

**The London School of Economics and Political  
Science**

*The Value of Effort*

David Jenkins

A thesis submitted to the Department of  
Government of the London School of Economics for  
the degree of Doctor of Political Theory, London,  
February 2014

## Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified).

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Quotation from it is permitted, provided that full acknowledgement is made. This thesis may not be reproduced without my prior written consent.

I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

I declare that my thesis consists of <96,040> words.

## Abstract

What is effort and why do we value it? This thesis examines various ways in which effort has been used to answer questions of distributive justice. I begin with effort's role as the unique legitimate basis for justifying differences in the deserts people receive. This role focuses on either the burdens associated with effort, so that it is only when we try hard and suffer disutility that we deserve anything; or else it is because our effort is the only part of our person for which we can be held responsible. I then discuss the legitimacy of the demand for specifically *productive* reciprocal effort in light of a society's institutional structure meeting certain thresholds of justice. I find problems with all three of these approaches because they miss important ways in which we use and understand effort in the course of our lives.

I examine the uses to which we put effort, developing a more inductive approach which draws on a particular reading of the concept of burden developed in the first half of the thesis. What are the costs associated with trying hard to do something and why are they important to how our lives go? I then frame this by a particular account of a character I call the 'craftsman'. This is someone who enjoys a particularly 'costly' way of living. The craftsman desires to achieve a depth in her life that is negatively affected by contemporary social and economic demands. Finally, I propose an unconditional basic income as a means to protect the craftsman and the agitator, an additional character identified in response to the discussion on reciprocity, who helps us collectively approach the thresholds identified in the third chapter.

**For Michael D. Zack**

## **Table of Contents**

Acknowledgements	6
Introduction: Why do We Care about Effort?	7
Burdens and Desert	23
Effort as the responsibility	48
Effort as Reciprocity	81
Effort and Depth	114
The Craftsman Versus the demands of Late Modernity	146
Unconditional Basic Income for Agitators and Craftsmen	179
Conclusion	213
Bibliography	219

## **Acknowledgements**

I would first like to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for awarding me a three year scholarship. Without this funding I would have been unable to conduct the research that went into the writing of this thesis and would have thereby had to forfeit the most interesting four years of my working life. I only hope that the quality of the final work adequately matches their generosity.

I would like to express my utmost gratitude to Anne Phillips, who has been a massive part of this thesis and thus the past four years of my life. Her support and advice have been more than I could have hoped for and I feel incredibly fortunate to have had her as my supervisor. She was always on hand to offer critical and constructive assessment and my thesis has benefitted immeasurably from her suggestions. Indeed, my discovery of Richard Sennett's work was in large part down to Anne's direction.

Parts of the thesis have been presented at various conferences and political theory seminars. Particularly important was the Summer School in Braga, Portugal on the topic of unconditional basic income. This was an incredibly rewarding experience both on an intellectual and a personal level, drawing me into a pretty intense half a year campaigning for an unconditional basic income in Europe. I would like to thank all those who attended and contributed at this event, in particular Stuart White and Roberto Merrill. In addition, the seminars hosted by the political theory community at the LSE have immeasurably strengthened my thesis. I am especially grateful to Carlo Argenton, Laura Valentini, Christian List, Lea Ypi and Chandran Kukathas for their helpful comments both throughout my presentations and in conversation.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for providing a great deal of financial and emotional support during and before the writing of this thesis, especially during a move to London in 2008 to start a Master's at LSE which ultimately paved the way for this current work. Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my wife Yao Chen for her extraordinary patience and support, especially in this final year. Writing a thesis can be lonely work at time and sometimes days would go by when the only face I would see would be hers: if had been any other face, madness may well have won out! Without her this thesis would not have been even close to possible.

## Introduction: Why do we Care about Effort?

The subject of this thesis is effort. In everyday life, our efforts are seen as something over which we have a significant amount of control. Whatever happens to us – short of crippling disease, catastrophic material deprivations and death – we can always *try* to make things better for ourselves. It is simultaneously the *least* that is asked of us and the *most* that can be expected. The intangibility and expansiveness of our propensities to expend effort, the fact that we can always try harder, is something that distinguishes it from our skills and talent. The talents we have, the families we are born into, the first language we speak and the colours of our skin are all accidents of birth and beyond the reach of our efforts to change. Effort then has a distinct status marking it from these other aspects of the person. Taking into account various important qualifications and caveats, effort has often been closely connected with individual responsibility. It is through our efforts and only our efforts that we can be said to deserve *anything* because it is only for this that we are responsible.

There are two different ways in which this notion of desert can be cashed out. First, we can be said to deserve things on account of the costs and burdens we assume. The fact that a person performs a particularly difficult or loathsome task which produces some benefits for others means that that person is entitled to some form of compensation. Where no cost can be shown to have been borne then no desert can be said to be forthcoming. We are not responsible for our talents and passion which *reduce* the costs of effort. Neither are we responsible for our efforts all the way down: our ability to expend effort is also in part a result of genetic and social fortune. However, so this account has it, this effort-expenditure ability – unlike talent – admits of far less inequality across persons. It is once we remove talent and passion from our account that we arrive at the proper basis of desert, namely the costs created by effort. By compensating costs, individuals are restored to some kind of initial balance according to that for which they are responsible.

The second approach designates effort as proximate to the person's moral centre. Effort is that over which people exercise significant control and for which they are thus responsible. However, unlike the above account, this does not imply that only costs borne are to be rewarded. Instead, this approach tracks the division between the parts of people that are explained by their efforts – and thus qualify as choices – and the other parts which are more appropriately described as aspects of circumstance and do not admit of choice.

Inequalities between people can only be justified by reference to the efforts/choices a person makes because it is this and only this for which a person can be held accountable.

An alternative way in which effort is important, one not revolving around questions of desert, is as a response to *other* people's efforts. By sharing in the benefits of economic, social and political cooperation we are obligated to contribute to those schemes. Effort is that by which we claim entitlement to social goods. Working sufficiently hard we gain access to a portion of the goods produced by social cooperation. This productive effort is also a fulfilment of an expectation that we recognise and reciprocate the same efforts made by others. If we enjoy the benefits of cooperative endeavour we are obliged to contribute to that endeavour. To do otherwise in situations of sufficient fairness, so this position has it, is to be parasitic, to fail to fulfil one's ethical duties and treat contributing others with insufficient respect.

Broadly speaking, these strands can all be incorporated into the paradigm of distributive justice. The first and second use effort as an answer to the question of who gets what and why, whether it be because of the costs a person assumes or the isolation of some deserving – because controlled – part of the self. The third uses effort as an answer to the question of what we owe to one another as cooperating members of a society. As the policy proposal which concludes the thesis makes clear, I do not leave this paradigm and so neither do I entirely leave these questions behind.

However, the current answers to those distributive questions are too limited in their understanding of the relation between effort and cost, responsibility, reciprocity and obligation. In the second part of the thesis I develop a different account of how we use effort and why it is important to us. I focus on the processes by which we use effort to develop the commitments, relationships and projects that matter to us. Contemporary studies of effort have paid insufficient attention to these processes. It is from this alternative focus that I develop my distributive proposal for an unconditional basic income.

### *Who Gets what and Why?*

Effort has often been used to provide the answer to the question of who deserves what. There are two distinct strands to this treatment of effort. First, there is the idea that how hard one tries is synonymous with the extent of the costs one assumes and, this in turn, determines how much one is owed in terms of compensation. From this distributive perspective whatever else effort is and however much we might enjoy its expenditure we



must not factor such considerations into our designations of desert. Our passions and talents, from this perspective, are not our responsibility and so should not be allowed to influence deserts.

At work in this account of effort is the vision of society as an arrangement of collective benefits and burdens: when a burden is felt by an individual so must a concomitant benefit be forthcoming to rectify that disutility.<sup>1</sup> Effort only functions as a basis of desert when it expresses an actual burden.<sup>2</sup> Absent this sense of burden or disutility, effort does not qualify as a relevant consideration when deciding on an answer to the question of who deserves what: to reward someone for something they already enjoy is to reward them *again* for something they have done nothing to deserve.

Effort is thus almost entirely conflated with disutility. This perhaps rings true with how a great many individuals regard their work or the work of others. The intuition seems to be that the more loathsome a task, the more money should be forthcoming as a way of recognising those costs and that loathsomeness. Where talent and passion for a particular activity are present, the rewards are already at work and nothing need be done to correct the situation.

There is a *moral* foundation underlying this general account of desert. The very skilled and talented amongst us can be enormously productive with little effort. However, such productivity lacks costs. Where a lesser mortal must struggle at the books for hours on end, this burden simply does not occur for others who simply breeze through homework and ace their exams. These ultra-talented, however, cannot appeal to the burdens or costs of their excellence precisely because it has come too easy: there is no desert claim that can be legitimately made and thus no reward that should be forthcoming. It is only where we face difficulties that desert becomes relevant. What is to count as a burden is of course an open question and likely to lead to some controversy. For example, the 'burdens' of responsibility and the risks of the marketplace are to some a boon, to others a nightmare. Similarly, the sociality of the workplace is oppression for some and a joy to others.<sup>3</sup>

An alternative to this exclusive focus on 'costs' is to ground questions of desert in the notion of 'choice'. This involves a more generous notion of moral responsibility for

---

<sup>1</sup> See Wojciech Sadurski, *Giving Desert Its Due* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985). See also Alan Zaitchik, 'On Deserving to Deserve', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 6:4 (1977) pp. 370-388.

<sup>2</sup> Sadurski, *Giving Desert its Due*, p 116.

<sup>3</sup> Sadurski includes effort, risk, responsibility inconvenience and sacrifice in his account. *Ibid.*

one's activity: we are responsible for what we choose rather than what we suffer. Two prominent thinkers who have contributed to this stream of thought are Ronald Dworkin and G.A. Cohen.<sup>4</sup> Both thinkers create a division within people between choices and circumstance: a choice is something for which a person can be held responsible whereas circumstances mitigate responsibility. Dworkin's description of ambition is especially crucial to his account. He assigns 'tastes and ambitions' to the person whilst assigning 'physical and mental powers' to circumstance.<sup>5</sup> Cohen's division leaves even less to the choice side suggesting that some of our tastes should be designated as circumstantial.<sup>6</sup> Both are agreed, however, that there is *some* part of a person's activity that can properly be described as belonging to the person and it is only this which can justify inequalities. To allow inequality for any other reason is to illegitimately and arbitrarily reward those parts of a person over which no responsibility can be claimed.

Effort is here employed as *the* device by which we can measure and compare that for which people are responsible. This need not imply that only efforts considered burdensome can be the basis of desert. This alternative approach stipulates only that we have to *choose* something – rather than suffer it – in order for it to be considered deserving. Where there is equal effort between people then they are said to be equally responsible and thus require equal reward. Of course, some of our efforts are down to our upbringing and are even genetically pre-determined. As a result, we lack effective control over these parts of our efforts.<sup>7</sup> How is it possible, in that case, to glean from this mixture of contingent circumstance and real choice that part of effort which is somehow reflective of a responsible self?

The most sophisticated and developed account of how this 'gleaning' might take place is provided by John Roemer's account of equality of opportunity.<sup>8</sup> As with other

---

<sup>4</sup> G.A. Cohen, 'On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice', *Ethics*, 99:4 (1989); Ronald Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) esp. pp. 11-119 (the 'What is Equality?' essays) & pp. 285-303 ('Equality and Capability'). See also Richard Arneson, 'Equality and Equality Opportunity of Welfare', *Philosophical Studies*, 56:1 (1989) pp. 77-93; Will Kymlicka, 'Left Liberalism Revisited' in Christine Synnwich, *Egalitarian Conscience: Essays in Honour of G.A. Cohen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, p 81. Cohen takes a similar position in his critique of Rawls. See Cohen, 'On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice', p 915.

<sup>6</sup> These disagreements, in part, stem from a controversy regarding what 'tastes' or preferences for which a person can be held responsible. See for example Dworkin, 'Equality & Capability', pp. 291 – 296 & G. A. Cohen, 'Expensive Tastes Ride Again', *On The Currency of Egalitarian Justice and other essays in political philosophy* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011). pp. 81 – 115.

<sup>7</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Belknap Press, 1999) p 89.

<sup>8</sup> John Roemer, *Equality of Opportunity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

thinkers who could broadly be labelled 'luck egalitarians', Roemer wishes to introduce responsibility into egalitarian discussions of justice: any inequalities that are allowed to occur between individuals have to be justified by reference to individual responsibility and deservingness as opposed to contingent and circumstantial advantages or disadvantages. However, where Cohen only recognises the difficulties of the morass surrounding the 'free will' problem and Dworkin attempts to deal with it through the abstract mechanism of the insurance market, Roemer takes the plunge and provides an actual real world policy to motivate and activate the cut between circumstance and choice. By adopting Roemer's methodology it becomes possible, so he argues, to isolate effort from the warp and flux of circumstance. His approach provides access to the responsibility-making part of the person and thereby allows us to reward people according to their deserts. By navigating the 'morass' of the free will problem in this way, effort functions as an answer to the question of 'who gets what'.

### *What do we owe to One Another?*

An alternative to the above concerns with costs and responsibility is the role effort performs responding to other people's efforts. Effort becomes a sign of recognition that, given the benefits we accrue from other's productive efforts, we are obliged to respond in like fashion. Where we are able, we too are obliged to work hard for the good of others.<sup>9</sup> On this account, the matter of determining for which parts of our activity we can be held responsible is no longer of primary significance. No longer is effort being used as that part of our person for which we can claim deserts. It is instead a manifestation of the regard and respect we owe our fellow-citizens.

Importantly, this question of what we owe others must first be set against a sufficiently fair background, the conditions of which Stuart White describes as constituting a 'civic minimum'.<sup>10</sup> In the absence of this civic minimum the demand to reciprocate the efforts of others is either reduced or, in extreme cases, even eliminated.<sup>11</sup> The civic minimum includes, amongst other things, a minimally secured standard of living, non-discrimination and the possibility of one's work being a site of meaningful activity. When these conditions are adequately furnished for people their 'integrity interests' are

---

<sup>9</sup> Although the level of appropriate, reciprocating effort is dependent on the capacities of the individual which will of course vary. See for example, Stuart White, 'Should Talent be Taxed' in Catriona McKinnon & Iain Hampsher-Monk, eds., *The Demands of Citizenship* (London: Continuum, 2000) pp. 70-90. Stuart White, *The Civic Minimum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p 79-85.

<sup>10</sup> White, *The Civic Minimum*, p 90.

<sup>11</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* p 302.

sufficiently protected and the means to live a full and dignified life are provided. By partaking in the collective, mutually-produced goods of their community, people are thereby obliged to respond with their own productive efforts. In other words, they are obliged to assume the responsibilities and burdens that are assumed by others.

Questions of responsibility and the isolation of some controlled part of the self is not the concern here. The overriding concern is no longer with making sure that individuals are allotted their due according to effort expended. The intention is instead to make sure that obligations and entitlements are properly distributed and fulfilled by the concerted efforts of all those who enjoy the fruits of cooperation. Of course, one's internal capacities are still a measure of what one owes since the stipulation is that one should expend according to one's *capacity* to contribute.<sup>12</sup> But this capacity is not used in such a way as to measure one's deserts. Capacities are used to measure what one owes to those with whom are shared the productive burdens of political and economic community.

In short, where from the perspective of desert effort is an almost exclusively internal phenomenon, descriptive of some part of the person's moral constitution, here the concern is with the justness of relations *between* people. It focuses on the legitimacy of background conditions against which people relate to one another as fellow citizens and workers. Where these conditions do not conform to some specified minimum standard, the effort of workers and citizens cannot be legitimately demanded.

### *What do we do with effort?*

However, each of the above approaches has significant shortfalls in their treatment of effort. To begin with, the notion of burden that collapses it into disutility does not take into account the true complexity of that concept. There is first the obvious difficulty in defining hardships in such a way that covers all possible understandings of an activity *as* toilsome. Given the subjective nature of disutility, what device can we use to *measure* people's different experiences of burden so that they can be cashed out in desert claims? Moreover, if disutility was to be the *main* part of a life, this would not obviously issue in a call for desert or even compensation. Rather, it is a call for redress of a more substantive kind, reducing that hardship as opposed to dishing out money by way of an apology or expression of desert.

---

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, White alludes to the Marxist maxim of 'from each according to his ability to each according to his need' as a motivating impulse of his proposal. White, *The Civic Minimum*, pp. 50 – 53.

However, there is a deeper and more interesting shortfall. Any account of burden which collapses it into being nothing more than a synonym for disutility fails to do justice to the *value* that often accompanies burden. In so ‘collapsing’, it abstracts from the complex ways in which our well-being and the commitments, projects and relationships we invest ourselves in and which are the source of that well-being, are in actual fact *constituted* by burdens. In deciding what to do with our time and energy, we are unavoidably making decisions as to the relationships, projects and commitments which are going to matter to us. It is through these decisions regarding what to do with our time and energy that we add weight to our lives and give them meaning. However, the flip-side to this weight is the cost it implies.<sup>13</sup>

When effort is wrapped up in these projects it is, by its very nature, cost incurring because of what it forecloses for the individual. As George Sher puts it: ‘A *fortiori*, steadfastly pursuing an outcome requires foregoing many other activities that one would find pleasant or worthwhile’.<sup>14</sup> But how are these ‘costs’ and burdens to be factored into a desert claim? It makes a mockery of the constitutive *value* of our commitments and relationships that they should be eligible for some kind of compensation. The vocabulary of desert/compensation is incapable of handling this aspect of our effort precisely because of the narrow way it treats burdens as synonymous with hardship or disutility.

By focussing on effort as a proxy for that for which we are responsible and thus as the ground of our *moral* deserts, John Roemer’s methodology avoids this problem of defining and measuring costs. However, there remain a number of problems with his approach. First, Roemer’s notion of control is itself problematic. The overall account requires that we confine our understanding of responsibility to a particularly strong account of control: we are *only* responsible for that which we can control. How can we be sure that what we measure is the result of some autonomously taken effort as opposed to some good fortune that has befallen an individual? The mere possession of a library card, a neighbour who introduces us to a particular passion or the presence of a diligent grandparent can make all the difference to an individual’s fate. But sifting through this data, extracting from it a picture of some centre that is representative of the self is exceptionally difficult. How can we be sure that what we are measuring is *really* a person’s effort?

---

<sup>13</sup> George Sher, *Desert* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987) pp. 53 – 68.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p 60.

What is more, this pursuit of *the* part of a person which incurs responsibility abstracts from the effects environments can have on people. Roemer takes circumstances into consideration but only as that part of people's activity which must be controlled for and then put aside. But the effects of circumstance, the ways in which they impact on individuals' ability to take responsibility for their action, the ends they set for themselves and the ways in which they confront opportunities, are not things that can be easily accounted for. In other words, the *subjective experience* of effort is altogether missing from this account of responsibility. Effort is instead treated as something that can be read off from a person's actions and choices in an objective way. It is then used to make comparisons between people who might be situated in possibly radically different ways. In attempting to find within the person some 'sterile' residual called effort it assumes a similarity that I argue might not be there.

Understanding effort within the context of discussions on reciprocity is a way of moving beyond these attempts to find answers to the sticky question of where choice and responsibility begin and circumstance ends. What is more, this approach is better able to deal with the subjective experience of disutility. When certain minimums are met, such that work cannot be regarded as overly laborious, dull or dangerous, then a person's attitude regarding the fulfilment of their productive contributions is essentially ignored.<sup>15</sup> If someone simply does not enjoy work that has been made sufficiently appealing and continues to enjoy the benefits of cooperation, her complaints will neither excuse her idleness nor issue in legitimate claims for compensation.

The thresholds specified by White's 'civic minimum' act as a way of saying 'If you enjoy the benefits provided by the work of others in your community then you are obliged, in a way commensurate with your ability, to contribute to production of those benefits for others'. This focus on obligation is therefore a more *political* treatment of effort. By this I mean that it is no longer with reference to philosophical questions of ultimate moral responsibility that effort is being used as an answer. Instead, effort is employed in a twofold fashion. First, it is something that can only be demanded of someone after certain basic conditions are fulfilled which, in being met, accord to the person the dignity that is her due. And second, that the establishment of these just minimums is not only a provision but also a *demand*. Individuals who benefit from social cooperation are obliged to make sufficient productive effort in order to sustain the justice of those background conditions.

---

<sup>15</sup> White, *The Civic Minimum*, p 90.

However, in a situation where these thresholds and minimums are a long way from being instituted, there is something problematic in treating productive contributions as the way in which people respond to the demands made on them as a result of enjoying benefits produced by other people's efforts. Focusing exclusively on *productive* contributions fails to adequately capture the breadth and complexity of the demands of real social, economic and political life, i.e. demands not as they appear in the realm of ideal theory but in the actual world. What are not considered are *other* potential obligations that issue from the actual world, and the other metrics, aside from productivity, which can be used to measure the contributions individuals make.

Indeed, there may be cause to baulk *against* the demand for productive contributions in cases of injustice and to fly in the face of demands to reciprocate like-for-like. In certain situations, it may be necessary to *resist* the draw to contribute productively and use our efforts and energies to disrupt current practices that do operate (in some minimal sense) in terms of reciprocity. These are the efforts of what I call the agitator. Historically, the agitator is not immediately regarded as someone engaged in reciprocating efforts. And, indeed, given the disruptive nature of those efforts they are not even strictly reciprocal in their intentions. Their efforts are directed toward the *reconstitution* of relations of exchange and can thus conflict with the demands that reciprocal exchanges make of people. If we are to fully appreciate the historical contingency and processes of development typical of the social movements within which agitators play a crucial part articulating and bringing us closer to standards like White's, we need to avoid the overly conservative concern with the sustaining dimension of productive contributions and reciprocity.

As a result of this failure to capture the complexity of effort in its personal, political and social function, this account succumbs to a certain narrowness of treatment. Effort might no longer be reduced to being a proxy for costs suffered or desert-producing control. But a reductive tendency remains when effort is used as a proxy for productive or economic contributions. Rather than limit our understanding of effort to a relation of reciprocity that is almost exclusively cashed out in terms of productive contribution, I argue that we need to broaden our understanding of the uses of effort as they pertain to our relations with others.<sup>16</sup> This includes incorporating a wider sense of the obligations we have

---

<sup>16</sup> White does expand the meaning of these obligations later on in his work to include the obligations and duties of citizens. See Stuart White, 'Markets, Time and Citizenship,' *Renewal*, 12:3 (2004) pp. 50-63 and Stuart White, 'Property-Owning Democracy and Republican Citizenship', in Martin O'Neill,

to one another and of the demands that are made of us as cooperating members of our communities. I couple this with a more expansive understanding of exactly what it is we do with our efforts, the lives which we build out of them and the value and meaning we are thereby able to enjoy through them.

### *Value and the Craftsman*

My thesis is first a rejection of the desire to use effort as a means by which we *solve* decisions of just distribution, i.e. providing resources according to how much effort people make. Second, I wish to broaden the above account of the demands that issue from our obligations to others. As part of this strategy, I analyse the demands made of individuals in real, contemporary life as opposed to some ideal, normative variant of the form those demands *should* take in situations of sufficient justice. Specifically, I want to focus on the demandingness of *value*, the time and energies it (more often than not) takes to get particularly good at something and for that something to be *deeply* meaningful for a person. I couple this with a description of how changes in the way we work – a particularly prominent demand that is made of people – have impacted on our ability to live particular kinds of life.

I therefore embrace a somewhat inductive approach. Rather than figure out what questions we want effort to answer and then try and grapple with how we bring those answers to fruition, I attend first to what effort *actually* does for us in the course of our lives. I therefore avoid the overly reductionist tendency to abstract effort into a proxy through which other things, desert or reciprocity, are able to make sense. By avoiding these tendencies, I gain a fuller picture of the uses and meanings that effort is able to have for the individuals doing the expending. By starting with what effort does for us we are better able to appreciate what effort is being *prevented* from doing for us. It is this line of reasoning which I then use to advocate for a particular distributive proposal, that of an unconditional basic income.

I attend first to a refinement and expansion of the term ‘burden’ as developed above. Burden is used to describe the ways in which the decisions we make and the efforts we expend are also decisions about what, for want of time and resources, we do *not* do. In deciding to be a teacher, for example, there is a multiplicity of other things I cannot (and will not ever) do. We have only so much time to live and so much energy to expend and we

---

& Thad Williamson, eds., *Property Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) pp. 129-146.



therefore want our decisions to be the right ones. Roemer's typology method is unable to include this qualitative dimension of effort. Since this methodology aims at an exclusively objective handling of effort it cannot compute people's subjective understandings and uses of effort.<sup>17</sup> What people think they are doing with their efforts, how they understand their decisions and actions, are aspects of effort that the methodology cannot handle.

What we do when we expend effort in pursuit of things we have reason to value is a complex process. It involves using our effort to develop a particular relation with the practices we find in our surrounding contexts. Practices are any form of shared activity whose shape is defined by a certain pattern of dos and don'ts.<sup>18</sup> Our involvement with these practices comes in two parts. First, we require a habituated involvement with the standards, those patterns of 'dos and don'ts', which determine what counts as good and bad instances of activity for that practice. It is alongside this habituation that people develop the expertise necessary to approximate those standards.<sup>19</sup> Second, it also requires a degree of subjection to the authority of the practice, to the standards as they *currently* exist and to the practitioners who approximate and embody them. Both habituated involvement and subjection to authority are necessary for deep and long-term engagement with practices. But this depth is not an *a priori* possibility: we cannot deeply involve ourselves in practices simply because we are human beings or because our cultures are rich with an historical inventory of practices.<sup>20</sup> The quality of this engagement can be degraded or even annihilated as a *sociological* possibility.

Our involvement with valuable practices does not occur within a vacuum. Such practice-involvement must contend with the *other* demands characteristic of economic and social life. These demands, however, are not necessarily conducive to the demands of deep practice engagement. In responding to the demands of work, for example, we are not necessarily given the time and space to properly engage with some practice – either inside or outside of the workplace – that we find valuable. Increasingly flexible and insecure

---

<sup>17</sup> For a different, more expansive way of understanding responsibility I refer extensively to Charles Taylor, 'Responsibility for Self', in Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, ed., *The Identities of Persons* (London: University of California Press, 1984) pp. 281- 299.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p 204. In addition see, Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth Press, 1981) p 187: a practice is 'any coherent and complex form of social established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity'.

<sup>19</sup> This is similar to the process outlined by Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Penguin, 2009). See, in particular, p 254 on the issue of learning how to approximate standards and p. 247 on the sociable, mentoring aspects that are important parts of the concept of expertise.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Raz, *Value, Respect and Attachment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p 134.

labour markets are symptomatic of the quality of these demands: where a worker must constantly move between different kinds of job, perhaps moving house and postcode in the meantime, the whole foundation of a life is unsettled. As a consequence of that, depth is made a more and more remote possibility.

I argue that contemporary economic demands reduce the possibility for the deeper kinds of engagement I describe through the character of the 'craftsman'. This is a person who uses his or her effort to properly habituate to the demands of a valuable practice and subject themselves to the authority and expertise of other craftsmen (both dead and alive) who have informed the evolution and development of the rules and standards of a practice. Craftsmanship is predicated on a certain amount of stability and 'ontological security' in a person's life.<sup>21</sup> However, our current epoch makes more available and celebrates the character of the 'dilettante'. This is someone who trades in the depth of the craftsman for a greater degree of breadth. Where secure careers and living conditions allowed for a degree of security and longevity in previous epochs, today these things are under increasing threat.

Craftsmanship is turned into a riskier form of engagement by this threat, precisely because of the depth it implies: the deeper one goes into a practice, the more one commits to those processes described above and the more it comes to matter to a person (the more she *identifies* with the 'craft'), the greater the loss that occurs when involvement with that practice is cut short. The craftsman is an example of a particularly vulnerable way of being and this is exaggerated by changes to the current economic system that promote the need and value of flexibility.

Vulnerability, so Harry Frankfurt argues, is a necessary part of value.<sup>22</sup> In order to live valuable lives the things we do must expose us to the possibility of profound loss. However, I argue that this is not strictly true. Vulnerability and value are actually quite distinct. We can live lives that we consider valuable without the frailty and risk implied by vulnerability. Someone who makes sure they cannot really be too deeply affected by the loss of any given project or relationship is not then utterly unable to live a life of meaning, purpose and value. Such a proposition smacks of an overly prescriptive perfectionism as to what is to count as valuable and meaningful, excluding a great deal of what some might

---

<sup>21</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991) p 43-46. Also, Jonathan Wolff and Avner De Shalit employ the notion of 'secure functionings' drawing more on the language of the capability approach to discuss the same phenomenon. Jonathan Wolff & Avner De-Shalit, *Disadvantage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) pp. 21 – 88.

<sup>22</sup> Harry Frankfurt, *Reasons of Love* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004) p 5.

reasonably consider worthwhile. What is proscribed by overt vulnerability, however, is depth: vulnerability is therefore better described as the counterpart to *depth* and not value.

So I do not suggest, as a certain kind of perfectionist might, that unless we are sufficiently deep our efforts lack value. Our efforts will still involve us in practices to some minimum degree, thereby allowing for valuable activity. But I do argue that depth, as a counterpart to vulnerability, is an important aspect of an overall *plurality* of value that should be preserved as a possibility for people. If the dilettante is the only mode of feasible engagement, something critical has been lost. By thus attending to the demands that are made of individuals' efforts, in a sense that expands on White's description of contributory obligations, we are able to appreciate the real impact of those demands on the possibilities and opportunities that confront people.

In addition, by leaving behind the metaphysical questions of desert and the location of some responsibility-making part of the self, I attend instead to individuals' actual uses and understandings of the effort they invest in their pursuit of meaningful ways to spend their time and expend their energies. This adds a more nuanced, subjective dimension to our appreciation of effort, allowing us to gain a sense of the actual challenges, tribulations and injustices that face people in the course of their lives.

I argue one way of protecting this depth is through a policy of unconditional basic income (UBI). UBI is a stream of income provided equally to all qualifying members of a political community without regard for their employment status or the volume of their wealth. The income should be at least high enough to support a minimum standard of living.<sup>23</sup> This proposed income would empower individuals to renegotiate and challenge contemporary economic and social demands from within a position of relative security, without fear of significant drops in their and their families' standards of living. It is in this way a means to facilitate the deeper kinds of engagement characteristic of the craftsman and thereby preserve a plurality in possible forms of engagement. In addition, UBI can be used to fund and protect the agitators described in chapter 3. People who are in work they find degrading or exploitative can ensure a reasonable standard of living while they campaign for changes.

---

<sup>23</sup> See Robert Van der Veen, & Philippe Van Parijs, 'A Capitalist Road to Communism', *Theory and Society*, 15:5 (1986); Philippe Van Parijs 'Why Surfers Should be Fed: The Liberal Case for an Unconditional Basic Income', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 20:2 (1991); Philippe Van Parijs, *Real Freedom for All* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Philippe Van Parijs, ed., *What's Wrong with a Free Lunch* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001) pp. 3-26.

### *Outlines of Chapters*

In chapter 1 I provide a background of debates surrounding the status of effort. I begin the discussion of effort's relation to responsibility and the ways in which it has often been used a proxy for our moral deserts. I pay particularly close critical attention to certain unsophisticated accounts of burden that fail to take into account the constitutive aspects of burden which cannot be collapsed into simple descriptions of disutility. In trying to link effort up to a compensatory paradigm that rewards people for the disutility they suffer, it does damage both to the notion of desert and, more importantly, to the ways in which we actually *use* and *understand* our efforts. We do not regard those constitutive burdens as worthy of reward or compensation in and of themselves. Rather, they are the very burdens out of which we hope to build meaningful lives.

In chapter 2 I focus exclusively on the methodology and model developed by John Roemer. I first describe his methodology, which is both ambitious and complex, before moving onto a critique of its assumptions and the account of responsibility it relies on. First, I interrogate the comparisons that Roemer makes between individuals who face vastly different opportunities and life chances. I suggest that although the methodology purports to isolate something 'autonomous' from the individual (what he calls effort), in actual fact, these techniques miss important qualitative distinctions between the efforts of different situated person. Given these differences, the comparisons across 'types' are unable to properly account for the real *meanings* effort has for individuals who face either disadvantage or privilege in the course of their lives. Finally, I motivate a different account of responsibility that does not track so closely the metric of control which lies at the heart of Roemer's method. This alternative view of responsibility draws instead on the evaluative capacities of individuals. This introduces a subjective element into discussions of responsibility and draws on people's own understanding of the meanings that their effort has for them. It is this sense of the *experience* of what we are able to with effort, the challenges we face in confronting opportunities and choices, that thus becomes the basis of responsibility.

In chapter 3 I focus on the ways in which we use effort to reciprocate the efforts and productive contributions of others. This chapter signals a move away from the issues of the self and toward an account of the relations between individuals in society. I first describe White's account of the thresholds that need to be met before people can be demanded to contribute to production. I supplement this with White's description as to

what is to count as reciprocal effort once those thresholds have been met. In light of the distance between actual political reality and an ideally theorised situation, a currently overlooked character, the ‘agitator’, becomes an important part of the political landscape. In non-ideal, political reality the sustained efforts of agitators are crucial for bringing us closer to White’s thresholds. These remain useful descriptions of what just background conditions should look like, but are incapable of motivating or directing the contestation and struggle needed to get us there. I argue that White’s account of what counts as contributory effort is thus too narrow and needs to be expanded to allow for the contributions of agitators.

In chapter 4 I return to the concept of burden as developed in the first chapter as a way of fleshing out my inductive approach to effort. I describe the ways in which we involve ourselves in commitments, projects and relationships through our sustained efforts. The more of our time and energies we spend in specific practices, the deeper we go into them and the more vulnerable we become to the disruption or elimination of that engagement. I argue that vulnerability is not, as some have argued, an aspect of value *per se*.<sup>24</sup> Rather, it is only an aspect of certain ways of living and of particularly deep forms of effort. This effort I describe as diligent-effort and it is this which is essential to the character of the craftsman.

In Chapter 5 I describe craftsmen as exemplars of a particularly ‘burdensome’ form of effort. Within the contemporary political and economic landscape, it is this character, the values and styles of life which she represents, that is being made increasingly difficult to sustain. Drawing on various sociological thinkers and their arguments, I argue that the current ‘liquidity’ and insecurity of the modern world has brought with it a reduced possibility for the deeper forms of effort and burdens. I argue that ‘shallower’, less ‘burdensome’ forms of life that are characteristic of the dilettante can survive these shifts. But the loss of the craftsman is still something that should worry us if we are at all concerned with the preservation of the dimension of *plurality* in our collective lives.

In chapter 6, I discuss UBI. My advocacy for this policy comes with important qualifications pertaining to the different ways of justifying a basic income. I present UBI as a tool that can help to mitigate the vulnerability characteristic of craftsmanship and, in addition, assist agitation by securing people’s ability to tactically disengage from unjust

---

<sup>24</sup> See also Ronald Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011) p 312 for a similar sentiment to Frankfurt’s.

demands and the practices that sustain them. This disengagement is not an 'exit' though or a way of significantly expanding freedom *away* from these obligations if we lack sufficient preference for such activity. I argue that basic income should not be seen as the means to facilitate escape from our obligations to contribute – in some form – to the collective welfare of our fellow citizens. UBI is instead a means to allow *reengagement*, renegotiation and act as a political challenge to those unjust practices.

My particular defence of basic income thus retains the power of obligation and necessity as motivating forces for people's decisions regarding where to put their effort. I retain the idea that even though individuals are able – in light of unconditionality – to avoid having to make contributions to collective welfare, they should still experience the demand to contribute as a necessary and constant obligation. I end the thesis with a conclusion that highlights its various shortcomings and limitations while offering possibilities for future research.

## Burdens and Desert

“Hard work is a misleading term. Physical effort and long hours do not constitute hard work. Hard work is when someone pays you to do something you'd rather not be doing. Anytime you'd rather be doing something other than the thing you're doing, you're doing hard work.”

George Carlin<sup>25</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to explicate and clarify the conceptual relationship between effort and desert. I focus on the ways in which the burdens and costs associated with an individual's effort have been used to determine what he or she deserves. In other words, a person is said to deserve something depending on how hard they have tried to achieve something. A person may have achieved great things but unless we are able to point to the costs involved in that achievement there can be no talk of anything being deserved. Where achievement is costless then talk of desert, so this perspective has it, is inappropriate.

The notion of costs and burdens is a complex matter. I argue that the hardship a person suffers in the pursuit of ends is too subjective a notion to ground any claim of desert. It is too difficult to systematically discount for the different ways in which people experience their efforts. Beyond certain obviously hideous occupations and activity, what for one person is a tedious and joyless task might be a great blessing for another. In the abstract, it might strike us as plausible that the joy of doing something should act as its own reward. It would therefore demand nothing additional by way of an expression of desert. But it is a step too far to then collapse all notions of desert into what is essentially another term for compensation.

There are other burdens/costs to take into account when discussing effort. These are the costs that accompany our decisions about what to do with our lives. Such decisions mean we foreclose a whole host of other options. However, such costs are too deeply associated with the value in our lives to be treated as demanding reward or compensation. From this alternative perspective, every large decision we make in life produces costs. But to claim that these costs issue in a desert claim involves treating valuable parts of our life as something we suffer. It also ignores the demand of a performance that is appropriate to the reward in question: an agent's effort is unable to guarantee a performance that is of a

---

<sup>25</sup> George Carlin, *When Will Jesus Bring the Pork Chops?* (New York: Hyperion, 2005).

quality sufficient enough to merit reward. I therefore conclude that the language of desert is incapable of making sense of this alternative understanding of costs.

### *Matters of Pre-Institutional Desert*

It was John Rawls' bold move in denying the role of desert within his conception of justice that set a still-standing paradigm for how effort continues to be perceived in contemporary political theory.<sup>26</sup> Rawls suggested that even our effort is down to genetic and environmental factors over which we have no control. As a result, our effort-making capacities are treated as effectively equivalent to our talents and proclivities.<sup>27</sup> This raises questions about the self and what remains, if anything at all, once we strip away preferences, talents and even the ability to expend effort. Does effort (and the capacity to expend it) enjoy any special status that separates it from these other aspects of personhood, representing some important part of the individual for which we can hold them responsible? If effort is special in some way, what is it that constitutes that difference?

The question of what we can be held responsible for is relevant to Rawls' consideration (and rejection) of pre-institutional desert, i.e. perceptions of entitlement that are seen as separate and prior to the 'legitimate expectations established by social institutions and community'.<sup>28</sup> In summary his position is as follows;

'We do not deserve our place in the distribution of native endowments, any more than we deserve our initial starting place in society. That we deserve the superior character that enables us to make the effort to cultivate our abilities is also problematic; for such character depends in good part upon fortunate family and social circumstances in early life for which we can claim no credit.'<sup>29</sup>

This is a picture of individuals stripped of any and all (pre-institutional) desert claims. The individual retains *possession* of these properties, protected as they are under a separate (and prior) principle of basic liberty which defends individual's integrity against encroachment by others.<sup>30</sup> But ultimately, without being able to 'claim credit' for the bases

---

<sup>26</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 86- 93.

<sup>27</sup> Effort making capacity is the term of art I use as a holder for Rawls description of effort at *Ibid.* p 89.

<sup>28</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p 89.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* Also see p 274 where he supplements this reference to familial and social environments with an account of the genetic origin of our efforts: 'the effort a person is willing to make is influenced by his natural abilities and skills.'

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* p 53.



of our constitutions – our abilities, preferences, characters, capacities to expend effort etc. – we are left without the use of either our actual achievements, or the efforts put forward in *attempting* to achieve, as legitimate bases of desert. Desert simply fails as one of the fundamental facts of our morality because what we are, at bottom, is anchored in events and causes beyond our control and consequently beyond even the *possibility* of desert-claims.

It is important to be clear on what Rawls is and is not saying. His view on effort does not exclude it from being a legitimate part of entitlement. As persons and groups take part in social, economic and political arrangements they acquire claims upon one another as defined by publicly recognizable rules. As a result of doing things encouraged by the institutions that form a part of such arrangements, individuals or groups develop entitlements to certain goods. A just distribution, in part, is precisely that distribution which honours these rights.<sup>31</sup> By conforming to the expectations defined by just institutional arrangements ‘those who are of the same level of talent and ability, and have the same willingness to use them, should have the same prospects of success regardless of their initial place in the social system’.<sup>32</sup> This ‘willingness to use’ our talent is another way of saying the ‘effort we expend’.

This is the formal stipulation of fair equality of opportunity, the force of which implies that where endowment and motivation are equal, outcomes in the form of achievement should also be equal.<sup>33</sup> Effort, though metaphysically shackled in the same way as ability, is still an important part of this equality since it forms a central axis upon which achievement is based and from which justified inequalities are allowed to emerge. Nevertheless, this is quite different to the pre-institutional desert that Rawls explicitly rejects. Effort is not freed from ability or other native endowments in this scenario because it is seen as being of much the same quality. There thus exists no attempt, within the Rawlsian account, to separate effort from those other attributes.

The ramifications of this are imaginably extensive (both within Rawls’ own account and for political philosophy generally) and not without controversy. Rawls ties desert to a very thick notion of responsibility. In his view, for desert to be in anyway a legitimate concern, individuals must have had total control over not just the use but the *invention* of

---

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p 273

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p 63

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p 265. Rawls recognises that this requires taking into account the various factors that affect people’s expectations and aspirations such as family background and societal support.

their capacities. This is impossible. However, if we can avoid Rawls' thick account of responsibility, effort might survive as a relevant basis for a desert claim. We must first ask whether effort should be treated as equivalent to talent and differences in social circumstance. If our ability to expend effort begins from an appropriately equal base, even if this base is beyond our choosing or invention, effort plausibly re-emerges as a way to justify deserts: we start off equally and the different decisions people make about what to do with their efforts are then classified as their responsibility and as justification for reward.

### *Equality in 'Effort-Making Capacity'*

This paradigm of non-responsibility for all our attributes may not then be as straightforward as it at first seems. The fact of non-responsibility for our attributes (including our effort-making capacity) can be conceded, whilst retaining the notion that effort is significantly different to talent. Effort, from this point of view, is important not because we are in *control* of its source and creation but because we possess it – as a potential – in more or less equal quantities. It is *equality* of – and not *responsibility* for – our effort-making capacity that can ground desert-claims.<sup>34</sup>

By treating effort and talent as of ostensibly the same quality because we are responsible for neither of them is to overlook an important difference: namely, effort's inherent fungibility. Whereas a specific talent can only be demonstrated by the performance of a particular activity or set of activities, effort can be demonstrated across any and every talent. The fact that I fail to put forward effort in performing A does not mean I do not – or am not able to – put forward effort in activities B through Z. This remains the case even where those activities are *never* performed because of an inability to access them (for instance, through lack of money – the other fungible). It might only be a matter of me finding my preferred activity. Once found, I am willing and able to expend an amount of effort equal to that which you put forth in performing your favoured A.

So the observation that an individual is not putting forward effort in the performing of a particular activity does not necessarily mean that that person's effort is *necessarily* more cramped or stifled across *all* activities. After recognising effort's intrinsic fungibility across the performance of all activity the question that emerges is whether there really *are*

---

<sup>34</sup> I deal with this alternative notion of control as crucial to effort's relation to desert in the next chapter.

significant differences between people in their effort-making ability.<sup>35</sup> The different effort levels that occur across persons might be a consequence of differences in the activities they have been able to find or access, rather than because of any innate idleness or the absence of some capacity related to effort.<sup>36</sup> Though we might castigate someone for her laziness, what we in fact confront is her lack of contingent good fortune in finding a passion or pursuit into which she can throw her efforts.

There is nothing to stop a person, at least theoretically, from continually exerting effort in the pursuit of some goal. This is both the beauty and tragedy of effort: a person doesn't necessarily have to quit, even when perhaps she should.<sup>37</sup> The exercise of effort is, unlike talent, something it is possible to will into existence despite the continued frustrations such exertion might bring. And yet, such willing always occurs from within a life, the material of which – our tastes, our early age development, our abilities – has *not* been willed. Effort thus manifests as a dynamic between, on the one hand, a potentially limitless phenomenon, and on the other, as something profoundly dependent on the world around it for support and cultivation.

Instead of a concern with finding that for which people *can* be held responsible, this stipulation of equality in (undeserved) effort-making capacity generates an alternative concern with finding those *additional* abilities for which a person both cannot be held responsible and which are not possessed equally across persons. Individuals are not responsible for their effort-making capacity but because they are effectively equivalent across persons this non-responsibility is irrelevant. As far as effort goes, we are all working with the same tool. However, the additional abilities for which we are *also* not responsible can play no role in desert claims precisely because they are *unequally* distributed and belong to different people in different quantities. Effort as a tool remains the same but

---

<sup>35</sup> George Sher, 'Effort, Ability and Personal Desert', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 8 (1979) p 367. Rawls makes no specific defence of this claim regarding effort as a capacity that varies significantly across persons. Certainly for those who would have each and every one of us 'on our bikes' it is a defence that might be required.

<sup>36</sup> This is complicated when 'outliers' are taken into account. Paul Erdős, the Hungarian mathematician, was famous for keeping at his maths for 19 hours a day (aided, it should be added, by copious amounts of Benzedrine). Paul Hoffman, *The Man Who Only Loved Numbers* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998). But even with this example, it just so happened that a man found an activity (it might well be numerous activities for other people) toward which he was able to expend copious amounts of effort. The *capacity* was arguably the same as other individuals; it was the application inspired by enthusiasm that distinguished him. That application is an option open to everyone whether or not it is all spent in the pursuit of some single task so long as the right activity is found and the means to engage with it are available.

<sup>37</sup> I am thinking here of those images of tragic/comic/beautiful effort: Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* (1982).

how we are able to use it varies widely across different people in light of potentially massive variations in our additional abilities.

Skills and enthusiasm are important parts of these additional abilities. The actual expenditure of our efforts is dependent on both the skills we have and the finding of activities for which we have the requisite enthusiasm. Where skills and enthusiasm are lacking we can also expect a corresponding decline in the effort individuals make. Any effort that is expended is weighed down by a sense of the costs and burdens associated with performing an unpopular activity. Since both the skills we employ and the finding of desirable activities are affected by contingency characterised by inequality, these should not be taken into account when discussing a person's deserts.

Even though we have distinguished effort from talent the question remains as to how effort can now be motivated as a basis for desert. What are we rewarding when we reward the application of this equally-possessed ability? Talent and enthusiasm have to be discounted because they are not shared across persons in the same equitable fashion. In order to avoid including reference to either talent or enthusiasm, questions of desert can only be answered by reference to the *burdensomeness* of effort. When an individual tries hard from this equally-possessed common ability to expend effort, what we are in fact referring to are the *costs* of that effort. To assess anything else is to permit inappropriate – because unequal – attributes to affect our calculations.

To flesh out this notion of burden, consider the following example: Steve is a very gifted footballer who spends every waking hour practising and playing football. He is disciplined, accepts the advice of coaches and works hard at all aspects of the game. Then there is Sarah, a gifted scientist. We can tell a similar story about her development and attitude. Both Steve and Sarah adore what they do and their talents and enthusiasm help them reduce the burdens of that effort.<sup>38</sup> Despite the hours and energy plied into their respective activities, they do not experience such effort as disutility or cost because they love what they do – including what others might consider the more mundane aspects like cleaning football boots or microscopes – and are able to progress within their chosen practices to a high degree of excellence. Burdens might be experienced however, by people less talented than Sarah or Steve but who share the same passion. Such individuals will reach a certain level and then experience nothing but frustration as their talents allow

---

<sup>38</sup> The respective merits of these pastimes need not concern us here. The currency of desert can either remain unspecified or else we can say that both pursue their respective fields in a professional capacity.

them to go no further. Similarly, individuals with more talent but less enthusiasm can feel frustrated in the pursuit of these activities. They find themselves doing something for which they have little passion. But talents and even enthusiasms are not down to the choices or decisions of the individual. They are soaked in the contingency of genetic and social circumstance.

When talents combine with enthusiasm in this way, they do not seem to be accompanied by much, if any, disutility. To describe Steve and Sarah's respective adorations and pursuits as costly or burdensome would strike us as peculiar.<sup>39</sup> The less talented or enthusiastic do seem to suffer from frustrations and disutility whilst performing the same activities. They experience their efforts absent the boon of good fortune enjoyed by Steve and Sarah. However, where these less fortunate types try hard – and suffer by doing so – are we suggesting that they are somehow more deserving of reward? In other words, because their efforts make no reference to 'arbitrary' talents and enthusiasm we seem to be suggesting that what they do is closer to a 'purer' form of effort and thus a more appropriate basis of desert. Once something gets tiresome or difficult and we cannot meet those challenges with either our enthusiasm or talent, only then is effort really *experienced* and desert can kick in.

There is a flip-side to the above story. If Steve had no access to football and Sarah no access to science yet they retained their respective enthusiasms and capacities, their previously abundant efforts would be stifled. What seemed like a bottomless supply of energy will have been stunted and all those talents locked up inside the person will now lack sufficient means for expression. In addition, where before they felt none of the disutility associated with spending significant amounts of time and energy doing what they loved, they now lack the activities and tasks that previously made sense of them. Whatever they end up doing is filled with the hardship and *sense* of burden that previously they felt not at all.

There is a certain intuitive plausibility to this focus on burden. Where Steve and Sarah are rewarded for enthusiasm and talents as well as their efforts their rewards are being double counted in some sense. Nature has already rewarded them with these propensities and gifts. Why then should we come along and give them even more rewards? Surely meeting the challenges and complexities of the respective tasks of football and

---

<sup>39</sup> Although as I explain below, there is a more complex notion of burden which they can be said to 'suffer'.

science are their own reward. What entitles them to any more than that? Of course, this only explains why individuals do *not* deserve the utility and rewards they gain as a consequence of arbitrary things like talent and enthusiasm. It is necessary to make an additional case for the fact that the disutility and cost associated with this absence of talent and enthusiasm is a proper basis for desert.

### *Effort-as-Burden*

In the examples of Steve and Sarah there is an important distinction at work within the concept of effort. They can hardly be said not to be trying. They still dedicate a great deal of time and energy to the things they love doing and are thus still making effort. Another notion of effort refers to the *experience* of the time and energy spent in doing those things. Where Steve and Sarah love what they are doing, and thus do not experience the spending of time and energy as in any way burdensome, there will be others who are absent talent and/or enthusiasm who will experience it in such terms. In other words, there are those who experience their time and energies expended in such tasks as frustrating, difficult and/or boring. Objectively, both spend time and energy doing something. Subjectively, they have different experiences of the time and energy necessary for that doing. It is the subjective experience of effort, stripped of undeserved and unequal additional abilities, which ground desert claims.

In his justification of inequality, Rawls' makes reference to the costs of effort. While talented individuals are not responsible for their ability to expend effort they still suffer from the costs and challenges of training. 'The premiums earned by scarce natural talents... are to cover the costs of training and to encourage the efforts of learning'.<sup>40</sup> These premiums direct the abilities of talented individuals to 'where they are most needed from a social point of view'.<sup>41</sup> Without such premiums, so the argument goes, the costs of training would prove too much for even talented individuals to handle. The enthusiasm and rewards associated with the exercise of talent do not put enough on the scales to justify the efforts involved in training and so additional incentives are required in the form of pecuniary remuneration.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 274 & 277.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* p 277.

<sup>42</sup> For a critique of Rawls' incentive argument see G.A. Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (London: Harvard University Press, 2008) pp. 27 – 86.

When this understanding of effort-as-burden is operationalized within accounts of desert – which of course Rawls does *not* attempt – it is with the underlying idea that desert is only of relevance when efforts expended are in pursuit of an end that ‘expresses an actual burden’.<sup>43</sup> More specifically, when it ‘involves some inconvenience, sacrifice, work, risk (or) responsibility’.<sup>44</sup> A person can only be said to *deserve* something when there is evidence of these burdens or disutilities. This notion of desert rests on an image of justice as a hypothetical, initial situation of balance between the distribution of burdens and benefits throughout a society: where a cost is borne, a proportionate amount of benefit must be forthcoming in order to restore the balance.<sup>45</sup> This is why we don’t feel playing games, for example, regardless of whatever effort expended, issues in a desert claim because there is no relevant burden being produced. Similarly, where work is itself treated as nothing but fun and games, like the joys experienced by Steve and Sarah, we have similar reason to challenge the idea that an appropriate burden is being borne.

From this perspective, the distinction between a person’s *possession* of a specific ability and her *use* of such endowment is important.<sup>46</sup> The initial ‘possession’ of ability lies beyond intentions and choices, and can constitute no part of any desert claim because such possession never in *itself* constitutes a burden.<sup>47</sup> It is only the effortful *use* of abilities which can issue in burdens: where there is no application, there is no possibility for burden. Reluctant geniuses can have all their powers locked up inside them, but without even some minimum expenditure of effort, that is where they shall remain. Once they bring them out it becomes possible to incur costs and they can then make claims of desert.

This again relies on a particular account of burden and draws on the above distinction between the types of cost we refer to when we talk about effort. Do we mean the mere cost of expending time and energy using some ability, irrespective of how we might feel about that use? This ambivalence regarding the subjective experience of effort produces that double counting effect for people like Steve and Sarah: we call effort a burden when it is not experienced in anything like that way. Suffering an ‘actual’ burden would seem rather to require cost in the sense of disutility. Otherwise it is not burdens,

---

<sup>43</sup> Such an account is provided by Sadurski. See Sadurski, *Giving Desert its Due*. In addition, Nicholas Barry, ‘Defending Luck Egalitarianism’, *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 23:1 (2006) is an example of a particularly overt focus on compensation-for-unjustified-burden as the means of instituting a just situation.

<sup>44</sup> Sadurski, *Giving Desert its Due*, p 116.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* p 130.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* p 117.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* p 122.

sacrifices or responsibilities being compensated by benefits but benefits accruing more benefits. For the person who revels in the risks and responsibilities associated with her efforts, describing them as a burden is to misrepresent something that is experienced as constitutive of a great deal of enjoyment and meaning.

Compensation is built directly into this account of desert. Wojciech Sadurski confesses as much when he asserts that desert, as far as justice is concerned, simply *is* compensation, a return to equilibrium in the distribution of burdens and benefits.<sup>48</sup> Desert claims refer back to an initial hypothetical situation of perfectly balanced benefits and burdens, where the disutility one experiences is matched by an appropriate sum of money or other form of redress. The very nature of burden that is being employed means that only claims expressing burdens experienced as hardship or toil will be deemed relevant to decisions regarding who deserves what. Mere time and energy spent doing something will not count, precisely because these things lack reference to the *sense* and *experience* of cost.

When discussing what people deserve, Ronald Dworkin refers exclusively to sacrifices which our choices impose on *others* rather than the disutility or burdens experienced as a consequence of expending effort.<sup>49</sup> As Dworkin puts it: a person might 'prefer working hard to anything else. But his preference cannot provide any argument ... that he should gain any less in money or other goods by his work than if he hated every minute of it'. He believes instead that a just distribution of the benefits and burdens must;

'reflect the cost or benefit to others of the choices people make so that, for example, those who choose to invest rather than consume, or to consume less expensively rather than more, or to work in more rather than less profitable ways, must be permitted to retain the gains that flow from these decisions in an equal auction followed by free trade.'<sup>50</sup>

From this perspective, cost refers to the prices people are willing to pay in order to purchase the goods produced by others' efforts. It is necessary to discount for superior

---

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* p 144. On the relationship between an independently conceived version of justice and the idea of desert-as-compensatory see Serena Olsaretti, *Liberty, Desert and the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) esp. pp. 50-54. Olsaretti's central argument here is that what compensatory desert claims ultimately express is that individuals be given what justice requires. The notion of desert is thus dependent on an 'independently formulated conception of justice' and is as a result superfluous. I can welcome these arguments without them posing a challenge because my concern is with the ways in which effort becomes conflated with hardship and not the ways in which desert so conceived is finally collapsible into a particular vision of justice.

<sup>49</sup> Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, p 85.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* p 89.



talents enjoyed by others, but not for the enthusiasm or joy a person has in producing goods. When deciding on a person's deserts, the subjective experience of one's choices and productive efforts are irrelevant to the notion of cost. A person can still enjoy as well as deserve.<sup>51</sup>

On Dworkin's account, burdens are not measured according to how much a person suffers as a result of their efforts. They are measured instead according to the resources people are willing to give up in order to purchase the products that are the result of other people's productive efforts. There is no mention of discounting for what a person might *feel* about the hard work, diligence or toil that goes into this productive labour. Dworkin cannot incorporate these into his account because these subjective experiences of our effort are things which belong to the person and for which we should be held responsible.<sup>52</sup> If we choose to expend our efforts in productive rather than unproductive ways then we should be rewarded according to this choice regardless of the enthusiasm – or lack thereof – that might accompany that decision. Individuals 'must be permitted to retain the gains that flow from these decisions' in so far as they are their decisions.<sup>53</sup> This is not a matter of deciphering how heavy the burden of such decisions are to the person but rather of finding out how much is down to effort for which we can hold her responsible.

On this account, taking responsibility for our experiences of effort is important because it is part of the wider responsibility we take for our beliefs, tastes, convictions, ambitions and judgements: we do not ordinarily regard these parts of ourselves as 'lucky or unlucky accidents' but as constitutive of our natures and of our selves.<sup>54</sup> Rawls is certainly right that we lack control over ourselves 'all the way down' into the roots of our condition. But we nonetheless remain capable, so Dworkin would have it, of taking responsibility for who we are and what we do. Dworkin turns us away from questions of the costs to individuals in terms of hardship and toward the costs experienced by others as a result of the choices we make.

The individual at the heart of Dworkin's account is responsible in a way that the individual who is rewarded for the disutility she suffers is not. Holding talent and opportunity equal, Dworkin argues the subjective experiences of effort are the responsibility of individuals: if a person hates having to labour this is tough luck.

---

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* p 85.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p 81.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* p 89. It is this which makes a distribution 'ambition-sensitive'.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* p 291.

Preferences for labour cannot be placed on the scales when deciding what people deserve. However, assigning tastes to the person is not without controversy.<sup>55</sup> Some of us are merely not as inclined to productive labours as others, lacking enthusiasm which others seem to possess as an instinct. For instance, in the west at least, in a family consisting of four children the first born typically works harder than the last.<sup>56</sup> Social circumstances carry the day but the individual is still being rewarded, and it might be a *double* reward at that since she could already enjoy the work itself.

One advantage of an approach that concentrates on experiences of disutility and treats burden as synonymous with hardship is that it avoids the double-counting of rewards. By discounting for both talent and enthusiasm, it retains Rawls' treatment of talents and proclivities for effort as beyond our claims of responsibility, without thereby neglecting the distinctive fungibility of effort. If a person shows signs of suffering from their productive efforts we need not ask the supplementary question as to whether they are ultimately responsible for feeling that way. The disutility is sufficient because it signals the absence of unequal and undeserved additional abilities like talent and/or enthusiasm which could alleviate such costs.

Despite this advantage, the approach fails to defend effort-as-burden as the pivot upon which *desert* must turn. As the argument proceeds no reason is given to believe that *effort-as-burden* (and burden of a particular kind at that) should be given pride of place in providing the foundation of our desert-claims. Why do trying hard and suffering costs mean we *deserve* anything? Why do we use the vocabulary of desert to respond to disutility rather than alter the situation in such a way as to reduce the disutility in the first place? This emphasis on compensation both fails to deliver the kinds of responses appropriate to disutility and distorts the meaning of desert.

Where effort consists mainly of burden we should look less to the provision of monetary compensation to return us to some kind of imagined equilibrium and more to the reduction of effort thus consumed by burden so understood.<sup>57</sup> Recognising such burdensome effort should trigger an investigation into the sources of that disutility rather than cash payment and proclamations of deservingness. Our motivation in recognising such

---

<sup>55</sup> See for example *ibid.* pp. 291 – 296. G. A. Cohen, 'Expensive Tastes Ride Again'.

<sup>56</sup> Oliver James, *They f\*\*\* you up: How to survive family life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

<sup>57</sup> For a critique of the compensation paradigm see Wolff & De-Shalit, *Disadvantage*, pp. 21 – 35. On the idea that compensation cannot be a principle of desert see Olsaretti, *Liberty, Desert and the Market*, pp. 49-55.

effort-as-burden has little to do with desert claims or stipulations of reward: it is not that such suffering deserves reward but rather that people do not deserve to suffer in these ways. Our motivation is thus better characterised as sympathy for other's plights, plights in which effort is doomed to only ever be perceived as something suffered, the infernal rock of Sisyphus.

Furthermore, our relationship to even burdensome efforts can be complicated over time. Even though we might initially experience our efforts as heavy going and/or dull, they can develop into a source of fulfilment when applied to the cultivation and expression of particular abilities. There are of course the 'typical situations' Sadurski describes in filling out his account of burden which strike us as uniformly horrible and irredeemable. These are the occupations and pursuits within which effort seems utterly burdensome. But beyond the labour of miners in the developing world or the holders of so-called 'McJobs', we cannot hope to put together an overarching framework derived from the notion of effort-as-burden precisely because of the complex ways in which *prima facie* costs can ultimately produce benefits for the person. Moreover, the subjectivity of the notion of burden makes it practically very difficult to specify. What to some might be hell on earth is to others the very stuff of the good life: just ask committed environmental activists about life as an investment banker and vice versa. Burden, when seen as hardship, is simply too subjective a phenomenon to do much work.

We need not interpret burden or costs in such depressingly simplistic (or simplistically depressing) ways. There are other important ways in which effort involves costs beyond its merely back-breaking or spirit-ruining implications. Effort is that by which we appropriate or develop the projects, commitments and relationships that shape and give meaning to our life. It is through appropriation and development of such things that our lives gain direction, leading us to cumulative successes and/or failures. Indeed, it is precisely this part of effort that is alluded to in Dworkin's account of the nexus of preferences we develop and discover, taking responsibility for the ends that emerge from the on-going, potentially difficult and effortful explication of our proclivities, talents and desires. By committing ourselves, by caring about these things, we create burdens and responsibilities for ourselves. But this sense of burden is marginalised when we frame burden exclusively in terms of hardship and disutility.

There is an alternative, more nuanced account of burden in which effort – specifically *sustained* or *diligent* effort – necessarily incurs costs but not in the sense of

some brute hardship or disutility.<sup>58</sup> By choosing what to do with the time and energy that fill-out our lives, we inevitably leave a lot of roads un-travelled. Time and energy are finite resources with which we can only do so much. This makes sense of the costs Steve and Sarah might be said to 'suffer'. Though they love what they do there remain things they are unable to accomplish precisely as a consequence of that love and the effort it inspires. Moreover, *because* they love what they do, sudden withdrawals or disruptions to their engagement with preferred activities can prove particularly damaging to the meaning and purpose of their lives. Therefore, even though they may embrace their involvements in particularly intense ways, they are still vulnerable to disruption and the kinds of disutility this would bring about.

George Sher argues that this notion of burden issues in its own set of desert claims. He distinguishes between the kinds of effort we experience as utter drudgery and that effort we direct toward certain ends we have reason to value. This second type of effort is burdensome, but rather than focusing on the hardships surrounding the expenditure of effort it focuses on the fact that every choice we make is also a choice to not do other things. The decision to do A is also a decision to not-do B, C... N.<sup>59</sup> By investing our efforts in a particular pursuit we are constrained from investing that time and effort elsewhere. It is this sense of costs associated with 'roads left untraveled' that complicates what we mean by burden and what role burden can play in grounding desert claims.

The idea that this forms a basis for desert is grounded in the common intuition that when people work sufficiently hard for the attainment of some goal, when they dedicate themselves to the accomplishment of some task, we believe it would be a good thing if they attained their desired end.<sup>60</sup> We are loath to see people fail at tasks they care about because of things beyond their control: a lack of effort is one thing, the vagaries of circumstance another. What is more, the bigger the part a particular accomplished goal would play in a person's welfare, the more painful the failures will be. It is this that gives sense to the idea that a person *ought* to achieve her goal. What is it that underlies this intuition? Why do we feel desert claims arise out of this kind of conscientious striving?<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> Sher, *Desert*, pp. 53 - 68.

<sup>59</sup> On the value of this kind of diligence as it pertains to autonomy see Thomas Hurka, 'Why Value Autonomy?', *Social Theory and Practice*, 13:3 (1987) esp. p. 366.

<sup>60</sup> Sher, *Desert*, p 54. This belief comes with the obvious constraints regarding harm to others and competitive goods.

<sup>61</sup> Of course this is not as straight-forward as it might appear at first glance. There are certain ends we would hesitate in saying someone deserves because they are somehow ignoble or unworthy-

*Diligent-Effort and its bearing on burden*

Diligent-effort (as I shall, following Sher, continue to call it) is closely connected to desire: indeed, it could be argued that it is 'logically impossible to desire something without being disposed to try to get it'.<sup>62</sup> We need not assert anything so strenuous however to fulfil our purpose. We will do as well to suggest that diligent-effort (the conscientious striving toward a certain goal) is a reliable sign of desire: if we try and do something it is because we want it to happen. Furthermore, we need to be able to move from a belief that 'M desires X' to a claim that 'M's having X is valuable in itself'. In other words, we need to have grounds to believe that the very desiring of something confers value upon that thing, that the attainment of it would produce a better situation than would the lack of that attainment.<sup>63</sup> But how do we make that inference, what is the connection between desire and value?

In discussing diligent-effort and its relation to desert, Sher makes an appeal to the idea that individuals have, in and of themselves, absolute value. It is because of this conception of the individual that he is able to assert the following about them: 'a portion of their (people's) value devolves upon what they value, that some of the absolute value of persons is transferred to, or inherited by, the things they care about'. Put simply, if people themselves matter so do the things they care about.<sup>64</sup> Effort, then, working as a function of desire, is a means of conferring value onto ends. We try hard to achieve things because we desire them, and in desiring we make them valuable.

This is not meant to suggest that diligent-effort and desires are equivalents. What it does imply, however, is that differences between effort and desires are to be considered matters of degree: effort is what brings desires to fruition, an additional and necessary (though not sufficient) property that turns desire into reality.<sup>65</sup> The value of those desires

---

someone who strives to preside over a pornography-publication empire. This question inevitably opens up an (Aristotelian) can of worms as to what ends can qualify as noble or worthy i.e. in which situations we believe diligence is not enough to warrant a desert-claim. These are separate considerations that would constrain the purchase of deserving diligent-effort. I thank Anne Phillips for bringing my attention to this point.

<sup>62</sup> Sher, *Desert*, p58.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* p 56.

<sup>64</sup> Something similar is at work in Joseph Raz's accounts of rights. Individuals have rights because of their intrinsic value and because of this possession that which they value can have derivative value. See Joseph Raz, *Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) pp. 169 – 170.

<sup>65</sup> Sher, *Desert*, p 58-59. Of course some desires do not require effort at all. But, should this expand to all our desires, we are looking at either an obscenely shallow and empty life or a tragically impaired one.

remains in the fact we, as holders of absolute value, want to see them fulfilled and it is effort that makes the realisation of that value possible. So although ‘the far greater value of the objects of diligent striving is somehow a function of the way diligent striving surpasses mere desire’, we must be clear on the *manner* in which effort performs this function and how it differs from desire via those degrees.<sup>66</sup> The key is on the diligent side of the hyphen. The reasons are two-fold.

First, specifically sustained effort stems from deliberative and considered judgements as desires typically do not. Desires can be passing fancies, whims of the moment that simply spring up within the person, absent any effort at all. Second, and this is the crucial point, *sustained effort by its very nature, forecloses other options as merely desiring does not*. Wanting something is entirely compatible with wanting any number of incompatible things, whereas *doing* something is incompatible with doing any other thing (at least for a particular period of time). Taken further and applied to the narrative of a life we see the implications. Consider a student who pursues medicine for fifteen years: such a pursuit has necessarily foreclosed other options such as suddenly becoming an architect. This is not to say that changes cannot be achieved. But the fact she has spent so much time and effort pursuing another profession means such changes will incur potentially dramatic costs. Diligent-effort by its very nature is cost incurring in what it forecloses. As Sher puts it: ‘*A fortiori*, steadfastly pursuing an outcome requires foregoing many other activities that one would find pleasant or worthwhile’.<sup>67</sup>

As a consequence of the application of sustained effort and the foreclosing of options that follows, the agent has to make a series of important allocative decisions involving her ‘non-renewable resources’ of time and energy. These decisions take on an existential magnitude since it is via these decisions that we use the time and energy – the stuff of life as it were – and from which we fashion our lives: ‘any agent who devotes a major portion of his time and energy to achieving a goal is quite literally making that goal a part of themselves’. Such diligent-effort cannot but implicate the agent in ways that mere desires never can. Effort (in its sustained form) becomes a ‘mode of caring’, providing us with sustained and consistent direction, shaping a large part of our sub-goals, preoccupations and habits, across our ‘cognitive, conative and practical activities’.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* p 55.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p 61.

This view of effort does not require effort to be regarded as a proxy for a person's deserts because of some alleged special metaphysical status it enjoys. Rather, diligent-effort's function as a desert base is grounded in the costs and burdens that are consequent to the allocative-decisions people make and which determine their sense of the success or failure of their lives. This approach avoids the problem of collapsing all effort into toil and hardship. Subjective experiences of disutility are no longer a primary concern and there is no need to determine what it is for an activity to be regarded as burdensome in the sense of toil. It also avoids the controversy surrounding what it is we can hold people responsible for: talented and untalented, enthused and unenthused alike will suffer from these kinds of costs.

Cost, when understood as part of diligent-effort, refers to the tremendous importance some of our decisions have for us. Alongside the magnitude of the decisions we make about our life are other commitments, relationships and projects we, quite literally, have no time for. However, the connection Sher makes between this understanding of cost and desert is unconvincing. Sher believes that because of the existential weight that accompany diligent-effort and the choices it fills out there is a sense in which it is, *ceteris paribus*, a good thing that people who apply diligent-effort get what they desire.<sup>69</sup> By this reckoning, if I have invested time and effort in the pursuit of some good and if that pursuit has taken on a significant enough role in my life then I can be said to deserve to succeed in my endeavours.

There are a number of problems with Sher's argument. First, there is the case of competitive goods. Where two or more 'diligent' individuals are applying for a particular job, for instance, cashing out this desert claim according to diligent-effort produces some peculiar results. Desert according to diligent-effort suggests that the most 'diligent' individual is the most worthy of reward. If so, we still need a sense of what this means in practical terms. The description of diligent-effort seems to suggest that the person who cares the most is entitled to the good, i.e. she who would suffer most if they were not to get the position. The person to whom it matters only a little must find something else about which they care more profoundly before they can be said to deserve it. But is this notion of cost really all we are to consider when deciding on what a person deserves?

---

<sup>69</sup> This is obviously complicated by goods that might be deemed harmful to the individuals themselves and others. For reasons of space, I put these paternalistic issues aside.

Missing from Sher's account is any consideration of the performances that we ordinarily regard as necessary when assessing people's deserts or entitlements. We rarely look only to the efforts a person makes before we decide what to give them. This reference to performance is not just a description of the efforts which go into an *attempt* at performing some task or activity. Instead, performance refers to the actual *attainment* of some objective, which has effort as only a necessary and not a sufficient condition. Whatever we do, to whatever level of skill, our diligent-efforts are always expended with some objective in mind. These objectives take the form of certain standards we *hope* and *strive* to reach with our efforts.

In archery for instance, it is not just the firing of arrows but hitting the target that counts and hitting the centre that counts most. As we progress, we introduce new difficulties into the activity such as the distance we stand from the target and the type of bow that is used. But the structure of success remains: we fire the arrow by drawing on some – perhaps a great deal of – effort but our success is not guaranteed by that effort alone. We can try and we can fail to meet the demands of these standards and in so doing, fail to deserve anything more than the sympathy of others who would have liked to see our efforts rewarded with success but who have also had their preferences disappointed.<sup>70</sup>

Sher tries to account for this by speaking of 'predictable failures' and the 'disvalue of unrealistic goods'. That is, when a person invests diligent effort in attempting to perform tasks which we can foreseeably predict will end in failure, irrespective of the time and energy she spends at it, desert claims are quashed. But this is insufficient to account for the meaning of failure vis-à-vis our efforts and intentions. If we have an interest in desert then decisions regarding who deserves what cannot be limited to measuring how hard an individual strives or how much it means to them *only* within situations where we expect them to succeed. Predictability is no guarantee that an individual *will* do what is expected of them, even if we can safely suggest that they *could have* or even *can* do it.

Even in the case of *unpredictable* failure we are not left with adequate grounding for a desert claim. What we are really left with is a chance to express sympathy and commiserate with the 'striver' in her failure. We recognise, sadly, that she might have been better off doing something else with her time and energy. Or we might try and console her by pointing to the useful lessons learned through failure. We might also provide something by way of compensation as a means to express our sympathy and lessen the blow of failure.

---

<sup>70</sup> This idea of approximating standards will be discussed in chapter four in greater detail.



But this compensation is by no means an expression of desert since the failure of performance has rendered that question essentially irrelevant. Ultimately, we cannot compensate the failed 'striver' with what she had wanted to achieve in the first place without rendering the whole act of striving meaningless.

This all might sound harsh, cruel even. But the main thrust of my argument has thus far been to recognise that the sympathy generated by people's sustained and diligent application, and the importance it has for the person expending that effort, cannot conclude in a desert claim. In comparison with those other accounts which isolate the *disutility* and *hardship* effort can cause, this more sophisticated account of burden suggests that burdens exist as a necessary part of effort *qua* effort. However, in both its more tangibly burdensome forms and in this more sophisticated rendering, effort remains an insufficient basis of desert – though it may elicit other responses on the basis of needs or rights such as the alleviation of the causes of disutility.

### *The Importance of Performance*

Ultimately, if we want our distributive decisions to include references to desert – a matter on which I can remain agnostic – desert-claims cannot be collapsed into an account of effort conceived as burden. If we wish to use the language of desert, we have to be sure that what we are describing is something that approximates the structure and constraints of that concept. Desert is fundamentally concerned with the performance of activity. This inevitably takes us *beyond* a person's intentions and effort. An exclusive focus on effort-as-burden, however, is unable to account for other important aspects essential to the structure of desert.

However lucky and arbitrary we consider the skills or genius which inform people's accomplishments within their various fields of expertise, discussion of desert cannot simply strike out all reference to performance. Rawls avoids this by precisely refusing to talk about desert and limiting himself to discussions of entitlement. In this chapter, I have discussed an alternative approach to desert that does not rely on the thick vision of responsibility-for-self which Rawls believes is necessary to motivate desert. This alternative posits effort-as-burden as that which remains after all the things for which we are *not* responsible (talents and passions) are removed from our consideration. While we are not responsible for our effort making capacity it is also, importantly, a tool that exists much more equally across all persons. It is this equality that grounds possible desert claims. However, while it might

accurately capture differences between effort and talent, this approach's failure to include reference to performances means it fails to capture the meaning of desert.

There is a different approach to desert that locates the deserving part of the person within performance and outcome. In searching for the grounds of desert, this approach refuses to ignore those parts of the person which are 'arbitrary from a moral point of view'. It accepts that performance and outcome will be affected by talent and thus by aspects of the person that are beyond their responsibility. But, so the argument goes, it is just these aspects that are crucial to any proper understanding of desert. If thinkers want to include desert in their discussions of distributive justice they are obligated to include reference to the 'arbitrary'.

This move takes its cue from the profound contrast between, on the one hand, Rawls' denial of desert's relevance to discussions of political theory and, on the other, the mainstream, quotidian political discourse within which talk of desert still has a great deal of resonance.<sup>71</sup> When we try and determine what it is a person deserves, our everyday understandings of desert are not confined to an account of the costs associated with activity. Nor are they confined to the suffering people endure because of a lack of enthusiasm for their performance. From this perspective, the equality of people's effort-making capacity is insufficient for the purposes of grounding a claim to desert.

The structure of desert involves the presence of three components; an agent (A), a performance (P) and a reward (R). It is implicit within ideas of desert that it is good for A to receive R as a result of P.<sup>72</sup> There is a mystery in this relationship that confuses reward with what is better described as an incentive payment, i.e. models that conceive of reward as means of encouraging A to do P *in the future*. Alternatively, it is a confusion with issues associated with preference satisfaction, i.e. that the performance of P by A illustrates the strength of a person's preferences and it is because of this strength that a reward thus becomes an appropriate response. This describes Sher's account: people's desire generates value which then, through the costs it creates, transforms into desert.

---

<sup>71</sup> David Miller, *Principles of Social Justice* (London: Harvard University Press, 1999). For an expression of a similar concern regarding this disparity between real-world application and understandings of desert and the theoretical consensus that seems to dominate the Liberal-Left see Samuel Scheffler, 'Responsibility, Reactive Attitudes and Liberalism in Philosophy and Politics', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 21:4 (1992). On a more general, theoretical analysis of the relevance of reactive attitudes see Peter Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment', in Gary Watson, ed., *Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>72</sup> Miller, *Principles of Social Justice*, p 133.

These other responses are appropriate for the objective ‘managing’ of action alluded to when we use the language of incentives and the like. It is to this ‘managing’ of action which Rawls refers in his discussions of payment for the costs of training. Rawls explicitly distinguishes such payment from any notion that they are rewards for a person’s virtue or desert.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, in our everyday appraisals of other people it is rarely the case that we consider their virtue or action by first referring to the voluntary acquisition of such virtue or to the means by which that action was able to take place. People ordinarily look no further than what is presently being manifest and admire it (or envy it) accordingly.<sup>74</sup>

Take, for instance, the individual who was in the right place at the right time to save a child from drowning. We do not feel that another person’s confident assertion that he would have done the same makes him equally deserving of the parent’s gratitude.<sup>75</sup> Equally, consider the following extension of the drowning example: from a beach we see a man in peril out at sea. Two people go to his aid, one of whom realises he cannot make it and turns around three quarters of the way there. The other goes the whole distance and rescues the man. The rescued man can of course express gratitude to the person who turned back, but it will not be of the same nature as that expressed toward his rescuer. Intention and effort are important ‘but we are also interested in what people as a matter of fact bring about in the world’.<sup>76</sup> And what people bring about in the world is inevitably going to be affected by the contingency that informs, motivates and conditions our actions. Performance, however affected by accidental ‘endowments’, is a crucial and a necessary part of the desert equation. If the agent fails to produce a performance worthy of reward then, although *other* things might be forthcoming, reward as an expression of desert will not.

This is not to say that our current reactive attitudes to performances are always ‘correct’ or ‘natural’. Certain performances within our culture are given rewards that far outweigh their actual desert. Such performances are rewarded in inappropriate ways while

---

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* p 136. See Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p 227.

<sup>74</sup> David Miller, *Social Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) p 96-97. This is not altogether true. Sometimes we can be incredibly admiring of a person until we hear of the privilege he has been afforded. Admiration then can quickly fall into resentment. However, this resentment does not refer to anything innate about the person but only the ‘accidents’ of privilege. We do not then step back from the attitudes and admiration; we only frame it in different terms. The skills we admire are still his and, in some part at least, a consequence of efforts we *also* admire.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* p 145.

<sup>76</sup> Miller, *Social Justice*, p 98.

others are not recognised with sufficient or appropriate admiration or prestige. Reactive attitudes are evolving phenomena which will always be present so long as there are performances to admire. We might hope that the performers of admired exploits will demonstrate modesty in light of the fact that a large part of their performances derive from a combination of good genetic and social fortune. But even absent modesty, the performance *itself* remains a source of our admiration.<sup>77</sup>

Focusing on burden as the axis of desert involves treating the performance part of the above structure very differently. For performance to issue in a desert claim, it must be shown to be a burden to the agent. Our assessment is not of the performance itself but of how it affects the performing agent. In the above examples, the archer hitting the target or the swimmer rescuing the child cannot be said to deserve *anything* unless it can be shown that their actions issued in a burden. Performance *qua* performance is not the relevant consideration. The correct reference point is either the subjective *experience* of the effort involved in that performance, or else the costs that accompany the diligent-effort that produces the performance.

The rewards in either case are also made with reference to burden. When the rescuer returns to the beach or the archer reflects on her rewards, what they can expect must again make sole reference to the burdens experienced in the action. To expressions of gratitude the rescuer must make it plain that she is a confident swimmer, enjoys it as a hobby in fact and it really was not the hassle the rescued might imagine. When receiving her prize, the archer must ignore the bull's-eyes she has managed to score and refer exclusively to the costs and occasional boredom associated with training and the activities she has forgone by involving herself with archery and not something else.

The peculiarity of this kind of talk makes clear how far removed we are from the concept and language of desert. Desert is a matter of responding to and taking from amongst our opportunities and 'producing intentional performances of an appropriately valuable kind'. Given talent's role in performance and performance's role in desert, we seem unable to factor it out without destroying a large part of what those performances

---

<sup>77</sup> In this vein, Miller's work with Michael Walzer on 'complex equality' is of interest. What this approach takes very seriously is the fungibility of money, its ability to diffuse across different boundaries and influence what one is able to achieve in all parts of life. In terms of performance if reactive attitudes are cashed out in money terms they are likely to give advantages in other areas of performance, essentially purchasing those favourable reactive attitudes. See David Miller & Michael Walzer, eds., *Pluralism, Justice and Equality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) esp. David Miller, 'Complex Equality' pp. 197 – 225; Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (USA: Basic Books, 1983).

mean. If we want to reintegrate desert into political theory we cannot dismiss performance *qua* performance as irrelevant, even if it is tainted by the arbitrary.<sup>78</sup>

Performance is never only talent. It is always accompanied by our 'choices' and 'efforts' to at least some degree. The whiff of the arbitrary might exist in all three of these components but that does not render our reactive attitudes to performance wholly misplaced. We are, essentially, confronted with a choice. On the one hand we can do what Rawls suggests, abandon desert as a concept, and regard the reactive attitudes that accompany it as, so far as justice is concerned, inappropriate. Or, if we wish to retain the concept of desert, we can accept contingency as a necessary condition of life within which desert has to make sense.<sup>79</sup>

From this second perspective, what we need, as Miller puts it, 'is the idea of an agent and a performance, where the performance is intended and controlled by the agent, but makes use of characteristics and qualities that are integral to his or her natural tastes and abilities'.<sup>80</sup> However, whatever approach we use, effort cannot perform the role of an exclusive basis for desert. In Rawls' rejection of desert effort collapses into the free will problem and is dismissed as beyond even the possibility of responsibility and thus desert. On the other hand, we adopt this alternative version of desert and incorporate talent and passion into our assessment of performance. In these accounts, effort is either an inappropriate proxy for responsible action or else an insufficient part of performance. If we care about desert we cannot assess performance solely from the perspective of the costs performances produce, even if this move would effectively eliminate all non-responsible action from our considerations. To do so is in fact to *avoid* assessment of the performance altogether.

Desert, from a perspective that allows concern with performance, is no longer dependent on total freedom from causation. Rather, it focuses on the ways in which individuals *respond* to their contingency. Genuine desert bases, *if* they can exist at all, must thus consist of a) choice and effort in turning natural talent into ability and b) the decision

---

<sup>78</sup> There is an alternative treatment of performance employed by John Roemer in the next chapter. His is also an attempt to glean the non-arbitrary aspects of performance from the arbitrary. This replaces the focus on burden with an emphasis on people's ability to *control* their performance.

<sup>79</sup> A third option, discussed in the next chapter, is to retain the search for the part of the person for which we are responsible but replace the focus on burden with a concern of responsibility.

<sup>80</sup> Miller, *Principles of Social Justice*, p 149. Miller also states 'to the extent that the impact of luck is under human control a decision to allow greater scope to luck will reduce desert'. *Ibid* p 145. This seems to recognise the difference between contingency-as-necessary and contingency as a matter of human choices and decisions.

to then deploy that talent in the production of a performance. Effort alone, as a reflection of disutility or the costs associated with important decisions, cannot be converted into a desert claim because such concerns lack reference to the 'goodness' or 'excellence' of a performance. Effort might still have a role to play in any and all possible desert claims but it is neither a sufficient nor even a greater part.

### *Conclusion*

Like Rawls, I do not consider effort an appropriate basis for desert. Rawls' argument rested on the assumption that since we cannot be responsible for our efforts nor can we be said to deserve any goods that are the result of effort. However, treating effort as effectively equivalent to talent also proves problematic. Although perhaps beyond our control, effort can be distinguished from our other capacities and endowments. Differences in effort do not admit of the same quality or magnitude as differences in those other categories. So despite the fact that our effort is beyond our responsibility, there is an equality between persons that renders this lack of responsibility less relevant.

This re-establishes effort as a possible basis of desert. One way in which effort can function as a basis of desert is by reference to the costs associated with its expenditure. Where costs are incurred by individuals it is a sign that other abilities for which one cannot be held responsible – such as enthusiasm or talent – are not doing their part in alleviating one's burdens. Such costs entitle individuals to compensation sufficient enough to cover them and return the situation to one of balance between benefits and burdens. Effort is thus treated according to its disutility and hardship and it is this which grounds desert. Another conception of burden considers the less tangible costs we experience in the course of using our 'non-renewable resources' of time and energy. Neither of these accounts of burden issue in a convincing desert claim because of the overall lack of concern with the performative dimension which is necessary to the structure of desert.

What emerges from this treatment of effort-as-burden are either the narrower and unworkable conceptions of toilsome effort – that emerge from Sadurski's account for example – or the more sophisticated treatment of burden as represented by Sher's account of diligent-effort. This second approach reveals interesting properties inherent to effort but misconstrues its real value by framing its analysis by discussions of desert. Diligent-effort is a useful way of expanding the notion of burden. But as a way of motivating effort as the correct basis of desert it is ultimately irrelevant. The problem is not only the practical one

of trying to define or isolate the burdensomeness of effort before measuring it and then according deserts. Without reference to some performance, even though that performance is a consequence of talent and luck as well as effort, the structure of desert is left incomplete. If we want to introduce considerations of desert into our design of distributive regimes, we cannot do so by referring exclusively to the effort people make.

Burden remains an important concept. It is often conflated with hardship, as a cost that can only be described as disutility and which on occurring triggers ‘reward’. This is inadequate because incomplete rendering of the functions that burden performs. Certainly, hardship exists and our efforts can produce considerable disutility. But treating effort *solely* in these terms overlooks the ways in which burdens – as the effort we dedicate to the pursuit of our ends – form the projects, commitments and overall ‘conceptions of the good’ that give meaning and purpose to our lives. This more interesting and refined account of effort’s value has been glimpsed within Sher’s account of diligent-effort. In the second part of this thesis I will further elaborate and develop those glimpses into a coherent and systematic whole.

However, my attempt at distilling effort out of this particular sphere of concern is not yet complete. In the next chapter I consider John Roemer’s sophisticated explication of effort’s role in justifying inequalities between people. Roemer, along with Dworkin, believes there are parts of a person we cannot simply push back into determinism. Roemer’s model is thus another attempt at getting to a place of metaphysical significance within the person in order to confirm the possibility for moral responsibility and thus deserts.

## Effort as *the* Responsibility

In John Roemer's innovative proposals regarding equality of opportunity (EOp) effort plays a central and decisive role. It is effort, and only effort, that can justify inequalities in the deserts to which different people lay claim. In no other account of distributive justice does effort play such a significant role and it is for this reason that a whole chapter has been dedicated to Roemer's proposal.<sup>81</sup> As in the previous chapter, effort is given a central role in determining who gets what. However, Roemer does not collapse the idea of effort into the burden or hardship of expending effort: experiences of effort as hardship are no longer given a central function in grounding desert claims. Instead, effort is understood as that for which we can be held responsible and it is in playing this role that issues of redistribution are resolved. The accounts of the previous chapter accommodated themselves to the Rawlsian paradigm. It was *equality* in effort-making capacities and not responsibility for them that grounded desert-claims. In contrast, Roemer's proposal confronts and *challenges* the Rawlsian paradigm: Roemer's policy is a means of finding that part of our activity and constitution that is truly *ours*.

I begin with an extended explication of Roemer's policy proposals. This explication is necessarily large in breadth and depth because of the intricacies of his methodology and the various employments of particular (technically construed) concepts on which the model ultimately relies. Roemer's model is intended as a contribution to the so-called luck egalitarian debate. It seeks to define and justify the correct dividing line between choice and circumstance, between what a person can and cannot be held responsible for. It then operationalizes this division into different policy proposals that can be applicable to fields such as health-care and education.

A crucial component in Roemer's methodology is the type. A type describes a group of individuals whose backgrounds are stipulated as being fundamentally identical. Comparisons between and within types form the basis of Roemer's distributive proposal. My criticisms of his methodology focus on the legitimacy of these comparisons. First, the

---

<sup>81</sup> The key texts I draw on in this chapter are John Roemer, 'Equality and Responsibility' in *Boston Review* XX (April/May, 1995) available at <http://www.bostonreview.net/dreader/series/equality.html> (accessed October 2008); John Roemer, *Theories of Distributive Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996) pp. 237 - 279; John Roemer, *Egalitarian Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): pp. 115 - 196 ; John Roemer, *Equality of Opportunity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); John Roemer, 'Three Egalitarian Rules and American Law', *Law and Philosophy*, 20:4 (2001); John Roemer, 'Defending equality of opportunity', *The Monist*, 86 (2003); John Roemer, *Responsibility in Egalitarian Theory* (2009, April 24<sup>th</sup>) p 12. Article available on request.



method is unable to adequately account for the effects of injustice on people's experience of the world around them. It cannot capture how injustices affect individuals' perceptions of the possibilities or opportunities that might be formally available to them. It fails to account for how a possible lack of confidence or security can affect the decisions people make regarding what to do with their time, effort and talent. The effects of injustice cannot be isolated in such a way so as to leave a remainder within the individual – in this case, her efforts – which we can describe as beyond those effects. This problematizes comparisons between the achievements of individuals who suffer from profound disadvantage and those who enjoy all the trappings of privilege and a cultural and familial climate of support.

Second, there are problems affecting the possibility of comparisons *within* types. Given the myriad influences that shape our lives, very few of which can be totally reduced to actions taken by the agent, control seems too strong a notion to describe what we do and who we are. Increased effort, even from people who suffer from injustice, cannot necessarily be reduced to the 'autonomous' choices of individuals but might still be the consequence of happenstance and good fortune. In this vein, I also explore the conceptual difficulty of defining effort in contradistinction with circumstance. Effort is always a response to the way the world is. It is therefore affected by interaction with circumstance of some kind. There is no 'blank' space where an individual's effort exists separate from this interaction.

If we want to capture the profound impact (dis)advantage has on the efforts people make to achieve ends they care – or could care – about, then control as an exclusive metric of responsibility is inappropriate. Concentrating on an abstracted, technical version of effort (a 'sterilised residual' in Roemer's terminology)<sup>82</sup> understood to be in some way close to a person's moral centre reduces the extent and intricacy of the interaction between people and their societies to a single quality. This simplification fails to do justice to the conceptual complexity of responsibility. To this end, I offer an additional, competing account of responsibility that does not tie so closely to Roemer's particular understanding of control. This alternative account roots responsibility in people's evaluative capacities. As a result, it is better able to accommodate concerns pertaining to the effects injustice has on our ability to take responsibility for our lives.

---

<sup>82</sup> Anders Björkland, Markus Jäntti, & John Roemer, 'Equality of Opportunity and the Distribution of long-run Income in Sweden', *Social Choice and Welfare*, 39 (2012) p 677.

Roemer's is a practical-technical guide to egalitarianism. As such his aims differ substantially from mine. This chapter does not seek to replace one piece of practical policy proposal with another. My intention is rather to interrogate Roemer's use of the concept of effort and to challenge him for what I believe is a lack of qualitative understanding of the lived experiences of effort, how we tend to use and understand it from *within* our relationships, commitments and projects.

### *Types and Effort*

Roemer's methodology is best understood in the context of the wider substantive literature of which it forms a significant part. This literature falls under the heading 'luck egalitarianism', a moniker accorded to it by Elizabeth Anderson, one of its most fierce critics.<sup>83</sup> Other important exponents of luck egalitarianism include Ronald Dworkin, Gerald Cohen and Richard Arneson.<sup>84</sup> The founding belief of this version of egalitarianism is that individuals should not be held responsible for that which they cannot control but should be held responsible for that which lies within their power to do or not do.<sup>85</sup> It therefore challenges Rawls' account, considered in the last chapter: luck egalitarianism posits some part of the person which cannot be assigned to the vagaries of genetic or social fortune. There is a remainder which properly belongs to the person.

This is importantly different from the critique developed in the last chapter. Where effort is conceived in terms of the burdens it creates it is not something over which we are designated some substantial control. It is rather the *equality* in the possession of the capacity to expend effort that exists across people. It is this which makes sense of effort as a ground for desert: we are not responsible for it *all the way down* but we are all equally non-responsible. The alternative offered by luck egalitarians like Roemer begins with the suggestions that there *is* a part of the person for which she is ultimately responsible. It is this responsibility for (some part of our) effort which justifies inequalities.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Elizabeth Anderson, 'What is the Point of Equality?', *Ethics*, 109:2 (1999).

<sup>84</sup> Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue* pp. 65 – 119; Arneson, 'Equality and Equality Opportunity of Welfare', pp. 77-93; Cohen, 'On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice'. See John Roemer, *Theories of Distributive Justice* pp. 237 – 279 for a critical assessment of these contributions.

<sup>85</sup> Roemer phrases the 'luck' egalitarian intuition as follows: 'a person's actions are determined by two kinds of causes: circumstances beyond her control and autonomous choices within her control'. Roemer, 'Equality and Responsibility'.

<sup>86</sup> Roemer states: 'Why should (people) not know their propensities to expend effort or, rather, that part of effort for which individuals are morally responsible? After all, the veil of ignorance is only supposed to shield individuals from knowledge of their arbitrary features'. Roemer, *Theories of Distributive Justice*, p 175-176. Furthermore, Roemer makes mention of 'freely chosen effort' that

In addition, there are interesting parallels with my discussion in the last chapter about the performance part of the structure of desert. In Roemer's account, performance is not only understood in terms of the costs it produces for the individual. Of course, the focus is still different from David Miller's account because Roemer retains the view that talent should be blocked out from our considerations of the performance. Nevertheless, performance *qua* performance (as opposed to *qua* 'producer of disutility') comes first. It is after the performance that decisions are made as to what part of it can be assigned to effort and what part, because rooted in circumstantial factors 'performers' are judged unable to control, should be ignored. It is control of the performance that is doing the work in justifying deserts, not the costs of that performance.

Whatever people *can* be held responsible for, i.e. what is *not* the result of circumstance, can also justify interpersonal inequality. Conversely, where there is no responsibility, no inequality can be justified. On this view then, disabilities, howsoever they be construed and insofar as they are not the fault of the person, can never be used to justify inequality.<sup>87</sup> The projects we attempt and the successes we accumulate have a portion that is down to what we do: there is some part of our activity that cannot be reduced to circumstance and can properly be called our own. There is another portion of our attainments/failures that belong to our circumstances. This portion can play no role in the justification of inequality. It is this issue of distinguishing the 'parts' of life that individuals can/cannot control which is fundamental to Roemer's approach.

Roemer constructs a model that seeks properly (and definitively) to encapsulate that division between a person's choices and their circumstances, between what is arbitrary and what is non-arbitrary from a moral point of view. Effort, it turns out, is the ultimate manifestation of the 'choice' side of that division, and comes to bear all the weight in the justification of inequalities.<sup>88</sup> The efforts people make and their relation to the circumstances within which they are made is a complex matter: where does circumstance

---

which 'a person expends on his own hook' at *Ibid.* p 173. This reference to the 'hook' of one's own effort can also be seen at Roemer, 'Defending equality of opportunity', p 270. For a similar project see also Kai Nielsen, *Equality and Liberty* (New Jersey: Rowan & Allanheld, 1985) pp. 104 – 112.

<sup>87</sup> Inequality here could refer to differences in welfare, opportunity, resources or utility depending on one's preferred account.

<sup>88</sup> It is not effort as such but the *degrees* of effort that do the work; effectively, the relative amount of effort that is expended. This will be more comprehensively attended to in the section dedicated to the type and its construction.

end and effort/choice begin?<sup>89</sup> The background conditions individuals confront are crucial in determining the choices they make and the efforts they expend. How can the seemingly infinite variety of circumstances and contingency that make up a person's life be sufficiently manipulated and then eradicated (or at least significantly reduced) for the purposes of assigning responsibility? There needs to be a way to equalize or control for the differences in background so that what remains (by way of inequality) is down to individual efforts alone.

Types are one of five key concepts in Roemer's methodology. The others are circumstances, effort, objective and policy. Circumstances are those aspects of a situation beyond a person's control and for which she should not therefore be made responsible – whether this be to her advantage or otherwise; effort is that 'constellation of behaviours'<sup>90</sup> for which society *does* hold the individual responsible; the objective is that 'opportunity equalisandum', the thing we wish to equalize opportunities for, whether it be welfare, longevity of life or acquisition of wage-earning capacity; and finally, the policy is the social intervention by which opportunities are equalised 'for acquisition of the objective'.<sup>91</sup> Policies of equality of opportunity derived from this methodology become a way of indemnifying individuals against malignant consequences that are due to circumstance, while denying indemnity against consequences that derive from *real* 'autonomously chosen effort'.<sup>92</sup> Conversely, it will deny individuals advantages accrued as the result of their circumstances while making sure rewards are forthcoming for those acts which can properly be described as their own.<sup>93</sup>

Types are established via a process of collective deliberation in which citizens, drawing on relevant available empirical data, organise themselves into groups according to a list of circumstantial factors that mark out the background conditions against which they

---

<sup>89</sup> For instance, Cohen (and later, Roemer himself: *Egalitarian Perspectives*, pp. 146-147) criticises Dworkin's position for locating this cut in the wrong place because Dworkin is unable to recognise the presence of expensive tastes that cannot properly be adjudged as the consequence of choice and are therefore justifiably made bases for compensation. See Cohen 'On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice', p 907. Cohen, 'Expensive Tastes Ride Again'; Roemer, *Theories of Distributive Justice* pp. 248-252. See also Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue* pp. 285 – 303; Ronald Dworkin, 'Ronald Dworkin Replies' in Justine Burley, ed., *Dworkin and his Critics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004) pp.339 – 348 for replies to these criticisms.

<sup>90</sup> Roemer, 'Defending Equality of Opportunity', p 262. On another occasion these are referred to as a 'constellation of choices'. See also Roemer, *Responsibility in Egalitarian Theory*, p 12.

<sup>91</sup> Roemer, 'Three Egalitarian Rules and American Law', p 449.

<sup>92</sup> Roemer, *Equality of Opportunity* p 11.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

and their fellow citizens make their choices.<sup>94</sup> For example, in the case of proposals for education, relevant data might refer to parental education levels as one possible factor indicative of the environment within which children grow-up. Another could be parental income. Yet another could be IQ, used as an indicator of native intellectual potential. Moreover, depending on the context, different factors will have varying relevance. For example in Ireland, divisions according to detailed religious cleavages might be of particular salience where in other times and places they might be irrelevant. These societal decisions thus reflect people's circumstances, i.e. those parts of the person for which she cannot be held responsible but which nonetheless structure both her opportunities and the resources with which she is to confront them.

The formulating of types is based on three suppositions. First, that we know which circumstances jointly determine a person's ability to process resources into a given kind of achievement. For example, we may know, based on existing evidence, that if a child's parents achieved some tertiary level of education, they will have a greater chance of educational success compared to children whose parents did not graduate from high school. Secondly, that these circumstances can be broken down into a given number of components (I.Q., parental education levels, race, income etc.) which then take on a given vector. Finally, that it is possible for this vector to take on a number of values within the population, so that we can reorganise that population into a final set of types 'where a type consists of all individuals whose value of this vector is the same'.<sup>95</sup> In other words, members of the same type are said to experience the same set of circumstances. Depending on the policy, members of a type might all have parents who obtained the same level of education, be similar in terms of socio-economic background and they might also be of the same race and have the same IQ. Any differences that occur between individuals of the same type are thus *not* the result of circumstance. The type goes on to form the basis of resource distribution because within the type individuals have (nearly) identical ability to transform resources into achievement. Each individual within each type should receive the same bundle of resources, while less/more fortunate types should receive larger/smaller bundles.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* Whether this should be something done by 'the people' or by some team of statisticians/metaphysical experts is considered by Carl Knight, *Luck Egalitarianism: Equality, Responsibility and Justice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) pp. 187-188. Precisely which one is employed is unimportant for my concerns since it is a strictly practical matter.

<sup>95</sup> Roemer, *Equality of Opportunity*, p7.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* p7.

After each member of a type receives bundles identical to every other member of the same type, where they end up in the distribution of their type will be a result of the choices they make to expend effort. Roemer argues that variations of effort within the type will produce a normal distribution: on the x-axis is the effort ('constellation of behaviours') being measured and on the y-axis is the number of people performing at each level of effort. The majority of people will occupy the middle of the distribution with minorities of outliers at either end. The size of these minorities will vary depending on what is being equalised for. But whatever the objective, those minorities at the top-end of the distribution have expended a great deal of effort. The bottom-end minority has expended less effort than most in their type. Where a person appears within the distribution of their type is then compared with other members of other types. Where they appear in the same part (centile) of their respective distributions, they have tried equally hard.<sup>97</sup>

The level playing-field required for an authentic policy of equality of opportunity is thus reached via a redistribution mechanism, providing appropriate resources according to the type's circumstantial ability to convert them into goods. Money is thus doing the work in rebalancing resources onto a more equitable footing by restoring more equal conversion ability across types. More advantaged individuals are endowed with greater conversion ability whether that advantage is genetic or more strictly environmental. Providing equal resources will fail to correct for 'conversion-inequality' since outcomes will continue to reflect abilities that are *beyond* the control of the individual. More financial resources are provided to individuals with less advantage in order to compensate for a certain measure of (unchosen) inefficiency in their conversion abilities. This parallels Amartya Sen's capability approach by recognising the part disadvantage plays – in both social and genetic terms – in affecting the conversion of 'money into good living'.<sup>98</sup>

Differences *between* types are the result of differing circumstance whereas variations occurring *within* the type do so as the result of individuals' different expenditures of effort: the former are equalised, the latter preserved.<sup>99</sup> Take education for instance. If the median effort level of type A is '2' and the median effort level for type B is '5' (where this could be measuring years in post-16 education for example) then individuals

<sup>97</sup> Mathias Risse discusses problematic assumptions pertaining to the use of these distributions. But I put these technical problems to the side. Mathias Risse, 'What equality of Opportunity could not be', *Ethics*, 112:4 (2002) pp. 720 – 747.

<sup>98</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 3. See also Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (London: Penguin, 2009) pp. 258-260.

<sup>99</sup> Again, if we make the assumption that effort is a measurable phenomenon or that we can at least collectively decide on a suitable proxy. Roemer, *Equality of Opportunity*, p 8.

within each type, operating at that median level, deserve equal reward (measured as wage after graduation for instance). This equality of reward is because they have tried equally hard. An individual of type A who expends effort level '5' (perhaps attending and graduating from university) deserves *more* than an individual from type B who expends '5' because reaching that level within type A is a more demanding achievement, i.e. type A has tried harder.

Anticipating an example I deal with in more depth below, a child who grows up in a household of smokers will be making more of an effort not to smoke than a child whose parents were non-smokers even if the two smoke the same quantity of daily cigarettes as adults. The former has shown a greater degree of self-control and had to try harder given the environmental pressures that surround(ed) her. Similarly, if I am one of only a handful in my type to get an A in an exam then I am trying harder than another recipient who is in a type where high grades are ten a penny: that is, are more easily available. (Again, Roemer's model demonstrates an advantage over the approaches considered in the previous chapter because performance is here treated *as* a performance and not merely as something through which costs are assumed. Effort – freed from talent – is the part of the performance being measured but it is not the subjective experience of disutility or hardship that is doing the work.)

The capacity to exercise effort remains dependent on the individual's circumstances. Such pressures are always going to exist to some extent: we cannot escape circumstance *tout court* and be left with nothing *but* our efforts. But within the range provided by the constraints and strictures of the type, individuals can choose at what centile range they operate and it is for this we hold them responsible. A citizen's place within her type is chosen because this is determined by factors outside of the type, by the 'autonomous effort' one is free to expend or not expend. If one belongs to a type where the number of cigarettes smoked lies between 2 and 5 a day, then the real choice a person in that type makes is between 2 and 5 cigarettes. We hold her equally responsible for the choice of 2 or the choice of 5 but cannot legitimately hold her to account for the fact she smokes, since zero cigarettes is not within the range of choices supplied by her type.

Perhaps the most interesting application of this theory is a policy designed to bring about equality of opportunity in the acquisition of wage-earning capacity.<sup>100</sup> The aim of the policy is to 'use educational finance to equalize opportunities for wage-earning capacities

---

<sup>100</sup> John Roemer, 'Equality of Opportunity: A progress report', *Social Choice and Welfare*, 19:2 (2002).

among young men in the United States'.<sup>101</sup> The population is divided into four types according to the level of education enjoyed by the individual's most educated parent.<sup>102</sup> This is defined by 'years of education' amounting to less than 8 years for the most disadvantaged type and, for the most advantaged type, includes some experience of tertiary education (12 years and up). The outcome in this instance is taken to be the individual's wage at age 30.

Roemer advocates a distributional difference between types such that those disadvantaged by the circumstances of their upbringing, i.e. whose parents did not receive as much education as others, benefit from additional funding from their state's educational finances. Consequently, those whose most educated parent has less than eight years' education would receive about five times as much funding as those whose most educated parent experienced some tertiary level education (in 1989 dollars, \$5,360 compared to \$1,110).<sup>103</sup> In this example, money corrects for differences in conversion ability that are the result of circumstances. This equalises the ability of the least advantaged to compete with the most advantaged in the job market, thereby levelling the playing field. Of course, the individuals in the data-set will not benefit since the disadvantages they faced have already taken their toll. Nonetheless, their experiences can be used for future redistributive measures that use the same criteria to organise a population into types and redistribute accordingly.

What is particularly interesting about this account is the fact that it moves beyond a strictly compensatory paradigm. It still utilises money's inherent fungibility but more as a restructuring device than as a compensatory mechanism: this is not a policy that suggests redistribution is a form of reparation or apology for injustice.<sup>104</sup> Roemer's proposal, at least in this case, is better characterised as a *preventative* measure. His model uses money alongside information pertaining to the effects of disadvantage to restructure and equalise opportunities. Money is not a means to reconcile individuals to their *lack* of opportunity. In employing models like this, Roemer is able to escape those critics of luck-egalitarianism

---

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* p 464

<sup>102</sup> The population is taken from a late 1960s sample in which both the educational spending of the individual's residential district at age 16 and his wage at age 30 are available.

<sup>103</sup> Roemer, 'Equality of Opportunity: A progress report', p 464.

<sup>104</sup> For a particularly extreme example of this kind of compensatory system from within the luck-egalitarian camp see Barry, 'Defending Luck Egalitarianism' in which it seems *all* forms of injustice are met with compensatory payment.



who claim that it focuses only on after the fact inequalities, thereby failing to appreciate the structuring role of inequality.<sup>105</sup>

For instance, Roemer's model can respond to Samuel Scheffler's point that 'equality, as it is more commonly understood, is not, in the first instance, a distributive ideal, and its aim is not to compensate for misfortune. It is, instead, a moral ideal governing the relations in which people stand to one another'.<sup>106</sup> The education proposal gives form to and quantifies these relations, enabling assessment of the effects that differences in people's circumstances have on their lives. Roemer's model also takes the further step of enabling us to make these relations more just by introducing radical differences in the resources allocated to differently advantaged sections of society. This could still be framed in terms of compensation: the types are organised according to ability to convert resources and money is supplied to make up for disparity in this ability. But it is not compensation as motivated by a sense of pity or commiseration, or the recognition of a failing on the part of the individual.<sup>107</sup> The different amounts of resources provided to differently advantaged individuals are a means of equalising starting points so that differences in conversion ability do not prevent individuals from realising their ambitions and projects.

The typology method issues in recommendations that are both radical in consequence and consistent with views on responsibility ranging all along the political spectrum. Roemer is able to argue for radical policy recommendations within the confines of a particularly 'conservative' (that is, extensive) vision of responsibility.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, Roemer's proposal can be seen as rendering an ingenious response to advocates of especially individualistic models of responsibility. This is especially true with regards to the way such advocates use the notion of 'conceivability'.

One such thinker, Lawrence Mead, referred to conceivability when he considered (and criticised) the 'sociological' approach to poverty and inequality developed in the 1970s: 'the poor and disadvantaged were understood to be so conditioned by their environment that to expect better functioning of them, such as work, became almost inconceivable. The

---

<sup>105</sup> See Anderson, 'What is the point of Equality'; Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Samuel Scheffler, 'What is Egalitarianism?' *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 31: 1 (2003); Samuel Scheffler, 'Choice, Circumstance and the Value of Equality' *Politics, Philosophy and Economics*, 4:1 (2005).

<sup>106</sup> Scheffler, 'What is Egalitarianism?' p 21.

<sup>107</sup> That is, a failure that is the result of something beyond their control. Other failings for which they can be held responsible are preserved.

<sup>108</sup> This point is made by Marc Fleurbaey. Marc Fleurbaey, 'Egalitarian Opportunities', *Law and Philosophy*, 20:5 (2001) p 503.

responsibility for their difficulties, even behavioural ones, was transferred to government or society'.<sup>109</sup> The powerful insight in Roemer's use of statistical data is precisely with respect to the conceptualisation of conceivability.

While Mead may be right that individuals *can* dig themselves out of dire straits through sheer will and determination, it is equally obvious that success is more conceivable for some than for others. That which contributes to such conceivability is precisely what is being captured by Roemer's use of the type. Where, for instance, no single student from a particular background (in Roemer's terms, within a specific type) manages to go to university, this reflects a lack of real opportunity and can be ascribed to the conditions facing members of that type. We cannot then try to blame the traits or characteristics of a single individual for something that is ubiquitous across all people similarly situated. Types purport to establish the parameters of conceivability, that within which responsibility can be defined. In so doing they also bring to light the various 'shackles' people face – without necessarily precisely defining the causes that produce them – shackles some erroneously believe fell off as soon as direct racial discrimination was made illegal.<sup>110</sup> Roemer's methodology conceptualises the ways in which background structures and individual choices interact with one another to shape and constrain the opportunities and possibilities a person confronts.<sup>111</sup> He manages to retain the insights of the lambasted sociological approach and combine it with both a radical vision of individual responsibility and equally radical distributive agenda.

### *Problems with Methodology*

Roemer's model makes two comparisons using effort. The first comparison is between members of the same type: circumstances having been controlled, individuals are compared according to the effort they have expended. A person's ability to convert resources into achievement is deemed equal within types. One's position within the type's distribution of achievements is therefore determined by one's effort and choices alone. Moreover, it is not just one's position that is decided by effort but also the *differences* in effort and achievement between members of the same type. Compared to members of other types, a person's trying hard might not look that impressive: it might appear that she

<sup>109</sup> Lawrence Mead, *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Free Press, 2006) p 55.

<sup>110</sup> Young, *Responsibility for Justice* pp. 12-14, p 20 & p 37.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* p 18: 'structures describe a set of socially caused *conditions* that *position* a large number of people in similar ways. Nevertheless, each person so positioned is responsible for how she takes up these conditions'. This could be one way of framing the algorithmic approach adopted by Roemer.

is actually not trying hard at all. For example, casual smokers might not look like they are trying hard when amongst non-smokers. But within the type, if you are trying hard, you are necessarily trying harder than others in the type.

The second comparison is *between* types. Where one appears in one's own type can be compared to where other individuals appear in *their* type because this is the measure of the residual (choice) and not of circumstances. Two individuals appearing in the same percentile of their type's respective distributions are deemed effective equivalents: they have expended the same *degree* of effort despite what might have seemed to be the case absent the comparisons enabled by the typology methodology. By making the first comparison amongst peers where conversion ability is the same the second comparison, it is supposed, also accurately captures effort alone.

Both these comparisons are problematic. Given that conversion ability is different across types, it is not obvious that effort can be regarded as equivalent without taking proper account of the potentially wide-ranging effects the type has on determining that ability. People in very different types facing very different possibilities might be doing very different things when they either try hard or fail to. Can we assume that equally gifted children who drop out of a chronically under-funded school fail in the same way that privately educated high-school drop-outs fail? Isn't there something different going on behind their respective failures that can explain differences in the (lack of) efforts they made? There is something troubling about judging and comparing people *across* type when the 'available behaviours' and opportunities they face *within* their type can vary so widely.

### *Comparisons across Types*

But do such differences actually make any difference to the *practicable* workings of Roemer's model? Indeed, it might even be considered a virtue of the model that it is able to evade these tricky subjective issues regarding the precise nature of what people are up to and why. From the perspective of positive policy proposals, focusing explicitly on the more objective and quantitative dimensions of effort is far more useful than entanglement with the subjective experiences and understandings of effort.<sup>112</sup> What individuals do when

---

<sup>112</sup> Björklund, et al. 'Equality of Opportunity and the Distribution of long-run Income in Sweden', p. 692 certainly make the case for a very progressive distributive regime in Sweden without recourse to any acknowledgment of these differences of conversion ability across types (70% of the income inequality can be explained by the 'sterilised residual' i.e. effort. However, perhaps this is a consequence of Sweden being an already relatively equal society (Gini Coefficient of 0.426 in late 2000s <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?QueryId=26067&Lang=en>). As a result, differences in

they convert resources into achievement becomes a question we can avoid having to answer, precisely because of the tools Roemer supplies and the radically egalitarian policies they justify. The meaning of effort for the person who is expending it is simply too complex, too personal a concept to do much work in an account of distributive justice. Furthermore, the additional resources that are supplied to those with less 'conversion ability' seem an intuitively plausible way of instituting more equality.

However, the effects of injustice can alter our perception of that for which we hold people responsible. Consider the following example. We compare two children, one who attends an under-resourced inner city school (type A) and another who attends one of the country's top private schools (type B). Both children operate at the same low percentile within their respective types. Children in type A live in socio-economically deprived areas where opportunities both for future employment and personal development are few and far between. Children of Type B on the other hand come from wealth, privilege and a cultural climate of support and encouragement where lots of opportunities are available for all kinds of valuable activity.

Can membership of equivalent centiles capture the effects such differences in circumstance have on the efforts made both by these children and the adults they will become? It would be hard to argue that their low positions within their respective types are reflective of the same kinds of choices, the same reflective deliberations and attendant behaviours. Rather, we might plausibly argue that where the latter could be accused of a variety of idleness for which we are not so willing (without good reason) to deny responsibility, something else is going on in the case of that other child, something which requires an entirely different response. The effects of injustice interfere with the equivalence necessary to motivate the comparisons that are crucial to Roemer's methodology.

We can of course say that both these individuals are lazy and that the problem is just that lazy people in type B will achieve a great deal more in life, including a larger wage-earning capacity. But the different reasons for – and possible justifications of – their idleness are relevant material for assessing the absence of efforts and the making of poor choices. Individuals who suffer significant disadvantage can suffer from a sense of hopelessness that is not suffered by advantaged others. By considering the concrete ways

---

conversion-ability and the circumstances they reflect are not really such great issues. More unequal societies might suffer from this problem more easily and might produce differences between people that more readily reflect these differences in conversion ability.

in which opportunities are structured and experienced, we are able to better understand the *reasons* people act the way they do and what they as individuals understand themselves to be doing when they either succeed or fail to try hard. People operating at the same centiles within different types are qualitatively *not* doing the same thing whatever the methodology of the ‘type’ might have us believe.

To take the flip-side of the example, imagine two individuals performing at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile within each of their types. In type B, we again have an individual blessed with stellar educational opportunities, a supportive background at both home and school, and a wide variety of role-models and exemplars of success in her peer group. In the disadvantaged type, by contrast, we have an individual who struggles on without support, opportunities or role-models. Whereas the privileged individual in B can be seen as in some ways expressing the ‘mode of her type’, i.e. performing in ways esteemed and respected by its other members, the same cannot necessarily be said of the person in type A. Indeed, she might have to fight against certain built-in expectations that are in part *constitutive* of her type, that act as ubiquitous cultural norms she must resist and break down in order to be successful. Furthermore, the primary motivation in the struggle to achieve academic excellence might be to *escape* the confines of her upbringing, to leave behind her formative environments and the background against which she has come to maturity.<sup>113</sup> The difficulty of this process for the disadvantaged child is inadequately captured when too much equivalence is assumed between her efforts and those expended by the child of privilege.

Roemer overlooks something similar when he discusses an ‘equal-opportunity-for-health ethic’ – specifically, people’s entitlement to treatment for diseases related to smoking.<sup>114</sup> He derives two types from the factors that influence a person’s propensity to smoke (race, gender, occupation). The first type is a black, male, steelworker and the second a white, female, college professor. A decision to smoke will be in part influenced by these circumstances. However, *within* these types the number of cigarettes smoked (the ‘achievement’ on the type’s x-axis by which effort is measured) will be a consequence of the choices individuals make. The environmental pressures supply a certain range of ‘cigarettes-smoked’ within which it is reasonable to hold members of a type responsible. To

---

<sup>113</sup> Richard Wright’s memoir *Black Boy* (London: Vintage Books, 2000 (1937)) is an exceptional portrait of precisely these tensions and challenges in the context of the American South at the beginning of the last century.

<sup>114</sup> Roemer, *Equality and Responsibility*.

put this in extreme terms, in a type where not one member smoked, a single puff on a single cigarette would be an act of gross 'irresponsibility'.<sup>115</sup>

However, what the black steelworker is doing when he smokes and what the college professor is doing when she smokes are not necessarily the same even though they might smoke equivalent numbers of cigarettes, i.e. appear in the same centile. Before comparing them directly it is necessary to look at the cultural contexts within which they smoke their respective cigarettes. Imagine two steelworkers who occupy the same type: one enjoys socialising while the other is a bit of a loner going his own way home after work. The person who likes to socialise is surrounded by smokers and, exercising restraint, only smokes a couple a night where others, again in the same type, go through a pack each. The steelworker lacking the preference for socialising has no need to exercise restraint. His preference has saved him from the pressure and thus from the need to try hard to avoid smoking.

For the white, female, college professor we can imagine a reverse of this situation. The college professor who likes to socialise does so in a way that avoids any communal pressure to smoke. Her co-socialisers do not smoke, either. In this case her preference for company saves her from the cigarette. On the other hand, there is another professor who, like the second steelworker, prefers not to socialise. Her method of relieving stress is to have a couple of cigarettes. The other professor who avoids smoking is not trying harder to do so. If she abandoned her preference for socialising, she too might enjoy a cigarette. It is thus her preference – although this time *for* socialising – that saves her from the *need* to try hard.

As a result, it is not just effort that is being measured when we count the cigarettes a person smokes. Effort might still be part of it to some extent but not as a phenomenon isolated from people's preferences. Our efforts make sense from within the preferences we have. We then pursue these preferences in a world that is to a large extent beyond our choosing: people do not invent the communal habits of their type. Where the non-smoking loner steelworker/socialising college professor are commended for being particularly restrained in their behaviour, all that can really be said is that a preference, combined with

---

<sup>115</sup> The flip-side of this is that, of course, where such types occur, smoking a cigarette is likely to have other meanings besides irresponsibility. For example, it could be an act of defiance in an obviously oppressive situation.

how that preference manifests itself within a given cultural context, helps them avoid the need to restrain themselves or ‘try hard’ not to smoke.<sup>116</sup>

Recognition of the significant role preferences have in our actions provides an important counter to the suggestion of equivalence which underlies the validity of Roemer’s comparisons. The smokers are supposed to be trying equally hard *not* to smoke. But they are trying to do different things and smoking cigarettes is incidental to those purposes. Cigarettes are the same means by which different ends are realised. The means only make sense given the presence of certain preferences that in turn are played out within environments over which the individual has no control. Returning to the education example: differences between people who in trying hard at school can *express* the mode of their type are not trying to do the same thing as others who use educational opportunities to *escape* from their type. To treat these as equivalent is to miss the respective meanings that trying hard has for the two students and thus the extent to which it classifies as trying hard at all.

Effort is not some uniform substance we use in uniform ways. It is influenced by our understandings of what we are doing and why we do it. We expend effort with certain goals in mind, reasons as to why we do what we do. The origins of our preferences are hard to pin down. Roemer’s model is an attempt to isolate just that preference to try hard, unsullied by circumstance. However, given that our efforts are always influenced by how preferences take form in the unchosen social contexts in which we move, it seems there is always something outside of effort doing work in determining how hard we try.

By abstracting from the ways in which individuals understand their own effort, we lose a great deal of the detail which explains and makes sense of a person’s behaviour. This much is recognised by Iris Marion Young when she criticises Roemer for a theory of social relations which is implicitly ‘individualistic and expresses the philosophy of the ownership society’.<sup>117</sup> She makes the point that the playboy who squanders an inheritance racing fancy cars is held equally responsible (within his type) to the ‘lower-income working man who charges a fancy suit even though he knows he has maxed out his credit cards’.<sup>118</sup> One has a lavish lifestyle that he manages to fritter away through careless choices; the other occupies a situation stymied by financial pressures where a mistake is made and prudence

---

<sup>116</sup> This in spite of the fact that Roemer rejects Dworkin’s cut that puts preferences on the side of circumstance. See Roemer, *Theories of Distributive Democracy*, p 246-247.

<sup>117</sup> Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, p 37.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* p 38.

perhaps only momentarily forgotten. Different things are going on in the examples, against different backgrounds which render the acts of purchase and the purchasers qualitatively different. While both make choices and might even be responsible for the disadvantages that are the result of those choices, they should not be regarded as equivalents (even though they might both be rightfully subject to our and their dependents' frustration and disdain).

Circumstances cannot be regarded merely as the counterpart to choice, something to be flushed out of our considerations before we can properly answer the question as to what people deserve. Circumstances are the background against which people choose the projects, relationships and commitments that will matter to them and give their lives meaning. The design and pursuit of these things are only ever partially connected with 'a choice'. We choose from within sets of constraints and opportunities over which we have very little control. Indeed, most of the time our choices are better described as dependent on prior assent to the way the world is: we develop our talents, follow our inclinations and pursue specific opportunities depending on how we perceive the world around us.<sup>119</sup> The socialising, steelworker smoker could not invent the ways in which sociality was expressed in his environment any more than could the socialising female professor non-smoker invent hers. The ways of sociality are, to some extent at least, accepted as given after which choices are made accordingly.

### *Comparisons within Types*

The last section considered the ways in which people from different types do different things with their efforts depending on the circumstances being confronted. This complicates the comparisons Roemer's model makes between types: what is it we are actually comparing if the performances under consideration are potentially very different? There is no necessary equivalence between what people aim at with their efforts across different types. In addition, the *absence* of effort can be explained in very different ways depending on the opportunities one faces. Roemer's methodology forces us into assuming this equivalence and in so doing mischaracterises the depth of effect wrought by circumstance. Where one appears in the centiles of one's type is incapable of capturing this.

For comparisons made *within* types the notion of control carries a great deal of the burden of justification. Control is understood in distinction from luck: what we cannot

---

<sup>119</sup> Claudia Mills, 'Choice and Circumstances', *Ethics*, 109:9 (1998) p 164.



control is the result of 'luck'. This collapses a great deal of different kinds of circumstance into the same category. People's nationalities, the colour of their skin, whether or not they live in an area with a good state school are all treated as part of the general 'jumble of lotteries that constitutes human life as we know it'.<sup>120</sup> A person's effort is measured by removing all the effects of luck so that what remains is that which the individual controls.

However, collecting all forms of luck together should not blind us to the variations in that concept. I do not want to criticise Roemer's position because it collapses social and institutional injustices into the same category as 'injustices of nature'.<sup>121</sup> Instead, I focus on other contingencies that although affected by social injustices are not reducible to them. These are the kinds of flukes and circumstances that have the potential to massively influence what a person is able to achieve, but over which that person has very little control.

From this understanding of luck, the child who stumbles across an author who inspires them toward their own literary aspirations, or who is motivated into learning about the cosmos after catching Carl Sagan on TV, or who in being the focus of a particular relative's attentions is encouraged to escape the confines that define their type, might all be deemed 'lucky'. They have an additional resource that can instigate possibly remarkable achievement. But how do we factor this luck into (or out of) Roemer's account? Even when the decisions concerning what are to count as circumstances are made by society (or a philosopher committee)<sup>122</sup> there is simply 'too much going on' beyond the question of one's own 'hook' for the concept of autonomously-chosen effort to hold much weight.<sup>123</sup> Luck (in its more cosmic forms) plays too large a role in shaping and determining our life. The bedrock of the person that Roemer hopes to have reached seems more than a little chimerical.<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>120</sup> Richard Arneson, "Rawls, Responsibility, and Distributive Justice," in *Justice, Political Liberalism, and Utilitarianism: Themes from Harsanyi*, ed. Maurice Salles and John A. Weymark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) p 80.

<sup>121</sup> This criticism is forcibly argued by Elizabeth Anderson. Anderson, 'What is the Point of Equality?', p 309.

<sup>122</sup> See Knight, *Luck Egalitarianism*, pp. 187-190

<sup>123</sup> This reference to the 'hook' of one's own effort is Roemer's. Roemer, 'Defending quality of Opportunity' p 270.

<sup>124</sup> This is similar to Bernard Williams' accusation of 'meaningless privacy' directed at those accounts which seek too readily to extricate the controlled from the uncontrolled part of what a person is from what he most *fundamentally* is. Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) p 38.

Interestingly, the resources this kind of luck provides, i.e. the having of enthusiasm-inspiring activities or people, are conducive to the additional abilities considered in the previous chapter. We are not responsible for either our talents or the further ability to be enthusiastic about the things we do. In the previous chapter these were removed and we were left with disutility as a measure of effort since this was all that we could be said to have as our own. Roemer does not take this position and is therefore saved from my previous criticisms. However, the point remains that this enthusiasm and all that inspires it are beyond the control of the individual.

Roemer's methodology seems to rely on an intuitively plausible assumption which could discount these kinds of luck: individuals with similar backgrounds (as defined by the type) will face similar situations of luck as well. The accidental boons enjoyed by some and the chance misfortunes suffered by others within one type will be of a similar, though never identical, quality. The effects of the additional resources that are the consequence of this variety of luck will thus cancel one another out in the long run. Everybody within the same type will get a more or less equal allotment of good and bad luck. Yet this only seems plausible if we abstract from the nature and depth of luck's unintended occurrences. Luck does not manifest itself in merely singular incidences that are contained and finite, enjoyed today by one member of Type-A and tomorrow by another member. They can often be deeply constitutive of a person's identity, informing not just one particular moment but the narrative course of an entire life. This kind of luck is not something that occurs equally across all different members of all different types.<sup>125</sup>

The examples of Sagan, inspirational neighbours and the diligence of relatives cannot be factored into Roemer's model without rendering each type  $n=1$ . There is no such thing within us which we can refer to as our own 'hook'. All such hooks are forged both within the foundry of the individual and the blaze of her surrounding environments – along with the depth of contingency that entails.<sup>126</sup> This doesn't *necessarily* return us to the Rawlsian paradigm where the regression requirement destroys all desert claims or all

---

<sup>125</sup> I am reminded in this instance of Brian Barry, *Why Social Justice Matters* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007) p 42 where he mentions the good 'luck' of being a library card owner or brought up in a household with an abundance of newspapers or magazines and the difference these can make to the individual. It is just such flukes that while beyond our control can make all the difference, *especially* for those to whom such opportunities might be few and far between.

<sup>126</sup> This is as true as much for those children who imbibe an academic environment in the home as it is for those Asian children pressured into grinding away at their work without that environment as alluded to in Barry's response to Roemer (see Roemer, *Equality of Opportunity*, p 21). Both of these children have a 'hook' that is being forged beyond their control.

possibility of responsibility. Rather, it once again puts us outside the chimera of control as *the* axis around which the concept of responsibility or desert must rotate. However, as we saw at the end of the last chapter, this would entail letting talent and circumstances affect the rewards which we give to valuable performances.

But is it not enough that the theory can *approach* the idea of control? Am I not asking too much of *any* theory if I attach these kinds of demands to the concept of control? What Roemer's type tries to capture are the conversion abilities of individuals similarly situated. Circumstances are held constant across its members and are then used to measure the effort people (really) make. Admittedly, this is made more complicated by the presence of those 'incidentals' that are constitutive of persons. But perhaps proximity to this measure is the best we can hope for: the model goes as far as possible in determining where control begins and ends and therefore gets us as close as we can hope to the ideal of distributive justice. It is essentially as free as we can get effort to be, as free as 'morally relevant choice' can possibly be realised.

However, even admitting that this level of control is all that we can hope for, there remains a rift between our ordinary experience and understanding of responsibility and the model of responsibility developed by Roemer. In contrast to Roemer, we do not ordinarily give control as central a role in our understandings of efforts. Indeed, as Hurley notes, in our quotidian use of the terms, effort and responsibility do not matchup: 'To give people what they *deserve* because they make more effort is not to give them what they are *responsible* for.'<sup>127</sup> What people end up bringing about is not the result of effort alone: it is always mixed up with the circumstantial aspects both of our selves and our situations.<sup>128</sup> Roemer does not explicitly ask us to change this habit: his is an approach that uses statistical methods to glean the information he needs from actions already performed and so it need have no impact at the level of everyday practice.

But something disturbing happens to our view of individuals when responsibility is derived from the methodology of the type. Since the distribution of effort is a characteristic of the type it thus stands beyond the control of the individual. Individuals should not therefore be held responsible for that distribution but only for their place along that

---

<sup>127</sup> S.L. Hurley, *Justice, Luck and Knowledge* (Oxford: Harvard University Press, 2003) p 185.

<sup>128</sup> This point can be boiled down to a paradox: 'A person can be morally responsible only for what he does; but what he does results from a great deal that he does not do; therefore he is not morally responsible for what he is and is not responsible for'. Thomas Nagel, 'Moral Luck' in Gary Watson, ed., *Free Will* (Oxford: OUP, 1982) p. 182.

distribution. However, Mathias Risse makes a fascinating technical point that seems to challenge even *this* degree of control. Since the individual is not responsible for the behaviours of those within their own type, they should not then be held responsible for that behaviour. However, ranking them comparatively with the behaviour of one's fellow type-members is *precisely* holding them responsible for choices beyond their control.<sup>129</sup> By focusing on control, the individual becomes abstracted from *everything* which lies beyond it – including the behaviour of one's peers – to such an extent that responsibility seems to reduce to a vanishing point.

Roemer has responded to this argument by conceding that the effort of others within the type *is* out of one's control. However, one's rank within the range provided by the type remains a subject of control because what the type organises is precisely the range of actions that are reasonably available to its members: 'My circumstances, the circumstances of others, the distribution of efforts of other types, and, if my type is large, the distribution of effort of my type, are all morally arbitrary for me, while my own effort level is not morally arbitrary for me'.<sup>130</sup> By dint of my effort I can appear anywhere I like within my type. This is what it means for effort to be under my control and this is why I can be held responsible for it.

Our efforts are always responses to the form luck takes in terms of what our natural abilities, interests and social circumstances happen to be. For some, that luck means they grow up in countries with generous welfare states. For others, it is luck that that they grow up in a state without such provision. Either way, our effort is a *reaction* to the luck of these draws. Susan Hurley makes the following point: 'if most of a person's basic life circumstances, or some very influential aspect of them, are a matter of luck, what particular choices would he have made in the absence of luck?' Or, put differently, 'what choices would someone make if his life had been a very different life.'<sup>131</sup> We cannot tell what people would do were they to face entirely different circumstances. We cannot escape the fact that what we measure is not just effort but is effort as a *reaction* to – and thus parasitic on – circumstance. Effort and control, as Roemer understands them, are always circumscribed by the range of behaviours our types presents to us. There is nothing

---

<sup>129</sup> Risse, 'What equality of Opportunity could not be', p733. Hurley, *Justice, Luck and Knowledge*, p 184 makes the same point.

<sup>130</sup> Roemer, 'Defending Equality of Opportunity'.

<sup>131</sup> Hurley, *Justice, Luck and Knowledge*, p 187.

other than this reaction to circumstances people actually *do* face which can act as a measure of a person's deserts.

Roemer's emphasis on control as something opposed to circumstance affects our *normative* understanding of the person. As Anne Phillips has suggested, we are left to wonder what 'is left of the individual when we separate her out from all the circumstances that have formed her'.<sup>132</sup> What we are left with is supposed to be *the* aspects of the person that we can hold her morally responsible for, that comes close to some moral centre. Again, as Phillips puts it, 'only these last are 'really' ours'. Anything that is a 'more common practice within one social group than another has to be treated as a characteristic of the type and therefore *not* a characteristic of the individual'.<sup>133</sup> Human control, and by extension responsibility, becomes nothing more than the leftovers from circumstances. Can we really reduce all responsibility to an account of agents' reactions when they are confronted with an available range of behaviours?

This vision of the self produces a peculiar relation between people and their circumstances. Our circumstances become characterised as in some way *interfering* with our true, deeper content. Bernard Williams' comments on moral luck seem particularly apt: 'Justice requires not merely that *something I am* should be beyond luck, but that *what I most fundamentally am* should be so, and, in the light of that, admiration or liking or even enjoyment of the happy manifestations of luck can seem to be treachery to moral worth'.<sup>134</sup> In Roemer's attempt to render control *the* axis around which responsibility turns, individuals understand large parts of who they are as in some measure irrelevant, as not touching that which they most fundamentally are. Inspiring authors, populist scientists and watchful relatives, despite the extent to which they shape the efforts we make and the things we care about, are all irrelevant from this moral point of view. What we *really* do and who we *really* are is the effort gleaned from Roemer's methodology.

Hurley signals something equally strange with the idea of 'morally arbitrary welfare'.<sup>135</sup> That which the individual is not responsible for, regardless of its role in the production of her welfare and the meaning it has for her life, is *morally* arbitrary from this view of the agent: her worth is centred on her ability to control alone. Following this line of

---

<sup>132</sup> Anne Phillips, "'Really' Equal: Opportunities and Autonomy', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 14:1 (2006) p 21.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Williams, *Moral Luck* p.38.

<sup>135</sup> Hurley, *Justice, Luck and Knowledge*, p 144.

thought to its logical conclusion, the differing abilities between individuals to generate welfare – right down to the biological propensity to produce endorphins – can be considered a resource and therefore a possible reason for distribution or a potentially relevant consideration when dividing a population into types.

Our most natural of moral assessments and our most immediate intuitions do not marry with the idea that responsibility has to be so closely aligned with the presence of control.<sup>136</sup> Samuel Scheffler expresses this sentiment when he writes ‘we are neither so systematically alienated from the unchosen aspects of our own identities nor so uniformly confident of and identified with our role as choosers as to regard the presence or absence of choice as having this kind of make-or-break significance’.<sup>137</sup> There is luck (and therefore lack of control) in defining the person we are, in the problems and situations we face in life, in how we are determined by antecedent circumstances and contingency. And, finally, there is a large dose of luck in the ways one’s actions and projects turn out.<sup>138</sup>

Is there another way to approach responsibility that avoids this neutered normative image of the person? Are there other concerns that can complement the focus on control whilst not necessarily altogether replacing it? It might be the case that other intuitions we have pertaining to responsibility are simply misplaced, at least as far as distributive concerns go, and that the account provided by Roemer explicates the *correct* view of responsibility thus conceived. It might be that other accounts of responsibility have other purposes but are inappropriate in this particular sphere. It is to another model and these questions that I now turn.

### *Another Model of Responsibility*

There is an unspoken assumption underlying Roemer’s model regarding the justice of the background structures behind the types. This is the assumption that although different individuals face very different circumstances, the effects can be captured in a purely quantitative way.<sup>139</sup> For Roemer’s model, the circumstances we confront and by which we are shaped do not alter the fact that our efforts are all aimed at producing outcomes that are effectively equivalent. This assumes that the efforts themselves can be handled as equivalents. Wealthy individuals who have enjoyed privilege and support their whole lives

---

<sup>136</sup> Nagel, ‘Moral Luck’, pp. 174-186. See also Scheffler, ‘Choice, Circumstance and the Value of Equality’, p. 8.

<sup>137</sup> Scheffler, ‘What is Egalitarianism’ p 19.

<sup>138</sup> Nagel, ‘Moral Luck’ p 176-177.

<sup>139</sup> Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, p 38.

and others who have lacked all that are still judged and compared according to expenditure of some uniform substance called effort.

Conversion ability – turning resources into welfare – is possessed in different *quantities* depending on the type. By controlling for the effects of type on the possession of conversion ability we thereby develop a process for comparing between people who are said to be doing the same thing. There remains a stipulation of equivalence *at this level* since privileged and unprivileged alike are alleged to be doing the same thing only with different *amounts* of resources. This focus on the possession of a uniform capacity to expend effort obfuscates important differences in how individuals facing different opportunities understand their own efforts and intentions.

Precisely what this conversion ability amounts to is left unexplored. What are individuals doing when they turn their effort into projects and plans – the basis of any more general welfare? By drawing on another idea of responsibility, one not ordinarily used for purely distributive matters, we gain some insight into what might be missed when conversion ability is treated as constant and uniform across types. This alternative account of responsibility provides a better sense of the pernicious effects of injustice that are ignored when equivalence is assumed between the efforts of people facing vastly different circumstances.

This is not to suggest that the alternative I outline is up to the task of replacing Roemer's methodology as a guide to practical policy. It is rather to suggest a competing and additional sense of responsibility which Roemer's model is incapable of adequately capturing and which undermines its attempt to ground responsibility in effort alone. It better accommodates the concerns raised in this chapter regarding the false equivalences informing the inter-type comparisons and the policies they justify. It also offers a normative vision of the self that does not produce the peculiar consequences described above.

This alternative vision anchors responsibility in our capacity for evaluation.<sup>140</sup> The image of the individual as an evaluator is a complex one. It takes into consideration the relation between a person and her desires: we do not simply desire things but also have a sense of the desirability of those desires. That is, we have various orders in our desires: there is a step beyond our actual preferences where we evaluate them, where we are able

---

<sup>140</sup> In the following account of responsibility I refer extensively to Taylor, 'Responsibility for Self', pp. 281- 299.

to ask ‘Do I really want to be what I now am?’<sup>141</sup> The stands we take on our preferences and our evaluations of the desirability of our desires are, from this perspective, *our* responsibility.<sup>142</sup> This is not confined to the preferences themselves but also refers to the actions we take as a consequence of those preferences. So, the glutton who steps back from his preferences and decides to rein in his appetite is taking a stand on those preferences whilst also hoping to escape from the kinds of activities with which those preferences currently involve him.<sup>143</sup>

This level of the self is missing from Roemer’s model. The differences between, for example, what the smoker-types (white female professor and the black male steelworker) are doing cannot be properly captured. The typology method sees them both smoking cigarettes and the investigation of what this activity amounts to ends there. There are no resources in this model that can be used to ask how smoking might interact with either of these people’s other preferences, their sense of who they are or what they are doing when they smoke. If they are both smoking so many cigarettes as to put them in the lower centiles then there is an absence of effort – as Roemer construes it – and they have ‘failed’ to the same degree. The same applies for the example of inactive students at the prep school and the inner city school. The evaluations that motivate their respective inactivity and the deeper reasons behind such failure are not properly taken into account.

The effort that goes into evaluation provides a different way of understanding the choices we make and the things we do. This effort is different from effort measured according to the number of hours spent at the school desk, the library or the factory. But our evaluations are not effortless: they are on-going and require focus, discipline and an understanding of the available options and the methods and costs associated with pursuit of an option. The time and effort involved in evaluation has immense importance for the relationships, projects and courses of action that they illuminate and which organise possible future actions and behaviours.

We hold individuals responsible for their evaluations and the actions that emanate from them: if someone claims to care about courage and then acts in a cowardly way we evaluate them at both levels. However, despite this assignation of responsibility, the things

---

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* p 281. This has similarities with Harry Frankfurt’s notion of ‘second-order’ desires which will be discussed in more depth in the fourth chapter. Harry Frankfurt, ‘Freedom of Will and the Concept of a Person’, *The Journal of Philosophy*, 68:1 (1971).

<sup>142</sup> See Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, pp. 293 – 296 for a similar vision of responsibility.

<sup>143</sup> Taylor, *Responsibility for Self*, p 295.



we care about are not necessarily matters of choice. As Charles Taylor argues 'Our evaluations are not chosen. On the contrary they are *articulations* of our sense of what is worthy, or higher, or more integrated, or more fulfilling'.<sup>144</sup> When we evaluate we are involved in a reflective process about who we are and what we do. We are always, according to Taylor, *already* within a given set of evaluations, an already present sense of what matters to us, of some mode of life we consider higher than other available possibilities.<sup>145</sup> The sense of who we are and what we do draws from an already established set of dispositions and character. In Roemerian terms, the backgrounds that the typology method attempts to control will be the provider and source of this material. However, this alternative view of responsibility does not abstract from this material as a means of accessing an individual's sterilised efforts. Rather, agents' efforts are regarded as being directed *toward* this material to transform it into a site of responsible action.

The matter of control is still alluded to in Taylor's account but not in the same way as Roemer employs it. In holding individuals responsible for their evaluations we are stipulating that they have a certain control over their sense of the importance of things, of the sense in which things matter to them. These evaluations are not impositions from some external source. They are the consequence of a person's on-going effort and activity to make sense of what they are doing. It is the presence of the agent in these evaluations, the deliberations and decisions she makes regarding her actions, dispositions and preferences which lead to judgements of responsibility. For Roemer's model this presence is neither here nor there. Indeed, there is a certain irony in Roemer's model in that, although he claims to use effort as a means of tracking the control an agent exercises, this control does not have to be acknowledged by the agents themselves. It is the mechanics of the type that measure the control being exercised.

However, although control remains a part of this alternative vision of responsibility, the capacity of evaluation on which it relies is still complicated by the lack of control at the level of background circumstances. These backgrounds are very rarely things that can be controlled: we are always dealing with givens in making our evaluations. Indeed, the use of the type recognises precisely this. But the givens that some people have to face seem more conducive to the development of skills necessary for effective evaluations. The terms of this fairness are necessarily complex and difficult to elucidate. But individuals from radically different backgrounds facing radically different prospects will be presented with very

---

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.* p 294. (My emphasis)

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.* p 296.

different material from which evaluations – and the understandings of the activities that issue from them – are to be fashioned.

This turn toward the capacity for evaluation might seem a long way from the smoking and education examples. I have turned the argument towards more complex matters of the self, so the responsibility here in question might seem to have very little to do with either the distributive questions motivating Roemer's methodology or the policies he proposes as answers to them. In order to make this alternative vision of responsibility relevant I therefore need to motivate this shift toward the language of evaluation.

### *Effects of Disadvantage on Evaluative Competence*

If effort is the proposed moral centre of the person it makes sense to ask what it is the centre *of*, i.e. what is the concept of the person that acts as the complement to this idea of effort? Roemer's methodology, as I argue above, relies on an unappealing normative view of the person. In developing this different evaluative dimension the moral status effort enjoys is complemented by an additional account of the capacities that constitute the person. As Taylor again puts it: 'A person is a being who has a sense of self, has a notion of the future and the past, can hold values, make choices... at least, a person must be the kind of being who is in principle capable of all this, however damaged these capacities may be in practice'.<sup>146</sup> In abstracting away from those capacities (and their damages) and attempting to deal with effort alone we lose a sense of their practical development and relevance, of the degrees that they can admit and of the ways in which they can be either stunted or nourished by one's environment.

Inequalities in the opportunities people face throughout their lives can be understood, in part, by reference to inequalities in people's evaluative capacities. Advantaged types enjoy environments more conducive to the development of these capacities than disadvantaged. Inequalities in evaluative capacities are therefore a useful way of characterising the influence of injustice on people's sense of what they are doing and their intentions in doing it. In so doing it complicates the assumed equivalences that underlie Roemer's intertype comparisons: our ability to make sense of the opportunities we confront is not just a matter of our facing different sets of options with different

---

<sup>146</sup> Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 97: Also see Charles Taylor, 'The Validity of Transcendental Arguments', in Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995) p. 27 where he argues against those 'reductive mechanistic accounts' which fail to take into account this self-interpretive aspect.

quantities of resources. There is also the need to account for the self-understandings, sense of security or its lack and the relations we have with other people which ultimately make those opportunities intelligible for us. It is because of the evaluations we form that we are able to employ our efforts, talents and desires in the pursuit of ends we have reason to value. Abstracting effort from our use of these capacities neglects a great deal of the work that they do (or are unable to do) for us.

This evaluative competence can be broken down into different aspects. The effects of disadvantage can then be discerned as they impact at these different levels. First is that initial articulation of how things matter to a person. This is not tied in any *conceptually* necessary way to the having of a range of alternatives. Things can matter to people without them having access to a plethora of different options. Think of the Amish way of life or other isolated communities who lack ready alternatives but who remain capable of articulating what they care about. More generally though, our articulations of what matters to us are formed out of backgrounds we have very little to do with creating, even though we are able to consider, possibly, a great many alternatives. Devout religious observers as well as the ‘tamed housewife’ are both capable of articulating their sense of the good without a variety of choices against which to do so.<sup>147</sup> However, the presence and real availability of alternatives commonly provide a means of understanding our choices and the articulations we end up with. Housewives and religious observers – even those who do not find their convictions particularly hard to bear – can be understood as lacking a sense of – and access to – alternative ways of understanding their lives and other possible interpretations of what could constitute their good. Disadvantage can, in part, describe the lack of a ‘favourable environment’ within which these articulations are first formulated as well as revisions that later get made to them.<sup>148</sup>

The example of the ‘lazy’ inner-city student can also be described as lacking this sense of alternatives. Without confidence in their abilities, appropriate role models or the encouragement of either peers or adults, such students have a stifled vision of the alternatives that are perhaps formally available to them. What they come to care about is formed against a background where alternatives are insufficiently illuminated. If these ‘missing’ parts of the background had been made available, a whole other person with a

---

<sup>147</sup> The tamed housewife is taken from Amartya Sen *Standard of Living* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) p 11. See also Roemer, *Theories of Distributive Justice* p. 245-250.

<sup>148</sup> T.M. Scanlon, ‘Equality of Resources and Equality of Welfare: A Forced Marriage?’, *Ethics*, 97:1 (1986) p 118.

different articulation of what mattered to him could have emerged. The processes and challenges of this articulation are missing if we dismiss this person as not only lazy, but as 'equally' lazy as students who possessed all the requisite background conditions, resources and opportunities and yet failed to try hard at school.

Secondly, by giving a sense of how things matter to a person this initial articulation is then used as a guide for action. For instance, a person who identifies with the cause of socialism will involve herself in various courses of action to put that identification into effect; joining a union, attending local talks, demonstrations and meetings and/or reading relevant economic and political theory. It will not do for a person to espouse an account of the good which then affects nothing in her behaviour. However, this follow-through on one's articulation is not a consequence of sheer will alone. It is, like the initial articulation, also affected by the support one experiences from one's parents, peers or other possible figures of authority, the time one has available for particular activities and the security and confidence people have in their abilities to pursue them. The presence or absence of just one of these can make enormous differences.

So people gain a sense of what matters to them and then would like to act according to that articulation. But in situations characterised by disadvantage where perhaps other more urgent ends need attending to, these preferences for action may have to take a backseat. There may be women who believe deeply in the virtues associated with private entrepreneurship but who are prevented from pursuing this because they are confined to the household by the expectations of their husbands, extended families and peers. Others who experience less pressure, who are bold enough to resist those expectations or whose more basic needs are met, will have more freedom to pursue their sense of the good and do not have to worry about these issues. They are free to be guided by those higher aspirations and that loftier sense of what matters to them. Without an appreciation of the evaluative spaces within which decisions are made we have no sense of what it is possible for the individual to include and what she is forced to exclude in the way of possibly valuable courses of action.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, we also lack a sense of the meaning of effort that is not forthcoming or the effort that *is* forthcoming but goes into other activities that are not so deeply cared about.

---

<sup>149</sup> Amartya Sen, "Capability and Well-Being", in Martha Nussbaum, & Amartya Sen, eds., *The Quality of Life* (Oxford: OUP, 1993) pp.32-33. See also Sen, *Development as Freedom*, pp. 62-63.

Disadvantage does not just impact on people's ability to meet their basic needs. It resonates out into the rest of a person's life. This is similar to Jonathan Wolff and Avner De-Shalit's work on the impact disadvantage has on a person's 'sustained functionings'.<sup>150</sup> Sustained functionings are those parts of our life that are most basic to our welfare and which we need to secure against overt risk. This category is by no means fixed but would usually entail access to food, shelter and some minimum standard of healthcare and education. When these are inadequately secured the rest of a person's welfare is put at risk. In addition, the absence of 'sustained functionings' brings with it a lack of adequate space within which people can develop a sense of their preferences, desires and possible conceptions of the good, because they are too involved with attempts to secure the more basic groundings of their existence.

Finally, there is the openness to re-evaluation of how things matter to us and our ability to put these reassessments into effect. The kind of openness and competence necessary for this negotiation – the awareness of options, the ability to choose reasonably amongst them and then to see them through to completion<sup>151</sup> – are not free from socio-economic influence. People who are more secure – in both the financial and emotional senses of that term – may be more willing to experiment with this kind of openness, to throw themselves open to radical reformulations and re-evaluations. People who lack this security might be more reticent in attempting such reformulations, worried about what it might mean for their current projects and the resources that might be put in serious jeopardy by too radical a change.

In these moments of re-evaluation one runs the risk of recognising mistakes in one's past choices. The relatively advantaged might see such revelation as beneficial, exposing flaws in their past conceptions and allowing rectification. This rectification is going to have practical consequences on the way a life is being led. For instance, a desire to change occupation will require re-skilling, the sacrifice of a certain status in a particular profession as well as the resources that accompanied that status. Those with the support to see through these changes have benefits unavailable to those who are less fortunate. The less fortunate will only expose themselves to the revelation without the means necessary to see those re-evaluations take effect in reality.

---

<sup>150</sup> See Wolff & De-Shalit, *Disadvantage*, pp. 65-73.

<sup>151</sup> Arneson, 'Equality and Equality Opportunity of Welfare', p 86.

When we reflect on the behaviours and attitudes of those less fortunate than ourselves we should, as Tim Scanlon suggests, ‘recognise that what separates us from such people is not just, as we would like to think, that we behave better and choose more wisely, but also our luck in being the kind of people who respond in these ways’ we see as valuable and worthwhile.<sup>152</sup> This ‘luck’ is in part constituted by the opportunities and choices we have faced, and the shape these have given to our evaluations and the projects, ends and possibilities that have been opened up for us. This cannot be controlled for and merely whisked away by algorithms and statistical imagination but is rather a fundamental part of the injustices that structure relations between the advantaged and disadvantaged.

This evaluative competence is missing from Roemer’s use of the concept of conversion ability. Without giving proper attention to the differences in opportunities to develop this evaluative competence, Roemer ends up stipulating compatibility between centiles and making overly simplistic comparisons across types. In not being able to capture the complexity of these issues something is missed with regards to how individuals actually confront the world around them depending on the advantage they enjoy or disadvantage they suffer. People denied the opportunity to develop the different aspects that make up evaluative competence cannot be accused of failing to try hard, even controlling for the effects of the type. Holding individuals *equally* responsible – even in the technically ingenious way in which this is cashed out by Roemer – when they face vastly different possibilities produces an image of effort that is incapable of capturing the invidious effects of injustice and disadvantage.

Roemer’s model ‘inappropriately reifies’ the social processes that structure these possibilities because at no point is responsibility seen as being a competence that is in important ways *denied* to certain people. We are all equally responsible for where we end up within the type and so the effects of injustice on that competence are hidden from sight.<sup>153</sup> What Roemer attempts to do is wrestle with the problem of establishing a comparable basis of responsibility. It is this which motivates the move to inter-type comparisons. However, while the move is intuitively persuasive, on reflection it fails to convince that equality has been reached in any substantive sense. It fails because advantage and disadvantage are framed at one remove from the ways in which effort and

---

<sup>152</sup> T.M. Scanlon, *What we Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998) p 294.

<sup>153</sup> Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, p 40.

control are actually experienced, and how people are shaped by the environments within which they live their lives.

### *Conclusion*

What emerges from this extended engagement with Roemer is essentially an addendum to the work done in the previous chapter. Roemer's account is undoubtedly ambitious and performs the impressive feat of combining a notion of responsibility that is both extensive and broadly endorsed across all parts of the political spectrum, with aggressively egalitarian proposals. In particular, the way it can justify different levels of spending on policies like education *before* the competition in the marketplace gets going, means it is able to escape the compensatory paradigm and use redistributive measures to generate far more transformative legislation.

However, it relies on a pair of comparisons between and within types that fail to capture the complexities in the ways we use effort. The comparison between types relies on the assumption that people at opposite ends of the spectrum of advantage can be described as doing effectively equivalent things, 'trying (or failing to try) hard' in the same way but with different resources. Differences in initial resources justify different levels of distributional rewards. However, though different levels of distribution might be welcome they are grounded in a false equivalence. Lazy individuals who enjoy all the trappings of privilege and support should not be deemed equivalent to 'lazy' individuals who lack all those things.

The second comparison within types relies on an account of responsibility which is tied closely to issues of control. Where we line up within our type is said to be down to something called 'autonomously chosen effort'. However, even where the type is supposed to account for and eliminate the effects of background conditions, control is simply too strong a term to describe a great deal of what we bring about in the world and how we do it. Too much of who we are as people are the result of things over which we have no control and which we are also unable to systematically account for without stretching the type almost indefinitely.

At the end of this chapter I have tried to offer an alternative vision of responsibility that both takes seriously the effects of injustice and incorporates criticisms surrounding

Roemer's collapsing of responsibility into questions of control. Our sense of what matters to us informs the plans and commitments we make and the lives we end up leading. This process of discovering what it is we care about is deeply dependent on the circumstances within which we live and mature. The experience of serious injustice will affect the development of competencies necessary to this process. For example, injustice affects the ability of individuals to properly assess and pursue their sense of what matters to them because of a possibly restricted sense of their options or lack of support in their pursuit. Responsibility is not determined by what we can isolate from this process. Judgements of responsibility must take account of the effects of injustice on the ability of people to take effective control over what matters to them and what gives their lives meaning and purpose. Roemer's model is incapable of performing this function.

In line with the conclusion of the last chapter, I suggest we avoid the idea of effort as representing some residual category for which we can be held responsible. It should not be employed as a means of justifying inequality in however elaborate a form. Effort is inappropriately employed when it is given this function, focussing too much attention on sticky problems of 'free will' and the foundations of 'real responsibility'. In so doing, it directs attention away from the practical, lived experiences of which effort is such an important and irreplaceable part. The next chapter considers one of the ways in which the 'lived experience' of effort has been tackled in current literature: that is, the effort expended in maintaining relations of reciprocity between members of political and economic communities.



## Effort as Reciprocity

In the first chapter I examined the relation between effort and burden. I considered approaches which argue that deserts are related to the costs a person suffers in the performance of certain activities. The approach I considered in the second chapter regards effort as that which it is within our power to control and for which we are therefore responsible. Decisions regarding the extent of people's responsibility issue in further decisions of a redistributive nature: deserts are to be determined solely by people's efforts. Both effort-as-burden and effort-as-responsibility focus on gaining access to the interior of the self: one posits the experience of hardship and disutility as the crux of effort's meaning, the other argues that responsibility and effort are synonyms for one another.

The present chapter exits the interior of the person and instead investigates the spaces *between* people. I consider the ways in which the efforts of individuals are needed to maintain relations of reciprocity within an on-going political and economic community. In particular I focus on Stuart White and his work on what he calls the 'civic minimum'. The civic minimum is essentially a description of a set of conditions that need to be fulfilled to a sufficient degree before demands of reciprocal effort can be considered legitimate. Where this sufficiency is not met such demands cannot be fully justified.

The aims of this chapter can be summed up as follows. First, I briefly explore the debates within which White's approach offers a significant contribution. I then provide an explication of the key concepts and ambitions of his project. Where conditions of a just background are sufficiently met, effort is synonymous with the productive contributions we owe to others with whom we share the burdens of cooperation. Where this effort is not forthcoming injustice is being perpetrated.

However, I argue that the demandingness of different tasks in 'non-ideal' and 'actual' circumstances cannot be derived from considerations of ideal theory. Too exclusive a focus on ideal theory obstructs our view of other possible contributions that cannot be described as productive. In current political reality we require a different kind of individual able to contribute in ways that are neither substantially reciprocal nor productive. Moreover, the types of individuals needed and generated by the demands of non-ideal environments – agitators and political activists – are essential in defining the content of

‘productive contributions’.<sup>154</sup> Productivity is itself a contentious and historically changing term. It is not a fixed concept about which we have, at this juncture, achieved something of a permanent understanding: what we mean by contribution evolves and expands, often out of the heat of fierce, sometimes violent, debate and contestation.

The activities of agitators are not likely to be embraced or saluted by all members of a community and can sometimes be met with possibly severe resistance. They might be dismissed by productive others precisely because they regard them as non-contributory and as disruptive of productive contributions currently being made. By ignoring the necessity of this kind of activity and focusing on narrowly *productive* contributions, the expansive, transformative but nonetheless potentially parasitic – and certainly non-productive – efforts of agitators and other politically relevant actors are inadvertently marginalised.

### *Stake-holding*

Concern with this substantive background is something I argued was missing from the previous chapter. In Roemer’s model individuals can be compared across types even though what individuals experience *within* those different types might be qualitatively very different. By focusing on the quality of the backgrounds against which opportunities are faced and choices made, disparities in the experiences of advantaged and disadvantaged can be more directly confronted. It is by paying attention at this level that we avoid drawing false equivalences between individuals whose life chances are utterly different. We thereby sensitize our understanding of inequality to the more complex effects of injustice. Although White does not employ effort in so central a position as Roemer, his account nevertheless achieves significant insights by taking a step back from the actual expenditure of effort and exploring the quality of the environment within which that expenditure takes place.

White’s view of effort, more often than not phrased as ‘productive contribution’, is framed by an overarching concern with establishing the correct terms of economic citizenship. He describes the fundamental rights and obligations that should inform and structure the ways in which we live our lives; both as individuals with our own projects and commitments to attend to and as interacting and interdependent members of a political

---

<sup>154</sup> I use activist and agitator interchangeably. However, the use of the term ‘agitator’ is supposed to draw attention to the adversarial and disruptive quality of her work, something not so obvious in the case of activists.

and economic community. Defining the terms of economic citizenship should thus be understood as part of the background against which justice is to be initiated: we work out the correct terms of cooperation (what we owe to others) and entitlement (what we are owed) and from this gain an idea of what institutions and policies are necessary to establish a just society.<sup>155</sup> In its ideal form this amounts to a particular conception of justice (justice as fair-dues reciprocity) which is satisfied 'when the demands of reciprocity are made in the context of policies and institutions that, among other things, prevent or fully correct for unequal access to the means of production and unequal marketable talents'.<sup>156</sup>

White's specific project contributes to a wider literature on the so-called 'stakeholder society'.<sup>157</sup> The emphasis of this literature is on the emancipatory potential of providing individuals with 'assets' – stakes – within the economic system.<sup>158</sup> These assets can come in the form of basic capital grants, a universal basic income to be paid in increments, or a fund intended for a given set of activities such as (re)training or education.<sup>159</sup> This reflects moves made by the left more generally toward 'supply side' egalitarianism, i.e. providing people with goods necessary both for meeting their fundamental needs and for effective competition with one another in the marketplace. The efficiency of the market is therefore sustained whilst also supplemented by greater protection for people in the event of serious market fallout.

In addition, stake-holding has the potential to enable individuals and groups to explore new possibilities in economic and political governance.<sup>160</sup> This emphasis on enhancing individuals' market capacities and using the institutions of private property and the market replaces (or complements) more traditional left-wing strategies which argue for

---

<sup>155</sup> White. *The Civic Minimum*, p1-2

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* p 18.

<sup>157</sup> Other works in this field include: Van Parijs, *Real Freedom for All*; Bruce Ackerman & Anne Alstott, *The Stakeholder Society* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2000); Keith Dowding, et al., eds., *The Ethics of Stakeholding* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003); Philippe Van Parijs, ed., *Arguing for Basic Income* (London: Verso, 1992); Van Parijs, ed., 'What's Wrong with a Free Lunch?'; Tony Fitzpatrick, *Freedom and Security: An Introduction to the Basic Income Debate* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999); There is also a journal (*Basic Income Studies*) which started up in 2006 as well as the website of BIEN (Basic Income Earth Network) at [www.basicincome.org](http://www.basicincome.org). This literature will be considered in more depth in the final chapter.

<sup>158</sup> See also the Rawlsian conception of the property-owning democracy developed in John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Harvard University Press, 2001) pp. 135-136 for example. See also O'Neill & Williamson, eds. *Property-Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond*.

<sup>159</sup> Respectively, see Ackerman & Alstott, *The Stakeholder Society*; Van Parijs, *Real Freedom for All*; A.B. Atkinson, 'The Case for a Participation Income', *The Political Quarterly* 67:1 (1996) pp. 67–70.

<sup>160</sup> For example, White talks about the possibility that stakes can provide capital for starting cooperative economic enterprises. White, *The Civic Minimum*, Ch. 8.

the socialised means of production and control over the division of labour.<sup>161</sup> The market as an institution is thus taken as both a necessary and effective institution so long as adequate attention is paid to its functioning and to appropriately skilling all people for participation in the marketplace.<sup>162</sup>

Assets provide people with more equitable starting points so that on entering the marketplace they compete with one another on a more level playing field. This is similar to Roemer's intent in employing the type methodology. The important difference is that White is not instituting this playing field in order to reward people's moral centre with its just deserts. Rather, his model distributes assets as a way to alleviate market vulnerability, improve workers' bargaining positions *vis-à-vis* employers and reduce the pressure of responding to market demands by providing all with a decent, stable material minimum.<sup>163</sup> In addition, assets endow people with the ability to develop themselves and their capacities and pursue ends they have reason to value. Moreover, much like the evaluative space considered at the end of the last chapter, resources are important in providing the space necessary for people to reflect on the direction their lives currently take and, if need be, change that course.<sup>164</sup> However, resources require an environment conducive to this kind of use. Where Roemer fails to adequately account for such structural concerns, they appear front and centre in White's description of the civic minimum.

This provides a brief picture of the kind of arguments in which White's work on effort/contribution has participated. The overriding tenets of his project are the creation of favourable background conditions from within which individuals are 1) able to fairly and effectively contribute to the communities to which they belong and 2) have the resources and endowments necessary to live fulfilling lives. We can summarise these different ambitions as, respectively, the 'contributory aspect' and the 'capacity aspect'. The first is concerned with the effort individuals ply into their (sufficiently just) communities in order

---

<sup>161</sup> Stuart White, 'A Progressive Politics of Responsibility: What would it look like?', *Public Policy Research*, 12:1 (2005) p 5. In so doing it consciously places itself in the social republican tradition of the left, also aligning itself with thinkers such as Paine and Rousseau. See also Ackerman & Alstott, *The Stakeholder Society*, esp. p 181- 196. Samuel Freeman, *Rawls* (London: Routledge, 2007) pp. 219- 235 similarly discusses this decentralisation and dispersal of power in the context of Rawls' property-owning democracy.

<sup>162</sup> Alex Callinicos, *Equality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000) p 91. This work is also a powerful critique of this turn. See also Anne Phillips, 'Egalitarians and the market: dangerous ideals', *Social Theory and Practice* 34:3 (2008) for a more cautious appraisal.

<sup>163</sup> Dowding, et al., *The Ethics of Stakeholding*, p 3.

<sup>164</sup> White, 'A Progressive Politics of Responsibility: What would it look like?', p 8. See also Catherine Audard, 'The Ideal of Self-development: Personal or Political?', in Axel Gosseries, & Yannick Vanderborght, eds., *Arguing About Justice* (Louvain: Louvain University Press, 2011) pp. 71-78.

to ground their entitlement to the fruit of that collective productivity. The second is concerned with the capacities and opportunities that are made available to individuals who have at their command significant quantities of resources and enjoy institutional structures that facilitate the use of these resources in pursuit of various worthwhile ends.

### *The Civic Minimum*

What then are the specific tenets of White's scheme of economic citizenship? There are a number of concepts White uses that need fleshing out and connecting in order to illuminate an account that is both complex and radical in its implications. A useful starting point is White's idea of the civic minimum. The civic minimum establishes the basic conditions against which all economic activity has to take place if the demand to participate in such activity is to be regarded as just. If these background conditions do not satisfy a minimum threshold of fairness, then the cooperation that emerges fails to qualify as fully fair.<sup>165</sup> A lack of justice at the background level reduces the legitimacy of the demands that our community can make of us *vis-à-vis* our reciprocating, productive efforts. This minimum threshold is animated by reference to the proletarian condition, the second term that needs explication.

The proletarian condition is employed by White as a term that broadly encompasses the 'bads' of life under capitalism. All such bads need alleviation to at least some degree in order to establish a background that is just enough to render demands of contribution minimally legitimate.<sup>166</sup> This is to be considered a matter of degree so that *reduced* contributions can be demanded against backgrounds of diminished economic and institutional fairness. This is crucial to the critique I provide below.

Alleviation of the different parts of the proletarian condition runs as follows: non-immiseration (the elimination of 'brute luck poverty in income or, more generally, in (a person's) capability for core well-being and/or ethical agency'); market security ('each citizen should enjoy adequate protection against market vulnerability and the exploitation and abuse to which it can lead'); work as challenge (the opportunity to have work become a 'site of intrinsically valuable challenge' – also framed as opportunity for 'self-realisation in work')<sup>167</sup>; minimized class division (reduction of inequalities in educational opportunities and initial access to wealth to a 'reasonable minimum'); and non-discrimination (protection

---

<sup>165</sup> White, *The Civic Minimum*, p 19.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.* p 87-91.

<sup>167</sup> I discuss this particular aspect of the proletarian condition in the final chapter.

against discrimination in areas such as education and employment on the basis of morally arbitrary characteristics).<sup>168</sup> It is only against a background of economic institutions that are able to satisfy these conditions that a contributory obligation can be imposed on citizens and relations of genuine reciprocity – as opposed to asymmetry and exploitation – can be established.<sup>169</sup>

The alleviation of this proletarian condition is justified by reference to what White terms the ethical-integrity interests of individuals. For a person to adequately develop a view of the good life their ethical integrity must be protected. This holds across all legitimate conceptions of the good: where ethical integrity is lacking the ends and preferences that people develop do so in unjust situations.<sup>170</sup> To live within the constraints of the proletarian condition is therefore to have one's ability to live a meaningful life sharply impinged upon precisely because such interests are always either undermined or at significant risk of being so.

These ethical-integrity interests can be broken down into three parts: the first is an interest in physical integrity, the ability to draw boundaries between one's own person and others and to regulate the movement of others across those boundaries. To lack fulfilment of this condition is to lack a fundamental physical and psychological condition of ethical agency. The second aspect is expressive-integrity. This is a 'matter of being able to live in authentic accordance with one's view of how life is best lived'.<sup>171</sup> This integrity is violated when one is pressured into conforming to other ways of life, professing commitment to a set of beliefs one does not genuinely endorse. The result involves a dichotomy within the individual between how she *appears* to others and who she feels herself to *be* or who she would like to *become*. The final integrity interest is deliberative-integrity: each individual has a right to enjoy adequate opportunities to deliberate and reflect on what she regards as the good life (including the ability to evaluate and consider other views that pertain to possible good lives) and the ways in which she is able to pursue it.<sup>172</sup> Alleviation of the proletarian condition is necessary for the protection and realisation of these integrity interests.

---

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.* p 90.

<sup>169</sup> Again, with the qualification that the demand for contribution is less legitimate when the justice of the background is not fully realised.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.* p 30.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.* p 31.

<sup>172</sup> This notion of 'deliberative integrity' has similarities with the evaluative competence developed at the end of the last chapter and the possibilities to act on adjusted priorities and preferences that occur once deliberation has taken place.

The content of these integrity interests lead us to another of White's terms: democratic mutual regard. The commonly-shared institutions that govern the lives of a community of citizens must respect their integrity interests and work to prevent their violation. In accordance with this principle each citizen must consider the effect that different institutional arrangements have both on her own and on other's integrity interests. These considerations issue in the following maxim: 'each must respect the basic interests of all'.<sup>173</sup>

What this amounts to is a community-wide internalisation of a certain viewpoint with respect to these interests, i.e. that citizens should never permit their violation nor play a role in reproducing the background conditions that make such violations more likely. This internalisation has consequences for other members of the community: if I believe protection of these integrity interests are appropriate for me as 'a self-respecting citizen' then they are perforce appropriate for each and every other member of my community. They thereby set a limit to which all institutional and policy matters must pay sufficient heed. As a result, 'a democratic social order is one in which individuals can mutually affirm the social arrangements in which they live as respecting their standing as free and equal citizens'.<sup>174</sup>

Democratic mutual regard is also the ethos that underlines what in White's account is perhaps the most important idea for the concerns of this thesis: the idea of fair-dues reciprocity. The idea can be summed up with the following: where the institutions governing economic life are otherwise sufficiently just, i.e. alleviate the proletarian condition and protect citizens' integrity interests to a significant degree, and by virtue of this provide citizens with both adequate opportunity for productive participation and a sufficiently generous share of the social product, people have an obligation to make a 'decent productive contribution' to the community.<sup>175</sup> Reciprocity is thus a 'primary virtue of shared productive endeavour in its own right', irreducible to any other egalitarian concern.<sup>176</sup>

By alleviating the proletarian condition and thereby protecting people's integrity interests, the institutional background against which individuals are expected to expend

---

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.* p 32.

<sup>174</sup> Stuart White, 'Freedom, Reciprocity and the Citizen's Stake' in Dowding, et al. *The Ethics of Stakeholding*, p 79.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* p 59 & p 124.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.* p 67. In Rawls' model of property-owning democracy the primacy of reciprocity can be derived from his Difference Principle. See Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, p 49 for example.

their effort is legitimised. In establishing a just institutional order it is fair and right to expect capable people to contribute to the productive efforts of their community as a way of sustaining the justice of that order and sharing in the burdens which its on-going stability and efficacy demand. Conversely, to do otherwise in such a situation is unacceptable: reciprocating effort becomes a legitimate and inescapable demand in the light of the goods that others produce for our use.

Effort within this context is thus seen in terms of the contribution one makes to the overall production of one's community. It is a duty, in the light of the attitude underlining democratic mutual regard, that each one of a community's members makes a 'reasonable effort' to ensure that others in that community are not burdened by their membership. The notion of reasonable effort is elastic, depending on the individual's capacity to contribute: reduce that capacity to zero, in the case of children, the severely disabled and the very elderly, and their respective obligations will be reduced accordingly.<sup>177</sup> But if one is able to contribute and does not make the effort to do so, this violates the principle of democratic mutual regard and the attitude of fair-dues reciprocity that is emblematic of a healthy, cooperative society in which those who enjoy the products of (a sufficiently just) collaboration should also contribute to their production.<sup>178</sup>

To sum up what I take to be White's position in drawing all these strands together: against a background of a sufficiently just economic order which protects the integrity interests of each member of a community, all such beneficiaries are obliged to contribute to the productive work of that society to the best of their ability. Members of a community who fail to contribute in such a situation gain illegitimate access to the goods their community creates. To neglect to contribute is to exploit one's fellow citizens and live in a parasitic relation to them, failing to treat them with appropriate democratic mutual regard. Responding to demands to make productive contributions is also a rejection of this parasitic relation and an embrace of the demands of fair-dues reciprocity: one is not a burden to one's community without whom they would be better off, but an active participant in the group's continuing shared labour.

---

<sup>177</sup> Stuart White, 'Fair Reciprocity and Basic Income' in Andrew Reeve & Andrew Williams, eds., *Real Libertarianism Assessed* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p 139.

<sup>178</sup> It should be noted here that White explicitly rejects the demand for *strict* reciprocity; where what one is entitled to needs to be strictly proportionate to one's contribution or is otherwise considered exploitative: White, *The Civic Minimum* pp. 49, 50-52. Rather he envisions it in terms of the Marxist credo 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need'. It is thus a move to a far more solidaristic ethic than could be envisaged under strict reciprocity.



What is particularly commendable about White's account is the way in which he moves between contemporary intuitions and images regarding 'people pulling their weight' and a recognition that there needs to be a sufficient background without which such demands cannot be legitimately made. These contemporary intuitions, adopted from a different political slant and dominated by a particular agenda, are often unremittingly scathing of a so-called underclass and undeserving poor. They are described as feckless drains on the resources of society who must be corralled into work against their will if necessary.<sup>179</sup> Such views pay little or no regard to the background against which these sizeable (40 hour a week) demands can legitimately be made. Instead, they posit the demands for productive contribution as *prior* to other concerns, including those of individual's integrity interests. There exists no appeal to the injustice of the background conditions that can excuse non-contribution. At work in these intuitions and their agendas is the idea that individuals possess the skills, capacities, and dispositions necessary for effective contribution irrespective of the on-going unfavourable societal processes and practices that surround them.<sup>180</sup>

In challenging these dispositions and attitudes, White accomplishes a similar task to Roemer: marrying strenuous claims of responsibility with recognition of the disparities in advantage which inevitably complicate those claims. White, like Roemer, does admirably in defeating these unfair assumptions and rescuing the value of reciprocity from the prerogatives of particularly conservative perspectives and political programmes. Moreover, White avoids the pitfalls of Roemer's account by taking into account the practical effects of injustice on the possibility for responsible action when crucial integrity interests are violated. White effectively demonstrates how empty much of the contemporary discourse of parasitism is in current political reality and provides effective tools to expose the viciousness of its intentions.<sup>181</sup>

### *Contribution*

In a situation where the integrity interests *are* protected and the thresholds of the civic minimum have been met, the contribution to reciprocate the efforts of others is fairly straight-forward: if I have contributed a certain amount of effort from which you benefit

---

<sup>179</sup> See Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (London: Verso Books, 2012) for a (recent) historical account of the processes underlying these agendas.

<sup>180</sup> Young, *Responsibility for Justice* p 24.

<sup>181</sup> Moreover, White stresses the inconsistency in accusations of parasitism that do not take into account feckless, bourgeois idlers. White, *The Civic Minimum* p 69.

and which you *recognise* as beneficial then I am entitled to having the same conditions satisfied by you. To refuse to reciprocate in such a situation is to fail to satisfy the democratic mutual regard owed to contributing others and thus to behave as a parasite.

What is the content of a productive contribution then? For labour to count as contributory in the relevant sense it must be what White terms ‘civic labour’. This is labour that provides a significant service to or on behalf of the wider community.<sup>182</sup> This requires that contributions are not only regarded as valuable by the provider but are also recognised as such by the recipients of our reciprocating efforts as well. This is because recipients have themselves participated in the production of goods enjoyed by those now obliged to return the favour. Lawrence Becker has framed this point as follows: ‘The good returned will have to be good *for the recipient*, and eventually perceived by the recipient both *as a good* and *as a return*.’<sup>183</sup> I call this condition – that the people receiving others’ reciprocal effort must recognise it as such – the subjective dimension of reciprocity.

The first form of civic labour is contributions made in the marketplace. By joining a company or starting up their own, people are making efforts to provide a service that answers to a human want or need. The second type of civic labour is the contributions made in the public sector, which can be further divided between the provision of ‘merit’ goods (public provision motivated by concerns of distributive justice) and ‘public’ goods (characterised by non-excludability and non-rivalry such as the defence of a country or the supplying of a lighthouse).<sup>184</sup> The third type is care work contributions. Care work describes the efforts made by capable others to satisfy the needs of individuals who cannot meet those needs themselves. This includes the work of looking after children and the infirm.<sup>185</sup>

In all these forms of labour the subjective dimension is at work. First, the market has an important role in organising individuals’ preferences. Others then provide a service which satisfies those preferences: if people are willing to part with money to receive the goods and services provided then we can judge the effort that went into the production of those goods or services to be an effective contribution. It follows that the more people are

---

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* p 98.

<sup>183</sup> Lawrence Becker, *Reciprocity* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) p 107. My emphasis.

<sup>184</sup> White, *The Civic Minimum*, p 100-108

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.* p 110.

willing to pay for the effort manifest in those goods and services, the larger is the contribution that is being made.<sup>186</sup>

White accepts that the presence of a market demand *per se* does not automatically render productive contributions which attempt to satisfy that demand. For example, prostitution, firearms and heroin have both excited considerable market demand but can be deemed illegitimate on grounds of, in the first case, violations of integrity interests, in the second and third, paternalism. These issues are controversial, and White admits that where such controversy exists there is likely to be disagreement as to what labour can count as civic.<sup>187</sup> There are additional limits to market contributions: where public provision is inadequate it could signal excessive production in the private sector and a need to adjust productive priorities. In which case, certain of the market-oriented productive efforts would fail to count as civic labour until appropriate adjustments have been made.

Public sector goods are not validated in the same way as market-generated employment, i.e. through consumer preference and purchase. However, the subjective dimension remains an important measure of the contributive status of public sector provision.<sup>188</sup> In determining whether or not this kind of labour is productive we need to look at whether what it provides is meeting the general interest of the population or if, on the contrary, it is the interest of the sector *itself* that is acting as the spur to production rather than any underlying genuine need.<sup>189</sup> This becomes harder to assess in the absence of the consumer preferences that are available to measure the contributions made in the marketplace.

Yet there remain possible standards to which we refer our reciprocal contributive efforts in the public sector. These efforts are directed toward and checked by the relatively fixed and determinate integrity interests described above.<sup>190</sup> Integrity interests do not admit of the same flexibility and expansiveness as market preferences and the efforts that go into providing them lack ready-made institutional forms, like the market, to facilitate their measurement. However, assuming we can devise means that measure what must be

---

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.* p 99. Again, although objectively these contributions might be large we need a sense of its relation to the ability of the contributor before we can assess whether the obligations of reciprocity have been fulfilled.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.* p 100 & p 124.

<sup>188</sup> 'Contributive' is White's term. See *Ibid.* pp. 97 – 125.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.* p 100

<sup>190</sup> There is also some like the market at work justifying provision of 'merit' goods: if a sufficient number of people want a good provided by the public purse, this justifies its provision. *Ibid.* p 102.

practically done to respond to citizens' integrity interests, the provision of such goods is still checked by reference to the subjective dimension. Public good provision must be recognised as a good and as a return by those who pay for it and receive it. The same applies to care work: when effort expended in care is not recognised as contributive, by the application of some appropriate standard, then it fails to register as answering the reciprocal obligation to contribute.<sup>191</sup>

How much we are expected to contribute depends on our own productive abilities and the type of needs to which we are responding. In ideal circumstances (or sufficiently just non-ideal circumstances as described by the civic minimum) benefits that are accrued generate a reciprocal obligation to contribute. It is only the different *ways* that contribution might be made which present us with problems, the technical details and measurements of that effort. Whether it is through the market, provision of public goods or care work, some productive effort must be made to meet one's obligations.

Individuals are asked to share the benefits and burdens of production. These different accounts of contribution effectively capture our general intuitions regarding what we owe to one another in light of the fulfilment of minimum standards of justice. However, once we step away from ideal circumstances new problems emerge. The only considerations at the ideal level are how much to contribute (depending on my capacity to do so) and the means by which to do it (paid employment in either the market or public sector or care-work). But what do we owe others when these standards are *not* met? Benefits can still be accrued in non-ideal situations: injustice does not have to completely eliminate all benefits to count as injustice. Are these to be benefits enjoyed without *any* need for the return of effort of some kind? Must such efforts conform to the same productive demands, if only in some more limited way?

### *Ideal, Non-Ideal & the Actual*

Productive contributions, which seem thoroughly appropriate in situations of substantive justice, do not necessarily merit the same valuations in situations that are not just. Moreover, the subjective dimension which acts as a measure of those contributions, most explicitly in the case of the market, is unable to track other efforts we have reason to value but which might prove *antagonistic* toward citizen's productive contributions. These are

---

<sup>191</sup> In the case of care work, this appropriate authority need not be the recipients who are often unable to deliver such judgements. As with public provision, integrity interests would do a similar job in justifying this kind of effort.

the efforts of political agitators and campaigners which aim at the disruption of productive contributions. Unfortunately they are insufficiently motivated by White because his account uses the ideal as a framing device for other relevant levels of political theorising.

There are three levels at work within White's account. First, there is the ideal standard of justice as fair-dues reciprocity. In ideal societies the proletarian condition has been fully removed. The obligation to contribute one's efforts to the tasks of productive cooperation through either the market or public service exists at full force: there would be no mitigating circumstance (other than an absence of capacity) to excuse idleness in the face of others' productive efforts.<sup>192</sup> The second level refers to a society which is 'substantially just'. In this situation, individuals would contribute at an intensity close to that of a fully just society. However, there might remain, for instance, concern over matters of brute luck poverty affecting individuals' access to advantage.<sup>193</sup> This second level thus changes, by a matter of degree, the contribution individuals owe to their society. However, the *nature* of the contribution remains the same: it still refers to specifically productive contributions regardless of the shift in levels from the ideal to the non-ideal. We merely have a 'modest downward adjustment of the work expectation'.<sup>194</sup>

The third level – where the proletarian condition has not been noticeably relieved – sustains this understanding of contribution: there is one more downward adjustment of what can be expected of people when there is a substantial distance between their set of circumstances and the ideal formulation of justice. Expectations are still cashed out in terms of *productive* contribution, which is still determined by *current* market valuations and preferences or by reference to the present institutional matrix of public service. To his credit, White expands productive contributions to include care-work and domestic labour. This recognises the extent of the interdependence that underwrites the economy and seeks recognition for these contributions.<sup>195</sup> It is from within present institutional

---

<sup>192</sup> White considers the (fully) ideal version of justice as fair-dues reciprocity at *White, The Civic Minimum*, pp. 78 – 85. For reasons of space I leave out a fuller version of this account. It is White's stipulation of what *non-ideal* circumstances demand that is the focus of this chapter.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.* p 117.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* p 118.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.* Ch. 5. See also Avner Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) pp. 84-85 where he presents data to the effect that large percentages of a country's economic product originates in household production. The contribution of such labour is thus *directly* productive since it supports a great deal of paid employment as well.

structures – replete with their deficiencies – that reciprocating productive efforts are made and the (admittedly downsized) contributory obligations are met.<sup>196</sup>

White recognises the importance of the shifts between the three levels: ‘One important issue concerns how our specification of the basic work expectation should be adjusted to take account of the residual injustices that will characterize a society that satisfies fair reciprocity only in its non-ideal form.’ Further, when these ‘residual injustices’ are particularly intense the basic work expectation disappears: ‘if the disadvantage is great enough, such that the effort to make a contribution is likely to expose individuals to risk of substantial harm, then these individuals have no moral obligation to make a productive contribution to the community’.<sup>197</sup> This idea of substantial harm is filled out, in a footnote, by the idea of a slave’s perfect entitlement to revolt against his master.<sup>198</sup> This is a very low threshold to specify what harm can entail. There is a large gap between the harms slaves suffer and the harms we can be said to suffer in our contemporary situation for instance. Are the harms faced in the context of contemporary capitalism sufficient to disrupt the dialled-down contributions a person makes? Or does this remain in effect until a certain level of immiseration is met, at which point total withdrawal can be legitimated?

I endorse White’s stipulation that a ‘class of disadvantaged individuals is... perfectly entitled to withdraw from active cooperation with the economic system’ when the disadvantages they face are sufficient enough. However, I believe White leaves insufficient space to legitimize such withdrawal in situations that lie somewhere between the abject horrors of slavery and the satisfaction of non-ideal thresholds specified by the proletarian condition. I want to suggest that withdrawals are justified prior to individuals suffering the ‘substantial harms’ to which White refers. This refusal extends even to the dialled-down form White believes remains in effect when circumstances fail to meet the civic minimum. Political campaigns, civil disobedience and general economic disruption are activities which remain under-justified in White’s account. We need a greater sense of the demands that emerge in the gap between non-ideal thresholds and actual reality which *cannot* be fulfilled via people’s productive contributions.

---

<sup>196</sup> Productive contributions that individuals make *beyond* this downwardly adjusted demand could thus be deemed exploitative since people are still asked to work 40 hours week in the face of great injustice. However, it is precisely what other obligations emerge in light of all this which is missing from White’s account. (Though he does make reference to exploitation at White, *The Civic Minimum* p 45- 47 & 62-63).

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.* p 91.

<sup>198</sup> Interestingly, slaves who manage to escape from their masters are also obliged to help fellow slaves in their collective struggle for freedom. *Ibid.* p 247 (24 n).

Charles Mills' notion of the 'ideal as model' elucidates the problem of allowing the level of the ideal to frame the other levels.<sup>199</sup> By idealizing justice in terms of fair reciprocity and allowing it to set a standard that is then employed to measure levels of contribution, we take too little account of the substantial qualitative differences that exist between the demands these three levels make. As Mills put it, 'ideal theory either tacitly represents the actual as a simple deviation from the ideal, not worth theorizing in its own right, or claims that starting from the ideal is at least the best way of realizing it'.<sup>200</sup> Starting with the ideal is one thing. I can afford to be agnostic on this. But allowing it to permeate down into the non-ideal and actual is to understand those 'lesser' levels only in terms of their failure to meet the ideal: 'we are abstracting away from realities crucial to our comprehension of the actual workings of injustice in human interactions and social institutions, and thereby guaranteeing that the ideal-as-idealized-model will never be achieved'.<sup>201</sup> The ideal cannot have this all-encompassing role. While ideal models can act as 'paradise islands' (to borrow Ingrid Robeyns' phrase),<sup>202</sup> the image of standards and practices we can hope to approach, they do not tell us *how* to get closer to those islands and the quality of the work that is required at the other levels.

Until we reach those thresholds of justice, harm, however minimal, will continue to be suffered. The issue is thus in specifying what makes this harm substantial enough to justify refusals to productively contribute. White offers some resources toward the answering of this question: when our integrity interests are adversely impacted on we can be said to suffer harm. Where they are harmed to a significant degree, these become substantial harms. However, excepting the case of the slave, fleshing out what these substantial harms amount to in the actual world is not an easy task. What is more, why should only *substantial* harms matter? Why isn't it enough that harms are suffered to legitimate work in the name of justice, even if this means one's productive contributions are reduced beyond the demand set by a downward adjustment of a basic work expectation?

When our obligations are framed in purely productive terms we lose a sense of other obligations that might emerge at the non-ideal and actual levels. Since we only have so much effort (time and energy) to give, these other obligations can draw us *away* from

---

<sup>199</sup> Charles W. Mills, 'Ideal Theory as Ideology', *Hypatia*, 20:3 (2005) pp. 165-184.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.* p 168.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.* p 170.

<sup>202</sup> Ingrid Robeyns, 'Ideal Theory in Theory and Practice', *Social Theory and Practice*, 34:3 (2008) p 361.

and *conflict* with productive civic labour.<sup>203</sup> Without determining the status of these other obligations in non-ideal and actual worlds we are left at a loss in trying to determine the status of contribution when it is *not* directly productive. This is particularly strained given the emphasis White places on certain of our reciprocal actions being perceived as such by fellow members of our community.<sup>204</sup> There is thus an unresolved tension between the (reduced) demand to contribute and the other tasks and the obligations they might conceivably generate which are also highly demanding, ‘effortful’ enterprises.

At work in White’s account seems to be an image of society as a ledger in which individuals chalk up *only* their productive deposits and withdrawals. We take a share of the goods produced by social cooperation and in so doing establish in others an expectation for our reciprocal efforts. In order for withdrawals to be legitimate, deposits of a productive variety have to be made. I assume with White that it is possible to devise a ledger in such a way that the various differences between individuals’ capacities to expend effort can be properly accounted for. This would therefore shift reciprocity conceived as ‘strictly proportional’ toward the less demanding conception of ‘fair-dues reciprocity’: the less capable can do objectively less than the more talented but not be punished for the lack of equality between their abilities.<sup>205</sup> Effort is a relative phenomenon that is to be measured against some pre-established, unchosen capacity to expend and does not demand the same objective contributions from the less fortunate as it does from the more.<sup>206</sup>

However, it remains a ledger with a very specific notion of what is to count as a deposit, i.e. a *productive* contribution. But what happens when we consider the efforts of someone who withdraws their efforts from the marketplace in order to ply them elsewhere, in the pursuit of something she calls ‘social justice?’ Which side of the ledger’s line are her contributions to lie? Certainly, the organisation of protests can be costly from the point of view of the public purse: police involvement, disruptions to transport

---

<sup>203</sup> For an account that does consider these other obligations in the light of a failure of substantial background justice, see Tommie Shelby, ‘Justice, Deviance and the Dark Ghetto’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 35:2 (2007) pp. 126 – 160. White does mention the more basic obligations of non-aggression and civility which are not subject to the justness of economic institutions. But these are far less substantive than those I am detailing. See White, ‘A Progressive Politics of Responsibility: What would it look like?’, p 9.

<sup>204</sup> This is especially clear in his linking of contribution to the marketplace where we measure the efforts we make against the willingness of people to pay for them. White, *The Civic Minimum* pp. 63 & 99. What we return to the community must be perceived by the recipients as both a good and a return. See also Becker, *Reciprocity*, p 107.

<sup>205</sup> White, *The Civic Minimum*, p 49-50.

<sup>206</sup> This has obvious resonances with Roemer’s model from the previous chapter, though here put to very different uses, i.e. as a measure of contribution and not of responsibility per se.



infrastructure, interruptions in trade etc. These particular efforts, unless adequately balanced by productive contributions made at other times might appear parasitical and as large deductions from her societal ledger. They are efforts that are made *at the expense of* a person's productive endeavours: when she is on the street protesting, she is not at a desk/on the shop floor/in the house/factory putting in her shift.

Tying the value of effort so closely to the issue of production can lead to the valorisation of certain kinds of contributory effort and the detriment of others. In being so closely tied to this paradigm of productive contributions, the different ways people's efforts build relations between them are too narrowly understood. What is more, tying effort to contribution in this way may introduce a sense in which the more obviously productive effort is to be more esteemed: the more we produce for the community (including in that community's non-ideal and actual form) the more we are seen as answering to the demands of reciprocity. Of course, in non-ideal situations, given the downward adjustment to what we are expected to do, we can also contribute *more* than is demanded by justice. But there are other metrics which might still count as contributory even though they fail as either productive or even, to some extent at least, reciprocal.

### *Agitation*

White's model requires resources that enable us to move from within situations characterised by potentially profound and wide-spread injustices *toward* situations that better satisfy the thresholds constitutive of the civic minimum. It will, after all, take great effort to more fairly redistribute the burdens associated with our collective labours. Such efforts incur significant costs for the people attempting to enact changes in the relations between people. However, these efforts go unsupported in White's model because the obligation to contribute productively, at least until a level of substantial harm has been reached, remains a metric by which all citizens should check their efforts.<sup>207</sup> Where such substantial harms do not exist, agitators and activists can be described as behaving parasitically.

---

<sup>207</sup> In the final chapter I propose an unconditional basic income sufficient enough to support agitation. White's proposals, which will be discussed in greater detail there, are extensive but not sufficient to the needs of the agitator.

The efforts of many political activists (of all stripes) are *intended* as contributions to the public good, beneficial to others as well as themselves.<sup>208</sup> At one point, White considers possible methods of generating ‘public-spirited preferences’ in the citizens of a community as a means of maintaining efficiency in the production of public sector goods. He discusses institutional measures like assemblies and citizen juries as means to these ends.<sup>209</sup> However, nowhere does he offer an account of political activists or agitators as possible means of generating public-spirited preferences.<sup>210</sup> Activism incorporates a diverse range of activity including strikes, petitions, marches, lock-ins and various forms of civil disobedience. Through the use of such means, political activists hope to bring attention to and help affect remedies to perceived injustices. In the long term, such activity can force shifts in the practices and norms by which a society functions.

It would seem odd to describe such activism as productive, at least within current understandings of what productive contributions amount to.<sup>211</sup> Strikes, civil disobedience and the like are not made as a return for benefits received – as is demanded by the subjective dimension implied by reciprocity. Their intentions are rather to *disrupt* productive contributions, both of the agitators themselves and of other non-agitating citizens. These other citizens, who do fulfil their dialled-down productive contributions (and probably more) might balk at the suggestion that agitators should register as contributory. Not only do they not perceive the agitator’s efforts as productive, neither do they register them as contributory. Instead, they assume the same status as parasites, receiving public goods to which they offer inadequate reciprocal effort. Indeed, given that they *disrupt* the productive efforts of others, they are worse than parasites who merely fail to contribute.

---

<sup>208</sup> Of course, some political activism, if we can call it that, might be done only for the benefit of a minority and at the expense of wider, public goods. Lobbying would be just such an example.

<sup>209</sup> White, *The Civic Minimum* pp. 107 – 108.

<sup>210</sup> Though such public-spirited preferences would not necessarily be limited to the production of public goods.

<sup>211</sup> See White, ‘A Progressive Politics of Responsibility: What would it look like?’, esp. pp. 11-12. White recognises the possibility of conflicts between different kinds of contributing obligations. However, with its singular emphasis on the *deliberative* aspect of politics it ignores the struggles and controversy I am at pains to emphasise is also part of the political realm. (Hence the use of the term agitator). More than that, that these struggles are made in the teeth of popular contempt framed precisely in the terms of non-contribution. The navigation of these tensions is thus left unexplored. For another appraisal of political activity beyond the competencies required for merely deliberative democracy, see Michael Walzer, *Politics and Passion* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2005) pp. 90-109.

There *is* a sense in which agitators are being non-reciprocal in their efforts. Agitators violate the subjective dimension implicit in the concept of reciprocity.<sup>212</sup> As Becker puts it: 'the mere recognition of a benefit seems to generate a sense of obligation to repay.'<sup>213</sup> Part of this repayment is that it should fulfil the subjective dimension of reciprocity: repayment should be recognised as a good by the producer of the original benefit who regards reciprocal contributions as an expression of democratic mutual regard. Agitators ignore this condition, using and accepting (at least some of) the goods produced by others whilst not referring their own efforts to the standard that at least part of that effort be repayment in kind.<sup>214</sup> The provider of goods can like it or lump it: agitators will use their efforts for something *they* and their co-agitators recognise as good. In the long-run, they might well be vindicated in their refusal to reciprocate, even by citizens currently labelling them parasites. In such a case where their efforts are successful, their parasitism might be retroactively excused and recognised as legitimate.<sup>215</sup> However, efforts expended as a response to these other standards set by agitations exist in tension with other productive citizens' demands for reciprocal *productive* contributions.

### *Defining Contribution*

Agitators often aim at challenging the practices surrounding the production of goods and the status of contributions deemed productive. Consider feminists who campaign(ed) for the recognition of housework as productive labour.<sup>216</sup> Their collective efforts aimed at altering and expanding the perceptions citizens have of their own and others' contributions. Through feminist campaigning, popular understandings of what activity is to count as contributory are altered. Rather than confining contribution to paid-employment, our understandings of contribution are significantly expanded. Citizens should be properly understood as being at work when engaged in the tasks of the household. Yet it is hard to see the endeavour of feminists' campaigning in terms of tit-for-tat exchange. Their efforts came *prior* to such exchanges and are not the *currency* of exchange. Their efforts renew the

---

<sup>212</sup> This can also be characterised as agitators not 'taking their turns' in fulfilling productive obligations. See Robert Goodin, *Motivating Political Morality* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992) p 23-24.

<sup>213</sup> Becker, *Reciprocity*, p 73.

<sup>214</sup> The use of 'accept' is supposed to account for the problems of 'innocent bystanders' who might be merely incidentally involved in the *receipt* of benefits. On this distinction see A.J. Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligation* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1979) pp. 118 – 136.

<sup>215</sup> There are other standards at work which constrain the efforts of agitators, including the integrity interests White elucidates. It will not do, as part of civil disobedience, to invade the physical integrity of innocent bystanders for example.

<sup>216</sup> See for instance Nancy Folbre, *Who Pays for the Kids?: Gender and the Structures of Constraint* (London: Routledge, 1994) esp. pp. 91 – 125.

conditions for exchange and reframe contributions in such a way that we come to regard productive efforts in new lights.

Even seemingly obvious understandings of the *form* of contributions are the result of historical contingency and, more importantly, struggle. For instance, in the case of American labour movements, the idea of being paid for one's time *at* work, as opposed to a piece of work that one has helped produce, was not an immediately apparent notion.<sup>217</sup> It took one particular section of the workforce made vulnerable by certain changes in working practice – specifically the journeyman carpenters in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century – to fight for the recognition of work as hours laboured. Time was thereby instituted as the correct measure of both contribution and entitlement.<sup>218</sup> This led to various changes in the practices of labour organisation and, indeed, to later struggles aimed at limiting the length of the working day. (Workers also had to insist on a town bell separate from the factory to prevent bosses from manipulating the length of the working day).<sup>219</sup> The very idea of contribution – how it is understood, measured and therefore the manner in which it can be reciprocated – is itself privy to the changes practices undergo when people engaged with them challenge the status quo. It is worth noting that when the ten-hour day was first suggested in the American context it was described as 'absurd', a sure way of crippling industry and the nation's wealth.<sup>220</sup>

White repeatedly emphasises how difficult it is to pin down the precise structure and content of contribution.<sup>221</sup> However, he does not pay sufficient attention to the need for agitators to participate in the process of defining and refining the meaning of contribution. The efforts of various agitators and campaigners have changed not just what kinds of effort we recognise as productive but also the *amount* of effort that qualifies as such. Reductions in working hours and rises in wages have often been won by agitators who, at the inception of their respective movements, were described as baulking against the way the world inescapably *is* and has been since time-immemorial. Their efforts at social change were regarded as a waste of what could otherwise have been useful, productive energy.

---

<sup>217</sup> David Brody, *In Labor's Cause: Main Themes on the History of the American Worker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.* p 32-33.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.* p 29.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.* p 3.

<sup>221</sup> White, *The Civic Minimum* p 124.

Conversely, where now we have laws recognising as legitimate the income accrued by owners of capital, we may later, following successful socialist campaigning, outlaw such income because it fails as a sufficiently contributory form of effort.<sup>222</sup> Income accrued to advertising firms may also suffer a similar fate given the plausibly adverse effects it has on the priorities of young and old alike.<sup>223</sup> By admitting or denying different activities the moniker of 'contributory', we change what it is a person can do in order to be seen acting with appropriate democratic regard. Capitalist and advertising executives are possible candidates for future non-reciprocators, however productive their activity might currently be regarded.

The process of revising what we understand as contribution, as in the example of feminist and labour campaigns, is better understood as a consequence of victories accrued through battles that are far from easily won. Moving from the actual to the non-ideal to the ever more substantively just are not easy accomplishments. They are sticky and hazardous processes marked by potential wrong turns and failures. Moves made and adversarial strategies employed by organised labour throughout the world have been an essential part of filling out an idea of democratic mutual regard. It is through such movements that workers' have been able to constrain the rights and status enjoyed by the employer. We might then characterise the battles between organised labour and the owners of capital as a working out of the terms of democratic mutual regard. Both sides of this on-going dispute are likely to have a different sense of what is owed to them. Unless we believe we have reached some era of stasis, these battles are in reality a long way from being concluded.

In this vein, David Brody warns against the idea that trade unions should shift *toward* a more accommodating, cooperative model of organisation and emphasis, and away from being predominantly adversarial in their tactics and strategy. He advises against

---

<sup>222</sup> See G.A. Cohen, *History, Labour & Freedom: Themes from Marx* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) p 228 for an updated version of the labour theory of value which retains the exploitative, non-contributing dimension of capital ownership.

<sup>223</sup> Indeed, such nonsense often comes mightily close to Frankfurt's definition of 'bullshit', something he finds so ubiquitous a feature of our society. *On Bullshit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) pp. 22 & 30. For instance; 'the realms of advertising and of public relations... are replete with instances of bullshit so unmitigated that they can serve among the most indisputable and classic paradigms of the concept'; their activity is 'unconnected with a concern for the truth... not germane to the enterprise of describing reality'. Confirming the 'contributions' these industries make as fulfilling the 'productive obligation' might well be interfering with those other obligations- those recognised by the political agitator for instance- which cannot be considered purely 'productive' but which do their best to fight through the bullshit.

‘retreating from a “them and us” orientation’.<sup>224</sup> This orientation does not seek to resolve tensions by acts of mutual compromise. By taking part in strikes, lock-ins, boycotts and other forms of labour agitation, trade unionists are not compromising with capitalists’ demands but are actively resisting them: capitalist ends are not workers’ and vice versa. Their respective views of what is owed to the other party in the name of democratic mutual regard are not necessarily – or even likely to be – mutually compatible.

This is not an orientation that everyone views with equal affection. Many will believe that any kind of adversarial politics which frames gains as necessarily zero-sum, extracted from an opponent as opposed to emerging from agreement with cooperating fellow-members, is incompatible with a purported ambition to ensure the sharing of benefits and burdens. However, friction between capital and labour is likely to persist because what is to count as an appropriate contribution from each party is a question that remains open to dispute. For labour, agitation is a crucial tool in sustaining that dispute and keeping the question alive. For capitalists, it is a thorn in their side with which they would rather not have to deal. They would rather the other side simply got on with their productive contributions.

Acknowledging the great efforts and feats of courage performed by participants in historic social movements for justice, we gain a sense of the dangers they confronted in order to bring about the changes they sought. To be successful these movements required a great deal of consistent and sustained effort, often in the teeth of great prejudice and strongly held alternative views. This reveals the historic contingency that underlies the notion of contribution, and the enduring battle of ideas framing and making sense of what it means to contribute and the entitlements that are a consequence of those contributions. White identifies the fluctuations associated with the struggle of citizens engaged in care work for recognition of their contributive efforts.<sup>225</sup> But he does so without sufficiently reflecting on the historical struggles, trial and error, reluctant publics and sometimes violent protest *underlying* our very ability to recognise it as such.

---

<sup>224</sup> David Brody, ‘The Breakdown of Labour’s Social Contract’, in Nicolaus Mills, ed. *Legacy of Dissent* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1994) p 386.

<sup>225</sup> White, ‘A Progressive Politics of Responsibility: What would it look like?’, p 10. White, *The Civic Minimum*, p 110. See also David Brennan, ‘Defending the Indefensible? Culture’s Role in the Productive/Unproductive Dichotomy’, *Feminist Economics*, 12:3, (2006) pp. 403 – 425. for an account of how understandings of production have developed as a result of changing cultural norms and understandings.

As a consequence of the real world's continuing imperfections and failure to approximate the thresholds set by the civic minimum, there is likely to remain a tension between the tasks and obligations surrounding agitation and the demands of 'productive contribution'. When individual contributions are to be checked by reference to a notion of productivity alone, without sufficiently motivating other possible demands made of our efforts, tendencies somewhat conservative and protective of the status quo could be one of the conceivable outcomes.

On White's account, in order to avoid parasitism and still enjoy the fruits of economic cooperation, our efforts must ultimately be checked by reference to whether or not we are acting reciprocally in a productivist sense. According to this (and taking into account the *reduced* demand to contribute in situations not enjoying substantive justice), if we expend effort in such a way that a) does not contribute to the overall productivity of the community b) is not sufficiently high compared to our capacity, we are behaving parasitically. The efforts made by strikers, abolitionists and protestors of various stripes have all, in their day, been accused of parasitism and disrespect for productive norms.

What is more, effort to reciprocate the other's productive endeavours seems to come before other efforts. So long as a person's agitating efforts in any way involve or draw on the goods produced by a community's collective endeavours the question remains: what gives the agitators the right to enjoy these goods when their contributions are directed at ends other contributors do not recognise as goods at all? This productive ethic therefore comes prior to our other contributive efforts which do *not* conform to a standard of production.<sup>226</sup>

In one respect this is an unfair characterisation of White, who acknowledges that we cannot always use the logic of productive contribution when considering entitlements. For example, in considering the limits of the endowment-egalitarian agenda and its enthusiasm for a marriage between justice and efficiency, he argues that redistribution to the elderly or disabled cannot be viewed in terms of 'investment expenditures' and are purely the transfer of assets. They are still, however, a way of expressing democratic mutual regard by providing for those we recognise as disadvantaged *even though* the

---

<sup>226</sup> As above, suffering substantial harm permits a total withdrawal of one's productive labour and a termination of any *possible* reciprocal labour: any labour that is forthcoming in this situation cannot be described as reciprocating. White, *The Civic Minimum* p 91.

transfers may reduce the community's competitive strength.<sup>227</sup> This lack of capacity is a means of 'escape' from the demand to make productive contributions and also from the charge of parasitism. White does not, however, consider the transfer of assets to fully capable, minimally/non-productive or disruptive agitators and campaigners who aim, for example, at challenging the practices and norms of production.

Importantly, the work of the agitator has no guarantee of success attached to it. Protests against agitation often focus on the feasibility of the movement's proposals. Agitators are accused of being too hasty or naïve in their demands, or else asking for things that are opposed to the way things intractably must be. Sometimes their demands are dismissed because they are likely to produce unintended and unwanted or dangerous consequences. The viability of the current ways of doing things proves itself in the fact it exists: imperfections abound perhaps, but we have the means to cope with these to a large extent. Anything that departs too swiftly or completely from the current *modus operandi* is destined for failure.

### *Failures to Contribute*

There is an important distinction White makes regarding the status of a person's failure to contribute. On the one hand, there are capable individuals with adequate opportunity who fail to contribute productively. On the other, there are failures subsequent to the 'reasonable' efforts individuals make to find the means to contribute, i.e. by looking for a job. The search itself should still be rewarded, on White's account, because even those who fail to find work have demonstrated that they accept the demand for reciprocal productive activity.

The search for work is supported by public financing. This can take the form of money for (re)training, assistance in identifying relevant opportunities, transport to and from interviews etc. Where the search ends in failure democratic mutual regard is still being expressed by the *attempt* individuals make to alleviate the collective burdens of others and contribute to the public purse. It is a respectful attempt to stop exploiting the productive. However, in an objective sense exploitation and parasitism remain because the group would be better off (if only in a strictly economic sense) if failing individuals were not amongst its membership.

---

<sup>227</sup> Stuart White, 'What do Egalitarians Want?' in Jane Franklin, ed. *Equality* (London: London Institute for Policy Research, 1997) p 75.



This constitutes a possible gap between the various concepts employed by White. What if, in doing nothing, people were less of a drain than if they used up state resources to have a stab at being contributive but end up squandering those resources? Individuals could very much want to try their hand at a variety of things and might draw on state support to do so. But there could conceivably be virtue in their checking such desires in the light of predictable failure. Individuals exercise restraint (and possibly democratic mutual regard) as a means of evading the charge of parasitism, doing things that are not strictly productive but which are also not wasteful.

Furthermore, after having tried and failed to reduce their burdensomeness, in fact merely exacerbating it by taking even *more* of the community's resources, what are the likely consequences for people's self-esteem? It is possible that, referring to the greater goal of productivity, I (and government agencies acting on my behalf) might calculate that doing nothing would be just as effective in *reducing* my parasitic presence, accepting my failures with good grace, preferring to be worthless to a lesser extent since this is all that is left me. My attempt thus acts, in part, as a shameful revelation of my own inadequacy exacerbated by my understanding that I am now *wholly* parasitical.<sup>228</sup> This is the possible spectre of uselessness, highlighting the risks of tying effort too broadly to the productive reciprocal-demand, creating painful situations for a community's most vulnerable members.

White recognises this argument but does not find it decisive, precisely because if one has *genuinely* attempted to follow through on a norm of reciprocity by seriously looking for work and making efforts to improve employability, any consequent shame is likely to be inappropriate. Moreover, the alternative would be to let individuals decide on their own uselessness and avoid being contested on that decision. Of course, however inappropriate this shame is, this will not stop it occurring. But in the real world where we can take certain direct action to alleviate obstacles standing in the way of a person's ability to productively contribute, we should not stop at simply labelling shame appropriate or otherwise. Rather, White suggests, we should attempt direct intervention into the causes of continued failure and alleviate 'inappropriate shame' by employing practical measures

---

<sup>228</sup> Jonathan Wolff, 'Fairness, Respect, and the Egalitarian Ethos', *Ethics*, 27:1 (1998) p 97.

to remove the very source of someone's difficulty,<sup>229</sup> perhaps by ensuring that there are adequate opportunities for people of all abilities in the labour-market.<sup>230</sup>

I agree with White in his characterisation of this kind of failure: he may well be right that the shame individuals feel after having expended sufficient amounts of effort relative to their capacity is unnecessary. In such cases, shame is the result of individuals measuring themselves against inappropriate metrics, i.e. measures of contribution which they, unfortunately, are simply unable to live up to regardless of the effort they expend. However, there are other kinds of failure White cannot treat in this way. These are failures in the efforts directed at altering the practices and understandings underlying currently conceived 'productive contributions'. In distinction to the failures of individuals who are incapable of contributing productively, failed campaigners and agitators *do* possess the means and capacities to contribute in directly *productive* ways. Rather than using those capacities in ways that failed to change the world for the better, they could have turned them toward productive contributions for the marketplace or public sector.

Failure for the agitators and campaigners can be determined in a number of ways. Sometimes it will be failure to enact their immediate ends and goals. This might refer to a specific policy they wished to overturn or introduce. However, there are also the longer term ends which admit of continuing frustration and failure, failures that often reach beyond the finitude of a generation and stretch on for decades. In such situations, no change is definitively wrought in the views of the population at large and the agitating efforts continue to be deemed pernicious, wasteful or, at best, naïve, unrealistic and nonreciprocal. Such failures cannot be collapsed so easily into an appeal to democratic mutual regard.

There is thus a wider issue at stake within the conceptual framework White devises concerning the appropriate treatment of failure. There are the failures of individuals who *try* to contribute productively to their communities and then fail. Then there are those who try to shift social understandings of democratic mutual regard or enact new practices conducive to justice, and then fail. These second kinds of failure are of a different quality because the individuals in question *could* contribute in productive ways by making deposits on their societal ledgers and sharing in the burdens of collective 'civic labour'. However, instead of doing that activists decide to direct their attentions toward other goals

---

<sup>229</sup> Stuart White, 'What's Wrong with Workfare?', *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 21: 3 (2004) p 274.

<sup>230</sup> White, *The Civic Minimum*, p 135.

measured by other standards, less easily articulated and organised than market preferences or the goods of public provision. It is by appealing to these other standards that her activity conflicts with the subjective dimension of the structure of reciprocity.

The problem arises when the individual is asked to weigh up her contributions: efforts which accord to productivity and those, more experimental in nature (and thus more prone to failures, retreats and abandonments), which aim at bringing us closer to as yet unsubstantiated and not entirely articulate standards of justice. Again, from the annals of the history of labour, just such a story can be told. American 'workingmen parties' which started to develop in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century were very fragile institutions. 'They lacked funds, seasoned leaders, precedents to follow... Everywhere, the workingmen's parties proved highly vulnerable to the machinations of the established parties.'<sup>231</sup> On average these parties lived scarcely two years and by the mid-1830s this 'first surge' of American labour politics had disappeared.

These parties were not effortless creations. They required organisation, diligence, imagination on the part of leaders and members. Moreover, it required all this in the face of a great deal of opposition, public scepticism and hostility and, perhaps most importantly, a lack of precedents on which they could draw for example and inspiration. Whole lives would have been dedicated to the ends of these failed institutions, dedication that could plausibly have occurred at the direct expense of production. Where they could have been more productive they were not: they removed their labours from the workforce and set about organising *against* the very terms of theirs and other's productive labour. Some full time agitators might have withdrawn from work altogether and dedicated themselves solely to the fulfilment of organisational duties. Certainly, such efforts have cumulative effects which can be built upon by later instances of labour politics. But such success is not guaranteed and in some instances is perhaps very unlikely. However, for all that unlikelihood, we should be wary of treating productive contributions as holding the main claim to our diligence, attachments and the general direction of our efforts.

A famous example of someone engaged in full-time agitation is Karl Marx. Marx and his family lived in often considerable poverty. While Marx earned some money through journalism and publications he was also helped – out of often dire straits – by the considerable sums of money donated by his close friend and writing partner Friedrich

---

<sup>231</sup> Brody, *In Labour's Cause*, p 46.

Engels.<sup>232</sup> Marx was a very capable man, who might well have been immensely productive if not engaged in his own work of activism. Certainly he and his family bore the costs of his lack of productivity and this would temper any claim of parasitism: there was no welfare state for him to draw on and complete his work and thus no productive members of the community whose wrath he could incur. Instead, he drew on the largess of friends only too willing and able to assist. But should we allow agitators, even those who will ultimately lack the influence of so huge a figure as Marx, to bear the costs of such poverty and degradation when their work aims at improving society? Are there not possible means of *funding* such agitation precisely to offset those costs and encourage this variety of contribution? In chapter 6, I look at one possible policy intended for this aim.

### *What to do with the Status Quo?*

Tensions between productive contribution and the transitional tasks generated by unjust practices and situations are not easily resolved. White provides us with possible standards (in the form of the civic minimum) to *evaluate* the efforts expended in the carrying out of those others tasks and the obligations associated with them. What his account lacks, however, is the sense in which such obligations and the efforts they inevitably imply are to be measured against the productive contributions we are also called on to make. The means to resolve the different responsibilities (on the one hand, the call to make productive contributions; on the other, the draw to engage with campaigns, agitation and protest) is likely to always be fraught with ambiguity at the level of individual motivation and decision. In the terms I employed in the opening chapter, the allocative decisions we make with regards to the question 'How should I spend my efforts and energies in contributing to my community?' is an issue we cannot dodge. However, for the sake of greater social justice, productivity cannot have final arbitration in deciding what contributions a person makes.

Where and how to make a productive contribution is always from within an already existing set of institutions and practices, from a particular location in space and time. When we engage in productive efforts we are not only contributing to the commonweal. We are also contributing to the *sustaining* of collective practices which are currently considered – however imperfectly – productive of a community's 'shared good(s)'. How we produce and

---

<sup>232</sup> David McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1973) p 265. This assistance was not enough to prevent four of his and Eleanor's seven children dying before reaching adulthood. See *Ibid.* p 461.

consume in the world is always from within an on-going set of practices which are connected in myriad ways with the performance of similar acts by others, some (if not most) of whom will assume significant costs as a result of their participation. The drinking of a cup of coffee is a simple case in point: the low wages paid to the staff and the even lower wages and worse working conditions borne by the farmers picking beans in the majoritarian world are all preserved by purchases of said coffee.

But such practices are not inevitable or intractable elements of our reality. As Iris Marion Young, drawing on Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of *practico-inertia*, puts it: 'The accumulated effects of past actions and decisions have left their mark on the physical world, opening some possibilities for present and future action and foreclosing others, or at least making them difficult'.<sup>233</sup> We experience 'passively' what were in fact past actions and decisions and which have been marked by human projects and culture. We reify them and consider the constraints they produce and sustain as objective parts of reality which 'continue to condition contemporary possibilities for action even as we try to transform them'.<sup>234</sup> By making our contributions from within these reified practices we also preserve their imperfection and injustices: letting business 'go on as usual' is to implicitly accept those constraints, the actions they make possible and the relations they establish.

In so preserving and reifying these practices and the ways they shape our interactions with one another we preserve their inadequacies and injustices. Breaking through the crust of such practices before altering them is unlikely to be an easy task. It will require (potentially enormous) changes at the institutional level, a great deal of which will be without ready-to-hand roadmaps or blueprints to effectively organise the imagination, strategies and intentions of its participants. In other words, such attempts are likely to be largely experimental involving trial and error, missteps and retreats, demanding hard-fought changes in public perception and constant efforts aimed at retention of these changes.<sup>235</sup> When Rawls says 'unjust social arrangements are themselves a kind of extortion, even violence, and consent to them does not bind' he seems to be allowing for

---

<sup>233</sup> Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, p 53.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.* p 55.

<sup>235</sup> These experiments are not free-form and without precedent. They will often draw on the traditions of which the specific movement or campaign might form a part. However, even with these traditional resources the actions, intentions and struggles are all essentially novel and experimental and therefore liable to the usual mistakes and blunders. See Maurice Glasman, 'Labour as a Radical Tradition', *Soundings*, 46 (2010) pp. 31- 41 for a particular account of the resources and historical legacy of Labour tradition within the UK. For a more far-reaching account Paul Mason, *Live Working or Die Fighting* (London: Random House, 2007) provides a detailed exposition of the (global) heroes of the labour movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

just this kind of experimental refusal to sustain.<sup>236</sup> If current arrangements fail to bind we must find some that do: agitation is part of this discovery.

With the successful performance of these refusals and the subsequent changes they bring about, the movements, campaigns and individual actions will have impacted on the world and brought about an objective shift to the ways in which everyday life is conducted. They will have reshaped and reconstituted that *practico-inertia* around different practices, habits and ways of doing things. Again, these are experienced as objective and reified and we will settle into experiencing them passively as constraints that cannot be usurped. Until, that is, the crust is once more removed for the next round of change that reveals the essential contingency of our situations. Without these attempts we get locked into unchanging, unjust interactions which nonetheless allow for and facilitate the (dialled-down) productive contributions that it is our purported duty to fulfil.

But what is the status of the effort that sets about tearing the crust from reified social processes? How do they weigh against those productive efforts that reify and reproduce the already existing practices and habits? White's account *reduces* the demand to work in non-ideal and real-world circumstances. But there is only a limited substantive account of other possible avenues of expenditure which reshape the terms of productive contribution but which may nonetheless fail to match up with the terms of productivity as they currently exist. On many occasions, these other efforts will conflict with the perceptions of some, perhaps a majority of people, regarding what they are owed by their fellow-citizens in the name of reciprocity, even at that dialled-down level appropriate to non-ideal circumstances.

Interestingly, elsewhere in his later work White supplies himself with more substantial tools to handle these problematic tensions. Discussing the republican strain in Rawls' work, White argues that although Rawls does not (and cannot) embrace 'civic humanism' – the notion that political participation is a particularly important instance of the good life – he can conditionally accept that for the sake of the stability of just institutions the republican prescription of active citizen engagement is legitimate.<sup>237</sup> Precisely what this engagement amounts to in non-ideal terms, beyond a minimum

---

<sup>236</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p 302.

<sup>237</sup> Stuart White, 'Property-Owning Democracy and Republican Citizenship' in O'Neill & Williamson, *Property Owning Democracy*, pp. 129 – 146 . Indeed, at p 136 White comes very close to framing the republican political efforts as directly contributory thus implicitly recognising another possible source of contribution distinct from that of productivity. See also White, 'A Progressive Politics of Responsibility: What would it look like?'.

threshold of voting and being informed to some degree on relevant policy issues, is not fully spelled-out.<sup>238</sup> Nevertheless, White does, on instrumental grounds, support the need for an active citizenry as a possible boon for the sustaining of already just institutions.<sup>239</sup> However, there is no specific mention of the agitator as a possible instance of this instrumentally necessary participation.

White's account, like Roemer's, does deliver far-reaching and radical proposals. For instance, he proposes a two-tiered package of welfare support. Guided by what White calls 'legitimate paternalistic considerations' and the 'distributive aims of fair reciprocity', he proposes 'a work tested income support underpinned by a form of (time-limited) republican basic income'.<sup>240</sup> This republican income acts as an emergency measure, to be activated when that first tier of work-related welfare support fails to pick citizens up. It therefore allows the individual the time and space to develop a strategy to solve their personal crises without too much insecurity and cost. No mention, however, is made of the possible boons of this type of income for activists and agitators: contributions they make are not figured in this model as a legitimate part of citizen participation.<sup>241</sup> In the final chapter I consider a particular policy explicitly designed to support agitations and its proponents.

In a world that is at any significant distance from an approximation of ideal standards, we cannot merely continue to participate in institutions already existing since these are, in maintaining current practices, also part of the problem. Our 'dispositions' to support and be loyal to *just* institutions require that we find ways out of current unjust arrangements and toward institutions worthier of our loyalty and support. Any changes that come about will require the disrupting forces of certain agents whose effort might collide with the (dialled-down) productive contributions they are called on to make. How are these to be weighed against one another? Most especially when we think of individuals joining the struggle (as they might see it), the fear of being labelled parasitic and non-contributory could prevent the accumulation of actions and movements that are part of

---

<sup>238</sup> Again, at White, 'Property-Ownning Democracy and Republican Citizenship' p 135, we gain a sense of reciprocity learned in institutions that are *already* just but no sense of what this reciprocity looks like *without* the bulwark of just institutions in the slippery and murky world of the non-ideal and the actual.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.* p 132.

<sup>240</sup> White, *The Civic Minimum* p 175.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.* p 202. White *does* recognise possible conflicts in priority that might exist when attempting to produce this civic minimum. However, there is a failure to recognise this specific tension between productive contributions on the one hand and on the other the experimental, hazardous tasks of political change that are not directly legitimated by the perceptions of fellow-citizens.

campaigns necessary for change. Returning to that motivational question of ‘what to do with my efforts?’ and given the necessity to enact some kind of trade-off between these varieties of contributions, individuals might well opt for the safer course of action and thereby preserve unjust practices and interactions through continuing their economic activity.

### *Conclusion*

Reciprocity is a fundamental aspect of our social lives. In order to flourish and develop we need the (sometimes considerable) assistance of others. This need is particularly evident within the family but is equally inescapable as part of our wider social existence. In order to sustain these relationships –and thus the assistance they imply – we need to show that we are similarly willing to return the favour. This requires reciprocity, the willingness to make sufficient effort – ‘sufficiency’ obviously allowing for a great deal of interpretation – to return efforts made by others.

These matters are of course complicated by a number of factors. First, capacities across persons can admit of great differences so that one person’s provision of goods requires much less effort than someone else’s return of a similar kind. Additionally, this might not be a matter of a capacity but of institutional advantage. The public school boy blessed with all the privileges society has to offer may find his becoming a lawyer/politician/doctor or whatever else less burdensome than the individual who lacks all this and ends up stacking shelves in a supermarket. Both contribute and both reciprocate but one person finds this much easier than the other.

White performs a considerable service in outlining the conditions of an ideal situation within which reciprocity can be fully established. He explicates in depth the background it is necessary to institute in order for demands of contribution to be just. What is more, he expands reciprocity to include those at the upper echelons of society who benefit from inheritance and other unearned advantage. Such citizens must also recognise an obligation to others that cannot be met by the advantages supplied by brute fortune but which must rather come from a *real* expenditure of effort.

However, problems begin to arise when we move away from this ideal situation into the non-ideal world (where there might be some degree of proximity to the ideal) and the actual (our world as it exists today and the additional distance that implies). Productive contributions in these situations are only dialled down. They are not qualitatively altered.



In an ideal situation we would be expected to give more of ourselves but our contributions in the non-ideal and actual are still made with reference to productivity. And this productivity, in its turn, is measured according to the satisfaction of preferences and answering of needs as they exist today.

Effort which does not refer to these metric, that does not wish to share in the burdens of production in this direct way, is not *necessarily* condemned as parasitic. But White gives too little sense of the ways in which ‘productive efforts’ and what I have called ‘agitating efforts’ are to be weighed against one another. This leaves us with too conservative and too static a vision of the society within which radical changes *must* occur for the achievement of more justice. This change is brought about by social movements that have the potential to fail. Failures have many causes but, insofar as activists' efforts are concerned, where nothing was achieved, such efforts are objectively parasitic: effort that could have been productive and reciprocating was instead squandered. However, despite this parasitism such attempts are a necessary part of transforming our arrangements to better approximate the ideals White so carefully details. How we protect the character of the agitator is something I discuss in the final chapter.

Individuals always answer this call to reciprocity within a set of productive practices that are already in motion. In the coming chapters, I will focus on the current (unjust) economic situation and its various effects on the possibilities – the challenges and opportunities – individuals face throughout their lives. Capital decisions, labour market legislation and technological levels all contribute to such practices. In so doing they frame and partially define the contributions that individuals are able to make. Individuals must, to some degree at least, accept these practices and work from within them in order to satisfy expectations to work. However, meeting that expectation will impact, sometimes negatively, on other areas of people’s lives that are *not* directly related to work. There are other demands outside of work which accompany our involvement with other people, places, projects or causes and are the source of a great deal of value and meaning in life. Work, after all, is not all that we do.

## Effort and Depth

'I live to become, but I carry the unshakeable burden of what I have been'

Senancour<sup>242</sup>

In the preceding chapters I focused on effort in relation to three functions: effort as that through which costs are born and deserts earned; effort as that which we control and for which we are responsible; and, finally, as productive effort which both creates and fulfils our reciprocal obligations to others. The first two approaches concentrate on issues of the self: how much can I be said to deserve given what I suffer or, alternatively what I can be said to deserve based on what I am responsible for. The third approach is concerned with effort's role in establishing relations of reciprocity between fellow members of a community. All these approaches have problems.

First, deriving desert claims from the disutility effort creates for people misses important aspects of the structure of desert. From this perspective, anything we do is only relevant as a desert claim if it creates sufficient costs for people. Second, identifying effort with responsibility is unable to adequately capture the injustices it sets out to correct. When effort is used as that for which we have ultimate and sole responsibility it abstracts from the deeper effects of injustices on people's ability to take responsibility for their lives. This approach fails to account for the risks and insecurity that may characterise people's circumstances and which affect their ability to understand and take up the different possibilities and opportunities that are available to them. Understanding effort in terms of reciprocity does theorise these injustices to a greater extent: where a certain minimum standard has not been reached, the demand to reciprocate the productive/contributory efforts of others is in some ways illegitimate – as are the comparisons between people experiencing different levels of injustice. However, a too narrow focus on reciprocity fails to adequately account for the *other* demands that present themselves to people in situations of injustice, which might ultimately override the demands of reciprocity.

We do not primarily *experience* effort as something we merely suffer. Effort is ubiquitous across all that we do, both that which we love and that which we loath. Effort is also not experienced as that for which we have ultimate responsibility. As even Roemer's

---

<sup>242</sup> Senancour quoted in Richard Sennett, 'Growth and Failure: The new political economy and its culture', in Mike Featherstone & Scott Lash, eds., *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World* (London: Sage Publications, 2000) p 21.

account makes clear, what we are ultimately responsible for is not something we can directly access or experience. Responsibility can only be understood after a great deal of data is organised and assessed through complex mathematical algorithms. White's account comes closer to accounting for people's experiences of effort by focusing on how we respond to other's efforts with our own and how we expect them to respond to ours. However, in overlooking the merits of agitators White neglects the demands which accompany injustices in non-ideal and actual political reality and other avenues for effort which compete with the demand for reciprocal productive contributions.

My alternative strategy in this chapter is to attend first to people's subjective uses and experiences of effort rather than using it as a proxy for something else.<sup>243</sup> In so doing I hope to avoid the pitfalls of the previous accounts while retaining their radical distributive implications. I adopt an inductive methodology that starts with what effort does for us, how it builds and involves us in the projects, relationships and causes we have reason to care about, before moving on to the possible distributive implications that emerge from treating effort in this way. This 'building' function is what Sher alludes to in his account of burden. However, the language of desert he uses to frame that function misses the actual purposes and meaning of burdens for the people who assume them. In so doing, he also misses the ways in which this 'burdening' can be affected by the wider institutional framework within which it occurs.

People face challenges that are specific to the time and places within which they live. Youth growing up today face different challenges than those faced by their parents and even more different to those which their grand-parents confronted. The details of contemporary demands are more fully explicated in the next chapter. But, briefly, they might include demands communities make of their members to find jobs that reciprocate the efforts of others. They can also refer to the demands democracy makes of its citizens. For example, these might include a demand to stay well-informed on current events and develop opinions pertaining to policy proposals and political candidates. Or else these demands can refer to our relationships, hobbies or interests which, in their turn, are also affected by the economic and political variety of demand: our having to seek and sustain employment and/or develop our political capabilities to some minimal degree will shape the nature of our other involvements and the time we have to take part in them.

---

<sup>243</sup> A slight qualification of this should be made for White's account given that reciprocity *does* refer to our subjective experiences and uses of effort. My alternative approach is thus better characterised as an expansion of White's approach via a different methodology.

It is (in part) by responding to the challenges that are made of them that people shape their lives. Different employment, political engagements, relationships and causes are that by which we become the people we are. Different responses to different demands lead to different people with different habits, hopes and desires. Who we are and what we do are both wrapped up in our responses to our environments.<sup>244</sup> As James Baldwin put it: "people pay for what they do, and still more for what they have allowed themselves to become, and they pay for it, very simply, by the lives they lead."<sup>245</sup>

It is my focus on the demands associated with current social and economic life that leads to a particular account of contemporary injustice. In order to care deeply about some commitment we have to spend more of our time and energy doing it than would be appropriate for shallower concerns. It will not do to simply assert depth: this assertion has to be complemented by significant effort, disciplined by what such care entails. However, demands – such as work – that issue from the wider institutional setting do not necessarily encourage or support this effortful pursuit of depth. In so doing they expose people who would seek depth in their engagements to profound vulnerability. This is a cause for concern because in lessening the possibilities for depth, it damages an important dimension of the plurality we value as an integral aspect of our communal lives. This chapter thus describes the structure of the vulnerability accompanying depth. The precise reasons why people are at the risk of such vulnerability in the contemporary political and economic climate are discussed in the next chapter.

The organisation of this chapter is as follows. First, I examine the ways in which we use effort in the process of discovering and pursuing the things we care about. An aspect of this discovery and pursuit is the dimension of *depth*: the more we care about some commitment, the deeper is our involvement with that commitment. A further complement to care and depth is the vulnerability we are exposed to: the deeper we are in an involvement, as a consequence of our care for it, the greater the cost to us when that involvement is terminated. When individuals avoid deeper kinds of care *because* the vulnerability to which their socio-economic environments expose them is too great, this is an instance of injustice. I end with a defence of the value of the depth as a response to a possible criticism of my position.

---

<sup>244</sup> As John Dewey puts it: 'the *meaning* of native activities is not native; it is acquired. It depends upon interaction with a mature social medium'. Our efforts are responses to the demands of our environment. John Dewey, *The Moral Writings of John Dewey* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1994) p 87.

<sup>245</sup> James Baldwin, *No Name in the Street* (New York: The Dial Press, 1972) p 55.

### *Burdens and Value*

As shown in the first chapter, effort (specifically diligent-effort) is crucial for our coming to care about things we have reason to value. Diligent-effort is essentially the *assuming of burdens*. When we expend effort toward some end we are necessarily prevented from engaging our effort elsewhere for the duration of that expenditure. For instance, when I am reading in the library I am not playing (and am unable to play) football or to go for a bike ride or listen to music. We can do these things later of course, but our ‘involvement’ with reading at this particular moment is ‘drawing on’ us in a way that means we are prevented from doing something else. This is what I mean by the assuming of burdens: the precluding of other possible avenues of involvement because of the choices we *do* make and the practices/activities/goods/ends we end up with as a consequence of those choices.

To reiterate the point made in the first chapter, this notion of burden cannot be collapsed into the idea of disutility. This is not the experience of our involvements as hardship. Indeed, it is only through a minimum amount of diligence that we are able to care about things at all since doing any one thing implies the presence of costs, i.e. the costs of *not* doing something else. It would be odd to characterise all that we hold dear as instances of suffering requiring financial recompense. These costs do not refer to hardship but rather to the vulnerability they produce for individuals: if a commitment which has absorbed a great deal of effort and is thus cared for is finally recognised as undesired or worthless, or a person is forced to abandon a treasured pursuit, *then* there is disutility. It is the threat of such discoveries and forced abandonments that create the costs associated with diligent-effort and not the disutility produced by one’s current projects and commitments.

The assuming of burdens is present across all of our efforts. Even the minimally involving activities exemplified above preclude other activities and thus produce (admittedly) small costs. Increased diligence precipitates greater costs and greater burdens. With larger and more complex practice involvements – the people we marry, the jobs we take, the children we raise – the idea of a ‘later’ in which other things can be done becomes more complicated. The size of the tasks confronting us, and the learning of the skills necessary to accomplish them, give us a sense of the finitude of our energy and time. We cannot accomplish everything on offer and so we hope to make the right choices and decisions,

take advantage of the right opportunities and involve ourselves in the right commitments and causes.<sup>246</sup>

It is through expending our effort that we come to care about things and how certain things in the world come to matter to us. If someone were to claim that they cared a great deal about something – like learning to play the guitar – and were given enough resources and time to do so, but then signally failed to even give it a go, we would call that assertion of care into question. The same could be said of those who claim care for the environment and yet refuse to recycle, use public transport or give money to environmental concerns. We need to see something behind these assertions of care, some minimal degree of effort and activity, in order to take them seriously.<sup>247</sup> The ‘allocative decisions’ regarding what to do with our time and energy must reflect that care in terms of the ends it involves us with, the projects, relationships and causes it makes matter to us and the burdens it creates for us.<sup>248</sup>

Our choice of involvements and the burdens such choices produce can be usefully explained by borrowing Joel Feinberg’s train-tracks analogy.<sup>249</sup> Imagine a person standing before a network of ‘tracks’ deciding on which route to travel. If at time (T) a person has the option set (a, b, c) then her involvement with one of these routes will, at time T+1, grow to produce new options (let us call these new options a’1, b’1, c’1). The ‘fecundity’ of an option, as Feinberg calls it, is the number of other options made available by having and following the original option.<sup>250</sup> So, for instance, by starting to learn to play the violin other skills within this activity become available: where before a student was unable to produce a particular sound or perform a particular movement, her preliminary involvement at (T) in (a) has opened up the possibility of (a’1) at (T+1). Furthermore, involvement in (a’1) and our

---

<sup>246</sup> Something like this sentiment is at work when Milan Kundera writes ‘life is always like a sketch. No, “sketch” is not quite the word, because a sketch is an outline of something, the groundwork for a picture, whereas the sketch that is our life is a sketch for nothing, an outline with no picture’. Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984) pp. 7 – 8.

<sup>247</sup> A similar point regarding necessary expenditure of effort to make inter-personal concern real is made by Niko Kolodny. See Niko Kolodny, ‘Love as Valuing a Relationship’, *The Philosophical Review*, 112:2 (2003) p 170.

<sup>248</sup> This is not the same as saying the things we spend most time and energy doing are the things we care most about. To suggest that the 60 hour weeks spent at factory conveyor-belts to pay bills and put a roof over the head of a family rarely seen are evidence of care for the activity itself is far-fetched at best (insulting at worst). However, part of the tragedy of such a situation is that the joys of parenthood and the depth of involvement it might otherwise precipitate are being denied. Where time and energy might be put into sites of great mattering and care, they are not.

<sup>249</sup> Joel Feinberg, ‘The Interest of Liberty on the Scales’ in Alvin I. Goldman & Jaegwon Kim, eds., *Value and Morals* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1978) pp. 21 – 35.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.* p 28.

command of the activity we hope to acquire as part of that involvement, is necessary for even further and deeper involvement at later moments (a'N). Crucially, the choice at (T) in (a) means there was no choice for (b) and thus no exploration of the fecundity of that particular 'track': options (b'1) through to (b'N) are thus inaccessible as a result of a choice for (a).

We can regard these additional growths as symbolic of the increasing expertise that comes with investment in particular options so that a'1 would later lead to a'2, a'3 and so on. The complexity of a practice can be measured according to the degree of its fecundity: choices that fail to produce options beyond a'1 are less complex or challenging, unable to generate further growth or possibilities. Of course, the failure to get beyond a'1 might also be a consequence of a shortfall in individuals' capacities rather than a lack of complexity in the practice. Whatever the cause, stalling at some particular juncture is also the termination of deeper possibilities for involvement along that specific track.

Another advantage of this analogy is that it can effectively capture the atrophying effect that accompanies sudden elimination of the possibility for further, deeper development of the initial options, i.e. when somewhere between (a'1) and (a'N) the track is cut off and its fecundity is terminated. If a person chooses (a) at time (T) and then goes onto (a'1) and (a'2), but something interferes with her involvement in such a way as to prevent (a'3), then she is being denied access to something she has come to care about.<sup>251</sup> An example: imagine that after years of undergoing the training and dedication necessary to become a doctor, a sudden advance in technology means that all medical procedures are to be performed by robots. Humans are not even allowed contact with patients anymore. All the training, commitment and specialisation necessary to become a doctor are now useless for the purposes it was intended to serve. Although this is a fantastical example, it nevertheless demonstrates the potential vulnerability that we can suffer should involvement in a practice be cut short. What is more, the doctor is stuck 'down the line' of her choice. There may be transferable skills that she can take into other involvements – indeed, learning to do one thing well might help in learning well a great variety of other things – but the burdens assumed at (a), the care that was begun and nourished, has been terminated.<sup>252</sup> New involvements will need to be found in light of this termination and the

---

<sup>251</sup> For example, he loses the resources (time/money) that previously enabled him to engage.

<sup>252</sup> Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p 277. Sennett outlines the basic abilities of the 'craftsman' – a purveyor of diligent-effort- and so learning them in one particular deep engagement might help train these abilities and this depth for other activities as well.

care that it has interrupted. Later on I will discuss the Japanese author Junichiro Tanizaki as an exemplary sufferer of this kind of interruption.

When we engage with certain ends or commitments over long periods of time, developing talents and expertise alongside the expenditure of our effort, we are also attaining a certain *depth* in that involvement. Vulnerability is the cost of that depth. In the absence of protracted and sustained involvement with specific ends or commitments such vulnerability is not a problem because one has not invested so much of one's time and effort. The existential magnitude of some commitment increases according to the degree that someone cares about something.<sup>253</sup> The extent to which we care about a commitment is, in part, a function of the time and energy that we ply into it. Where we do not try hard, this is possible evidence that there is an absence of care.<sup>254</sup>

Some degree of vulnerability is a necessary correlative of our caring for things. If we care about a cause or a person we want to see that cause or person flourish. When they do not, for whatever reason, this hurts us to some extent.<sup>255</sup> Unless we are masochists, this pain is not something we will readily embrace. Causes, relationships and projects predictably doomed to failure are not going to appeal to the majority of people. Where failure is predictable and unavoidable we will do our level best to avoid it. This has important implications for the type and quality of activities we engage in. However, before describing the structure of vulnerability it is necessary to first attend to what we actually do with effort when exploring the fecundity just described.

### *Depth in Person-Practices Relations*

The question remains as to how people's time and energy are used when they choose amongst the different 'tracks' available to them and how this then issues in their caring for some things and not others. I have described the burdens we assume but without yet describing what we actually *do* with our efforts for them to issue in burdens. The depths we achieve in our endeavours – and the vulnerabilities that are their correlative – are the consequence of our involvement in practices. It is these which make sense of our effort and

---

<sup>253</sup> Sher, *Desert*, p 61.

<sup>254</sup> This would also seem to hold for future commitments as well where we *anticipate* that we would like to expend a great deal of time and energy caring for something. Where this depth is denied from our options we are also likely to be profoundly affected. Time, energy and identification remain an appropriate measure of care in this instance.

<sup>255</sup> Of course, causes and persons might not deserve to flourish in certain situations as a result of mitigating factors. This might justify them not flourishing but it will not completely eliminate the harm felt by the carer.



give form to our strivings. Whether what we do is play football, grow vegetables or perform surgery, what we are taking part in is activity defined by standards we try and approximate to the best of our abilities.

When we decide what it is we want to do with our time and energy, we are deciding with which practices to involve ourselves. By choosing one career over another, embracing this hobby rather than that, joining association A rather than association B, I engage with different practices in different ways. The choices we make in the name of those rather grand-sounding ‘conceptions of the good’ are choices regarding which practices we find reason to value and then pursue.

Practices are any form of shared activity whose shape is defined by a certain pattern of ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’. Consequently, practices range from our activities in the marketplace, the raising of our children, right down to the ways in which we greet each other on the street. These exist at all levels of human life, from the national right down to the familial: a practice’s patterns of ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ set standards for our behaviour which sustain, govern and make intelligible our activity.<sup>256</sup> The practices which are of particular concern for this thesis are not those understood as lubricants of our everyday goings-on – the distances established between people engaged in a conversation, the handshakes used to confirm deals, rules regarding eye contact – but those others we participate in as part of purposive engagement with valuable activity, i.e. practices within which we spend our (non-renewable) time and resources and which make up our various ‘conceptions of the good’. So where we simply act according to the social norms that dictate how we behave on greeting one another on the street, without necessarily doing so in a way that acknowledges the possible value of such norms, the concern here is where engagement in practices is done with just that intention of pursuing some end/activity we find valuable.<sup>257</sup>

Valuable performances within practices always entail the intentionality of the agent: our involvement with practices is active and purposeful. We do not *accidentally*

---

<sup>256</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self* p 204. In addition see, MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p 187: a practice is ‘any coherent and complex form of social established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity’.

<sup>257</sup> An expansion of the fellow-participants who are allowed to share in these norms and practices is an important part of making social interaction non-hierarchical and more just. In situations of profound injustice, shaking the hand of an individual who is a member of a particular ethnicity or is of an outlawed sexual-orientation is precisely to lay such standards open to an ethical evaluation and to challenge the types of behaviour such norms are intended to guide.

become exceptional (or even average) at something in the way that we may simply imbibe the know-how necessary to facilitate a conversation with a casual acquaintance on the street.<sup>258</sup> Whether it be playing a game of chess or being a parent, these kinds of engagement require an understanding of the nature of the good that is engaged with and of what constitutes success and failure for that particular practice.<sup>259</sup> Without that awareness we would be unable to appreciate the value which involvement with that good opens up to us: ‘all goods are identified by standards of excellence’ and without those standards the concept of a ‘good’ anything becomes unintelligible.<sup>260</sup> Coming to understand a practice’s standards and the activity they require of us demands a level of habituation without which we are unable to properly imbibe and assimilate what it is those standards command of us, and the directions our effort must take in order for us to meet them.

Something like this is at work in Rawls’ use of the ‘Aristotelian Principle’: ‘human beings enjoy the exercise of their realised capacities, and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realised or the greater its complexity’.<sup>261</sup> The Aristotelian Principle expresses, in Rawls’ view, the basic psychological insight that the better we are at something, the more we enjoy doing it, largely because we take pleasure in employing a larger repertoire of capacities when performing any task. The way we get better at something and are able to thus expand and perform an increasing array of capacities is, on the view I am here developing, precisely by habituating ourselves to the standards and demands of the practices we find in our surrounding contexts (or in some ‘surrounding’ context somewhere).

But these standards of excellence and the judgements they make are not momentary phenomena that can be singularly and immediately engaged with. They require our on-going engagement, our continuing referencing and, in certain cases where we fail to meet the standards, our accepting deferrals. When a father asks himself whether he is a good father or not, he can never make a single, final judgement and have that last him until

---

<sup>258</sup> For an account of the specifically *emotional* difficulties and complexities surrounding the practices of parenting and other complex, deep, and long-term relationships see Arlie R. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (London: University of California Press, 2003) pp. 69 – 75.

<sup>259</sup> For an anecdotal account of the need of this practice-time see Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers* (London: Penguin, 2009) pp. 35 – 68.

<sup>260</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self* p 204.

<sup>261</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p 374. See also Dworkin’s discussion of the challenge model of the good life. Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, pp. 237 – 284.

the role has somehow been completed. The same is true across all manner of goods, including our occupations, hobbies and other relationships. Engagement with goods is a process that involves continuous reflection as to whether the relevant standards of excellence are being approximated. People develop understandings of what they need to do in order to continue to meet those standards, and also decide whether they wish to continue with a particular engagement.

Crucially, our reflections on involvements we have reason to value will be shot through with an assessment of our standing in terms of the plurality of *other* demands that confront us in our social lives. A particularly important part of this plurality consists of the demand to seek employment. In order to ‘go on’ exploring the ‘fecundity’ or depth of our choices and the involvements they precipitate, people need a sense of the probability and predictability that they can successfully navigate this plurality – by finding and keeping a job for instance.<sup>262</sup> If this plurality cannot be safely navigated, that depth will be put at risk. It is this which leads to vulnerability.

References to the demands environments make of people allows analysis at a level Roemer’s account ignored. As I argued toward the end of the second chapter, in order to gain a sense of individuals’ experiences of their efforts we require a complementary understanding of the impact circumstances have on their ability to develop preferences, make plans and evaluate the course their lives have taken. Where Roemer’s account was unable to properly account for the pernicious effects of injustice and inequality, my more pragmatic focus better captures the ways individuals are *demanded* to react to their circumstances and the impact on those abilities these demands precipitate.

Engagement with practices and their standards requires a process of *habituation*. Such habituation, in its turn, requires a context which *allows*, nourishes and supports it. It cannot merely be assumed that habituation is possible for people because they happen to live within a long-established community that contains an historic plethora of interesting practices. Habituation requires more than a mere geographical or linguistic continuity. It requires a certain stability within the practices and their social constitution.<sup>263</sup> That way,

---

<sup>262</sup> Fecundity and depth are synonymous: it simply means replacing the horizontal dimension of the track analogy with the verticality implied by depth: we dig instead of using trains.

<sup>263</sup> I qualify this notion of stability to acknowledge and embrace the dynamic nature of practises. They will change and it is important that they do. However, the point is that an overt fluidity, sudden changes to the meanings and nuances of practises will tend to undermine the ability to habituate to the demands made by standards of excellence. Rorty is illuminating in this regard: ‘A criterion (what follows from the axioms, what the needle points to, what the statute says) is a criterion because

individuals are allowed sufficient opportunity to apprehend the standards, to learn what counts as a 'good' or successful engagement with a particular practise and the value contained therein.

If the rules of chess suddenly changed in such a way as to fundamentally alter the techniques, prowess and mental alacrity needed to be a successful chess player, individuals who had been habituated into the previous standards would be left without the means to continue their engagement with that particular good.<sup>264</sup> Similar problems would occur if a person had all the equipment necessary to play chess but no way of accessing the rules of the game or the strategies and tactics necessary for successful performance. More mundanely, loss might occur if an individual was simply no longer able, perhaps as a result of no longer having the time, to play the game of chess. The acquired habituation and the care to which playing chess had given rise (or would give rise in the event of longer habituation) no longer has much relevance if it cannot figure in her possibilities for action.

Habituation to the standards of practices and the possibilities for depth which this facilitates, involves a certain subjection or deferral to the authority of the practices, i.e. its standards and its expert purveyors. The relationship to these practices is therefore two-fold. First, we require a habituated involvement with those standards in order to learn what counts as a good and a bad instance of that practice. It is from this position, where such an understanding is gained, that the standards can be challenged, played with and altered.<sup>265</sup> Second, learning techniques associated with good practice-performance also requires a degree of subjection and deferral to the expert purveyors of a practice and thus to the standards as they are *currently* performed and personified.<sup>266</sup>

---

some particular social practice needs to block the road of inquiry, halt the regress of interpretations, *in order to get something done*'. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982) p xli (my emphasis).

<sup>264</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p 188. They could, it is true, be transferred to other practices. But I am reminded here of an example told by Andrea Sangiovanni at an LSE seminar. If we were able to transport the skills of an expert jazz musician back to a Viking community, would that classify as 'good' music. The answer, according to Sangiovanni, is no. The standards necessary to assess and judge that genre of music did not exist and so the skills were lacking an anchor in which to make sense of them. New skills would need to be learned, referring to new standards. See also Andrea Sangiovanni, 'Justice and the Priority of Politics to Morality', *The Journal of Political Philosophy* (16:2, 2008) pp. 8-9.

<sup>265</sup> This is similar to the process outlined by Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p 254 & p 247. Sennett describes both how people develop the ability to approximate practice standards and the sociable, mentoring aspects that are important parts of the concept of expertise.

<sup>266</sup> The structure of this subjection to authority and possible problems with my argument are looked at in the final two chapters.

Habituation is not an all or nothing phenomenon. There are degrees involved: people can spend longer or shorter amounts of time engaging with practices they find valuable. But for depth to be gained, the realisation of this habituation requires a longer-term engagement with practices. However, long term engagement is *not* an *a priori* possibility: it is not something that exists simply as a fact of our being human or as a result of our culture's historical inventory of practices. Long-term practice engagement can be degraded or even annihilated as a *sociological* possibility.<sup>267</sup>

Deeper commitments and engagements – those that are the consequence of significant expenditures of diligent-effort – become harder to enjoy when the context within which such engagements take place militates *against* longer-term commitments and the habituation they demand. Involvements that extend over longer periods of time and entail the substantive burdens and vulnerabilities to which diligent-effort exposes us will be altogether less appealing when the risk of failure becomes *too* great. In the next chapter and its more detailed discussion of changes in the labour market and the economy more generally, I argue that certain contemporary demands do so militate, most concretely in the case of work.

### *The sociology of care and identification*

The concept of depth has important implications for another, that of 'identification'. This is the idea, developed most extensively by Harry Frankfurt, that individuals possess various 'orders' of volition concerning their desires, preferences, projects and plans. We don't merely 'want X', we also 'want to want X': that is, we have preferences about our preferences.<sup>268</sup> In addition, we develop a similar set of orderings for our *efforts* and the acts we carry out: we don't just expend effort to do things we want to do, we expend effort to do things we want to want to do. As I have already described, these efforts involve us in various practices we have reason to value. A part of identification is thus a set of second order volitions motivating our activity, i.e. I want to want to play the violin, be a parent and/or become an academic. I want to be the kind of person who does these things and does them well. Identification with a given practice precipitates the exploration of its fecundity and depth.

<sup>267</sup> The *Quantum Leap* scenario in the next chapter makes this point more concrete.

<sup>268</sup> Frankfurt, 'Freedom of the will and the Concept of a Person', pp. 8-20. See also Harry Frankfurt, *The Importance of what we care about* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); *Necessity, Volition & Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and his Tanner lectures *Taking Ourselves Seriously* and *Getting it Right* (both 2004) available at <http://www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/atoz.html#f>

For Frankfurt, processes of identification and formulation of these second-order volitions are an essential part of the value and meaning in people's lives. Without second-order desires we lack a sense of what matters to us, to those parts of our life that draw us into valued practice engagements. As Frankfurt puts it, 'the formation of a person's will is most fundamentally a matter of his coming to care about certain things, and of his coming to care about some of them more than others'.<sup>269</sup> Things we care about more than others are things with which we have a deeper involvement.

Identification is also the development of a particular kind of knowledge about what it is people wish to devote their time and energy to doing. By gaining that knowledge, individuals gain a sense of what is meaningful to them and give shape and purpose to their lives. By identifying with the plans we make, we simultaneously embrace the *demands* they make of us and the *constraints* they put on our activity: we are no longer entirely free to do anything we please so long as care for that particular activity remains part of our concerns. To identify with a commitment thus has an important disciplining function in line with the processes of habituation described above.

The self-knowledge that we gain as a result of identification, as well as the commitments with which we identify, are closely connected to people's circumstances. For example, occupations that might be available in contemporary cultures would have been absent from those a century ago. Moreover, the quality of ostensibly the same job will also change given shifts in technology, the market, organisational structures within a given enterprise, the relations between the state and the economy, capital and labour etc. Care and the formation of people's wills are never freed from their experiences and understandings of the world around them. Employment is but one part of this experience. People necessarily start from that world as (for the most part) given. So in the 21<sup>st</sup> century western context where samurais are few and far between, there is no way for me to become familiar with the codes, practices and ways of being that would render it a feasible objective for my care and effort.<sup>270</sup> We start from what is familiar, considering various opportunities that are made available by the context at hand. We do not start from some position called 'self' and only then turn out to the world in pursuit of the goods that the self has designed.

---

<sup>269</sup> Frankfurt, *The Importance of What we Care about*, p 91.

<sup>270</sup> Stephen Mulhall, *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996) p 16.

However, this sense of an already familiar world from which we appropriate our various commitments and projects is missing from Frankfurt's account. He focuses exclusively on the internalised machinations of the will's formation. He describes processes like 'reflection' and 'the ordering of volitions' but ignores other important processes that inform our 'coming to care' for things.<sup>271</sup> Reflection, deliberation and care cannot be so divided between the world 'in' here and that 'out' there. The tasks of identification and discovery are formed with the world at large always 'in mind', a constant aspect of our (not necessarily consciously formed) considerations. When we see the world 'out there' as unfavourable or hostile to possible projects/causes/relationships, including those far less absurd than the samurai suggestion, the interior processes that constitute the 'formation of the will' and the decisions concerning what it is we should care about will incorporate that assessment.

Frankfurt is right that in deciding what to *do* we cannot help but decide on what it is we are going to *be*.<sup>272</sup> But the answer to both those questions is found essentially via the *appropriation* of roles/projects/commitments from the environments we find ourselves in, rather than through a process of actively *creating* such things from scratch. By explicating – and correcting for – Frankfurt's omission of the sociology behind processes of identification, we gain more insight into exactly how our circumstances complicate the concepts he employs and, quite rightly in my view, values so highly.<sup>273</sup> Crucial to this undertaking is an examination of the vulnerability that accompanies deep habituation to the demands of a practice.

The care we are able to have is itself dependent on a world receptive to such concern. If that world fails to encourage the efforts necessary for deeper habituation to the

---

<sup>271</sup> Marilyn Friedman also recognises this lack of concern for processes of socialisation in Frankfurt's account. Marilyn Friedman, 'Autonomy, Social Disruption and Women', in Catriona Mackenzie & Natalie Stoljar, eds., *Relational Autonomy* (New York: New York University Press, 2000) p 39 (n. 29). However, Friedman does not engage with the issue of care as such but takes issue rather with the overall self-manufacture that Frankfurt's account seems to imply.

<sup>272</sup> Frankfurt, *The Importance of What we Care about*, 84 and most especially Frankfurt, *Reasons of Love*, p 99- 100 where he talks about individuals who, due to some aspect of their personality being unable to identify and thus destined to remain forever ambivalent, uncommitted and under-defined.

<sup>273</sup> Identification is not conceptually necessary for engagement with practices. One can perhaps imagine a person indifferently habituating themselves to the standards of a practice, performing excellently for a period of time, even turning those standards on their head and thereby giving the practice a different flavour and meaning, whilst simultaneously never seeing themselves as *caring* one way or the other about it, never seeing themselves as a member of the practice or regarding their contributions as anything worthy of merit. For a more detailed description of possible challenges to this idea that identification is not necessary at a psychological level for the organisation of will and is distinguishable from questions of care see Bernard Berofsky, 'Identification, the Self and Autonomy', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 20:2 (2003) p 210-211.

standards of a practice, what becomes of the formative process and, indeed, the will itself? For example, we might care a great deal for some particular occupation in some particular firm. To then have that taken out from under us because of events beyond our control is to remove the object of care from what Frankfurt calls our 'devotional activity'. What is more, when this removal might exist as an ambient threat, i.e. as something we might be able to predict and 'feel' around us, putting our deeper commitments in jeopardy, this will also tend to moderate our devotion and the care we are able to have for such work. To actively throw oneself open to high-levels of predictable risk is to behave recklessly. When our involvements are at risk of rupture or curtailment a more sensible strategy is rather to avoid excessive vulnerability.

Diligent-effort – and the depth it issues in – is not equally available in all possible worlds. It generates vulnerability in a sense other ways of expending effort (those which do not imply the same depth, 'burdens' or costs) do not. This vulnerability is inadequately theorised by Frankfurt as he tends to run 'identification', 'care' and 'vulnerability' together. I counsel caution in doing this as the three are ultimately separable. Significant vulnerability is not a consequence of care as such. It is a consequence of depth.

### *Vulnerability and issues of concreteness*

Vulnerability is a crucial dimension in Frankfurt's account of care: 'The same structural configuration that makes us vulnerable to disturbing and potentially crippling disabilities also immeasurably enhances our lives by offering us... opportunities for practical rationality, for freedom of the will, and for love'.<sup>274</sup> For Frankfurt, the parts of our lives that make us vulnerable to failure, that expose us to the risk that care brings in its wake, are tied to the value of our most important involvements. In order to care, the above structural configurations would seem to suggest, we need to be made vulnerable. Vulnerability is a product of care: where there is little vulnerability, there is also less care.

What Frankfurt does not discuss are the variations within this notion of vulnerability and how our coming to care for things can ultimately be distinguished from the structures of vulnerability: we can care about certain ends, projects or relationships without necessarily exposing ourselves to a great deal of vulnerability. What the absence of vulnerability makes impossible are diligent-effort, depth and significant complexity. But we

---

<sup>274</sup> Frankfurt, 'Taking Ourselves Seriously', p 5. See also Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs*, p 312.



can continue to *care* for and identify with our desires, plans and commitments even where these things are not characterised by diligent-effort, depth or complexity.

At one point, Frankfurt discusses the different ways a plan can be abandoned or ended.<sup>275</sup> First, plans may be ended only temporarily as a means to pursue some other valued end. We then return to this initial plan at a later date. Second, we may abandon it and never return to it because we simply cease caring about it. The first is thus privy to a *degree* of vulnerability in that we are unable to pursue these plans *now* alongside other cared-for ends. The second is also not a costless decision given that we might have expended considerable resources prior to abandoning it. But what of abandonments that are forced on us *despite* our care? We might permanently abandon some end because it is demanded by other aspects of our circumstances rather than because we cease caring for it. For example, someone might give up a particular career because of massive downturns in the economy that have nothing to do with her preferences or plans. These additional instances of vulnerability go unconsidered by Frankfurt because his focus is geared too strongly toward the *internal* machination of the person's will at the expense of sociological realism.

Parallel to the different ways in which we abandon our plans and projects are the different ways in which we experience vulnerability. People might be made vulnerable by their lack of capacity to accomplish a given end. The success they anticipated was chimerical and they fail because it turns out they were not up to the task. Their involvement is thus cut short, stagnates and/or is abandoned. Other experiences of vulnerability are the result of unforeseen occurrences in people's situation. Such occurrences can have a number of effects: first, they can significantly reduce the time people have both for habituating to the standards of a practice and their subsequent attempts at approximating those standards. Second, they can precipitate sudden reductions in the financial resources necessary either to engage in the activity or else ensure more basic functions are met. Third, they can result in the removal of the very possibility to engage with a practice, perhaps because the equipment necessary for engagement is no longer readily available in one's locality.<sup>276</sup> Finally, the increased

---

<sup>275</sup> See Frankfurt, *Reasons for Love*, p 15.

<sup>276</sup> These occurrences will necessarily impact on the first issue of capacities. The more difficult the situation becomes the more our abilities are put to the test. But there is a distinction between my failure in all and every world and my failure in a world where the odds were always stacked against me. The separation of the different types of vulnerability is meant to capture that.

*expectation* or ambient *threat* of all such occurrences can amplify the sense of vulnerability and warn against too deep an involvement.

Frankfurt leaves these variations in vulnerability unexamined. The first variety, which we can call ‘capacity failure’, is likely to always be a source of anxiety, regardless of our environments: such anxiety accompanies our most basic human frailties and insecurities. There are many things we are able to do but there is always the possibility of falling short and being disappointed by limited abilities we cannot transcend. The other anxieties and vulnerabilities which refer to the sociological context within which we engage with practices cannot be traced so directly to people’s capacities. These anxieties are in response to environments perceived as hostile to the demands of diligent-effort and to the discipline and constraints implied by depth.

An example will illuminate this point about vulnerability and its relation to potentially hostile worlds. Junichiro Tanizaki was an early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japanese author, famous in part for his embrace of (and melancholy at the waning of) traditional Japanese culture. As a young man Tanizaki was intent on Japanese cultural alignment with the West, going so far as to celebrate an earthquake for opportunities it gave in this direction.<sup>277</sup> It was later in life and in works such as *Some Prefer Nettles* and *In Praise of Shadows* that this embrace of novelty was replaced by a profound appreciation of his nation’s traditional culture.<sup>278</sup> At the same time, however, he recognised that it was a culture in decline, replaced in large part by the western influences and contrivances that in his youth he would have welcomed.

Tanizaki deeply involved himself with a set of practices and their incumbent standards. He identified with these practices and embraced the ways in which they constrained his activity, outlook and preferences. He believed they preserved and expressed a valuable form of life. However, because of the *depth* of this involvement and the intensity of the identification, he was made supremely vulnerable by changes to the very equipment that made that life possible – changes, incidentally, brought about by increased interaction with Western ways. For instance, Tanizaki explains the design of Japanese outhouses in ways very different to how we might perceive them in the West. At one point he describes the outhouse as a great place for earlier Japanese poets to compose haiku because the toilet itself came ‘replete with fond associations with the beauties of

---

<sup>277</sup> Junichiro Tanizaki, *Some Prefer Nettles* (London: Vintage Classic, 2001).

<sup>278</sup> Junichiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows* (London: Lette’s Book, 1997).

nature’.<sup>279</sup> The use of porcelain and the colour white typical of Western toilets he considers vulgar, showing an obsession with cleanliness he finds inelegant (though he accepts its benefits in terms of hygiene and convenience). However, the costs of preserving older traditional forms of domestic architecture were getting increasingly expensive given that the majority of his fellow-citizen’s tastes had fled west: such a toilet – and the way of life of which it formed a part – became impossible to preserve.

The depth with which he explored these traditions, the deep identification he had with them, rendered him extremely vulnerable in light of their inevitable decline: inevitability Tanizaki himself recognised as such.<sup>280</sup> To have remained shallow during Japan’s transitional phase, to have merely dabbled in Japan’s cultural inventory, would have been a way to reduce this costliness and minimize that vulnerability. Valuable activity would still have been possible in this shallower situation. What would be lost is the *deeper* ‘mattering’ of things and a more profound identification with such practices. Without the intense burdens and costs that are an inevitable accompaniment of significant depth, exploration of the ‘fecundity’ complex practices represent is also being denied.

In the place of that depth we could have more numerous involvements. It is not that ‘dilettantes’ – people who avoid deep involvement in specific practices – necessarily lack opportunities for value. Tanizaki could have plied his time and energy, for instance, into a kind of cultural promiscuity, sampling Japanese culture along with a great many others. Never engaging too deeply with any one place, person or project but instead spreading himself and his efforts over a *variety* of activities and practices. In my desire to preserve this dimension of depth, there is a minimal perfectionism at work, one that embraces *as an option* – not an obligation – the axis of depth here under scrutiny.<sup>281</sup>

---

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.* p 14.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.* p 19.

<sup>281</sup> It is important to distinguish between the kind of cost accompanying this idea of vulnerability and the kinds of cost Cohen and Dworkin discuss in their battle over whether individuals should be held liable for their expensive tastes in light of the fact that such preferences may be the consequence of uncultivated, and thus brute, proclivities. See for instance Cohen, ‘On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice’; Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, Ch. 7 and Dworkin’s reply in Burley, *Dworkin and His Critics: With Replies by Dworkin*, pp. 339 – 397. There are similarities: namely, that the costs Tanizaki faces are produced by preferences organised within a market which rendered the skills needed to preserve these complex practices rare (supply-side problems) because of fast-disappearing preferences that had any use of them (demand-side problems). This is in much the same way that photography is an expensive hobby because of the complexity of skills involved in the production of its equipment and the demands that currently shape the market. But my use of this example is not with reference to the resource dimension at some static point *before* preferences are developed and embarked upon. Instead, it is with the cost that occurs *after* that embarking has begun, when the resources that have

In distinction to the profound vulnerability accompanying Tanizaki's deep engagement, there are other 'shallower' types of end and involvement which produce a lesser degree of vulnerability. It may, for instance, be important to an individual that she/he has romantic liaisons with as many people as possible. People might care about this end and be made vulnerable to failure should they fail in its pursuit. However, failure cannot be affected by any specific person or event. After suffering rejection, the pursuit strikes up again only directed toward another person. The fact that such vulnerability is not specified and limited to a particular object and made concrete, renders it qualitatively different to the kind of vulnerability that operates when the object *is* specific, when it is, for example, a *particular* person in a *particular* place at a *particular* time (or indeed any one of these three). Care and the importance of ends are therefore not necessarily/conceptually tied to their objects being made concrete but can make sense in the looser, more fluid way illustrated by the above promiscuity. The depth of Tanizaki's care, a particularly strong exemplar of someone who experiences the costs created by diligent-effort, is not an account of care *tout court*: care remains possible when freed from any concrete specificity or particularity.

When the concept of care is not described in terms of identification with *particular* and *concrete* ends, ideals or persons, it is simply too broad to encapsulate the important variations within the concept of vulnerability I describe above.<sup>282</sup> Diligent-effort inescapably implies significant vulnerability because of the depth in practice-engagement it involves. This depth is almost a matter of arithmetic: where more dilettantish persons can spread their time and energies over a number of practice-involvements, the purveyor of diligent-effort invests those (non-renewable) resources in the gaining of *depth* and *expertise*. Time and energies are expended in learning and approximating the standards of a particular practice engagement: the deeper people go, the more complex are the skills such approximation entails. A corollary of this is that less time and effort is available for habituation to other practice-standards necessary for the pursuit of other ends. It is thus

---

been put into use and the ends toward which they have been directed are, potentially radically, undermined. So tastes have been developed, ends are in the course of being pursued and costs have been measured only to have these assessments and the familiarity which informed them suddenly pulled away.

<sup>282</sup> Frankfurt, *Necessity, Volition and Love*, p 130. I include Ideals in the concrete category (contra Frankfurt) because although they include appeals to abstract notions (like morality for instance) they still *constrain* in concrete ways. So, in caring about being moral one is demanded to perform in certain ways at certain times. They are not free to disengage from the rules associated with that ideal at any particular time if this ideal is something they care about.

*specifically* diligent-effort that is productive of both depth and the vulnerability Frankfurt (rightly) recognises as valuable.

The non-concrete care exemplified by the dilettantes can still possess an organising function even though they do not issue in significant vulnerability.<sup>283</sup> Dilettantes' concerns can constrain volition in a way Frankfurt deems crucial for the possibilities of human flourishing. Dilettantes can consider their desires constitutive aspects of who they are as a person. They can fully embrace those desires and identify with them as providing reasons for activities they regard as valuable. The same can be said for people (like Dworkin's buzz/tick addicts made flesh)<sup>284</sup> who simply hunt for preference satisfaction, treating their lives, resources and efforts merely as tools for use in the hunt for certain sensations and experiences. This 'hunt' is something cared for, considered important and even disciplining, but tied to nothing specific that might render individuals vulnerable in a different and ultimately more pressing way. Where the hunt hits a dead end, it just starts again in some other direction looking for the next possible source of satisfaction. For the person who cares deeply for some concrete, specific end, failure in its pursuit does not admit of so easy a transition to some other end. Whereas for the dilettante, where success is not gained *here* it might still be available over *there*.<sup>285</sup>

The issue at stake is therefore the *extent* of vulnerability: some ends do not leave us open and thus vulnerable because they are not fixed by specific, concrete reference points and are freed up to range across a variety of reference points. For example, tourists who find their good in holidaying in exotic places look only for distant climes and are pleased with any place so long as it is warm enough. The goods are thus not especially hard 'to get hold of' as long as resources are in adequate supply. Indeed, even with reduced resources the distant climes can just be made less distant. There is thus limited exposure to

---

<sup>283</sup> I use the term 'dilettante' to denote anyone who exemplifies 'non-concrete care' i.e. it need not relate solely to sex but can refer to place, occupation, interest and people more generally. The person who cares about 'football clubs' rather than *this* 'football club' will be an example of this variety of dilettantism. See Thomas Hurka, *Perfectionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) pp. 84- 98 for an account of dilettantism and the need to balance it against some measure of expertise in order to achieve a, as he calls it, 'well-rounded life'. I remain agnostic on this point.

<sup>284</sup> Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, pp. 291-296.

<sup>285</sup> This equivalence is implicit to Frankfurt's account and not something he would seem to endorse. His understanding of constraint belongs properly only to the more substantive understanding of vulnerability characteristic of diligent-effort. See for instance his discussion of 'thematic continuity' in Harry Frankfurt, 'On the Usefulness of Final Ends', *Necessity, Volition & Love*, p 162. But without this clarification, he is unable to properly motivate the distinction.

possible and dramatic failure, no sense in which a complex, effortful involvement with some activity or practice could be terminated in the way Tanizaki experienced it.<sup>286</sup>

In order for descriptions of identification and care to adequately account for the role of vulnerability they must include reference to two things. First, to the concreteness of the end in question: this is necessary to distinguish between ends which expose a person to very little vulnerability and ends which belong to the purveyors of diligent-effort, shaped and charged with the possibilities of quite profound vulnerability.<sup>287</sup> The second is the depth which is a consequence of diligent-effort. In order for people's care to issue in vulnerability, they need to have achieved a minimum depth in their involvements. Dilettantes do not suffer from this problem precisely because there has been no deep, long-term expenditure of effort in habituation to practices I described above. They can extract their efforts from their shallower involvements and ply them elsewhere without the same damage to their sense of what matters to them.

### *Preferences and Projects*

A way of examining the variations between the purveyors of diligent-effort (craftsmen, as I call them in the next chapter) and dilettantes is by reference to Tim Scanlon's distinction between two rival accounts of preference formation. The first is the summative account which makes it (absurdly) rational for individuals to simply rack up desires in order to fulfil them and thereby increase their well-being. In the other 'global' desires account, preferences are only intelligible when they are anchored to specific parts of a person's life or their life considered as a whole: our preferences are derived from the projects, relationships and commitments that matter to us.<sup>288</sup> Summative desires, by contrast, lack reference to larger-scale concerns 'about how one's whole life or some significant part of it should go'. Instead they refer only to the satisfaction of preferences *tout court*, with no grander scheme of plans and projects to make sense of them.<sup>289</sup> Much like the 'shallowness' of dilettantes, this describes activity as divided into a series of contained episodes of preference satisfaction which once completed are left behind to make way for the next encounter.

---

<sup>286</sup> Except by death of course, to which we are all vulnerable.

<sup>287</sup> This character I call the 'craftsman' and discuss him/her in the next chapter.

<sup>288</sup> Scanlon borrows the notion of 'summative' desires from Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) p 497. Cited in T.M. Scanlon, 'The Status of Well-Being', *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (1996) p 112 available at <http://www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/atoz.html#s>

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid* p 113.

But this distinction between comprehensive goods and ‘summative’ goods is not, in reality, a hard and fast line: it operates rather as a continuum. There is a certain *variety* within the notion of comprehensive goods that admits of something like a summative view of desire. This is the case precisely because comprehensive goods can refer both to concrete ends *and* those less specific ends which lack concrete points of reference. At one end of this continuum there are the Tanizaki’s of the world, and at the other end are the dilettantes and, even further along, Dworkin’s buzz addicts. It is this variation within the type of ends that are pursued which complicates Scanlon’s distinction and produces a continuum in its stead.

At the neurological level ‘buzzes’ or ‘tingles’ are precisely what happens when preferences get satisfied. It is just that these buzzes, as Dworkin rightly claims, are framed by conceptions of the good which make sense of them, that make them ‘buzzes’ at all.<sup>290</sup> This idea of the framing of preferences is important: buzzes utterly unframed by some wider preference structure are at one end of the continuum. These buzzes are perhaps descriptive of the highs achieved by drug consumption and basic adrenalin rushes like parachuting or bungee jumping. These buzzes are momentary phenomena and do not allow for the complex activity consequent to the habituated involvement characteristic of deep practice engagement.<sup>291</sup> Nor, then, do they expose individuals to the same kind of vulnerability.

At the other end are buzzes, framed by very thick/comprehensive conceptions of the good, that can only be enjoyed after sustained, habituated involvement with the standards and activities of a given practice or set of practices. If a project, relationship or cause which deeply mattered to a person was suddenly eliminated, it is not merely a matter of transferring her concerns elsewhere: it is not so easy to reconstruct long-term ‘framing’ projects that make sense of the ‘buzzes’ we are able to achieve. Tanizaki, as described above, is just such a person: he was denied the opportunity to transfer his care and concern to other possible frameworks or conceptions of the good precisely *because* of the depths he achieved in his practice-engagements. There was nowhere else he could go to achieve his buzzes once the equipment he needed was no longer available. The way the world mattered to him was inflexible on this score.

---

<sup>290</sup> Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, p 293.

<sup>291</sup> This distinguishes the possible joys of learning such skills to a high degree – if they permit of such degrees – and the rushes achieved through bio-chemical response.

Between these extremes are different degrees of comprehensiveness: individuals who can slip between preferences that are framed by a larger variety of practices are less vulnerable than the person whose preferences are framed by less (even though deeper) practice involvements. The 'dilettante' who engages shallowly with a range of 'preference-satisfying' practices can, in the sudden absence of one particular practice-engagement, ply her time and energy elsewhere. Someone without that variety is thoroughly at a loss when a practice with which she is deeply engaged and the commitments, projects and causes that she has come to care about are suddenly removed from the field of possibility. Her efforts have nowhere else they can go that mattered to the same degree as the involvement now absent.

There is then a variety in the *kinds* of projects we pursue that tracks this distinction – when rendered as a continuum in this way – between comprehensive and summative desires. There are the longer term projects that stretch a ways into the future, do not admit of easy or short-term satisfaction and require deep and on-going habituation and involvement. And there are those which lack this concrete reference point of a future dependent on a *particular* involvement with a *particular* practice. Instead, more episodic desires are determined only by a kind of short-term globalism which makes sense of preferences against a background of more episodic concerns and projects regarding what can be had or enjoyed now or in the not too distant future.<sup>292</sup>

An illustration will make these points more vivid. Imagine someone who works in a frontline service in the public sector. Through this job she has a great deal of contact with members of the community, often the same members, whom she then becomes (professionally) acquainted with. In order to perform this job well, skills need to be learned that enable the completion of tasks to a minimum standard. To do otherwise will result in less than glowing references from her manager and thus a trimming of subsequent employment opportunities. However, differences in how she relates to those skills as part of her working life and how she understands them as part of who she is will depend on a prior understanding of what the functions associated with that job will or can ultimately amount to.

If she *remained* (or *expected* to remain) in that particular sector for a longer period of time she might spend more time learning about relevant legislation and developing

---

<sup>292</sup> For a sociological account of these kinds of preferences see Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life* (London: Polity Press, 2007) Ch. 3.



judicial precedents, cultivating skills directed specifically at what *that* job in *that* sector demanded. This particular work could then figure more comprehensively or globally in her sense of who she is and what she does. But this is plausibly, strategically sensible even, treated as an ineffective use of time and energy if she anticipates the need to make a move elsewhere at short notice where such knowledge will be superfluous. The same could be said of the way she relates to clients: recognition of long-term and on-going contact with clients might precipitate a different relationship than one where her involvements with particular individuals will be cut short. So a relation to her position and to the standards of the practice that determine the quality of her work will be qualitatively different depending on where and how she sees herself now and in the future and, indeed, what she might have learned at some point in her past about the most effective way to navigate the labour market.<sup>293</sup> Constantly changing jobs and anticipating that change, precipitates an understanding of work that is ultimately more summative than comprehensive.<sup>294</sup>

The routines and habituation necessary for longer-term commitments and the competencies that accompany them, will be inappropriate or unnecessary for ends and strategies that lack reference to the long-term or the depth that it enables. For instance, tourists have to learn how to react in minimally competent ways to a diverse range of situations and function in a set of novel contexts. To do otherwise would mean they fail to enjoy even, as I term them, the shallower enjoyments of the tourist: being a tourist involves a set of skills just as do all other kinds of practice involvement. But the worker hoping to thrive in a particular location and a particular role will need a different set of skills, ones learned through disciplined practice and repetition, gaining more and more familiarity with particular tasks and involvements, building on already routinized habits and established proficiencies in order to gain new skills and capacities. Tourists learn competencies for any and all settings. The long-term civil servant in the example above

---

<sup>293</sup> This example has more than a kernel of illustrative truth to it. When I first started work for Southwark Council in 2009 – the time of impending swingeing cuts as they were being called – I asked whether the jobs of newly employed trainees would be safe and exactly how large the cuts would be in terms of housing jobs. I was quickly assured by one of the council big wigs that job security was of a bygone era and was a sign of an overripe concern with cushiness. She then stated that I should spend my time in this job trying to make myself as employable as possible down the line in any job I might end up in- whether in housing or elsewhere. It went down well as she proceeded to receive cheers of ‘hear, hear’ from the (potentially soon-to-be redundant) staff.

<sup>294</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998) pp. 32 – 45.

develops skills that make sense in much fewer settings. Not all the skills learned becoming a good public servant are transferrable to any and all work places.<sup>295</sup>

If people hope to achieve the longer-term concrete ends which diligent-effort implies, they perform particular activities that are utterly *necessary* from the point of view of their comprehensive ends: learning the standards associated with the practice and producing performances of sufficient excellence are not things we can bypass. So long as we care about these ends, our activity will be disciplined and constrained.<sup>296</sup> Our practice-engagements make demands of us that cannot be merely pushed aside if our sustained care with that practice is to continue. Moreover, so long as that concern remains relevant we cannot simply go elsewhere like the tourist – to Marbella and not to Bermuda – because we have involved ourselves too deeply in a particular cause/task/place/(set of) person(s). Withdrawal remains possible if we give up caring for the *concrete* ends that motivated us to that point but in so doing depth will have been stalled.

Comprehensive goods *can* emerge from the summative end of the above continuum: larger goals that make sense of our desires and preferences are formed out of the accumulated – not cumulative – episodes of smaller units of success. Success can then be measured according to the counting or racking up Scanlon described as absurd: the holidays enjoyed and the places visited will be measured against the standard of the activity ‘tourism’ for example. Individuals seeking enormous amounts of romantic liaisons will perform the same counting up, each encounter acting as one more background against which the satisfaction of a preference refers itself. The same applies for workers who are forced from low-skilled job to low-skilled job, concerned with nothing but making ends meet and thereby denied access to a more comprehensive reference point that could give greater depth to their careers.

Individuals who have longer and deeper comprehensive goals are more vulnerable than people closer to the summative end of the continuum. Where we fail to recognise what this category of depth entails vis-à-vis the demandingness of complex practice engagements we also fail to attend to the value made accessible to deeper practitioners and, depending on their depth of involvement, to the differences in vulnerability to which practitioners are exposed.

---

<sup>295</sup> This distinction between, what I will call following Richard Sennett, exogenous and endogenous preferences, will be discussed in the next chapter:

<sup>296</sup> This has similarities with Frankfurt’s notion of ‘volitional necessity’. Frankfurt, *The Importance of What We Care About*, p. 86

An adequate assessment of the demands made by social and economic life, like demands to find and keep a job for instance, reveals the considerable tension between responses to these demands and those that are made by the process of practice-engagement and deep habituation. Individuals are obliged to navigate this tension by either trading off depth for reduced vulnerability or else attempting depth, but with an increased vulnerability to possible termination in the things that deeply matter to them. Where this chapter focuses on the *structure* of depth, in the next chapter I describe the socio-economic demands that constitute our environments and analyse the ways they affect individuals' *possibilities* for depth.

### *The Value of Depth*

I have described a particular mode of engagement that I have tried to capture with the category of 'depth'. In so doing, I have suggested that this dimension of life is both an important and fragile part of value and plurality: it is a sociological rather than an *a priori* possibility that should be preserved. That is not to say other styles of life, more transient and episodic, do not have their own virtues. But they are of a qualitatively different kind and are only one part of a plurality of possibly valuable ways of living. However, given that I recognise value can exist without the depth and vulnerability characteristic of the Tanizakis of the world, is my advocacy for depth merely an example of misplaced nostalgia or, even worse, oppressive perfectionism? Furthermore, given changes in the demands our socio-economic environment makes of us – to be explored in the next chapter – is that sociological possibility something we can in actual fact afford to relinquish for the sake of other important goods and goals?

Accusations of nostalgia or perfectionism are particularly pressing possibilities when we consider the concepts of 'subjection to authority' and 'vulnerability' side by side with one another. By subjecting ourselves to a practice, habituating ourselves to the standards and demands of its authority, we are rendered vulnerable to a *concrete* and *objectively-decided* kind of success and failure, i.e. according to standards the meaning of which we do not have ultimate control over. Getting rid of the vulnerability characteristic of deep involvements could be seen as a boon. Perhaps we would be better off jettisoning vulnerability and subjection to authority. In their stead we *embrace* the styles of life and possible conceptions of the good enjoyed by dilettantes, precisely *because* they are

available without the intensity of these problems and do not rely on the constraints and demandingness associated with deep and complex involvement.<sup>297</sup>

To examine these accusations it is useful to further examine the concept of identification and ask whether it is either necessary or even especially significant. To identify with some commitment is to define oneself by reference to it. This concept, like depth and vulnerability, also admits of degrees: what we identify with can deeply matter to us or matter to us only a little. Dilettantes and deep practitioners can both be said to identify with their activities. Is it really so important for us to identify with our involvements and the costs these imply in the especially *wholehearted* ways characteristic of depth? Can we avoid the vulnerability described above and still enjoy useful, valuable and meaningful lives even if we do not identify with them in as deep a way as might be possible in other circumstances?

Richard Arneson for one does not believe identification has the significance necessary to render it a central concern of justice. He relegates it to just one consideration among many which can be variously outweighed. He suggests that ‘one can achieve goods that are valuable and whose value enhances one’s life even if one fails to appreciate their value or recoils from one’s own achievement in response to its coerced or manipulated character’.<sup>298</sup> Elsewhere he uses the notion of a person who is confused about why they reject a particular end. In his example, this is a poem that someone has written and then rejected not because it lacks quality, but because of an odd-ball aesthetic theory the writer comes to hold. Her rejection of the poem in light of this theory interferes with the role it can play in identification: ‘no doubt her utility would be higher, other things being equal, if she were to endorse it, because a subjective sense of accomplishment is itself a not inconsiderable good, especially when it is well grounded on genuine accomplishment’.<sup>299</sup>

However, Arneson goes on to reject the idea that subjective recognition of the value of one’s performances is a *necessary* part of value or well-being. The sensation associated with subjective endorsement is simply one relevant concern alongside, for instance, significant achievement: ‘we might prefer for (a person’s) own good that she not develop her capacity for self-endorsement but instead develop and exercise her capacity

---

<sup>297</sup> I deal with the specific problems pertaining to the issue of subjection to authority in the final chapter.

<sup>298</sup> Richard Arneson, ‘Perfectionism and Politics’, *Ethics*, 111:1 (2000) p 44.

<sup>299</sup> Richard Arneson, ‘Human Flourishing versus Desire Satisfaction’, *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 16:4 (1999) p 136.

for significant achievement'.<sup>300</sup> Subjective assessment of one's projects and commitments is not prior to what the projects and commitments actually *are*. A person's success is, in this argument, separable from her *feeling* about it. Where there is little concern or care for what one has done this does not mean that what one has done is therefore meaningless. The depth of care and the vulnerability it precipitates is therefore regarded as an unnecessary part of a person's well-being. There are alternative ways of measuring well-being that cannot be collapsed into people's subjective experience of their activity.

There are two problems in Arneson's account, one which he can respond to and another which he cannot. First, there is the realism of the image of the person Arneson employs. This image suggests individuals can 'collide' into value without any genuine intention to do so. This relies on the questionable notion that a capacity for complex achievement and some minimum level of endorsement are commonly separated from one another. If the poet embraces a silly and confused aesthetic theory then this will necessarily act at the level of reasons and intentions influencing her account of *why* she engages with the writing of the poem in the first place.<sup>301</sup> She will write in accordance with and with reference to that aesthetic theory – given her endorsement of it – and will produce a poem according to the standards of that particular genre of poetry. Certainly, she might produce a poem that, according to a newly adopted (and identified with) aesthetic theory, she later rejects as worthless. But this changes nothing with regard to the reasons and prior identification that played their part in producing the poem in the first place. I would like to try my hand at these genres of poetry that can be produced in so impressive and valuable a form absent the intention to do so!

Arneson is right, though, that this level of identification does not have to admit of any particular depth for valuable activity to take place. Identification need not be so intense an experience as was emblematic of Tanizaki nor is the depth he fathomed a necessary condition for value. There is only the need for a minimum amount of identification for any valuable activity to take place. Dilettantes can identify with what they are doing and describe themselves in terms of their activity and preferences: the tourist sees herself *as* a tourist and embraces it. Intentional action would be hard to perform if we entirely lacked a sense of what we want to do and why we want to do it. But, beyond that

---

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> See on this Joseph Raz, *Engaging Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p 203. See especially where he says 'the engaging with intrinsic value is something active, in that it requires intention and attention'. My use of the concept of identification is a particular description of what that intention and attention can amount to.

minimal level, a valuable life does not require the kind of depth I have been describing. In the same way care and vulnerability are separate from value, value is also separate from depth. Dilettantes' ways of life are a perfectly acceptable version of value.

Arneson focuses on the individual and I accept his point that, at this level, especially deep forms of identification are unnecessary. They can be variously outweighed by other considerations such as the quality of the performance a person produces or the welfare generated by satisfied preferences even in the absence of deeper identification with them. However, at the level of society and the collective, deeper forms of identification take on increased significance.

If we lived in a situation wherein no single individual – or no members of a specific group – embraced their ends and their achievements to some *significant* depth this would be a matter of great concern. In such a situation the absence of identification would not simply be one value losing out among competing others. It would rather be a telling sign that something of fundamental importance was missing, a profound estrangement that could not be blamed on proclivities, perversities or inconsistencies in the preferences of individuals but would have to be located at a societal level, in processes that were actively interfering with the very possibility of depth.

The way Roemer's type-methodology expounds the idea of conceivability has an interesting resonance with this point (though of course his model lacks the (modest) perfectionist impulse I employ). If we recognise an utter absence of depth in the collective life of the community this is something with roots beyond individual volition and effort. It is not that all people have no desire for such depth. Rather, this kind of depth is not contained within the ranges of behaviour available to the population. It is an absence that is being produced and sustained as an integral, organising fact of the background against which choices are made and lives lived. Where depth is denied to any particular portion of the population, the same point holds.

If we care about variety and plurality in the public life, some people's *depth* of engagement with some practice – the deeper mattering of things that accompanies deeper identification – is just as important as *breadth* – the variety of activities about which we can be dilettantish. We might have different religions, associations, arts and various other involvements available to us. As Rawls suggested, a democratic society is one that 'has a

place for all the main purposes of human life'.<sup>302</sup> But where a deeper kind of identification is made impossible, unlikely or simply difficult, then the evoking of diverse ways of living as a sign of modernity's vibrancy and vitality is being undermined.<sup>303</sup> While individuals who do not engage to any depth with their involvements can still live a valuable life, to see that absence at a broader, societal level should make us uneasy.<sup>304</sup>

Furthermore, the fact this depth is taken on by at least some purveyors of a practice is an important part of its continuation. Without the 'expert purveyors' the practice itself suffers because crucial aspects of practice-engagement, i.e. subjection to the authority and examples of the expert purveyors, cease as lively options. There is therefore a certain structure to the sustaining of a practice that *requires* depth by at least some of its practitioners. Practices are necessary for value, even for the dilettante. The structure of any engagement with practices is twofold: (minimal) habituation to the standards and demands of the practice and (minimal) subjection to the authority of the expert purveyors. These experts are the 'deep engagers'. Without them the standards would not be made lively and personified for the other 'shallower' or 'early' practitioners to approximate.

For example, those who have embedded themselves within a community-run organisation or association for considerable lengths of time will have a greater understanding of the variety of ways in which their work can be accomplished. They will appreciate and apprehend the bureaucracy that needs to be dealt with in order to get everything above board and legitimate; they will have a better sense of the areas within which their resources are best employed; of the limitations concerning what they can hope to achieve and the quality of needs that their work is ultimately going to meet. Again all this takes time to come to grips with and cannot be fashioned out of nothing.<sup>305</sup> They

---

<sup>302</sup> John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1993) p 40. See also William Galston's discussion of 'deep diversity' in William Galston, 'Two Concepts of Liberalism', *Ethics*, 105:3 (1995) p 526 – 527.

<sup>303</sup> Admittedly, this position relies on an intuition that depth will or can accompany ways of life that are not especially coercive or restrictive. For example, we might plausibly baulk against the wholehearted identification and depth of an Amish community member because such depth is the result of limited options. For discussion of this tension between diversity, autonomy and depth see Richard Arneson & Ian Shapiro, 'Democratic Autonomy and Religious Freedom: A Critique of *Wisconsin V. Yoder*', in Ian Shapiro & Russell Hardin, *Political Order* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) pp. 389 – 393.

<sup>304</sup> There is also the (perhaps distant) possibility of *combining* depth with breadth. It is just this that would characterise Communist men and women. See Bertell Ollman, *Social and Sexual Revolution* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1978) p 70. For a slightly less distant and more immediately available vision of this combination see Hurka, *Perfectionism*, p 98.

<sup>305</sup> In this sense, I strike a position similar to Michael Walzer when he advocates the state 'fostering associative activities' in order to counter some of the mobilising tendencies symptomatic of modern

require skills like any other practice-engagement which take time to get right. These organisations also need ‘regular infantry’ – as it were – volunteers to do the ground work and help with completing tasks and putting plans into action. But such ‘grunt’ work is *dependent on* the deeper kind of engagement characteristic of people with longer histories within the organisation. Without those longer histories, the shorter ones could not happen.

### *Conclusion*

Our efforts are what ultimately make the material out of which a life is formed. It is through the allocation of time and energy in projects, commitments, relationships and causes we regard as valuable that we are able to get a grip on what it is we care about, what it is we wish to do and who it is we wish to be. We do this by first putting effort into finding out which projects, commitments, activities and practices we wish to spend time learning about and doing. It is through our efforts that we learn about the demands and constraints that are definitive of practices and by which our activity is judged. We expose our efforts and activity to these standards and are thus made vulnerable to failure: success is not a decision individuals make on their own terms. Rather, it is a judgement made against the background of demands already formed and expectations derived from the practices with which we are involved.

I began with a reiterated account of the burdens discussed in chapter 1. The choices we make about what to do and who to be all issue in costs. By choosing one thing we are simultaneously not choosing a whole range of other things. By caring about things we are also made vulnerable to their potential absence or withdrawal, whether these are the result of personal failures or wider socio-economic factors. Lacking from accounts that have previously addressed these matters is recognition of the distinction between the concepts of care and vulnerability. There are ways to care without thereby being opened up to intense problems of vulnerability and the costs associated with diligent-effort. There is, however, a deeper kind of practice-engagement which *implies* and *necessitates* this vulnerability. These engagements need a certain amount of security, a mitigation of vulnerability, in order to protect them.

---

society. Michael Walzer, ‘The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism’, *Political Theory*, 18:1 (1990) pp. 6 – 23.



Finally, I considered whether this desire for protection is motivated by a piece of unwarranted nostalgia, an inability to accept certain of the terms of modernity.<sup>306</sup> However, in assessing the ways in which individuals relate to the content and concerns of their lives, the potential person-end relations that are being undermined *are* particularly crucial. I concede that we can survive, and in some ways even flourish, without the deeper instances of concrete practice-involvement: the promiscuous-type, tourist and other dilettantes are ever present and celebrated fixtures of our contemporary culture. But these characters cannot flourish in ways that depend on a particularly strong notion of identification and the concomitant vulnerability to which this exposes deep practitioners. In much the same way we celebrate plurality along a dimension of breadth, we should be careful not to neglect the depth axis which is also an (increasingly fragile and more tenuous) aspect of this plurality.

In the next chapter I offer an analysis of why this vulnerability is exacerbated by contemporary socio-economic circumstances and also examine what this vulnerability affects within the person-practice relation. By drawing on a more sociological literature I will examine more closely the activities and demands typical of person-practice relations. Specifically, I look at the two-fold demand these involvements make of individuals, i.e. subjection to authority and extended, habituated involvement with the practice. In particular, I examine the quality of this person-practice relation in the context of work. Work is an especially crucial involvement because it also represents another important demand made on people by the environments they live in. When working not only are we potentially engaging in a meaningful enterprise, we are also performing activity that is, from a social point of view, necessary.

---

<sup>306</sup> Certainly there is a moment in Raz's account of value where just this accusation of nostalgia might be gleaned. He seems to extol a certain minimalism for what it is we need to live lives of sufficient value. Joseph Raz, 'The Role of Well-Being', *Philosophical Perspectives*, 18: 1 (2004) p 290. It is here that he claims that he is a minimalist with regards to what it is that we, as creatures with rational capacity, need to have in the way of conditions that make our lives valuable. So individuals in the Stone Age would have had just those opportunities 'to express emotional, imaginative, creative, physical and other aspects of their nature'. However, when we combine this with Raz's emphasis on loyalty and identification (for instance in *Morality of Freedom* p 382 & p 405) then the emphasis on minimalism seems somewhat strained. When our engagement with practices is further backgrounded by the development of a sociology of liquid modernity then this strain becomes even more evident and untenable. These preliminary thoughts are developed further in the coming chapter.

## The Craftsman versus the Demands of Late Modernity

'I possess the world effortlessly, and the world hasn't the slightest hold upon me... I am here now and I have the power to be elsewhere! I am dependent upon neither time, nor space, nor distance. The world is my servant'.

Honoré de Balzac

The above quote is emblematic of an attitude opposed to the depth implied by diligent-effort. It recognises freedom (and value) in the absolute absence of those things that *hold* or *ground* us, and that, in so doing, make us vulnerable. It is a celebration of the capacity to be unburdened by deeper kinds of involvements and the demands these make on our time, resources and effort. The absence of diligent-effort is not evidence of a wretched life devoid of all value. But dominance of such an attitude throughout a society, if such dominance were ever to be fully accomplished, would be devastating to important aspects of the commitment and depth that characterise those complex person-practice relations I examined in the previous chapter. In this chapter I describe the character of the craftsman, someone whose life is in part constituted by diligent-effort and the deep person-practice relations it fills out.

The last chapter developed the image of individuals engaging with valuable practices in their surrounding cultures. I argued that engaging in complex and deep ways with these practices, of identifying wholeheartedly with them, is not an *a priori* possibility but a matter of sociology. Without an appreciation of the demands our social world makes of us, we are left without the means to properly assess this possibility. Our practice-engagements do not exist in a vacuum away from our having to navigate potentially treacherous labour markets or the duties of the concerned activist or citizen. These imperatives and obligations significantly impact on the possibilities of depth we are able to entertain.

In this chapter I begin by describing in more detail a particularly deep mode of engagement. This description issues in the character of the 'craftsman'. The craftsman is, like Tanizaki from the previous chapter, someone who comes to care deeply about some particular, concrete activity. In this chapter, however, I employ the more common usage of the notion of craftsmanship and explore the world of work. Work has often been a place and activity where a great deal of our time and energy has been 'put' and is thus a typical instance of a place where depth in a practice involvement could potentially be gained.

Work is also important because it is one of those social demands with which the person has to deal in the course of their everyday life.

I then go on to describe the nature of work as an example of a concrete *social* demand within the late-capitalist context, concentrating on the shifts in the way capital and labour operate against one another. I argue that the social demands associated with work in the current epoch are not conducive to the demands of depth and that they can in fact exist in considerable tension with one another. In the absence of some minimum level of security, individuals are left without the means to handle and navigate these social demands and are thus unable to mitigate the vulnerability that accompanies deep engagement. In such a situation, the other demands of depth are, I argue, less likely to be entertained. This would represent a loss to the plurality and diversity of valuable ways of life we are able to enjoy.

### *Who is the Craftsman?*

There is an overall lack of concern for the actual content and structure of meaningful work within the political theory literature. A lot of attention is instead focused on the question of a *right* to meaningful work or how work impacts on issues of autonomy.<sup>307</sup> These arguments tend to emphasise the powerful, self-realising potential that work has – but only *as a potential*.<sup>308</sup> The arguments remain abstracted from the ways in which system-level economic imperatives affect the meaning it is *possible* for work to have within a person's conception of the good: the right is therefore defended without exploring the actual content of meaning in the context of work and what it means to work in meaningful ways.<sup>309</sup> People's work is not invulnerable to the shifting sands of supply and demand, changes in technological, organisational and capital infrastructures. The meanings that work is able to enjoy – the kind of work available, the content of whatever work is

---

<sup>307</sup> For instance, see Jon Elster, 'Self-Realisation in Work and Politics', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 3:2 (1986); Adina Schwartz, 'Meaningful Work', *Ethics*, 92: 4 (1982); Beate Roessler, 'Meaningful Work: Arguments from Autonomy', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 20:1 (2012). See also White, *The Civic Minimum*, p 90 & p 194.

<sup>308</sup> Elster, 'Self-Realisation in Work and Politics', p 97. This can be traced to Marx's notion in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* that in communist society work would no longer be merely 'a means of life' but would become 'life's prime want'. See David McLellan, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) p 569.

<sup>309</sup> Marx himself is an (occasional) exception to this; his descriptions of what the end of alienation amounts to are descriptions of work when that potentially self-realising force is unleashed, though admittedly it remains in a more or less abstracted form. See, for instance, *Ibid.* p 114-122 (*On James Mill*) & pp. 77-87 (*The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*).

demanded and then done – are thus privy to a great deal of events and decisions that are not made in (or anywhere near) the workplace.

In his discussion of the possibility for meaningful work, White alludes to Dworkin's challenge model of the good life.<sup>310</sup> From this perspective, meaning is gained in life via responding to intrinsically valuable challenges. Work is one possible site of that challenge. To lack the possibility for meaning in one's work is to be unable to treat one's work as a site of valuable challenge. Challenge will remain in having to stomach the burdensomeness of toil. In such a situation, effort is treated as the creator of burdens. But this kind of challenge is not of an intrinsically valuable kind. Responding to valuable challenges is thus a possible *structure* of the value we can enjoy at work. In this chapter I build on the previous chapter's description of the person-practice relation in order to describe the *content* of such challenges as they pertain to work. I then assess possibilities for such content within the contemporary economic situation.

In his reply to Richard Arneson, Russell Keat recognises the effects that wider social demands can have on the possibility of meaningful or appropriately challenging work. Arneson argues that socialists should be concerned with distribution alone and that they should be agnostic as to the role work plays in people's lives and conceptions of the good: meaningful work is one choice among many and it is not for the state, on pain of accusations of paternalism, to legislate one way or the other.<sup>311</sup> Keat, contra the distributive focus Arneson employs, recognises the significance of economic regimes in rendering meaningful work a real and lively *possibility*. In other words, Keat argues that the reduction of focus to being one about choice cannot be justified simply by resolving to 'devolve' all further choices to individuals. This is so because the choice of economic system 'determine(s) the framework of societal possibilities within which individuals must (largely) operate'.<sup>312</sup> There are systemic considerations at play that cannot be ignored given the influence *any* choice at that foundational-level has on preference formation, the design of projects and the conceptions of the good people are able to develop and pursue. An exclusively distributive focus fails to fully capture the reality of the political situations we

---

<sup>310</sup> White, *The Civic Minimum*, p 89. See also Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, pp. 237- 284.

<sup>311</sup> See Russell Keat, 'Anti-Perfectionism, Market Economies and the Right to Meaningful Work', *Analyse und Kritik*, 31:1 (2009) pp. 121 – 138; Richard Arneson, 'Meaningful Work and Market Socialism Revisited', *Analyse und Kritik*, 31:1 (2009); Richard Arneson, 'Meaningful Work and Market Socialism', *Ethics*, 97:3 (1987).

<sup>312</sup> Russell Keat, 'Ethics, Market and MacIntyre', in Kelvin Knight and Paul Blackledge, eds., *Revolutionary Aristotelianism: Ethics, Resistance and Utopia* (Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius, 2008) pp. 243-257.

face. To remain agnostic on wider issues of institutional structure and capital ownership is to implicitly favour and disfavour certain kinds of life.

While the concept of the craftsman I develop is not confined exclusively to the idea of the ‘worker’ I do draw largely on examples of people at work.<sup>313</sup> In doing this, I do not take a stand on the *necessary* structures of ‘good work’. This is not intended as an *exclusive* description of meaningful or good work or the role work *must* have in a person’s life in order for it to count as meaningful. What I wish to describe under the heading of the ‘craftsman’ is one way in which work can be deeply and meaningfully engaged with.<sup>314</sup> So there is a minimal perfectionism involved in that I am suggesting that this is *one* particularly valuable (and vulnerable) form of life without thereby asserting it as the *only* possible source of value.

Richard Sennett describes the craftsman as someone who does good work for its own sake.<sup>315</sup> This puts it beyond the idiomatic notion that ‘craft’ is relevant only to skilled manual labour. Certainly, the work of the craftsman is ‘practical’ in that the activities that constitute work belong to practices that make sense of them, i.e. provide the standards by which they are to be judged.<sup>316</sup> But the orchestral conductor and journalist are learning a practical craft as much as the carpenter. Craftsmanship thus describes, in part, a particular *attitude* to a person’s work. The work of craftsmen and women is done with an eye trained on the quality of the work being done. Carpenters, orchestral conductors and journalists may gain (more often than not, pecuniary) advantages in working in a less craftsman-like way by, for instance, focusing on the speed in which results are produced, rather than on

---

<sup>313</sup> Of course, the historical possibility for this kind of engagement was both dominated by men and reliant on other less craftsman-like tasks being performed by women and children: while the craftsman attained depth the less than deep work was delegated to those excluded from such opportunity. The final chapter and its emphasis on the emancipatory potential of technological and wealth distribution can be read as arguing for the possibility that such engagement can be supported *without* the need for reliance on gender inequalities and the exploitation that is implied.

<sup>314</sup> Russell Muirhead has done something similar but much broader. See Russell Muirhead, *Just Work* (London: Harvard University Press, 2004). Muirhead describes the way in which work can be considered ‘fit’ for the dignity of human-beings (see *Ibid.* pp 51-70). In contrast to that approach I will not involve myself with questions of the dignity of work but rather with the narrower question of what are the kinds of things that allow work (or more generally practice involvements) to be meaningful in the way characteristic of the craftsman.

<sup>315</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p 20. See also Susan Wolf, *The Meaning of Life and Why it Matters* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010) p 5.

<sup>316</sup> See also John Dewey, *How we Think* (Kansas: Digireads, 2004) p 66-70 where Dewey seeks to reunite ‘concrete’ thinking with ‘abstract’. All activity, Dewey suggests, follows a primary familiarity with concrete activity which then has the potential to be developed into the more abstract but which in so doing does not *escape* concrete use. The carpenter’s tasks can issue in abstract thought just as those of the scientist or ‘theorist’ can draw on concrete, practical activity.

the quality. But the craftsman treats issues such as speed as less important than attendance to those standards of excellence, those ‘patterns of dos and don’ts’, which define their respective practices. It is an attitude that recognises a possible gap between getting something done and getting something right.<sup>317</sup>

Craftsmen thus represent a minimally *deep* engagement with the rules and standards of the practices with which they are involved. Engagement is not regarded as a means to some other end but is primarily done for the sake of learning and producing ‘good instances’ of a practice. Alasdair MacIntyre’s distinction between the pursuit of external and internal goods as part of our reasons for engaging with practices is interesting vis-à-vis this question of depth.<sup>318</sup> Goods that are internal to a given practice are those which cannot be had in any way except by engaging with that particular practice. They are thus inseparable from the concrete activity associated with that practice: goods associated with the study of literature are different from the goods of scientific investigation which are also different from the goods of high-level sport performance. External goods are those that are obtainable without reference to a particular activity, those goods that are potentially available across all practices. The most obvious external good is money since it can be obtained through any number of activities. Status in its more general sense might be another.

This interestingly parallels the distinction in the previous chapter between concrete and unspecified ends and goals, and the vulnerability that is characteristic of the former. In this context, it is internal goods that are especially vulnerable when the processes underlying habituation to the standards of a practice are put under threat. The ability to gain access to particular internal goods relies on the continued existence of – and thus institutional support for – a *specific* practice, whereas the accruing of external goods relies only on there being *some* practice in which individuals can involve themselves.<sup>319</sup> The concrete, specific activities and their potentially attenuated relation to the internal goods they make available are thus contrasted to the more mutable relation lying between practices *per se* and external goods. Put bluntly, we may be able to find and secure external

---

<sup>317</sup> Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p 46.

<sup>318</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p 190.

<sup>319</sup> This idea of engagement is separate from the actual *existence* of goods internal to practices, which only need sustaining practices in order to emerge but once existing will always exist. Raz, *Value, Respect and Attachment*, p 134.

resources from all manner of work.<sup>320</sup> But the idea that we can do so in one particular profession – whether it is carpentry, administrative work or in academia – and thus go on exploring the fecundity/depth of options represented by concrete and specific practices, is dependent on the security of that involvement which in its turn is dependent on wider systemic imperatives.

The behaviour necessary to engage *deeply* with these internal goods is importantly objective, i.e. not subject to shifts according to time and place but to some degree rigid and constant. The standards set by the practice do not shift to accommodate failures: if one fails to reach them and produce performances of sufficient quality then one has failed.<sup>321</sup> An important part of such engagement is the ability to *subject oneself* to the authority of the practice, both to its contemporary practitioners and those who have come before: ‘it is thus the achievement, and *a fortiori* the authority, of a tradition which I then confront and from which I have to learn’.<sup>322</sup> The practice and its standards are things we negotiate as in important ways *given*.<sup>323</sup>

This concept of givenness is an important aspect of a practice’s authority. Following Michael Sandel’s use of this term in his work on bioethics, the acceptance of practices’ authority is also an acceptance that certain of our situations’ limitations are not merely contingent. These limitations should not be regarded as merely waiting to be revolutionised and brought to conform to novel understandings of an activity or good. Rather, they are forever set beyond our urge for total control. Putting them beyond this ‘Promethean’ urge is a large part of the value they are able to have for us.<sup>324</sup> We can master the standards of a practice and become expert in how to act *within* its authority, perhaps even develop the requisite expertise to alter them to some extent. But to an

---

<sup>320</sup> Of course, in situations of scarce employment even this access to external goods is hard to guarantee and vulnerability registers here as well.

<sup>321</sup> Although temporary and accumulative failures are certainly an important part of the habituation process I have described in the last chapter and which I expand on below.

<sup>322</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p 194. Interestingly this sounds very similar to the model Sennett develops to characterise the ways in which craftsmen and women were historically educated. See Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p 22.

<sup>323</sup> This seems to imply a kind of dictatorial relation between expert and the less than expert. The standards of the practice, however, are a useful block on that: The expert’s authority is rooted in the practice not in her person *per se*. It is an epistemic authority that must be open to challenges that make reference to those standards. The expert scientist, for instance, has no authority vis-à-vis the student outside of the standards and rules of the practice about which he is especially knowledgeable.

<sup>324</sup> Michael Sandel, *The Case Against Perfection* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Harvard University Press, 2007) Ch. 5.

important degree, these standards exist beyond our impulse for control and act as limitations on our activity.

What exactly does the learning of the standards associated with a practice demand of the individual? What concrete processes do people participate in when they engage deeply with practices? Sennett is again illuminating on this score. He identifies three abilities which are basic to craftsmen. These are the abilities 'to localize, to question and to open up'.<sup>325</sup> Take, by way of explicating these processes, Sennett's description of the carpenter at work.

Localization is the ability to focus one's attention on 'a place where something important is happening'. For the carpenter, localising might involve the handling and inspection of a single piece of wood in the hope of finding interesting or challenging details. There is the need for complex tacit knowledge to make sense of this localisation: carpenters need a sense of what is being inspected and for what purpose in order for this localization to make sense. The grain that shows up as interesting, as possessing something of importance is only intelligible in the light of what the craft of carpentry *means*, what it *does* and what it *produces*. This is something which might seem immediately apparent even to those of us who are not inculcated in the crafts of carpentry: it involves using wood to make things of utility. But the application and use of that knowledge is far from easily acquired.

The next phase, questioning, is the exploration of the identified locale and relies on an implicit curiosity, an ability to dwell 'in an incipient state'. That is, in the case of the carpenter, a handling of the wood and 'pondering how the pattern on the surface might reflect structure hidden underneath'. The carpenter inhabits a space of 'suspend(ed) resolution and decision, in order to probe'.<sup>326</sup> Action therefore leads to a period of non-action during which results are questioned. Then action is allowed to resume in a new, more informed way. The third part, opening up, involves the interactions of different habits within the carpenter's toolkit as a way of arriving at promising ways of using this particular wood and its qualities. The carpenter steps back and explores the different possibilities that

---

<sup>325</sup> Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p 277.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.* p 279. This can be seen as specific instance of the more general idea suggested by Dewey, *How We Think*, p 58. 'It is such peculiar combinations of the understood and the nonunderstood that provoke thought'. By understanding that which is not understood in the light of that which *is*, we are able to work through a problem to new understandings and techniques.



the identified problem/quality has presented her with, eventually deciding on a particular course of action she regards as suitable to deal with it.<sup>327</sup>

An important dimension of the craftsman's engagement with practices is, evidently, the issue of time. The habituation to the standards of a practice is not a straightforward event or process and all those skills have been earned via repeated accumulative experiences. This involves a great deal of trial and error, the abandonment of old techniques in order to develop new, more complex ones and close, painstaking inspection of the standards and expectations surrounding our involvement with an activity. All of this is both effortful and time-consuming. Part of such effort is engaged in what Sennett has called 'dwelling in error'. This demonstrates the *necessary* role constructive failures have in our learning and development as we experiment, learn and occasionally stumble, throughout our engagement with practices.<sup>328</sup> It is not a process in which success is guaranteed or in which application is naturally and inevitably accumulative and productive. Learning to deal with error and failure is a crucial part of what we do with our effort.

#### *The Content of a 'Practice Session'*

To supplement the basic abilities characteristic of the craftsman it is also necessary to understand what the person does with the time spent in 'practice sessions', i.e. those activities that inform and fill-out person-practice relations.<sup>329</sup> It is through these 'sessions' that depth is gained. The activities associated with any given practice build on previous experience and skills. This process, while obviously admitting of a great diversity across the whole range of practices, does have some practice-independent constants. That is, the ways in which craftsmen learn about their practices do possess a certain structure that facilitates habituation to the relevant standards and expectations.

A significant part of this structure is dealing with resistance. Progress in learning skill is not linear. Any practice in which we take part and about which we care has, in the process of our involvement with it, presented us with difficulties and challenges. Resistances, 'those facts that stand in the way of the will', are experiences common to all our attempts to get good at something we have a taste for.<sup>330</sup> (Sennett also suggests the

---

<sup>327</sup> Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p 277-280.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid* p 161.

<sup>329</sup> 'Dwelling in error' constitutes an important part of these 'sessions' as shown below.

<sup>330</sup> Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p 215.

necessity for *creating* opportunities for resistance where none are found as a way of developing and increasing capacity).<sup>331</sup> It is only in learning to deal with these resistances constructively that any (non-linear) progress can be made at all.

The primary experience of resistance is frustration. In confronting resistance we apprehend a situation in which things cannot 'go on' as before. Something needs to change in order to allow us to continue with our activity. Again this 'changing' is a skilful and effortful process. It is learned and acquired rather than being some bedrock capacity we can automatically draw on. Like a great many of our capacities it is privy to atrophy and underdevelopment. Three skills of special importance in dealing with resistance, again drawing on Sennett, are the skills necessary for i) reformatting the problem, ii) judging of time and iii) identifying with the resistance.

Briefly, reformatting the problem allows practitioners to take a step-back from the problem as it exists and imaginatively recast that resistance in a different light and draw on other experiences or frames of reference that can then be applied to the problem at hand in order for a solution to be found. Sennett uses the example of Peter Barlow's building of a tunnel under the Thames, in which the architect, instead of trying to *resist* the river using bricks as the material of choice, used iron tubing to work *with* it. This shift was achieved in the act of imagining himself swimming across the river and seeing his body less as a box (which suggests the strength of bricks) and more as an empty vessel (hence the decision to use a hollow tube).

The judging of time involves the revision of our expectations vis-à-vis the length of time a particular task will take. The wrinkle here, as Sennett describes it, is that such revision is dependent on the fact that 'we have to fail consistently (in order) to make this revision'.<sup>332</sup> There is a virtuous circularity at play here: the making of mistakes is necessary for the recognition that resistance is present. Such recognition is *itself* dependent on there being an already achieved minimal depth of understanding into the standards of the practice at hand. Acknowledging the unusual amount of time a task is taking to complete means a third and final skill is made necessary – that of *identifying* with resistance. This is the process of finding 'the most forgiving element in a difficult situation', a counterpoint to the skill of localisation, and exploiting it as a possible means of solving the bigger problem. Returning to the example of Barlow and the building of the Thames tunnel, we see that by

---

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.* p 222-226

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.* p 221.

turning his attention to the *flow* of the water and away from the unforgiving aspect of the *pressure*, he was able to reconstitute and reimagine the problem in such a way as to make it more amenable to resolution.<sup>333</sup>

The reason I have dwelt on a description of the skills associated with craftsmanship is to draw attention to the extensive range of those skills and also to emphasise the fragility of such a character-type. The craftsman is not an easy way to be. It demands the nurturing of a certain attitude, a great deal of time and a significant quantity of effort plied into very concrete and specific tasks. Unlike the hero of the Balzac quote at the start of the chapter, craftsmen cannot escape the burden and cost of their involvements.<sup>334</sup> Her sense of what matters – of who she is to be and what she is to do – is too deeply interwoven with that involvement. Such burdensomeness – in the sense I described it in the last chapter – has to be embraced, identified with and followed through in the ways characteristic of craftsmen. To lose those burdens, to be free of them in some sense, would be also to lose the sense they made of her life. It is to this loss which craftsmen are made vulnerable.

The capacities here being described are not preconceived but created out of our experiences in the world. They are thus highly contingent. In the absence of possibilities that make lively and available the kinds of practice-engagements that are peculiar to craftsmen, these abilities, habits and experiences will also remain, at best, an unexploited potential. The depth we might wish to ‘enjoy’, drawing on and nurturing the different skills described above, is not an act of individual decision alone. It has to occur within a world that *allows* it, that grants us the time and space in which all these things can be learned and, importantly, learned well.<sup>335</sup>

An interesting instance of this potential being left underdeveloped is the story Sennett tells of the modern bakery. In a Boston bakery, machines have been developed to

---

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>334</sup> Of course the Balzac character has their own set of skills to learn- the ability to live in this ‘costless’ way is itself learned and will present challenges and resistance peculiar to its nature. Such skills, however, can flow with the flux of environment and do not have to baulk against it.

<sup>335</sup> Also, Sennett’s emphasis on routine and its role in the establishment of these endogenous, embedded skills stands implicitly opposed to Frankfurt’s characterisation of boredom as somehow inimical to identification and wholeheartedness. In order to identify with a particular concrete end whose standards we are habituated into and whose authority we accept, boredom may become a necessary part of this kind of value. Until we are bored (to some degree) with an activity – that is, when a certain level of resistance in the practice is broken down because of the skills we develop – we have not yet sufficiently inculcated those skills which allow us to claim that we have successfully engaged with a practice. We then begin an even deeper engagement with the practice learning the new demands it will make and the new skills it will call on. *Ibid.* p 273.

be the most user-friendly imaginable: computer screens and high-tech sensory devices have been combined with ovens to furnish workers with the ability to produce and make bread in all its many forms despite a total absence of knowledge pertaining to bakery. This has certain (institutional) advantages because costs are kept low, profits high and rehiring easy. Workers can be unskilled because the machines themselves are chocked full of the necessary know-how. Sennett describes this as a 'terrible paradox', whereby the 'diminishing of difficulty and resistance, create the very conditions for uncritical and indifferent activity'.<sup>336</sup> The drawbacks of such a system extend beyond those times a machine breaks down and the lack of know-how amongst the bakers leads to a lot of sitting on hands. Whether the worker intends, must, or desires to be able to flit between ranges of differently low-skilled jobs, this lack of know-how does not become an encumbrance but a necessary fact of life.

This lack of concrete, embedded know-how will also influence the ways in which these workers are able to see themselves in relation to their work. This is precisely *because* of the lack of skills and understanding they are able to 'get by' with, the lack of challenging *resistance* their work supplies. In much the same way that we don't take seriously the person who claims love for an activity or a cause they take no part in, who has yet to face the challenges they might encounter in so taking part, we would be hard pressed to describe these individuals as bakers. Their understanding of the process and practice of that activity – the challenges, difficulties and resistances that have to be confronted in the process of so becoming – is too minimal. They lack the skills necessary to support claims of identification with the craft of bakery.

People who claim to care for the environment have to back that up with specific practical activity e.g. recycling, use of public transport and vegetarianism. People who claim to be bakers also have to demonstrate that care through activity within the practice of bakery. Identities have to be earned in some way, through involvement in practical performance of the tasks and challenges set by crafts. Without this, even though time is spent at a place where baking is done, there is a lack of the kind of involvement which issues in the skills that warrant substantive identification with the practice and the occupation. This is not necessarily the individual's fault: the world within which she 'moves' inside the institution of the bakery demands little from her and provides even less

---

<sup>336</sup> Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character*, p 73-75.

opportunity for the development of her skills.<sup>337</sup> It requires only a minimum amount of attention which, when emergency/resistance/ambiguity present themselves, prove almost utterly useless.

### *Conflicts with the demands of Depth*

The person-practice relation MacIntyre refers to and the concrete details of craftsmanship as Sennett describes them are not isolated from the web of relations that exist elsewhere within an individual's life. The demands that are made of us by some 'parts' of our life can complicate and render difficult other more craftsman-like uses of our time, energies and resources. Occupations are a prime example of the ways in which the demands made on us by our environments 'turn us out' to other parts of our life. That is, work makes demands of us that will be felt elsewhere, in our other engagements. For example, a promotion/pay-cut/redundancy might entail moving house or cutting back on certain expenditures thereby unsettling family life. (This works in the other direction as well: family life or a particular religious affiliation may put a pin in a promotion or a particular type of work.)

Certain expectations are made of the individual in their capacity as members of a particular society. It is the meeting of these expectations which allow societies to function and reproduce themselves. This is the meaning behind Zygmunt Bauman's notion that 'there are many ways of being human, but each society makes a choice of the way it prefers or tolerates'; or Ulrich Beck when he writes 'the private sphere is not what it appears to be: a sphere separated from the environment. It is the outside turned inside and made private, of conditions and decisions made elsewhere....With general disregard of their private, biographical consequences'.<sup>338</sup> In meeting a society's demands and expectations we become members of specific groups. The expectation that we work, for instance, turns us into 'workers' which leads to our assuming certain roles and joining particular organisations. Different responses to these demands will lead to membership of

---

<sup>337</sup> For this distinction between institutions and practices which take place within them, see MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p 194. Also, see Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p 46-51 for an empirical example that reflects this medical care (practice) and hospital (institutional) conflict, a tension he characterises by reference to a different distinction between 'correctness' (internal goods) and 'functionality' (imperative of the institution).

<sup>338</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (Open University Press: Milton Keynes, 1998) p 105. Ulrich Beck, *The Risk Society* (London: Sage Publications, 1992) p 133. It is also this point Iris Marion Young makes in the chapter concerning productive contributions and the role they play in reproducing the current reified interactional and institutional structures. Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, p 53.

different associations: a nurse joins the hospital, a teacher the school and a banker the bank. There are also secondary associations such as trade unions and professional associations which these prior memberships can grow into. The demands that arise out of such various memberships can issue in the kinds of associational conflicts that John Dewey recognised even in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>339</sup>

These conflicts refer to the ways in which involvement in one set of associations makes it difficult to associate elsewhere. So, for example, workers spending 14 hours a day down the mine or in a factory may find it difficult to operate effectively as citizens, fathers, brothers and whatever else.<sup>340</sup> Dewey's concerns were specifically with regards to the formation of 'publics', to those associations necessary for individuals affected by a particular confluence of processes in the social, economic and political situation to take control of their collective fates, to 'project agencies' which might order such processes.<sup>341</sup> His worry was that 'new forces' of mass industry, increased speeds of communication and capital accumulation, produced 'mobile and fluctuated associational forms' that meant individuals were less able to accommodate themselves to the demands of their various associations. This in turn would reduce their collective ability to construct and render effective those projecting agencies: 'Without abiding attachments, associations are too shifting and shaken to permit a public readily to locate and identify itself.'<sup>342</sup> In this example then, the habituation necessary for the 'craft' of effective political, social and economic opposition or organisation is imagined as exceedingly difficult precisely because of the lack of structures needed to facilitate the learning, embedding and employment of the relevant skills.

Declines in trade union membership and changes in their purposes and functions have borne out this worry. Not only is trade union membership down but the *ways* in which people use unions have also changed.<sup>343</sup> Not only are there fewer people joining

---

<sup>339</sup> John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (Athens, NY.: Swallow Press, 1954) p 140-141

<sup>340</sup> This is a variation on Smith's point: 'The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects too are, perhaps, always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur'. Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (New York: Bantam Dell, [1776] 2003) p 987. It is the fact that such tasks *monopolise* the workers' efforts and admit of no plurality that dullness and a more general incompetence is the result.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.* p 131.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.* p 141.

<sup>343</sup> "Over the period 1995 to 2011, employee union density in the UK generally shows a downward trend, declining from 32.4 per cent in 1995 to 29.8 per cent in 2000 and 28.6 per cent in 2005." Department for Business Innovation and Skills, *Trade Union Membership 2011* (National Statistics

their unions but those who do are not involved in ways that coordinate on-going collective action as effectively as in previous epochs. Where before the union surrounded a person's life and was a large part of workers' social lives, this is no longer the case: today, the union is primarily a place where grievances are registered and complaints made, representation sought and employment advice offered.<sup>344</sup> It is no longer an all-encompassing association in which holidays, education and the majority of extra-curricular activities are collectively organised around the workplace. This is not a normative or even nostalgic point. I use this only to demonstrate the almost tautological point that the efficacy of a collective agency is lessened when people do not regard it as a tool of such agency, when it is abandoned as a place worthy of their time, effort and skill: that is, as both a part and means of people's conceptions of the good.

Robert Bellah (et al.) have noted something similar affecting the ways in which individuals understand their engagement with their communities and what these particular involvements are able to mean for them.<sup>345</sup> Bellah draws on the image of the 'town father' – an explicit contemporising of Tocqueville's 'character ideal' of the 'independent citizen' (along with the sexist connotations of that ideal) – to describe someone whose working-life and community-life enjoyed a certain unity and coherence. Town fathers' engagement with their community would help them in their working-life: 'the demands of work, family and neighbourliness were intersecting'.<sup>346</sup> Men – as they would have been, more often than not – first attended to the demands of community and public interest out of a sense of necessity, i.e. such assistance helped with the establishment and development of business, until such necessity precipitated in them a taste, habit and preference for it.<sup>347</sup> Actions which were at first inspired by narrow self-interest became activity integral to the person's sense of himself and what he was doing.

Bellah, however, argues that this intersection and the moral identification it makes possible is made increasingly fragile by modern economic and social processes. The demands specific to our particular epoch do not function in the same organising way: 'The associational life of the modern metropolis does not generate the kinds of second languages of social responsibility and practices of commitment to the public good' that he

---

Publication, April 2012) p 7. Currently trade union membership stands below 1919 levels- this without even taking into account the enormous increases in population size. *Ibid.* p 9.

<sup>344</sup> For an historical account of other roles unions used to enjoy (specifically in Germany) see Paul Mason, *Live Working or Die Fighting*, pp. 152 – 159.

<sup>345</sup> Robert Bellah, et al. *Habits of the Heart* (London :California University Press, 1985) p 169- 181

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.* p 170.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.* p 174.

believe characterised, in admittedly ideal form, the associational life of the independent township.<sup>348</sup> The complexity of the modern era and the differently intersecting demands made of an individual do not *allow* for a substantial degree of unity. There is a great deal of flux and conflict which individuals must negotiate, a negotiation not easily compatible with the trials and tribulations of public involvement.

Here I have been referring to the ‘craft’ of public engagement. Like those person-practices relations I have described above and in the previous chapter, this requires time for habituation, for the skills associated with such a practice to ‘bed in’ and be properly formed. As Sennett says, ‘the slowness of craft time serves as a source of satisfaction; practice beds in, making the skills one’s own. Slow craft time also enable the work of reflection and imagination – which the push for quick results cannot. Mature means long; one takes lasting ownership of the skill.’<sup>349</sup> Our other associations, perhaps less voluntary in nature – such as work, which the majority of us are obliged to perform – can draw on our time, efforts and energies in ways less than amenable to the long-term demands of, in this instance, public life.

In the design of their conceptions of the good, people pursue certain ends and take part in certain projects. These pursuits and projects are not matters of pure choice. They must also take into account the demands that are found throughout the economy and public life more generally. We do not altogether choose the ways in which we work since these are guided by imperatives we have very little say over. For instance, when the economy needs us to be flexible in our work, prepared to move off or change employment patterns at a moment’s notice, success is governed by our ability to effectively negotiate that on-going task. To do otherwise – to forgo such negotiation as it were – would be to lay oneself open too readily to risk and possibly grave misfortune. It is thus a strategic necessity to perform in this flexible way. The skills and competencies needed in order to achieve this flexibility are different to other varieties that might arise in response to *different* contexts. Relating this to the wider biographical consequences, skills developed at the level of work will radiate out into other areas of people’s lives, affecting the other

---

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.* p 177.

<sup>349</sup> Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p 295. See also Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Random House, 1974) where Sennett explores *other* reasons for the waning of the craft necessary for public engagements. Essentially, the reasons boil down to an invasion of the personal imperatives of the private sphere into a public sphere which demands impersonality in order to thrive in an egalitarian fashion.



involvements their efforts have elsewhere drawn them into. Put succinctly, we are ‘workers’ everywhere not just at work.<sup>350</sup>

This is demonstrated by a character (Rico) from Sennett’s 1998 work *The Corrosion of Character*.<sup>351</sup> Rico is a high-flying technology advisor who runs a consultancy firm but has done so amidst a great deal of uprooting and long-distance house moves. He is also a father who wishes to impart certain lessons of integrity, loyalty and constancy to his child. His deepest worry is that the substance of his life – in which there is no sense of the long-term or of a fixed community in which to settle – is barren of such virtues, that his work *denies* him the opportunity to be a father in the way he would like. This worry expresses itself in a question that captures the rift between the demands of different associations: “How can (he) protect his family from succumbing to the short-term behaviour... the weakness of loyalty and commitment which mark the modern workplace?”<sup>352</sup>

A twist on these associational conflicts can be seen in the way shifts in legislation produce similar challenges to which people are obliged to respond. Consider, for example, the ways in which the United Kingdom’s housing situation – framed by legislation which itself absorbs a great deal of the imperatives surrounding economic activity and growth – might impact on people’s relation to their community, work and any of the other concrete (read: vulnerable) engagements with which craftsmen could deeply immerse themselves. Confronting such challenges is effortful and time-consuming, issuing in skills and competencies that allow for effective agency in the light of what those challenges present. They are also burdensome and costly since time spent tending to such challenges is time people do *not* spend elsewhere in other practices or associations they have reason to value. In the UK during the 1980s, housing legislation underwent a great many changes. After these changes were initiated they served to render the tenants of private residences significantly more precarious whilst also impacting on the more secure tenancies enjoyed by council house residents.<sup>353</sup> This was coupled with a more general government policy to

---

<sup>350</sup> This notion of the reproduction of certain behaviours in the name of reproducing a given system is also captured by Andre Gorz when he alludes to a situation wherein ‘commodities buy their consumers’ or the ‘autoproduction of consumers to the standards of the industry’. Thus, the system survives precisely because of the behaviours, attitudes and activities of the individuals inside it matching up with what that system produces in the way of goods and services (commodities). Andre Gorz, *Paths to Paradise: On the Liberation from Work* (London: Pluto Press, 1986) p. 29 & 26.

<sup>351</sup> Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character*, pp. 17-31.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.* p 26.

<sup>353</sup> The 1988 Housing Act created the Assured Shorthold Tenancy which is now the default tenancy in all privately rented accommodation. This Act enables landlords to give something called a Section 21 notice, terminating the tenancy and effectively removing the tenants from their property three

reduce the overall provision of council houses and even sell off existing stock, the consequences of which we continue to live with today.<sup>354</sup> All this was (and still is) in the effort to encourage private landlords to invest in housing, employing markets as the primary means by which to effectively meet growing housing demand. The result has been a situation where, within one London borough alone (Southwark – the largest provider of council housing in the country), around 17,000 households are currently registered on the housing waiting list.<sup>355</sup>

Where legislation is organised in such a way, individuals (and whole families) are going to have a very different relation to the places they call, for the time being at least, their home. This resonates beyond the walls of the family abode. It will radiate out, impacting on other associations and possible avenues of involvement. In the absence of a feeling of real security we do our best to maintain and ensure as much security as possible. This again is an unavoidably effortful process: we learn our rights regarding what council assistance we are entitled to, learn ways of keeping a potentially trigger-happy landlord on board, perhaps learning how to take care of minor repairs around the house in order to maintain landlord-tenant relations, we spend time looking into different schemes of house ownership or council tenancy. Challenges that are created at a structural level are dealt with via individual competencies.<sup>356</sup> These actions are time-consuming and often hard work, especially when balanced against other demands such as work and family life, i.e. those other possible sites of social demandingness. All this renders difficult the effortful and time-consuming habituation to *other* practices, the learning of concrete, practical skills that

---

months after the serving of notice (there are certain caveats and exemptions: for instance, it cannot be served within the first six months. However, as a caveat to the caveat it can be given alongside the tenancy agreement to be effective as soon as those 6 months are up). In council owned property this type of tenancy does not apply and residents have secure tenancy which can only be revoked in cases of severe and consistent rent arrears and persistent anti-social behaviour (Housing Act 1985). This security of tenure goes some way to explain the massive waiting lists in Southwark and throughout the country and also makes the low council house builds all the more depressing.

<sup>354</sup> Huw Nesbit, 'Are we facing an inter-generational housing crisis?', *Guardian* (August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012) available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/housing-network/2012/aug/20/inter-generational-housing-crisis>. See also Shelter et al. *The Housing Report* (May 2012) available at [http://england.shelter.org.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/435653/Housing\\_Report\\_2\\_May\\_2012.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/435653/Housing_Report_2_May_2012.pdf).

<sup>355</sup> Around 800 properties are filled per year. The majority of the people going for these properties will never be housed this way and will have to suffer the vicissitudes of remaining a private tenant unless they overcrowd their properties in which case it will only take 5-10 years. Nationwide there are (correct as of 2011) 1,837,042 households on council waiting lists, the majority of which are in areas with massively reduced supply. See [http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/housing\\_databank](http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/housing_databank).

<sup>356</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (London: Polity Press, 2000) pp. 61-62 & p 129 where Bauman writes of the 'privatisation of the notion of agency'.

are characteristic of the craftsman. Where a person fears her membership to such practices will be ended or the effort, resources and time she is able to ply into them severely curtailed because of having to deal with those other demands, deep involvement becomes inherently risky.

Unable to rely on the 'ontological security'<sup>357</sup> a stable housing situation would help establish, we might try to avoid certain deeper ways of engagement that expose us to too much vulnerability in case we fall on the wrong side of some event or happenstance.<sup>358</sup> Combine this with potentially temporary or unstable working situations – zero hour or short-term contracts, temporary employment, internships<sup>359</sup> – and the compounding effect of all the various unsettling, ambient threats seem even more severe, reducing the possibility of continued involvement in activities that are not dedicated to the cementing and sustaining of some minimum ontological security. In wanting to avoid the ruptures and fallouts that are the consequence of falling on the wrong side of this vulnerability, people might balk at the very *notion* of vulnerability, the potential risks incurred being simply too high. This is an attitude necessarily opposed to diligent-effort since, as I have tried to show in the previous chapter, some degree of vulnerability is the necessary corollary of depth in practice-engagement. So for the craftsman-like behaviour necessary for gaining the depth constitutive of diligent-effort, it is crucial to have security in other of our more basic involvements.

### *Stability and Flux*

In exploring the spectrum which lies between situations of fixed, unchanging stability and contexts dominated by ubiquitous flux I will use two examples. One is drawn from a specific historical period, the other from fantasy. Via these two extremes it becomes possible to see the consequences (in admittedly exaggerated form) that fixity or fluidity in the background can have on the ways in which individuals relate to their surroundings. The relative fixity or fluidity of that background, how secure we believe ourselves to be in our current situation, profoundly influences the possibilities for the relations we bear to our practice involvements, to each other and to our lives taken as a whole.

---

<sup>357</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity*, pp. 43-46. Also, Wolff and De Shalit employ the notion of 'secure functionings' drawing more on the language of the capability approach to discuss the same phenomenon. Wolff & De Shalit, *Disadvantage*, pt. 1.

<sup>358</sup> Margaret Radin, 'Market Inalienability', *Harvard Law Review*, 100: 8 (1987) esp. pp 1918- 1921 where she talks about housing and work as constitutive of a person, their designs and plans for the good life and thus as deserving of protection from the market's powers to commodify.

<sup>359</sup> For an account that charts the latter of these see Ross Perlin, *Intern Nation* (London: Verso, 2011).

MacIntyre's description of Homeric ethics provides an instance of the pervasive fixity of a particular socio-political framework.<sup>360</sup> Within this image of society, 'the most important judgements that can be passed upon a man concern the way in which he discharges his allotted social functions'.<sup>361</sup> Individuals are, in effect, entirely absorbed into the various roles they discharge (whether that person be a nobleman, a parent, a blacksmith etc.). The content of those roles and the tasks that are thereby assigned him act as a guide for life. Appraisal of a person is thus rooted in the performance of assigned tasks, and success is measured according to the standards associated with roles and their concomitant tasks. If one successfully performs the tasks appropriate to the role then one will be considered a 'good' nobleman/parent/blacksmith.<sup>362</sup> The roles themselves and the tasks that are ascribed to them are rooted in social *facts* and admit of no substantial interpretation: one's behaviour either conforms to the assignments or it does not.

There exists as a result no *possible* gulf between what/whom one is from the question of what one is to do or how one is to proceed: motivations and intent are neither here nor there. Such questions and their answers are fixed by the structures of the society into which one is born and immediately absorbed. It appears then that life is laid out ahead of individuals who are thereby spared the task of negotiating a changing world, where roles might shift around, take on new meanings and annul the meaning of old activity. Involvements are enveloping, pre-determined by the objective facts surrounding a person's birth and uninterrupted by radical changes in the infrastructure, equipment and technology that undergird these roles. Zygmunt Bauman has described this as a *complete mappa mundi*.<sup>363</sup>

This is a situation whereby the context itself provides the totality of knowledge about the world and one's place within it. All existential questions are answered by one's membership of a given group to which one belongs from birth until death, 'putting on in the meantime and taking off again a series of strictly defined and non-negotiable identities in a strictly defined and non-negotiable succession'.<sup>364</sup> The surroundings are fixed, the roles and their demands are known and the idea of existing *beyond* those demands in some

---

<sup>360</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967) Ch. 1.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.* p 5

<sup>362</sup> See *Ibid.* p 6 for a qualification as to the meaning of this term in the Homeric context: The word 'good' in the Homeric context is a factual statement regarding behaviour. It does not look behind the behaviours and the performance of roles to make an additional description of intention or motivation.

<sup>363</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *In Search of Politics* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1999) p 162.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

other community is simply not feasible (within the idealised version of this historical account). We would be hard pressed to call this situation amenable to any degree of autonomy given that even the most wholehearted identification with one's roles has come up against no alternative, admits of no choice and will brook no resistance.<sup>365</sup> In spite of this absence of autonomy, people in this situation might well develop complex skills and impressive competencies precisely because of that total and focused involvement in a particular set of practices.<sup>366</sup> There is depth here, but accomplished at the total expense of any degree of – or possibility *for* – breadth.

This, then, is one end of that spectrum between absolute fixity of context and absolute fluidity. The other end of the spectrum is a science-fiction version of extreme fluidity, a situation much like the American TV Series *Quantum Leap* where Scott Bakula's character (Sam) shifts between different eras and situations having quickly to adapt to the demands they make and the tasks they set. Imagine a situation within which we can start to make our life-plans as we see fit, taking into account the context, predicting consequences and developing strategies to see those plans come to fruition, but always in full knowledge that at any moment we may be transported to an entirely different context, perhaps another country or period of history. Within this different country/era we may not have adequate or appropriate resources to continue with our previously determined ambitions and intentions. Our previously formulated plans may be inappropriate for the new context, unfeasible and derided by those others with whom this environment is now being shared. This is a situation, admittedly presented in extreme and fantastical form, which has breadth in spades but utterly lacks that dimension of depth.

Choice is here in evidence, indeed it is constantly being called upon as and when revision or adjustments become necessary. To some extent we can even say that someone in such a situation is still capable of authorship. Yes, the world is utterly given and the potential for the 'Promethean urge' – the desire to see the world conform, in some limited

---

<sup>365</sup> Having said that, Robert Young's allusion to the Jehovah's witnesses within the concentration camps of Nazi Germany should give one pause for thought. While it is perhaps unlikely they were subjected to quite so tribal an environment in growing up, it is true that their engagement and negotiation of their beliefs would have come under immense pressure of socialisation, closing off many alternatives that might otherwise be feasible avenues for the expenditure of effort. However, within the context of a concentration camp it was this socialisation, the inculcation and identification with a given set of steadfastly followed beliefs itself that allowed such people to act with dignity and restraint. Here it seems identification with beliefs, regardless of their source, can still be a source of overwhelming value. See Robert Young, *Personal Autonomy* (London: St Martin's Press, 1986) p 16, 34, 39 & 70.

<sup>366</sup> This chimes with Raz's professed minimalism at Raz, 'The Role of Well-Being', p 290.

way, to our desires and ambitions – severely diminished. But authorship could still be ‘kept going’ so long as the individual understood the context and could reshape his preferences accordingly. The dilettantes from the previous chapter could well thrive in such a world even though craftsmen would likely vanish. The possibility of long-term commitments might be removed but this has no effect on preferences that are capable of immediate or short-term satisfaction.

To give this fantastical abstract example some flesh, consider the following as an admittedly pale approximation. A startling example of the ‘liquidity’ of our contemporary political and economic situation is the movement not merely of financial capital but of whole factories. The actual physical bases of production (in this example, all 250,000 tonnes of equipment along with 40,000 tonnes of documents explaining its reconstruction) can now be stripped down and shipped away to foreign climes. The factory in question is the ThyssenKrupp steel mill in Dortmund which after years of providing employment to local communities (10,000 people all told) – and years of steady decline it should also be noted – was carefully disassembled and packed off to China.<sup>367</sup> A mainstay in the local economy was thus removed along with the security and livelihoods that had been built around it. The very geography and institutional configuration of a situation was thus radically altered by the removal of this factory.<sup>368</sup> Here it is not the person who is whipped off to another setting but rather a significant part of the world within which she moved.<sup>369</sup>

A whole factory seems to have mutated into a giant dice, rolled across the world in the hopes of a good return. If we take this ‘flightiness’ as a given and, in some quarters as a boon for economic innovation and growth,<sup>370</sup> then the consequences for realistic,

---

<sup>367</sup> James Kynge, *China Shakes the World* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006) p 1-7. It should also be noted that although the mill certainly had lost competitiveness, there were suspicions a behind the scenes deal had taken place and the plant might have stayed open were it not for the desire of management to close the plant and make their profits.

<sup>368</sup> This is not limited to a capitalist economy. The so-called ‘mono-towns’ in Soviet Russia which were built around the presence of some mineral in a particular place, were quickly made redundant once the mineral was mined out and are still struggling to find a foothold in the absence of such industries. See Leon Aron, ‘Darkness on the Edge of Monotown’, *The New York Times* (October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Available at [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/17/opinion/17aron.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/17/opinion/17aron.html?_r=0).

<sup>369</sup> Another aspect of capital withdrawal is the change and devastation that are wrought for urban environments and the geography of their inhabitants. See William Julius Williams, *When Work Disappears* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996); Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air* (London: Penguin, 1988) pp. 290 – 348; David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital* (London: Profile Books, 2010) pp. 148 – 183

<sup>370</sup> See for instance World Bank, *Reshaping Economic Geography: World Development Report 2009* available at <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/EXTWDRS/0,,contentMDK:23080183~pagePK:478093~piPK:477627~theSitePK:477624,00.html> (accessed 30/03/2013). In

embedded distributive possibilities become (potentially severely) restricted as the terms of engagement with capital increasingly favour those who are in control of its movement. While previously there was some imperative for the owners of factories to make use of their capital at a fixed location, given the unfeasibly massive project such movement would formerly have involved, even this has now succumbed to the force of liquidity.<sup>371</sup> The physical places of work are pushed into what Zygmunt Bauman has characterised as the 'space of flows', something that can be here today and gone tomorrow.<sup>372</sup>

Whereas in Homeric ethics, individuals could find no alternatives to the roles into which they had been inculcated as the *sole* means by which to live, this second situation provides no framework within which to establish a long-term narrative. Life is destined to be episodic, forever a vignette never an epic. That doesn't mean we can't all be the authors of picaresque vignettes should our situations demand it. We can even identify with those vignettes, the situations that produce them and the person that emerges from them. Again, my argument is not against vignettes *per se*. Rather, it is an argument from a perspective of plurality which recognises the sociology needed to support those longer, more involved and deeper narratives which look beyond the short-term for their satisfaction.

What we have to contend with in either of the above extremes are the different tasks that the world sets for us, the different 'givens' we must face. Any control we have over our lives is a skill that is earned by dealing, first and foremost, with these tasks. We may no longer live in the first example where our lives are ready-made for us and into which we slot without the opportunity for resistance (and this is of course something to celebrate). But if instead we are presented with a modern context that is even a vague approximation of the *Quantum Leap* scenario, this too needs to be gauged in its full significance. Here too, though apparently free from the strictures of roles and commitments assigned at birth, there remain demands that need to be met in order for effective action to continue. Currently these demands are, at root, beyond the choices of individuals.

### *Competencies, Demands and Confidence*

---

particular see the overview of this document p 14 for instance on the benefits for growth of on-going capital and labour movement in South East Asia. See also Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character*, p 51 and his discussion of reengineering institutional organisation for the sake of short-term gains.

<sup>371</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Ch. 4.

<sup>372</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007) p 84.

The ability to deeply involve ourselves with any given practice is not merely the result of an unencumbered individual decision. It is dependent on the perception of a degree of stability and continuity in our lives which allows for sustained engagement with the practices we see around us. What is more, the demands such practice involvements make do not occur in a vacuum away from the demands made on us by our other involvements, involvements which *can* take on the aspect of immutable givens which we are unable to simply do away with.

These givens and their demands are of two varieties. The first set comprises those involvements we are already engaged with as part of already existing practice-engagements: these can be described as 'personal-historical' in quality. The second set are the demands made on us by the type of communities we live in and which stand above and in important ways *shape* the other variety.

An instance of the personal-historical is the prior involvement characteristic of the parent. Parents' feelings for their work, for example, may be more or less stressful, more or less fulfilling, depending on how they think of themselves as parents and how the work they do and the money they earn helps them perform the tasks of parenthood. Remove the involvement of parenting from their conceptions of the good and the quality of the goods, tasks and self-understandings will shift in consequence, perhaps taking on less urgency or making promotions, demotions or relocations less/more important. What is more, being a parent is itself a practice that is in part defined by the standards and norms of the community to which one belongs. Meeting these standards will thus also draw on the efforts of the parent in question, cutting off other possible uses of his or her time and energy.

Demands may also come from a more objective context, one that is separate from any concern with my particular activities. Here I mean, for instance, the demands made on us by an economy to find work and, furthermore, to understand that work in a specific way: to regard it as temporary, retractable and forever in doubt or else as a thirty year career in the same company. Given the centrality of work in our lives (in the fact that it is through work that we are able to earn the resources used elsewhere in our other endeavours) the way we are drawn on to work will resonate out into other activities that are potential components of our conceptions of the good. In addition, these demands may be political as well as economic. The strict republican ideal of deep involvement in organising the affairs



of one's community would inevitably draw on a person's effort and skill them in a certain way, to some extent irrespective of that person's volition.<sup>373</sup>

Our involvements then are not 'merely' the expression of certain preferences, the design of a certain set of ends as if our lives were, as Williams put it, 'a rectangle that has to be optimally filled in' from a place of privileged anticipation.<sup>374</sup> The space within that 'rectangle' also includes our negotiating of a situation which is beyond our choosing and control but which we nonetheless have to take into account. The 'allocative decisions' discussed in the first and fourth chapters are in part decisions about how to go about this negotiation, the time and energy we devote to meeting the challenges set by those constraints. In being demanded in these ways both by our other involvements and various political/economic/social obligations, we develop certain skills and competencies that we need in order to meet them. For example, the parent who works in retail may have to balance a shift-pattern that changes weekly with the responsibilities of childcare, drawing on a wide network of relationships or money in order to do so. The private renter, as discussed above, develops adequate skills to keep a house in good order so as to avoid incurring the eviction notice of an impatient landlord in a market short on supply and rife with demand.

Joseph Raz describes the competencies and skills we need to 'move about' in our societies as responsible agents as a necessary part of our 'being in the world'.<sup>375</sup> Raz paints a picture of individuals who find themselves in a world with which they need to develop familiarity. With this familiarity individuals grow confident in their dealings with that world, i.e. in the activities they perform as a means to secure certain of their ends and goods. As Raz puts it: 'People develop skills that enable them to do many things with confidence that they will succeed, barring some extraordinary events like an earthquake or a seizure'.<sup>376</sup> The reference here to apparently natural or bodily (as opposed to social or economic)

---

<sup>373</sup> Michael Walzer, 'A Day in the Life of a Socialist Citizen', *Radical Principles* (USA: Basic Books, 1980) p 128-138. Here Walzer considers Wilde's quip that the problem with being socialist is that it would take up too many evenings. Like Walzer I agree that this is a profound challenge to the socialist project precisely because it seems another (perhaps comprehensive) invasion on the time and energy of free men and women. See also Michael Oakeshott's account of political education in Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and other essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991) pp. 43-69 for a 'thinner' account of what the practice of politics demands in the way of knowledge and education to be properly enacted.

<sup>374</sup> Williams, *Moral Luck*, p 33.

<sup>375</sup> Joseph Raz, *From Normativity to Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) Ch. 10. The idea of 'movement' referred to here is concerning the practical intentions of individuals, their enacting of plans and designs into the world in order to achieve certain goods.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid* p 237.

catastrophes is really only incidental. The issue at stake is that when we move about in and engage with our surroundings, making the choices and decisions that go into the ends and strategies of our lives, we do so with an expectation of normality, of things going on as before and thus of our competencies remaining relevant to the activities and involvements with which we engage.<sup>377</sup>

This has consequences for our confidence in 'moving around' *within* our chosen practice-relations (i.e. approximating the standards relevant to those practices) and beyond (i.e. in the wider-world within which such involvements are pursued). Such confidence is founded on an expectation of things going on as we have learned to deal with them. As Raz suggests: 'we expect (the) outcome (of our activities) to depend on our skill and effort. We are aware that they too depend on factors over which we have little influence but take our skills in using and navigating around such factors to justify confidence that we will succeed'.<sup>378</sup> These skills are learned and, what is more, become capacities that shape and guide our activity. Hubert Dreyfus sums up this point nicely: 'Our skills *have us* rather than us having them'.<sup>379</sup> We are, that is, in important ways *defined* by the skills that are required to move about in the world with confidence.

Sennett also discusses the meaning work is able to have for workers in light of the skills they need to develop to be both confident and effective in their 'movements'. These skills can be classified as either endogenous or exogenous. This means, like the skills of the craftsman, they can be embedded in the task and made specific to a given activity (endogenous). These are harder to translate into skills that could be used elsewhere in a variety of other kinds of work. Alternatively, there are skills which are dis-embedded in such a way that they can be valid in a variety of settings (exogenous).<sup>380</sup> Exogenous skills allow us to 'go elsewhere', to withdraw ourselves from any specific milieu and ply our

---

<sup>377</sup> On a side-note, there is an interesting parallel in Martin Heidegger's discussion of 'being in the world' when he talks about the concept of 'breakdown' or deficiency. This is when the transparency of the 'equipment' we engage with- resources considered generally in this instance- is dissipated and we see the world less as an absorbed participant and more as a detached, deliberating observer trying to find our way *back* into a situation of familiarity where we can once again be confident. See Timothy Koschmann, Kari Kuutti, & Larry Hickman, 'The Concept of Breakdown in Heidegger, Leont'ev, and Dewey and Its Implications for Education', *Mind, Culture & Activity*, 5:1 (1998).

<sup>378</sup> Raz, *From Normativity to Responsibility*, p 238.

<sup>379</sup> Hubert Dreyfus, *Being in the World: Commentary on Heidegger's "Being and Time", Division 1* (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1991) p 202.

<sup>380</sup> The exogenous side of the division could also be understood, more colloquially, as 'soft' skills. Richard Sennett, *The Culture of New Capitalism* (London: Yale University Press, 2006) p 115. Also, see Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p 107 for the idea of skills being embedded in a 'spatial culture' that are not easily transferable to other settings.

efforts in different places and different trades. The tasks of any particular setting would not then draw on us in ways that render us vulnerable precisely because of the fluidity that it is possible to achieve in our actual skills and capacities themselves. In effect, the individual, at the level of skills employed in her dealings with the world, has imbibed the fluidity perceived around her and internalised its demands. Endogenous skills on the other hand, which are learned by being embedded in a concrete practice, make the individual vulnerable to the absence of the *specific and concrete* tasks with which she has involved herself. Removing a context which makes sense of those skills and their development is also the removal of the possibility for continued, confident and deeper involvement with a particular practice. Endogenous skills, then, are the skills of craftsmen learned by expending effort diligently.

Confidence is tied up with the fact that as agents, we have a purpose which we have set and toward which we act and, in addition, a necessary handle on the means of getting there. In order to employ skills confidently individuals need a sense that what they do and have – the skills they employ, the capacities they possess – will move them toward their goals. Yet all this confidence, these skills, capacities and the role they play in defining (at least in part) who we are, are ultimately dependent on ‘normal conditions’ within which such skills are and will remain relevant.<sup>381</sup> To return to the Tanizaki example, it was precisely the ending of a certain relation to the world and the skills needed to navigate that ceasing world which moved him to melancholy. The ‘fecundity’ of those options made possible by a culture he believed was disappearing were no longer available and it was this that plunged him into a sense of loss. He lacked the skills and had reduced confidence in moving about the world that remained.

To remove that normality or perhaps even to merely threaten it, is thus to throw in doubt the confidence necessary to appropriate longer-term goals as our ends. Consequently, our choices are in an important and interesting way related to our confidence: if we choose and are confident in our competencies and in the normality and constancy of the situations within which we act – and thus in the continuing *relevance* of our competences and skills – we will have the opportunity to relate to those ends in a different way than when such confidence is absent. Where we sense or anticipate that the practices within which our competencies have thus far been developed may be removed

---

<sup>381</sup> Raz, *From Normativity to Responsibility*, p 239. This idea of skills ‘remaining’ relevant obviously entails a certain relation to time i.e. our use of skills now is dependent on an understanding that they will continue to be so *if*, that is, we wish to continue to use those skills.

from our overarching conceptions of the good, the relation to ends will again be of a different nature.

There is something myopic, from a strategic point of view, if we insist on investing ourselves in our involvements as if they were guaranteed to continue for a long time when the confidence we have in our ability to sustain those involvements is fragile.<sup>382</sup> Temporary workers, as a less fantastical expression of experiences in the *Quantum Leap* scenario, who try to learn ‘deeply’ the skills specific to a profession they will have for only three weeks and which they know will be of little use beyond the three weeks, are failing to assess the demands their situation makes of them. The same could be said of the “baker” from the above example: what would be the point of beginning to learn the craft of bakery in such a setting? Confidence in the possibilities of depth in these instances would be misplaced, the result of misjudgements and misperceptions regarding the demands of their environment. That confidence needed to commit and skill oneself in the way I have used to describe the craftsman, the accumulative learning of concrete and specific skills, is not something that is necessarily, *a priori* attainable. Confidence is likely to be better achieved and maintained by avoiding the demands of longer-term projects which serve as the foundation for the learning of those skills.

Once again we are confronted with the deeply situated nature of the person. Our involvements grow out of and are defined by our involvement with the wider context and our familiarity with it. Of course, temporary workers can become familiar with their situation and thereby develop the kind of competencies necessary to move from occupation to occupation confidently and effectively: these are the exogenous skills individuals can learn. In this way both familiarity and confidence seem always to be within reach, even for the extreme fluidity of the *Quantum Leap* scenario. But what familiarity is a response to, i.e. what the situation *demands* of a person in order for them to be confident and ‘move about’ effectively, will inevitably impact on the kinds of involvements she chooses, the depths with which she can engage them and the narratives and identities she is able to build out of them. Different situations require different responses, narratives and identities in order for confidence to be gained and sustained.

### *Using Resources*

---

<sup>382</sup> Sennett, *The Culture of New Capitalism*, p 126.

The question arises as to whether the issue of resources, the things employed in the design and fulfilment of 'conceptions of the good', can be so resolutely abstracted from the world within which their employment takes place. The ways in which we use resources will be greatly influenced not just by who owns what and how much of it they own (though of course these are important), but by the practices and patterns of activity that emerge from the answers a society gives to certain economic questions. Questions, for instance, that pertain to relations between capital and labour, financial regulation, the use and ownership of technology in industry, redistributive policies etc. Such answers will ultimately influence individuals' lives, their relationships, commitments and identities, as they try to navigate the demands made of them *by* those particular systems. It is not just a matter of having sufficient resources to navigate the ins and outs of an environment so construed, as if it were all a matter of quantity. These resources are fed into and used in cultivating the specific competencies that people develop in response to the kinds of demands actual socio-economic situations make of them.

For instance, as mentioned above in connection with the newfound possibilities and desire to shift whole factories across the world (Trotsky's dream of mountains moving under the spell of human control now seeming to have been effectively accomplished), successful navigation may now necessitate and demand a 'shallower' relation to ends on the part of individual resource-users that was unnecessary prior to such technological capacity. It may mean that individuals who rely on this rather slippery type of factory in order to make their productive contribution have to hoard resources they earn in anticipation of particular catastrophes, employing them in specific ways that may help preemptively limit the chaos of such happenings. Or it may mean the exact opposite, a loosening of all purse-strings in a veritable orgy of one's current holdings with no mind on a future that seems beyond reasonable prediction and thus beyond studied care.

It is precisely this concern with economic systems that was lacking from Rawls' earlier work. When his concern is directed toward economic matters, it is mostly with questions pertaining to 'what things are produced and by what means, who receives them and in return for which contributions and how large a fraction of social resources is devoted to saving and to the provision of public goods'.<sup>383</sup> By focusing concern in these directions, there is a failure to understand i) the ways in which individuals work to accrue resources can affect the ways they *use* resources: lesser job security – because of flightier

---

<sup>383</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p 235.

and thus more exacting capital – may encourage certain attitudes vis-à-vis our resources, an aspect of owning resources that cannot be fully captured by reference to the *amount* we have; ii) how various institutional possibilities are affected by questions of who owns the means of production and the fluidity of the capital that underwrites the operation of those institutions.<sup>384</sup>

Consequently, the ways in which Rawls characterises government's ability to act in this situation is also anachronistic (even within the confines of ideal theory). For instance, Rawls states 'there is a divergence between private and social accounting that the market fails to register. One essential task of law and government is to institute necessary corrections'.<sup>385</sup> But when such corrections would scare capital away and thereby undercut the very production of resources needed to make such corrections possible, i.e. through taxation, there emerges a paradox-laden dynamic that fundamentally undermines the government's ability to fulfil those tasks required of it by (Rawlsian) justice.<sup>386</sup> Rawls focuses too narrowly on the individual ownership and quantity of resources. In so doing, he evades such questions as pertain to the world within which those goods are produced and, moreover, how navigation of those worlds, the skills and types of confidence this issues in, will necessarily impact on the quality and diversity of 'conceptions of the good' that are made available.

Interestingly, the later Rawls (of *Justice as Fairness*) provides something of a means to correct this matter. He first stipulates, as one would expect, the primacy of the right 'to hold and to have the exclusive use of personal property' whilst remaining agnostic on the more developed claims to a right of property in i) natural resources and the means of production generally and ii) the *equal right to participate* in the control of natural resources and means of production. This agnosticism is based on the lack of primacy these two aspects have in the development of an individual's fundamental moral capacities. However, these property rights may still be justified at the later 'legislative stage' depending 'on the existing historical and social conditions'.<sup>387</sup> The focus remains firmly on resource distribution. But the reasons for this emphasis are tied up with resources' utility for

---

<sup>384</sup> Though he does make sure to render such designs amenable to a socialist economic system. See *Ibid.* In addition, it should be noted that on its first date of publication, the movement of capital and the means of production was nowhere near as liquid as it is today and therefore it would've perhaps been hard to anticipate the various affects it has in our current climate.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.* p 237.

<sup>386</sup> See Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital*, p 197-198. Also see Callinicos, *Equality* pp. 88-129 for a similar rallying cry against the tendency to settle for an agnostic view on state-capital relations.

<sup>387</sup> Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, p 114.

individuals' development of capacities needed for devising and pursuing diverse conceptions of the good. Therefore, questions of economic system and the rules of property that structure them are to be answered via reference to the types of life they make available, and to the kinds of capacities they develop within the individuals who are to set about assessing and choosing amongst these available options. Public ownership of the means of production is only one possible, alternative structural mechanism (depending on social, historical and economic conditions) that might enable the development of those fundamental moral capacities Rawls thinks so important.<sup>388</sup>

My argument though is not that the kinds of fundamental competencies necessary for coping with the variety of demands posed by a 'liquid modern' situation are utterly unsuited for *any* kind of development/pursuit of a conception of the good. Rather, though such suitability might well be found for the development and pursuit of certain other 'conceptions of the good', they are nonetheless poorly suited to the deeper practice engagements and ways of life characteristic of the craftsman.<sup>389</sup>

\*\*\*

This chapter presents only one reading of current economic and social developments. Without the time or space to get bogged down in hefty sociological or economic debates it is therefore necessary to provide something of a disclaimer. My intention has not been to provide all the evidence that would convince someone one way or the other that descriptions emphasising the fluidity of our current epoch are the correct interpretations. The evidence has been anecdotal at best. My intention has been to raise awareness that the competencies and skills which structure certain ways of 'being-in-the-world' – in this chapter, the craftsman's way – are not universally or *a priori* available. So while the emphasis on the liquidity of our socio-economic situation may be wrong in some

---

<sup>388</sup> This seems to move Rawls closer the capability approach and its focus on the substantive kinds of options that resources make available for people. The concern shifts away from the question of resources *tout court* and could thus accommodate my emphasis on the concepts of care, identification and depth I have been developing. See, for instance, Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Ch. 1 & Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, Ch. 12.

<sup>389</sup> Nevertheless, it would be hard to argue Rawls commits himself to preserving this dimension of depth. The craftsman may be just one possible form of life that gets crowded out in the marketplace of conceptions of the good. Only the minimal competences of political efficacy are to be instilled as a matter of course. See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, pp. 196-199. However, the axis of depth is different to other problems because I am not arguing for the presence or absence of certain ways of life but of *degrees* of engagement with the already existing. Where such depth of involvement is denied for systemic economic reasons then it seems that an important aspect of reasonable pluralism is being intruded upon. The survival of such options are not down to choice but what is left-over after the public demands (both economic and political) have been answered.

ways (or perhaps exaggerate its extent and ubiquity),<sup>390</sup> what I hope to have highlighted is the manner in which our world *always* draws on us in specific ways, promoting certain attitudes to ourselves, our ends and to our environments. This is something that is often missed in the abstract reference to 'resources' and their use in 'the design of conceptions of the good'. The depth of identification and skill characteristic of the craftsman is not an ever-present way of life. It is profoundly dependent on an institutional situation that *allows* it.<sup>391</sup>

The person-practice relations within which the skills of the craftsman are learned need to provide the individual with adequate security. The longer time-frame, and the stability that accompanies it, are crucial in allowing individuals to embrace the vulnerability that is a necessary part of the depth of engagement characteristic of craftsmen. Habituation to the standards of a practice and subjection to the authority of that practice is a risky business at all times: we are always prone to failure or open to some kinds of catastrophe. But this is made riskier when fundamental parts of our ontological security are placed under threat.

With the importance of these person-practice relations in mind, the desire for stability and predictability is not a sign of weak will in the face of demands made of us by our social and economic situation. This accusation of weak-will is made, for instance, by Daniel McCabe when he suggests that 'those made uncomfortable by the uncertainty, choice-making, and critical examination characteristic of autonomy, and who instead crave security, continuity, and structure may thus actively turn away from the ideal of self-creation that... liberal society holds out to them'.<sup>392</sup> Here we see opposed to one another the values of autonomy and those of continuity, structure and stability. The self-creation envisaged here is one that people seem to be able to perform through their holdings of

---

<sup>390</sup> Indeed, even Andrew Ross – someone who is in general averse to these kinds of trends in the global economy – seems to recognise the potentially thrilling value for *a minority of* individuals in this new, liquid and precarious situation (specifically with regards to those in the 'creative industries'). See, for instance, Andrew Ross, 'The new Geography of Work: Power to the Precarious?', *Theory Culture and Society*, 25:7-8, (2008) p 36, when Ross describes the 'existential charge' of 'being liberated from the fetters of company rules, managerial surveillance and formal regularity'. Walter Powell, in a rather different vein, suggests that the currently unforgiving circumstances and its endemic *précarité* are simply teething problems while our economic systems shift clumsily toward and institutionalises a new logic of organisation. See Walter Powell, 'The Capitalist Firm in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Emerging Patterns in Western Enterprise', in Paul DiMaggio, ed., *The Twenty-First Century Firm* (Princeton, New Jersey.: Princeton University Press) pp. 33-68.

<sup>391</sup> Sennett, *The Culture of New Capitalism*, especially pp. 37-50.

<sup>392</sup> See Daniel McCabe, 'Joseph Raz and the Contextual Argument for Liberal Perfectionism', *Ethics*, 111:3 (2001) p 512.



resources combined with sheer acts of will that are able to simultaneously make sense of their situations and render their lives meaningful. As I have been at pains to concede, people certainly *can* live valuable lives through sheer acts of will. Balzac's hero is an example of someone refusing to subject himself to any authority or process of habituation, any demand which seeks to fetter his drive for fluid self-creation. This is certainly one way of keeping all vulnerability to a minimum, floating beyond all involvements and their potentially painful gravity. But this is a very specific kind of value and one that cuts off a great deal of the deeper involvements available to individuals of more craftsman-like temperament.

### *Conclusion*

In the previous chapter I have described practice-dependence as an inescapable part of value. In order to take part in meaningful and valuable activity, involvement in practices is necessary. However, it is a matter of shade: there are people who engage deeply with a practice and there are others who dabble. Given the 'non-renewable', finite quality of our time and effort we cannot have it all. Depth precludes breadth and breadth precludes depth to at least some degree. The deeper we go into a practice and the more we explore the fecundity of a particular concrete option, the less time we have for other practice-engagements. The more we spread ourselves over a great range of involvements, the less time and effort we have for the plumbing of depth.

The craftsman is a model of deep engagement. In this chapter I have explored some of the techniques and competencies that are characteristic of this mode of engagement. Craftsmen explore the depth of a practice and are thus made profoundly vulnerable. In addition, the depth to which craftsmen plunge cannot be isolated from all the other demands that are made of them. It is when we take these other demands into account alongside the different associations in which they involve individuals that we are able to appreciate the nature and quality of the craftsman's vulnerability. What is more, the resources we employ in pursuit of our preferred ends, projects, causes and commitments are also drawn on in this other process of negotiation. Our time and energy are not free from the demandingness of our socio-economic involvements. If a person's company is downsized and she has to find work elsewhere, her resources are similarly lifted out of that setting and are reemployed in another firm, amidst other people. This inevitably skills her in particular ways which again impact on the actual uses toward which her resources are put.

The techniques and competencies that make up craftsmanship have to be married with other techniques and competencies that enable successful negotiation of other associations and involvements, some of which – like work for instance – are more or less compulsory. So, for example, where someone's work might be a site for the kinds of depth I am describing it can also be privy to fluctuations within the market, changes in technology or to the organisation of the firm. Skills learned in dealing with this flux are not necessarily compatible with those which are needed for craftsmanship. Indeed, the former might make the latter incredibly difficult to fulfil.

Therefore, if depth of involvement is something we regard as important and the character of the craftsman as a figure worth protecting, we have to find a way to settle these conflicts in competencies. Of course, if we believe that the situation of flux is necessary and that this character is, at best, a regrettable sacrifice that has to be made in the name of, for example, economic efficiency, then the settling of these conflicts becomes irrelevant and unnecessary. In the same way that we should not pattern for distributions out of marketplace arrangements, we should also, this argument would suggest, reject patterns for the plurality of types of life such arrangements make available.

In the next chapter I examine the ways in which one particular policy, Unconditional Basic Income (UBI), offers a possible way out of this problem. In addition, I argue UBI allows for the flourishing of another character identified in the course of this thesis: the agitator. I envisage UBI as a means of rendering citizens more secure and therefore more willing to become craftsmen and agitators. Competencies currently needed to remain flexible in a world demanding fluidity and shallowness will be less necessary in a community where UBI has been introduced. However, there are also other ways to frame UBI which concentrate on the ways a basic income can expand our freedom 'to do what we want'. I find this a troublesome argument and make pains to distinguish my account from such a defence.

## Unconditional Basic Income for Agitators and Craftsmen

‘We take as basic that the human exists in a space of questions’.

Charles Taylor

Two characters have emerged in the course of this thesis: agitators and craftsmen. Both characters are at risk in a world that fails to recognise their value and protect them. This chapter explores a policy that could protect both character types and make them more available to people. The policy is an unconditional basic income (UBI). UBI is a funding stream provided on a regular basis to all citizens of a community when they reach maturity. It remains constant throughout a person’s life and is provided independent of the uses to which it might be put and irrespective of moneys accrued elsewhere, for instance through employment, investment or savings. I envision UBI as a means to do two things. First, it will facilitate and enable (without making compulsory!) the kinds of depth I have been describing over the last couple of chapters. Second, it will furnish means for the struggles against injustice I described in the third chapter.

Both characters represent different relations to authority. Craftsmen subject themselves both to the rules and standards that define their practices, and their craft’s expert purveyors – individuals most able to approximate the relevant standards of excellence. Agitators, on the other hand, offer a more defiant relationship to authority. They reject the authority of the subjective dimension implicit in the structure of reciprocity. They deny the decisiveness of demands for productive contribution in light of other demands made on them by on-going injustices in their communities. Agitators withdraw their efforts from productive contributions and ply them in activities that might *disrupt* contributions made by others. UBI is a means of funding and supporting these kinds of activity by assuring their more ready availability.

These different relations to authority are not mutually incompatible: craftsmen can sometimes operate like agitators and agitators, to be effective, must operate like craftsmen. Once a craftsman reaches a certain level of expertise it is part of craftsmanship to challenge the status of the rules and standards definitive of the practice. For a practice to remain vital it must be periodically opened up to such challenges. This is especially true so far as we are concerned with membership of a practice. Many of the practices we have reason to value have been historically cut off to people because of their class, race or gender. Contesting

rules governing membership has been crucial in breaking a part this regressive and conservative tendency and widening possibilities for practice membership.

Agitation is itself a craft. Techniques associated with civil disobedience, the discipline required for effective organisation and the tactics needed for everything from effective campus demonstrations to general strikes are all skills that are learned in the course of doing them. Such strategies are not invented from scratch but are developed by drawing on past examples, precedents of effective strategies and consulting with experts and those with experience. Moreover, such skills are not easy things to accomplish. Becoming an agitator obviously admits of degrees. There will be single cause agitators who see their involvement only as a means to an immediate end and/or in which they spend only limited time and effort agitating. However, others will involve themselves deeper with the practice and identify with agitation as a particularly valuable form of life.

Finally, I offer a caveat to my advocacy for UBI. There are important changes happening to the way we work. We are arguably at a point in our historical development where work, at least in its 40 hour a week, full-time manifestation, is something a great many can live without. This has obvious benefits: reductions in working-time will mean we enjoy a greater freedom to do other things. However, we should be careful to retain some aspects of work – even as we might jettison the actual content – that are important to our political and ethical education. Work is a particularly salient instance of people subjecting themselves to an authority other than their own desires and preferences. Working *with* others to produce something *for* others are both important parts of people's current ethical experience. Being obliged to work means we cannot merely ignore the presence and needs of others. These aspects of work are something we should be at pains to preserve, even though they might exist in tension with the tasks and aims of both craftsmen and agitators.

### *Craftsmanship*

The security UBI achieves for its recipients is a feature that pervades the multiplicity of its different defences. This is a theme that can be dated back to the inception of the idea as proposed by Thomas Paine at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>393</sup> With this funding stream

---

<sup>393</sup> Thomas Paine, 'Agrarian Justice', in Mark Philp, ed. *Rights of Man, Common Sense, and Other Political Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995 [1795]). For more contemporary accounts see, for example, Phillip Pettit, 'A Republican Right to Basic Income?' *Basic Income Studies*, 2:10 (2007) p 4. Also see David Casassas, 'Basic Income and the Republican Ideal: Rethinking Material

guaranteed throughout their lives, individuals can extricate themselves from exploitative relationships (whether in the household or the workplace) and formulate both short and long-term plans, safe in the knowledge that these resources are constant. The funds thus facilitate the material independence of the person, draw a circle around her and protect her from the vagaries and inconstancies of life.<sup>394</sup> In this way, UBI could have powerful effects on the possibilities of depth represented by craftsmen in the previous chapter.

People who fully withdraw from employment or else take part-time instead of full-time work as a result of receiving UBI will have a great deal more time and energy available to pursue their passion for painting, music, languages or sports whilst maintaining a decent standard of living. They can spend more time learning and approximating what is demanded of them if they want to attain to a level of advanced proficiency within their chosen practice. They have more time and energy to correct and improve their techniques on the advice of the expert purveyors who, in their turn and because of their own UBI, might be more available for transmission of their example to less advanced practitioners outside of the workplace. Overall, individuals are better equipped to produce performances indicative of excellence for the activities they end up doing.

These performances need not relate to the more private examples of musical instruments and sports. UBI can also fund the pursuit of excellence when it is directed at serving the needs of the community. Freed from the need for employment, citizens might direct their energies toward responding to the needs of their community in different ways, ways they recognise as more responsive to need even if there is no wage attached. This can be anything from setting up community gardens, a local film festival, helping coach the local football team, visiting the infirm in hospital etc. The possibilities are vast. All these are also examples of practice engagements which can be engaged with to various depths. Where the market might not find the means to offer payment for such services, a UBI will fill the gap and enable individuals to participate in this kind of activity on a sustainable basis.<sup>395</sup>

---

Independence in Contemporary Societies', *Basic Income Studies*, 2: 2 (2007); Carole Pateman, 'Why Republicanism?', *Basic Income Studies*, 2:2 (2007); Tony Fitzpatrick, 'Basic Income, Post-Productivism and Liberalism', *Basic Income Studies*, 4: 2 (2009); Carole Pateman, 'Democratising Citizenship: Some Advantages of a Basic Income', *Politics and Society*, 32: 1 (2004).

<sup>394</sup> For an argument pertaining specifically to the workplace see Claus Offe, 'Basic Income and the Labour Contract', *Basic Income Studies*, 3:1 (2008); for arguments pertaining to the household see Carole Pateman, 'Democratising Citizenship: Some Advantages of a Basic Income', esp. pp. 98- 101 and Alsott, A.L. 'Good for Women', in Van Parijs, ed., *What's Wrong with a Free Lunch*, pp. 75-79.

<sup>395</sup> Andre Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason* (London: Verso, 1989) pp. 233 – 234.

This particular manifestation of craftsmanship is salient in light of possibly positive tendencies in the global economy to *reduce* the need for work: with increased capital and technological efficiency, less labour is needed to produce the same output. Thinkers such as Andre Gorz and Kathi Weeks have argued that UBI should be seen as enabling moves *away* from work as a primary involvement. Instead, UBI can take us *toward* a society where individuals are involved in a great multitude of associations and activity. This approach celebrates, in effect, the breadth represented by the dilettante in the fourth chapter.<sup>396</sup> Work, they argue, should be gradually and effectively abandoned as a demand we meet in the course of our daily lives.

However, even this does not preclude the ethics and ambitions of craftsmen. It only shifts them into other arenas of life that have less to do with earning a wage. To borrow an example from the previous chapter, we can still engage with the craft of carpentry, explore its depth, complexity, and identify ourselves as carpenters who care deeply about that craft, without necessarily receiving payment for the work. With reduced pressure to find employment and then sustain employment, and vulnerability substantially mitigated, depth is made a livelier option. The breadth advocated by Gorz is just one dimension of plurality that UBI opens up for exploration: neither dimension obliges people's involvement. However, UBI also has the potential to protect craftsmanship in the arena of employment as well. As a component of alleviating the proletarian condition, White's emphasis on meaningful work could also be facilitated by an unconditional basic income.

Depending on the size of the stipend, pooling unconditional basic income with fellow citizens can help convert it into a supplementary form of capital. This capital can then be used as start-up funds for worker led firms. In the United Kingdom such firms are rare.<sup>397</sup> This rarity is partly explained by difficulties facing asset-poor workers to access credit markets. UBI performs a number of functions in improving this situation. When pooled, UBI acts directly as capital or as a guarantee for credit loans and can help fund the start-up costs required for sustainable cooperative organisations.<sup>398</sup> Moreover, UBI is a

---

<sup>396</sup> Andre Gorz, *Reclaiming Work* (London: Pluto Press, 1999) pp. 72 – 78. Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work* (London: Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>397</sup> Powerful examples abound in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy, home to over 8,000 cooperatives.

<sup>398</sup> White, *The Civic Minimum* p 194. See also Alstott & Ackerman, *The Stakeholder Society* for a proposal for Basic Capital, a variation on UBI that provides large, lump sums of cash at an age of suitable maturity. My reason for favouring UBI comes with the risks of stake-blowing accompanying large-sums of money that can undermine the security I envisage for basic income.

means of empowering citizens by providing them with an ever-present safety-net that can be drawn on during times of possibly experimental economic endeavour, in which firms explore new markets to which they can contribute. If a person fails in the endeavour to begin a worker-owned enterprise, she can use UBI (along with other savings perhaps) to sustain a reasonable standard of living and avoid the anxiety and precariousness currently associated with unemployment.<sup>399</sup> UBI thus supports an entrepreneurial function, mitigating the risks currently associated with economic ventures.<sup>400</sup>

From the point of view of craftsmen, the worker-led enterprise has several advantages. When workers are in charge of the definition and distribution of work-related tasks it is up to them to decide the complexity and demandingness of the labour they perform.<sup>401</sup> Both the definition and execution of work become a part of workers' decisions. As a result of gaining this organisational responsibility, workers can alter current divisions of labour which focus on massively reducing the complexity of labour in order to allow easily monitored and automated activity – tactics employed to an extreme degree by Taylorist modes of organisation. Work can instead be arranged to allow for 'the development and consolidation of particular technical, artisan, social, or organisational skills for the accomplishing of specialized ends'.<sup>402</sup> Worker-led firms are thus better equipped to reduce the severity of the division between task-definition and task-execution since both are to be performed by the same people and are not fixed or guided by any hierarchical form of organisation, nor the imperatives belonging to one particular strata of a hierarchy.<sup>403</sup> Workers are thus enabled to submit themselves to the authority of the practices with which they are involved, developing the capacities for effective performance of their work.

More generally, UBI empowers people vis-à-vis their responses to the demands of social and economic life. In the absence of a safety net that is both constant and sufficiently generous, individuals are often forced into a bargaining position that lacks effective status. Accompanying the security of unencumbered and guaranteed resources is the ability to

---

<sup>399</sup> Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011) Ch. 7.

<sup>400</sup> Beck, *The Risk Society*, pp. 139 – 149.

<sup>401</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) pp. 216 – 222.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.* p 216. There are of course complexities surrounding the market-competitiveness of such firms. For reasons of space I am unable to consider them here. See David Miller, *Market, States and Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) pp 72 – 97. Frank Roosevelt & David Belkin, *Why Market Socialism? Voices from Dissent* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994).

<sup>403</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, p 218.

stand up to those in power and renegotiate or even refuse the expectations surrounding their demands. In the workplace for example, UBI could see the effecting of real power on behalf of the worker. A greater parity could therefore be established between workers and their employers as basic income takes on the form of an individualised strike fund. In this way, even workers who do not wish to join worker-led enterprises can still see improvements to their working conditions following the introduction of UBI.<sup>404</sup> In effect, this is similar to the creating of a space for developing the evaluative competence discussed in the second chapter: UBI becomes a means to create real opportunities for people who have traditionally suffered from an inability to stand back, re-examine and potentially adjust the direction their lives have taken.

Beyond the issue of working or not working there is also the long-term planning a UBI facilitates. Where sources of income are insecure and impermanent it is harder to plan our future. Where we have security in our more basic functions we can afford to entertain other considerations like depth, long-term commitments and the rest. Our knowledge of the quantity and permanence of the UBI stream mitigates the vulnerability accompanying changes in employment status when work is the sole means of earning an income. With UBI present, work can remain (and even be embraced as) flexible, without having the devastating consequences on our 'ontological security' that currently accompany un-(and under)-employment. Depending on the range of jobs one does, flexible work might reduce the possibility of craftsmanship in the workplace: where skills are exogenous and 'shallowly' learned, the depth required for craftsmanship will be missing. But craftsmanship can still remain a possibility in other areas of life that have nothing to do with employment so long as the future can be effectively managed and predicted.<sup>405</sup>

### *Basic Income and the Exploitation Objection*

As described in the third chapter, the time and efforts needed for political campaigning and agitation can collide with the demand for productive reciprocity. In so doing, such activity can be described as non-reciprocal: goods (the results of productive contributions) are recognised as goods and enjoyed by agitators but are not returned by sufficient productivity. An argument often made against UBI is that it institutes non-reciprocating and

---

<sup>404</sup> Where individuals are more able and willing to engage in worker-led enterprises, this could have a knock-on effect on the quality of other jobs. Where the feasibility of worker-led firms is increased, employers are aware that the jobs they provide must be of a minimal quality. If the standards drop below a certain level, workers may move away from traditional forms and employment and toward opportunities in cooperative organisations. White, *The Civic Minimum*, p 194.

<sup>405</sup> Sennett, *The Culture of New Capitalism*, pp 186 – 187.



exploitative relationships between workers and non-workers.<sup>406</sup> UBI has to come from somewhere, and by allowing total withdrawal from employment it funds the merely feckless, idle or utterly self-involved to do whatever it is they please. However, while I believe the exploitation objection is valid it is not decisive. This is because there are other advantages that the institution of basic income could bring about which could be set off against the possibility of exploitation.

There are two sets of reasons I consider that should make us wary of too easily labelling UBI a *necessarily* exploitative policy. As with many things, there are shades of grey to be explored and understood before jumping to the (admittedly intuitive) idea that UBI establishes in law an exploitative and/or parasitic relationship between workers and non-workers. These arguments, respectively, fall into the following categories: balance of reasons in terms of fairness and the balance of reasons in terms of reciprocity.<sup>407</sup>

First to the balance of fairness argument. Accepting that reciprocity can be breached after the introduction of UBI we can, in defending UBI, point to other gains that can be won in the name of other aspects of justice. Reciprocity *is* undermined but we take this loss on the chin for the sake of other potential gains. For example, the significant gains in terms of mitigating vulnerability or empowering workers in their struggles with employers to enforce fair treatment can be put beside the possibilities of reciprocity failure. Any move that raises the exploitation objection cannot rely on the metric of reciprocity as a decisive metric: it can only be an all things considered argument which takes these other gains into account.

Second, and more interestingly, even within the concept of reciprocity there are gains that UBI can bring in its wake. For example, with UBI in place, women can be more demanding of their partners vis-à-vis the distribution of work within the household, without fear of the kinds of conflict that could lead to the termination of relationships which then expose them to considerable vulnerability.<sup>408</sup> As a consequence, reciprocal efforts are here being initiated and secured through the *introduction* of a basic income. In a

---

<sup>406</sup> Jon Elster, 'Comment on van der Veen and Van Parijs', *Theory and Society*, 15 (1987) pp. 718 – 719. See also Stuart White, 'Liberal Equality, Exploitation and the Case for an Unconditional Basic Income', *Political Studies*, 45 (1997) pp.312 – 236.

<sup>407</sup> A third set of reasons is the so-called external assets argument. For reasons of space I do not address those reasons here. See Van Parijs, *Real Freedom for All* Ch. 4 and, for a rejoinder to this kind of argument, see Gijs van Donselaar, *The Right to Exploit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>408</sup> This has obvious benefits for the private, direct negotiation of reciprocal demands discussed earlier in this thesis.

similar vein, there is a great deal of work going on in the community (such as domestic and care work) which would be provided for, secured and even encouraged by a basic income. Payment for such work is recognition of the contribution it represents. And, as a final example, with people now having the option to work less in order to obtain sufficient resources for meaningful activity outside of work, lower working hours will allow *other* people into work and thereby answer the call to productive reciprocity.<sup>409</sup> Taking as given those arguments that complain about the fact UBI provides for (possible) reciprocity failure, parasitism or exploitation, we can still find reasons, using those very same terms of argument, to see UBI as (tentatively) triumphant.

However, while these are defences for UBI in terms of productive reciprocity and other considerations regarding justice, they do not defend the agitator. Agitators cannot make the same arguments regarding reciprocity precisely because they *deny* the validity of the terms and currency which currently define what it means to be reciprocal, i.e. the subjective dimension of reciprocity. That is, they deny the authority of the demand for *productive* contributions. Of course, in hindsight agitators' efforts can be justified according to the changes they produce in people's exchange with each other. But until those results are won, they throw themselves open to charges of parasitism, however well-intentioned their efforts might be. Where for craftsmen basic income secures a situation wherein they can expend sufficient time and energy approximating standards definitive of excellence for that practice, agitators would do something different with their UBI.

Agitators challenge the current terms of exchange that define reciprocity, terms that specify what I must do in order to show you sufficient respect for the efforts you have made to produce for others. Their relationship to authority is necessarily combative. Although in the long-term such combativeness can be justified, to label them reciprocal in light of their explicitly *rejecting* the subjective dimension is to overlook an important aspect of reciprocity, i.e. that efforts returned for benefits enjoyed should be *recognised* as such by the producer of the original benefit. With the introduction of UBI, people involved in political campaigns can continue to benefit from the work performed by others – use of public infrastructure, education and healthcare as examples – just as the merely feckless and idle do. However, where the idle do not resist the authority of governments – where unconditionality is in place doing nothing breaks no laws or fouls no commitment – the agitator actively *opposes* the government's authority, challenging the status of the laws

---

<sup>409</sup> Stuart White, 'Reconsidering the Exploitation Objection to Basic Income', *Basic Income Studies*, 1:2 (2006) pp. 1-17.

and policy that protect the current way of doing things. Disrupting work, throwing up road-blocks, creating public disturbances are designed to interrupt and make difficult the normal course of business. The authority of reciprocal relations are not just being denied but are also subverted and made more costly for others.<sup>410</sup> Where craftsmen need time to adjust to the authority of their practice, agitators need time to develop the skills that *challenge* authority and the status quo that authority resides over.

Republican advocacy of UBI is founded on the independence it provides to the recipient.<sup>411</sup> UBI creates a 'protected position' and empowers the individual against exploitation. Where before exploitation at work or in personal relationships might have been accepted as the best possible option, UBI initiates a better worse option than would have been previously enjoyed.<sup>412</sup> There are various ways to use this protected position: one can use it to return to school and retrain, leave a particular firm and look for other work, finish a relationship that has become abusive or unrewarding, or else take a secondment to participate in more local community work. The security UBI provides is thus used as a means of expanding citizens' range of available options and their freedom to choose between them.

This 'protected position' is also a means of preserving the disruptive functions of the agitator. Disruption is always at the expense of a certain kind of reciprocal effort, whether of people doing the agitating (who can't work while they campaign) or those whose productive efforts are being interrupted. Effort that would otherwise be spent in sustaining contributory practices is being denied to other contributing agents regardless of what many of those contributing agents make of that decision. Instead, the effort of the agitator goes, for example, into organising strikes, i.e. the refusal of involvement with a given set of working practices until certain demands are met. Those other productive agents might, subjectively, reject the reasonableness of their demands, seeing them as contrary to the spirit of reciprocity and demanding too much from others. Furthermore,

---

<sup>410</sup> The lock-in for example, where striking workers take over the machinery and deny other non-strikers access to them is such an example.

<sup>411</sup> Daniel Raventos, *Basic Income: The Material Conditions of Freedom* (London: Pluto Press, 2007); Daniel Raventos & Antoni Domenech, 'Property and Republican Freedom: An Institutional Approach to Basic Income', *Basic Income Studies*, 2:2 (2007) pp. 1 – 8; Pettit, 'A Republican Right to Basic Income?'; Pateman, 'Why Republicanism?'; Pateman, 'Democratising Citizenship: Some Advantages of a Basic Income'.

<sup>412</sup> This 'protected position' is similar to Seyla Benhabib's reading of Arendt's sense of a 'home' as a 'space that protects, nurtures and makes the individual fit to appear in the public realm'. See Seyla Benhabib, 'Feminist Theory and Hannah Arendt's concept of public space', *History of the Human Sciences*, 97:6 (1993) p 107. See also Phillip Pettit, 'Freedom as Anti-power', *Ethics*, 106:3 (1996) pp. 576 – 604.

they may resent paying taxes that contribute to public goods that these people continue to enjoy in the absence of productive labour.

Philip Pettit discusses the denial of freedom that follows on from some agent (or set of agents) possessing the means and rights to 'invigilate' an agents' behaviour, 'with a view to interfering when necessary'. Excessively invasive monitoring and censure of agents would not survive the institution of 'protected positions' provided by guaranteed and secure resources.<sup>413</sup> In being free from the threat of such invigilation, agitation and radical social/political/economic movements become all the more available as possibilities. As a corollary of these individually supplied resources, collectivities are also simultaneously empowered. Workers that were previously divided by fear of a loss of livelihood would no longer be exposed to the same degree of vulnerability. They can more securely and confidently stand in solidarity with their colleagues and comrades throughout their shared struggles for fairer conditions. UBI would thereby become part of the process to 'develop practices and institutions that multiply occasions for our exercise of powers of resistance and reconstruction'.<sup>414</sup>

Without UBI, agitators might have to accept the likelihood of significant losses before deciding to engage in agitation. Going on strike usually involves drawing on one's savings and/or accessing a union's strike fund, both of which will eventually run out.<sup>415</sup> However, where basic income is instituted these losses do not weigh so heavily and the risks of agitation are therefore significantly mitigated. Of course, as stated above, this does allow for exploitation. Individuals will perhaps agitate more frequently and their demands will be considered by contributing others as too high. Or else they will not work at all and cease making demands altogether.<sup>416</sup> This is undoubtedly a risk of UBI: we remove the sword of Damocles and the individual who was once obliged by necessity now escapes that compulsion. The costs of agitation currently in place are, some might argue, necessary to make sure that it is not a decision taken too lightly, that the heat of righteous indignation

---

<sup>413</sup> Pettit, 'A Republican Right to Basic Income', p 4.

<sup>414</sup> See Roberto Unger, *Self-Awakened: Pragmatism Unbound* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009) p 38. More generally, it could achieve the kind of institutional elasticity and experimentalism characteristic of Unger's radical pragmatism. For instance, when (at p. 43) he suggests we 'arrange society and thought so that the difference between reproducing the present and experimenting with the future diminishes and fades.' UBI could be seen as part of the means to this end.

<sup>415</sup> It also involves accessing public goods and other entitlements which might contribute to the ire felt by the productive who feel unduly burdened by having to pay for such costs.

<sup>416</sup> Pateman, 'Democratising Citizenship: Some Advantages of a Basic Income', p 103. Pateman also recognises this risk and, like me, submits it is a cost worth risking or a price worth paying.

and sense of injustice must be accompanied by significant material sacrifice to ensure a modicum of responsibility. To have it otherwise is to have *everyone* become or call themselves an agitator and there is thus no possibility for the sustaining of productive exchange and stable social practices of *any* variety, just or otherwise.

However, people who suffer most from injustice and have the most reason to want to change current practices and institutions often lack sufficient assets to make their needs felt by those in authority. Consider the effects borne by poor Americans as a consequence of systemic changes that have occurred in industrial cities across the country since the 1960s.<sup>417</sup> Deindustrialisation, under investment in federal housing programmes, refusal of bank credit to landlords seeking to improve their housing, mass migration to the suburbs, a shortage of employment in poor areas and chronically underfunded public transport have all conspired to make it increasingly difficult for residents of many urban districts to secure a minimum standard of living or find employment.<sup>418</sup> The work that there is has moved out to the suburbs, so those without the means to leave the ghettos have to rely on a car (itself expensive to buy and run) or public transport, often requiring several changes meaning commuters have to get up several hours before work begins.

Are these reasonable demands for the residents of poor areas to meet?<sup>419</sup> In order to contribute and reciprocate, individuals in these ghettos have to find employment, navigating all these different factors while doing so. As a side-effect of so contributing and of successfully navigating those factors, they also serve to *sustain* such practices, plying their efforts into producing goods and services even though they endure a great deal in doing so. To withdraw their labours, to refuse to search for employment because the demands are too high is seen by some as the action of a parasite, willing to live on the efforts of others. And yet their circumstances do seem fairly obvious instantiations of White's proletarian condition and might, indeed, qualify as 'substantial (enough a) harm' to warrant total withdrawal from productive obligations. This refusal and the activism it leads to can therefore, potentially at least, be legitimated by the absence of the meeting of those thresholds White describes in chapter 3.

---

<sup>417</sup> The following example draws from William Julius Wilson's analysis of Chicago's working class areas. William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears*, Ch. 2.; Tommie Shelby, 'Justice, Deviance and the Dark Ghetto', pp. 126 – 160.

<sup>418</sup> Marshall Berman has described this process as 'urbicide'. Marshall Berman, 'Emerging from the Ruins', *Dissent* (Winter, 2014).

<sup>419</sup> For an answer in the negative to that question see Shelby, 'Justice, Deviance and the Dark Ghetto'.

But how is this legitimate refusal (if we can describe it as such) to be made sustainable? As things currently stand, such a refusal means the ending of the possibility of an income sufficient to meet a basic standard of living (unless the individual turns to 'deviant' behaviour'.<sup>420</sup> This is hardly sustainable – the American justice system is evidence to that effect).<sup>421</sup> An unconditional basic income, however, could be seen to have just this sustaining function. Not then as a means to sustain the *practico-inertia* of the current ways of doing things but rather as the means to sustain the *refusal* to implicate oneself in such a situation, to break out of that inertia and bring new demands to the table. It is thus a twist on the subjective dimension implicit to reciprocity discussed in chapter 3. I may benefit from your contributions to some degree; from the taxes you pay you contribute to the provision of services that I use, to public goods, a UBI and to the production of goods I can (limitedly) purchase at the marketplace. But I do not return that effort until I see certain thresholds of fairness have been satisfied: acting thus I reject your right to demand contributory effort from me. It is thus a way of keeping constantly open to challenge the fairness of the exchanges between us and of interrogating the prior relationships that frame our exchanges with one another. When Rawls says 'unjust social arrangements are themselves a kind of extortion, even violence, and consent to them does not bind' he seems to be allowing for just this refusal to sustain (and thus of a right to sustain refusal).<sup>422</sup>

The disruptions to contemporary social practices that have gone on throughout history have also, necessarily, been refusals to ply effort into institutions then existing. Effort that was spent in campaigns, agitation and sabotage was effort that had been withdrawn from its sustaining functions. Agitators refused to accept that a terminating, authoritative point had been reached by which the justice of exchanges could be assessed and judgement passed. These refusals were long fought battles, often in the teeth of fierce opposition phrased precisely in terms of the reciprocating effort they thought they were owed and which were being denied them by disruptive agitators.<sup>423</sup> Basic income, as a protector of this agitating space (and with the caveat of the risks identified), ensures that

---

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.* p 148.

<sup>421</sup> 25% of the world's prison population is held in America even though it has only 5% of the world's population.

<sup>422</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p 302.

<sup>423</sup> Lawrence Becker's appeal to proportionality as part of the return of 'good for good' is also not met precisely because this agitating effort can be regarded as entering nothing (proportionally and absolutely) in the way of a good by the provider of goods. Lawrence Becker, 'The Obligation to Work', *Ethics*, 91:1 (1980) pp. 40-41.

we are never in a position to pronounce that practices currently being sustained by our reciprocating efforts have no need for disruption or sustained challenge.

Of course there might be times when the agitation and the demands made by agitators are misguided.<sup>424</sup> In such circumstances these agents will, to some extent at least, not only be exploiting contributing others (by not reciprocating their efforts) they will also, perhaps, be exploiting those with whom they share associations and who are considered comrades and fellow-sufferers.<sup>425</sup> Such moves of agitation are likely to be best served in cooperation and continued deliberation with these others rather than as individuals.<sup>426</sup> When agitation is misguided, or when it collapses into simple free-riding idleness, it displays an undoubted disrespect to the subjective assessments made by others regarding what they are owed in the name of democratic mutual regard. I have been arguing that given the distance between our current state of affairs and a substantially just situation, other people's assessments and demands for productive contribution may be wrong: withdrawal from the sustaining of current practices is therefore justified. But this is not always the case. It is therefore necessary to exercise this power after careful deliberation and discussion with others who share one's situation (alongside those making claims that they are owed) as a means to avoid these problems.<sup>427</sup>

### *Cross-Purposes*

This last point about the responsibilities associated with agitation reveals a point of mutual compatibility between agitators and craftsmen. They both have a lot to learn from one another regarding their different relations to authority. The craftsman submits himself to both the standards of a practice and to the expert purveyors of that practice. This asymmetrical relationship gives standards and the experts who interpret them a great deal of power over the practitioners. However, it is not a power that enjoys incontestable status. Indeed, a great deal of progress has occurred precisely because the experts and standards have been contested, challenged and, after protracted battles, overturned.

---

<sup>424</sup> Andrew Sabl, 'Looking Forward to Justice: Rawlsian Civil Disobedience and its Non-Rawlsian Lessons', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 9:3 (2001) pp. 328 – 329.

<sup>425</sup> These two groups may consist of the same people. Their efforts at agitation are not only not *regarded* as non-reciprocal by others they are also, finally, *not* reciprocal.

<sup>426</sup> Michael Walzer, 'The Obligations of Oppressed Minorities', *Obligations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970) esp. pp. 53-54.

<sup>427</sup> See Mitchell Cohen, 'The Value of Dissent', *Dissent* (Winter, 2014) for possible directions and pitfalls of agitation and dissent.

This contestability is not exactly like the work of the agitator. Agitation, as I have been developing it, refers specifically to denying the authority of demands for productive reciprocal contribution. However, there is something similar in the attitude of contestation that produces changes in the meaning and relevance of practice-activity and the membership of a practice. Progress in the practice of science, for example, has often required 'heretical' practitioners to go against the authority of elders (both scientific and religious) and the paradigms to which they referred their activity and which made sense of their work.<sup>428</sup> Art as well has changed as a result of challenges to the established techniques and meaning of what art is supposed to be and do.<sup>429</sup> What counts as excellence and as definitive of good practice is not fixed for all eternity. The standards and expectations definitive of practices are often the result of painful evolution and great contestation. At the less epoch-changing level, 'students' can, when versed enough in their practices, come to challenge their teachers and demand more of them by way of explanation and justification for doing things one way rather than another.

There is also the more strictly political contestation in which craftsman can engage to expand the membership of a practice. There have been long struggles fought for underprivileged people, oppressed minorities and genders to gain access to various practices. Experts and the standards they approximate should not be the prerogative of any particular part of a population. Certainly, advantage often means that only small sections of a population have genuine access to particular practices. But this is due to lack of financial resources as opposed to dearth in native ability. Indeed, in order to ensure that potentially very talented members of a community are not held back by their lack of money and thus ensure the health of a practice, it is necessary for practices and their institutions to open their ranks to as diverse and abundant a source of talent as possible.<sup>430</sup> To do otherwise is to risk leaving the standards of excellence under-approximated and under-developed, stagnating by being overly populated by people sharing only very similar experiences.<sup>431</sup> If

---

<sup>428</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Arthur Koestler, *Sleepwalkers* (London: Penguin, 1964).

<sup>429</sup> Avant-garde artists have also been important members of agitation in a more directly political sense. See Lea Ypi, *Global Justice and Avant-Garde Political Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) pp. 154 – 173.

<sup>430</sup> This makes sense of the role of affirmative action in getting people of colour and women into higher education institutes for instance. See Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, pp.386 – 408 (esp. pp. 402 – 404).

<sup>431</sup> This additional access will also introduce new evaluative perspectives on the standards as they currently exist, breaking down dominant and potentially oppressive cultural norms and definitions. For these additional problems regarding the hierarchy between experts and non-experts within practices see Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, p 211 – 212.



all literature had been written exclusively by privileged, white men, it would never have been able to entertain, inspire and provoke in the way it has.

Conversely, agitators are exemplars of craftsmanship. Agitation is not an effortless capacity that simply emerges as a consequence of recognising or suffering injustice. Indeed, suffering a great deal of injustice can often stand in the way of learning and adopting the best way of opposing it. Trade unions have, historically, been a great space within which to learn the art of political campaigning. They exposed their members to the arsenal of tools at their disposal and the solidarity and discipline on which the use of such tools relied. Where unions have shrunk from public life other associations have had (or, more probably, will have) to emerge to replace or reenergize them. Tactics and strategies have to change, incorporating responses to new developments in the demographics and demands of their membership and the challenges being confronted: agitation is thus an evolving craft. For example, the contemporary Occupy movement uses strategies similar to the lock-ins employed by unionists, inhabiting particular spaces of high-visibility or public use as a way of raising their complaints.<sup>432</sup> Such agitation also needs to develop complementary means to articulate demands in as democratic a way as possible. All these are challenges that are met by skills, learned on the street, in the workplace, the family and, sometimes perhaps, the school.

Solidarity is necessary for effective agitation. Without solidarity between members of a community experiencing injustice, UBI will not be as effective a means for agitating against the structures and perpetrators of injustice. Tommie Shelby's description of solidarity is useful as a way of highlighting the practical aspects of this concept.<sup>433</sup> Shelby highlights five dimensions that are crucial for developing solidarity: identification with the group; special concern ('a disposition to assist and comfort those with whom one identifies'); shared values or goals, and loyalty and mutual trust. With the possible exception of the first, these aspects of solidarity are more than merely passive expressions. They are defined by demands and norms that constitute what it means to be solidaristic. They are standards, in other words, that must be met with practical activity.

---

<sup>432</sup> For an account of this movement, its tactics and actions see David Graeber, *The Democracy Project* (London: Penguin, 2014).

<sup>433</sup> Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Belknap University Press, 2007) pp. 67 – 71. See also Richard Sennett, *Together* (London: Allen Lane, 2012) for the different ways in which togetherness is a skill that can be learned both well and badly.

When someone is in need, for example, the expression of special concern implies we are in a position for that person to approach us and ask for assistance. This involves publicity of some kind, letting our fellow-members know we have such concern and are capable enough to assist. Shared goals and values, where they are not readily apparent, require articulation in order to be properly identified with. This is itself a complex process fraught with difficulty and potentially fierce disagreement. After articulation, values and goals also require translating into effective demands that can be brought to bear against those in power. Beyond the tasks of articulation, it is also a job for effective leaders in such movements to ‘first champion this turbulent insurgency and then channel it into a set of well-consolidated laws, institutions, and bargaining arrangements that can last a generation or more’.<sup>434</sup> This is all skilful work borne out of (something like) the practice sessions described in the last chapter.

In order to be loyal one must develop a sense of what that means, i.e. precisely *what* one is being loyal *to*. Identification with a group is thus a reference point against which we come to understand to whom and to what we are being loyal and how we can ‘live’ that loyalty in our day to day realities. Moreover, mutual trust must be earned through concerted effort and activity. Where such activity is lacking so too is evidence enough to express that I am one who can be trusted: there is no obvious foundation from which trust can grow. The development of solidarity is the development of practical skills which are further necessary (if not sufficient) for effective agitation. It therefore requires a craftsman-like dedication to the demands and excellences of solidarity, as well as efficacy in the use of other tools that are a part of agitation.<sup>435</sup>

### *The consequences of unconditionality*

My defence of basic income is consequentialist. Should UBI prove to produce more craftsmen and agitators I believe these count in favour of such a policy. Why then do I advocate unconditionality? Why do I not advocate a basic income with conditions attached for it to be used in ways that encourage craftsmanship and agitation? This should be

---

<sup>434</sup> Nelson Liechtenstein, ‘Two Roads Forward for Labor: The AFL-CIO’s New Agenda’, *Dissent* (Jan, 2014). There is also the need to recognise ‘the limits placed on civil disobedience (and agitation more generally) by the requirements of future cooperation’ with non-participants and targets of agitation. See Sabl, ‘Looking Forward to Justice’, pp. 307 – 330.

<sup>435</sup> Writing manifestos, for example, will draw on other skills that are not solely defined by reference to solidarity. Finding the appropriately inspiring turn of phrase can draw on skills associated with solidarity – knowing one’s audience – but will also require reference to more literary standards and excellences.

straight-forward in the case of agitators: the protected position necessary for effective agitation is curtailed when states can fix it to some kind of demand for contribution that they define. Agitation cannot be so pre-determined precisely because it aims at challenging both the standards of what is to count as contribution and the authority of those in positions of power to define and designate contributive activity. It is thus unsuited to the rigidity of bureaucratic rules and enforcement.

However, there are also advantages in unconditionality for the craftsman. First, as it pertains to craftsmanship at work: in order to be able to withdraw one's labour from work one finds meaningless and unfulfilling and which thus admits of no possibility for depth or complexity, a person must be able to refuse certain employment. The protected position provided by unconditionality means that one can more easily leave undignified work knowing full well that another source of income cannot be disrupted.<sup>436</sup> Moreover, in the same way that the agitator refers their efforts to standards that are not shared by everyone, the craftsman can use his skills to contribute in ways he and members of his community deem effective without having to refer it to the market or some bureaucratic definition of contribution or craftsman-like depth.<sup>437</sup> In this way UBI might encourage more informal 'gift relations' between people, a form of exchange that can supplement or even replace the 'cash-nexus' economy which currently defines so much of our cooperative activity. When their more basic needs are covered, people no longer need to pursue additional wealth for material gain and can do (craftsman-like) work, should they so wish, for other reasons.<sup>438</sup> Deeper participation in producing for this gift relation is also made possible by UBI.

Having said all that, challenges remain. I frame unconditionality according to the consequences it produces. There are other ways to support unconditionality that do not promote the same set of consequences. That is, they retain the focus on consequences produced by UBI but they emphasise an alternative set of them. First, UBI can be defended as a means of expanding liberal neutrality, blocking the state's ability to impose and

---

<sup>436</sup> Again recognising the caveat associated with the solidarity needed for effective agitation. Of course one can leave employment without it turning into agitation: one simply looks for employment elsewhere rather than tries to transform the employment one leaves.

<sup>437</sup> For a possible argument in this vein see Atkinson, 'The Case for a Participation Income'. For problems with bureaucratic definitions required for conditions of contribution, see Brian Barry, *UBI and the Work Ethic*, p 66.

<sup>438</sup> Charles Eistenstein, *Sacred Economics* (Berkley, California: Evolver Editions, 2011) Ch. 17 on the social dividend. Also see Andreas Wittell, 'Counter-commodification: the economy of contribution in the digital commons', *Culture and Organisation*, 19:4 (2013) pp. 314 – 331.

enforce people's preferences. In the same way as it is deemed inappropriate for governments to decide what religions we follow, the people we marry or hobbies we enjoy, the unconditionality of basic income means involuntary employment is eliminated: no longer do we have to work if we do not like it because what we do not like we can just leave behind. We only work because we want to and an unconditional basic income is a way of ensuring that.

This, for example, is Philippe Van Parijs' motivation and is captured by his third condition of a truly free society: 'each person has the greatest possible opportunity to do whatever she might want to do'. This approach opposes the minimal perfectionism of my position. Where I ground the value of UBI in *particular* lives it makes available and which we have reason to value, expanded neutrality, on the other hand, is a way of leaving all such questions alone: it cashes out the benefits of UBI in the way it reduces, if not eliminates, all those parts of our life that we do not experience as voluntary. It thus flattens out our experience of the activities with which we are involved: the quality of all our involvements become voluntary in nature.

A second possible defence of the unconditional of a basic income is on the pragmatic grounds that it reduces administrative costs associated with means-tested payment. So we might in fact prefer to have an element of conditionality but the costs, practical difficulties and intrusiveness of instituting the necessary bureaucracy make unconditionality the fall back position.<sup>439</sup> Thirdly, and as an aspect of the intrusiveness of administration, unconditionality can be seen as eliminating the shame and low self-respect that accompany having to answer the prying personal questions of a bureaucracy attempting to expose the extent of a person's incapacity.<sup>440</sup> Fourth, we can institute unconditionality so that nothing anyone does can jeopardise their right to the opportunities and goods made possible by a basic income, thereby acting as an expression of community solidarity with its members.<sup>441</sup>

---

<sup>439</sup> Goodin, 'Something for Nothing', p 66; Barry, 'UBI and the Work Ethics', p 94.

<sup>440</sup> Jonathan Wolff, 'Fairness, Respect, and the Egalitarian Ethos', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 27:2, (1998). See also Anderson, 'What is the Point of Equality'; Ian Carter, 'Respect and the basis of equality', *Ethics*, 121:3 (2011) esp. pp. 564-565.

<sup>441</sup> Pateman, 'Freedom and Democratization: Why Basic Income is to be Preferred to Basic Capital', pp. 146 – 147. This distinguishes Basic Income from the Basic Stake. Advocates of a one-time Basic Stake could still regard this policy as an expression of solidarity but only as being a provider of an *opportunity* that can be lost and forfeited. See, Ackerman & Alstott, *The Stakeholder Society*, esp. Part 1.

A final reason to institute an unconditional basic income is that it is made necessary by massive changes in the economy that have occurred over the last century or so. A great deal of work has been automated and appropriated by machinery. As a consequence, workers are not only much less involved with their work there is also simply less work to do. UBI is a way of reforming welfare systems to better meet people's complex contemporary needs in light of these changes. With the increasing efficiency of machinery, much (if not most) productive labour is reduced to menial tasks, supervision and the maintenance of machines becomes the primary task.<sup>442</sup> In such an environment, work can *only* be experienced as a burden to be lessened and *never* as a craft to be rescued from the clutches of technological development.<sup>443</sup>

From this perspective, a basic income is necessary to civilise this process. Rather than baulk against this trend of deskilled labour we should seek rather to *complete* it, to take that simplifying process as far as we are able in all types of work and then to share out any residual labour in as egalitarian and just a fashion as possible.<sup>444</sup> A basic income is a necessary redistributive mechanism because massive reductions in work mean there are fewer opportunities for people to find gainful employment and earn enough money to support themselves and their families.<sup>445</sup> Basic income thus breaks up the connection between wages and income. Work might cease to be an arena within which the complex practice-engagements that are characteristic of craftsmen can remain a lively possibility. But, so this view has it, this is more than recompensed by the other possibilities opened up outside of our labours.<sup>446</sup> UBI is a way of facilitating this move toward a society that would be dismissive of work as we currently conceive it.

---

<sup>442</sup> Andre Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class*, (London: Pluto Press, 1980) p 49.

<sup>443</sup> For a view that rejects this inevitability of work-as-heteronomous and purely a burden to be slaked off see Sean Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature* (London: Routledge, 1998) p 46.

<sup>444</sup> Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, p 191. See also Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, pp. 165 – 183 for means of redistributing hard or toilsome work.

<sup>445</sup> Gorz, *Reclaiming Work*, pp. 80-81. Gorz argues for an unconditional basic income, even though previously he had wished to retain a connection between labour and receipt: Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, p 205. See also Philippe Van Parijs, 'Political Ecology: From Autonomous Sphere to Basic Income', *Basic Income Studies*, 4:2 (2009) for Gorz's revised position.

<sup>446</sup> See also G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) p 315. Cohen, for instance, saw one of the prime virtues of socialism in the fact that producers in such a system were 'free, as far as systematic economic constraints are concerned, to choose between expanding output and reducing labour, when there is progress in productivity'.<sup>446</sup>

This reduction in work, following Marx, is another way of reducing the time we spend in the 'sphere of necessity' and thereby enhances our freedom.<sup>447</sup> This is importantly different to the above freedom from involuntary employment. This alternative position is not that it allows *some* people to choose unemployment while others fill the gaps with their particularly strong preferences for work. Rather, it requires a concerted collective effort to massively reduce *all* work for *all* people. Preferences for work are thus cut off at the source since there is significantly less work available for people to prefer and no occupations with which they can identify and by which they can define themselves. The question 'what do you do for a living?' which seems so inescapable a part of our culture, will no longer make sense.

However, despite differences in the specific ways it affects our sense of necessity or the involuntary, enormous reductions in work produce the same levelling effect in our ethical experiences that accompany the expanded liberal neutrality described above. When all work is taken out of our hands and denied to our cooperative efforts we no longer experience our involvement with one another in the same way: it is no longer *necessary* that we come together in order to produce the goods we consume. In a situation of liberal neutrality, preferences for work mean that it is no longer experienced as involuntary. Massive reductions in work also mean that no work is experienced as involuntary precisely because there is no work to do. This is a huge shift away from the forms of current (adult) sociality which, for a great many people, will to a limited extent at least, take place in the workplace. The elimination of such work will also mean the elimination of this *necessary* sociality. The *objective* demandingness of social life has ceased. Our mutual participation with one another can *only* be the consequence of voluntary engagement.

We can practically distinguish different dimensions of unconditionality. So, for instance, we retain the advantages of the third and fourth dimensions above (non-invasiveness; expressive solidarity) whilst exploring ways of mitigating the 'flattening' effects of liberal neutrality at other points in the institutional arrangements. Instead of

---

<sup>447</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital Vol. 3* (A New Abridgement) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) p 470. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998) esp. Chapter II. While I follow Hannah Arendt in her definition of necessity, I do not follow her into the more refined distinctions between work and freedom. Work is specifically that which we perform in order to build a durable world in which to live- it still occupies the realm of necessity and is designed to facilitate a move into public, away from necessity and toward freedom (it liberates but does not make us free). For Arendt, freedom involves engaging in the public realm of action where we join others to speak and act together embracing the plurality and individuality of each and every participant and is thus very different from freedom as I am understanding it here.

regarding the gains achieved by unconditionality in terms of hugely expanding the realm of things we might like to do and reducing all sense of the involuntary, we see its gains in terms of security, bureaucratic simplicity or as an expression of communal solidarity. Everyone would therefore be entitled to the basic income but in schools, culture and in society more generally we might try to counteract the possible excesses brought about by the *a priori* neutrality that is a natural (but, on this view, unfortunate) concomitant of unconditionality. It comes down to whether we wish to institute this expanded liberal neutrality *alongside* the other goods a UBI might facilitate. What, ultimately, are the terms with which we wish to frame the introduction and purposes of UBI? And, if I envisage UBI as a means of protecting agitators and craftsmen, is it likely that a consequence of expanded liberal neutrality will be this protection?

### *Senses of Necessity*

So long as work remains an engagement we have to take part in if we are to enjoy a reasonable standard of living, what we wish to do with our time and energy will have to take that obligation into account. Necessity is a many layered concept.<sup>448</sup> First there is the idea of necessity as it refers to all the work that has to be done for the community to go on. This is not a fixed notion: ideas of what constitutes socially necessary labour change over time. For instance, the socially necessary labour – including its ‘rational regulation’<sup>449</sup> – required to sustain today’s advanced economy and the greatly expanded set of needs and desires that inform it is considerable. If we wish to sustain these needs and desires, this kind of necessity cannot be reduced *per se* because the more things we want the more has to be done to satisfy that want. But what *can* be achieved is a delegation of such labour to machinery and increased efficiency in the use of such technology. The work gets done then but by something else that it is not (yet!) human. This idea of necessary labour thus includes work that is performed by machinery.

The second level of necessity refers to the people engaged in labour. It can be split into a further couple of categories. The first of these is the labour that is the necessary counterpart to that variety of labour, signalled above, already delegated to advancing technological capacity. Technology has yet to completely supersede our capacities and so there remain gaps, sometimes quite extensive, which we fill with our own time and efforts.

---

<sup>448</sup> See Weeks, *The Problem of Work*, p 39. Weeks makes a similar set of distinctions but without referring to a sense of necessity in its sustaining function, that which is done because it is necessary for the needs of the community.

<sup>449</sup> Marx, *Capital*, p 470.

The service and creative sectors require human involvement at least at this stage of our development. The second category is labour that it is necessary *for the individual* to perform in order for her to receive compensation sufficient enough to sustain a reasonable standard of living and satisfy her basic needs. As things stand, without the income provided by work it is very difficult to attain even a modicum of good living. Such labour is thus necessary from the *subjective* point of view. By guaranteeing income even for the unemployed, UBI reduces the impact of this subjective kind of necessity. However, the quantity of labour performed by advanced technology to meet our expanding needs might continually increase. Indeed, such advanced technology might come to take over more and more of currently human labour.<sup>450</sup>

Finally, and at something of a tangent from the above, we can talk about the ‘inner’ necessity associated with labour. This refers to the (controversial) Marxist notion of species-being, or some other essentialist understanding of human nature and its relation to productive labour. Briefly, we have an idea of what it is to be human. This includes a desire to see in our productive labours a primary reason for living, a central and axiomatic practice within which to develop our capacities, creativity and inherent nature from which we are, under capitalism, presently alienated.<sup>451</sup> With the advent of communism we create the means by which work takes on these characteristics and through which we are finally able to develop that inner, bedrock human sense of what is necessary for us to live meaningful lives.

The last of these is the most controversial but seems implicit in any defence of UBI that retains a view of the good of community but does not take into account the habits, socialisation and inculcation that is necessary to achieve any kind of substantive, patterned human behaviour. There seems to operate the optimistic idea that once we liberate ourselves from the other kinds of ‘objective’ necessity we are, at root, the kinds of people who simply come together to work. Necessity is here re-appropriated as an entirely internal and subjective phenomenon without recourse or appeal to the disciplining effect

---

<sup>450</sup> The necessary human counterpart that operates alongside advanced technology could also, in the event of UBI, be renegotiated and reduced as people refuse to perform tasks they consider unworthy of their participation. See for example William Morris, ‘Useful Work Versus Useless Toil’, *News from Nowhere and Selected Writings and Designs* (London: Penguin, 1962) pp. 133-136 & David Graeber, ‘On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs’, *Strike! Magazine* (August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013). Available at <http://www.strikemag.org/bullshit-jobs/>.

<sup>451</sup> Sean Sayers, *Marx and Alienation: Essays on Hegelian Themes* (Basingstoke: Palgrave & Macmillan, 2011) pp. 36-59. See also Karl Marx, ‘Critique of the Gotha Program’, in McLellan, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, p 569.



of actual *objective* necessity. We can therefore, in an unproblematic and costless way, reduce our involvement with the demands of work without concern for the wider implications vis-à-vis our relations to other people.

Socialisation and education would also be needed to bring about what Van Parijs himself calls 'solidaristic patriotism' and 'pride in the collective project' of which citizens of a UBI-instituting community would be a part.<sup>452</sup> But this seems to introduce some serious tensions into the concept of liberal neutrality: freedom is expanded this far but only on condition that we bring about these kinds of sentiments, habits, visions of the good and accompanying actions. How is this solidaristic patriotism to be encouraged in light of the voluntariness that Van Parijs would like to see characteristic of all our endeavours and associations?

Van Parijs is not helped on this score by one of his proposed sources of UBI: employment rents. These rents consist of resources accrued by the employed simply because they are employed and not through any additional effort on their part.<sup>453</sup> A portion of the wealth/goods/resources created by a productive community and that are not owned by anyone are, according to Van Parijs, owed to its members regardless of their contributions to that product.<sup>454</sup> Legitimate reciprocity and appeals to things like 'solidaristic patriotism', on this account, can only be appealed to *after* workers' monopolising effects have been counteracted and the basic income has been distributed. Otherwise what we are demanding is something more than reciprocity.<sup>455</sup> In other words, UBI is supplied to everyone to prevent its being accrued by people who have done nothing to deserve it. The supply of basic income is not something that we recognise as obliging us in any way: we are owed it. The stipulation that any obligation (such as that required for Van Parijs' 'solidaristic patriotism') follows on from that requires an additional argument,

---

<sup>452</sup> Van Parijs, *Real Freedom for All*, p 230. Something like this need to consider an accompanying socialisation is recognised as a necessary part of instituting a basic capital by Ackerman & Alstott, *The Stakeholder Society* pp. 65-76. See also Will Paxton & Stuart White, 'Universal capital grants: The issue of responsible use', in Will Paxton, & Stuart White, with Dominic Maxwell, eds., *The Citizen's Stake: Exploring the future of universal assets policies* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2006) pp. 121- 134.

<sup>453</sup> White, 'Liberal Equality, Exploitation and the Case for an Unconditional Basic Income', pp.312 - 326; Philippe Van Parijs, 'Reciprocity and the Justification of an Unconditional Basic Income. Reply to Stuart White', *Political Studies*, 45: 2 (1997) p 329-330.

<sup>454</sup> Van Parijs, *Real Freedom for All*, p 107.

<sup>455</sup> This point is particularly salient in situations where there might not be enough jobs to go around and yet the demand to seek paid employment remains. Gorz also recognises this point: 'One has also to remember that the figure for worldwide unemployment stands at between 600 and 800 million and that, if we were to extend the wage-based society to all who will enter the labour market between now and 2025, yet another 1,200 million jobs would have to be created.' Gorz, *Reclaiming Work* p 25.

precisely that which is lacking when all our associations are to be thought of as valuable only insofar as they are voluntary.

By making these distinctions in necessity we reveal the different ways in which it informs our understanding of work. When an inner sense of necessity is said to survive the end to objective necessity it is an empirical claim that is being made. But what reason do we have to believe that this will be the case? Having delegated all work to machinery or making all employment voluntary we also reduce a sense of our being *needed* to work. Can we be so comfortably assured that some essential part of who and what we are will generate sufficient sociality for a thriving community and public life?<sup>456</sup> Might we not conceivably translate freedom from the compulsion of necessity into isolating ourselves from one another as much as is possible, enjoying the private realm of family and friends at the cost of wider public involvement?<sup>457</sup>

Of course, this desire for isolation is entirely consistent with expanded liberal neutrality: UBI opens up the possibilities for *whatever* it is we might want to do. Should a vibrant public and community life vanish along with the craftsmen and agitators I hope to see protected, then these are just the consequences of ‘real’ freedom. But why should freedom (and a particular version of freedom at that) have such a monopoly on the reasons we have for instituting UBI? There are other concerns, such as the protection of particularly valuable forms of life, which can motivate our advocacy. Again, this need not issue in enforceable conditions. Nevertheless, there are other ways to promote and protect valuable options without the threat of sanction or the denial of benefit.

### *Socialising without Enforcement*

The unconditionality of UBI and liberal neutrality are separable. Indeed, we could have a very substantive perfectionism still linked to an unconditional basic income. We would still

---

<sup>456</sup> For an argument pertaining to the virtues of work in cultivating public spiritedness, see Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontents* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996) pp. 123 – 167; Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) pp. 45 – 66. For a flip-side of this account i.e. where work can have *negative* effects on such virtue see Richard Sennett, ‘Why good workers might be bad people’, *New Statesman*, 9<sup>th</sup> October (1998) pp. 25 – 27.

<sup>457</sup> The Pixar film *Wall-E* (2008: Dir. Andrew Stanton) is a superb example of something like this situation in dystopic form: humans, in escaping from a world they have destroyed through over-consumption and lack of ecological awareness, become more and more dependent on machines – to the point where all knowledge of even basic agriculture disappears and we become nothing more than enormous, near boneless (!) consumers. In addition, some thinkers have seen the rise of the private as directly linked to deterioration in the possibility for effective public life. See Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* and Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 248 – 325.

provide funds to everyone but would load our society with schemes of socialisation, public schemes and particular incentives and funds which would produce particular constraints and limitations. For instance, when Carole Pateman recommends UBI as a way of encouraging citizenry reflection on the structural interrelationships that characterise contemporary society, giving individuals the space to leave and/or challenge those relationships, it becomes animated by an agenda of politicisation and democratisation rather than the 'real' freedom of Van Parijs' 'real' libertarianism.<sup>458</sup> We could have UBI in a situation which still regards Van Parijs' Malibu surfers enjoying the goods of social cooperation without contributing any of their efforts as worthy of collective censure precisely because they do not use UBI for its intended (though unenforced) purpose.<sup>459</sup> It is precisely this censure which liberal neutrality seeks to eliminate.

Depending on how seriously we take the unconditionality of a basic income and how deeply we allow it to pervade our institutions, there also arises the question of the norms and processes of socialisation that would have to accompany neutrality expanded to include reference to preferences for work. If we really wish to make work a choice, a large accompanying cultural shift will have to be produced. It cannot just be a matter of grafting an expanded sense of liberal neutrality onto current ways of life drenched as they are with non-neutral work ethics of all denominations. For 'real' freedom to be instituted individuals must have as wide a field of options as possible. Where the demand to contribute is retained as an aspect of our cultural environment, even if it is not enforced, the involuntary nature of such contributions, the sense that we *must* contribute in spite of what our preferences might be, can still remain.<sup>460</sup>

If liberal neutrality is to be an aspect embedded in our cultures it has to be taught somewhere. It cannot be merely transplanted into our current situation after it absorbs employment into its remit. If freedom is made 'real' and we are to regard the capable and lazy as doing what they have a right to do, then this is a necessary part of its institution. To neglect the educative needs of a population is to allow the current scorn for such people to

---

<sup>458</sup> Carole Pateman, 'Freedom and Democratization: Why Basic Income is to be Preferred to Basic Capital', in Dowding, et al., eds., *Ethics of Stakeholding*, p 138.

<sup>459</sup> Richard Arneson, 'Is Socialism Dead? A Comment on Market Socialism and Basic Income Capitalism', *Ethics*, 102: 3 (1992) p 507-508 challenges Van Parijs on his expanded version of liberal neutrality. He sees it as incapable of defending its claim that a social order which takes the 'perfectionist' stance of favouring those who do take employment would be '*objectionably* non-neutral'. However, collective censure that does regard such neutrality as objectionable can exist without it being institutionalised and converted into conditions for the obtaining of Basic Income.

<sup>460</sup> This is especially true in light of the expanded understanding of obstacle that pervades real libertarian accounts of freedom. Reeve & Williams, *Real Libertarianism Assessed*, p 4-5.

continue unaffected and remain as obstacles to freedom.<sup>461</sup> The oppositional terms to words like 'courage' and 'hard-work' would no longer be allowed to carry the weight they once did and this would unavoidably throw new light on what we mean when employing them. Doctors and teachers could still be seen as 'courageous' and 'hard-working'. But we can no longer chastise those who, though capable of becoming doctors and teachers, put in no effort whatsoever and contribute nothing to the collective good and yet cannot be labelled 'cowardly' or 'lazy'.<sup>462</sup>

With the 'expanded neutrality' defence of UBI nothing replaces work as an activity with which we necessarily engage, as something that cannot be avoided as a *sine qua non* of community membership. Work and all other demands to contribute can be, if one so wishes, forgotten as organising questions of life. Our life will continue to be surrounded by questions pertaining to what we want to do and who we want to be. This, as Charles Taylor suggests in the opening epigram, is part of the human condition. But the quality of those questions is no longer of a kind that admits of the unavoidability and necessity descriptive of work. Work can still be engaged with as a valuable activity and association. Or, where work is massively reduced, other forms of contribution can be made. But such activity can only be conceived of as consequent to desires and preferences and not as a necessity or ethical demand we *must* answer either in the form of reciprocal productive contribution or agitation. What we are surrounded by are questions we *voluntarily* assume.

This involves a diminution of our ethical experience: where before we had a plurality of experiences, seeing some things as necessary and other things as voluntary, all our involvements are now collapsed into the latter. Work, religion, political and social involvement all take on the shape and feel of voluntary associations. Where association or involvement are experienced as involuntary UBI fails to perform its primary function of

---

<sup>461</sup> See Walzer, *Politics and Passion*, p 16- 19 for a sketch of another kind of (impossible) socialisation in which students are taught to treat all their associations as voluntary and all their decisions as muscularly free. For the ways in which different levels of socialisation- in public, in the family, schools, religious associations etc.- can interact and conflict with one another precisely because of their involuntariness see Michael Walzer, *On Toleration* (London: Yale University Press, 1997) pp. 71-73.

<sup>462</sup> Moreover, in light of liberal neutrality's *laissez-faire* socialisation, the money that would be provided to the currently unpaid labour in the household, which currently facilitates the free-riding of other members in that household, is not paid to those individuals (predominantly women) *because of* the work that is done. It is neutral on that, blind to it. It is paid because such individuals are members of a community that has initiated an unconditional income. What you do with your time and resources after the transfer is made is neither here nor there and certainly not for us to evaluate. So while free-riding members of the household are eliminated and the security of women is improved, the *recognition* of hard and necessary work being performed seems to be negatively affected by the suppositions of liberal neutrality.

expanding the realm of what we *want* and *desire* to do. In so doing, these associations lose a part of their formative quality.<sup>463</sup>

I also accept of course that stipulating the value of certain kinds of life over others because they include this appeal to necessity is *itself* a curb on a plurality of different ways of life. I am suggesting that UBI should be framed by an understanding that housewives, agitators and volunteers are doing something more valuable than people who *only* surf – even if those surfers are, in a broad sense, craftsmen. However, I agree with White that the principle of liberal neutrality – and the plurality it might entail – can still be checked by other considerations such as reciprocity.<sup>464</sup> It is only that I do not believe it is legitimate to articulate the demand to contribute solely in terms of productivity. First, because of reduction in the amount of work available for people to do and the difficulty this introduces for everyone to contribute in that particular way.<sup>465</sup> And second because of the limitations such demands could impose on other forms of contribution, in particular that performed by activists and agitators.

In a situation of expanded liberal neutrality people will not be entirely without a sense of the demands of authority. When people take part in valuable practices, subjection to the standards of that practice will still be required in order for performances to be considered even minimally good. However, such performances will derive their motivation from an exclusively internal sense of necessity. This has to be sufficient since other demands, to contribute for example, are lacking. In effect, the kind of subjection I argue is *also* valuable is a sense of obligation to others that cannot be derived solely from our preferences. Work is one particular way for this obligation to be made manifest.

There are two separable senses of subjection. The first, emblematic of the craftsman, is subjection to authority of the practice. Subjection is a quality of the craftsman and, by extension, the agitator *qua* craftsman. Indeed, White's description of reciprocal productive contribution involves subjection to a particularly authoritative demand: that of other cooperating members of a productive community. I have not denied the relevance of such a demand. I only made the case that the authority of such a demand exists in considerable tension with other demands, to which we submit in other ways. Agitation remains bound by the suffering of oneself and one's fellow sufferers, as well as the causes

---

<sup>463</sup> Stuart White, 'The Republican Case for Basic Income: A plea for difficulty', pp. 1 – 6, especially p 5.

<sup>464</sup> White, 'Liberal Equality, Exploitation and the Case for an Unconditional Basic Income', pp. 322 – 323.

<sup>465</sup> Gorz, *Reclaiming Work*, p 91.

for which one fights. At work, craftsmen refer their activity both to the standards of their respective crafts and, insofar as their work will be purchased in the market or employed for public service, to the demands of the public.

The second sense of subjection is that which is, currently at least, emblematic of the worker *qua* worker (and not *qua* craftsman). This is subjection to the demand to find work because there is an enforceable obligation that people do so: where people do not fulfil this demand and there is no reason to excuse it, income is denied. While the depth plunged by craftsmen may be assisted and complemented by the subjection that workers experience, this is an empirical point that may prove untrue. It is not a coincidence that craftsmanship and work have often gone hand in hand with one another: by being under the pressures of necessity to work for long periods of time a great deal of expertise *can* – when circumstances are favourable – be developed in the course of a career.

My concern is that without something to replace the sense of objective obligation that accompanies the current necessity of having to work, the other forms of subjection characteristic of craftsmanship will be harder to inculcate when the expansion of neutrality is considered as utterly costless. But craftsmanship *might* survive the absence of this second kind of subjection. We may be able to sustain craftsman-like depth without having to endure the traditionally long hours spent at work and without the sense of necessity and enforceable obligation that previously characterised it. Voluntary involvements, when embraced with sufficient intensity, could conceivably still produce the depth of identification characteristic of craftsmen.

Even with this possibility though, both aspects of subjection are worth retaining. For craftsmen, the first variety of subjection to the authority of practices opens up the deeper mattering of things. More generally though, a sense of the involuntariness of some of our engagements is important for sustaining a particular relation to our fellow citizens, one that is felt as *prior* to choice, as something to which we *must* attend, rather than as a merely voluntary engagement.

Robert Heilbroner makes an interesting point when he discusses the definition of work and its relation to an idea of submission.<sup>466</sup> Work has changed character since its beginnings. Technology, organisation and communications have all developed in such a way as to radically change what we mean by work as well as the quantity of it. However,

---

<sup>466</sup> Robert L. Heilbroner, 'The World of Work', *Behind the Veil of Economics* (London: W.W. Norton, 1988) pp. 80 – 103.

what remains as a constant through all the different manifestations of work is the fact that it 'refers to activities undertaken in a social condition of submission – a condition that results from the inability of individuals to avail themselves directly of the resources they need'.<sup>467</sup> This submission can refer to that which accompanies the production line: we cannot baulk against the rhythms and pace of the machines that dictate our movements and which render our activity little more than 'dismembered gestures'. In short, we submit to the demands of the machine in order to perform effectively.

However, there are also wider connotations associated with the idea of submission. In whatever way we work, for that work to make sense there is submission to what Heilbroner calls 'social direction': work, at least as we currently conceive it, is necessary because it is through work that the community sustains itself. As agitators make clear, such sustaining must also be disrupted for greater gains in the name of justice. But prior to such agitation is the community itself, sustained by the efforts of a great many people, producing goods and services for one another. As long as work exists as something to which we *have* to attend, we are not merely left to our own devices to do as we see fit. The obligation we feel to contribute in some way – whether through agitation, production or some other service – means we open up to interaction with others. The disciplining effect of this kind of subjection is not necessarily anathema to value in the way the production line might be.

I am not suggesting that work is the only way in which we can experience obligation as prior to our preferences. Familial relations are also examples of such experiences. But work has been a historically effective way of inculcating in people a wider sense of doing things because they *must* be done rather than merely *desired*. When enormous reductions in necessary labour and the end to work as we know it are coupled with the expanded liberal neutrality described above, this produces consequences that should worry us. If our coming together is assumed as a good that will naturally occur without *any* force of circumstance, it relies on an essentialist notion of inherent human sociability that is not empirically verifiable for advanced society. It is an assumption that treats mutual involvement as something that simply occurs when the detritus of other (perhaps less edifying) involvements, like work, are removed from our collective lives. It assumes that once we step away from the daily labours which thrust us into a common space with one other, involvement in some cleaner, face-to-face variety inevitably takes

---

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.* p 96.

centre stage.<sup>468</sup> Our mutual involvement will be the result of choice alone and the possibility to make that choice is all sociality needs to flourish.

But if necessity and involuntary associations have the value I argue for them, how are they to be reinstated alongside the unconditionality of basic income? So long as our needs are sufficiently low we no longer have to work together. We can make do with a low income and restrain our consumption so that any extra cash accrued through work is more or less superfluous. With the same constrained consumption, there is no prerogative to agitate (at least for reasons of self-interest) since basic income covers our basic costs. When work is no longer necessary because of the unconditionality of basic income or because our wants can be met without cooperative productive endeavour, isn't it precisely this notion of subjection to the demands of others which we lose? How can we inculcate a notion of the involuntary when we no longer enforce compliance through means-testing access to benefits and punishing individuals who refuse to perform in ways deemed appropriate?

Without the sense of necessity imposed by enforceable obligation it will ultimately *have* to be rooted in self-motivation. However, this sense of internal necessity can be a peculiarly strong form of conviction. Indeed, deeply committed agitators and craftsmen can both regard their actions as emblematic of what Frankfurt has described as 'volitional necessity'. Frankfurt describes Martin Luther's exclamation of 'Here I stand, I can do no other' – spoken as he posted his 95 theses on the church door in Wittenburg – as an example of someone moved by volitional necessity.<sup>469</sup> There was nothing enforcing Luther's sense of obligation, no condition that he was being made to meet. There was only the belief that this action was commanded of him by the strength of his convictions and it was by this that he felt both compelled and constrained.

Again, I do not wish to suggest that only craftsmen (and agitators *qua* craftsmen) can experience this aspect of necessity, the sense of being drawn in a way that is different from simply *desiring* something. Certainly, the experience of necessity is itself gained alongside the learning of a craft: we begin with preferences that develop into conviction. What today I merely have a taste for, is tomorrow something definitive of a great deal that is important to me. But the submission which is a natural part of the depth involved in craftsmanship does expose craftsmen to rules and demands that cannot be treated as

---

<sup>468</sup> Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature*, p 42 makes a similar point.

<sup>469</sup> Frankfurt, *The Importance of what we care about*, p 86.



merely volitional. In order to be a craftsman, certain activity *has* to be performed: that is, it is necessary.

This is altogether too brief an account of what necessity and obligation can amount to in a society that no longer enforces a work obligation. Detailing the complex sociology of a situation where work is either made voluntary or massively reduced will require extensive study and is perhaps more suited to radical manifestos and blue-prints. I do not wish to attempt such a study here.<sup>470</sup> However, by describing the plurality currently characteristic of our ethical and social experiences, we gain a sense of the difficulties we plausibly face if we eliminate the experience of commitments and associations as involuntary and thus as prior to our wants and desires.

As a result of levelled ethical experiences, duties associated with citizenship might be harder to inculcate. We will occupy a society that takes seriously a version of liberal neutrality that does not attach any substantive or primary value to contributory effort of *any* kind.<sup>471</sup> Expanded liberal neutrality make demandingness, necessity and duty harder habits and values to inculcate because these are notions that ride roughshod over neutrality, over that terrain of what we might *want* to do. The burdens assumed by citizens are regarded as volitional, voluntary and engaged with as possible components of the good life, to be measured against the other (equally valid so long as voluntarily held) conceptions of the good held by the playboy, the tourist or the couch potato. In this situation the community has ceased making demands of our resources and energies from the standpoint of duty or necessity. Our contributions, productive or otherwise, now occupy the same terrain as the holiday, consumption or some other source of challenge, pleasure or buzz and so must appeal in those terms: they are involvements in which we *might* spend time and energy but not necessarily so. As long as the unconditionality of UBI is cashed out in terms of greatly expanded liberal neutrality it must also take account of the norms and socialisation that would have to accompany it.<sup>472</sup>

---

<sup>470</sup> Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason; Reclaiming Work*; and Weeks, *The Problem of Work*, pp. 175 – 225 are examples of attempts to plot out such a possible society.

<sup>471</sup> See, for instance, White, 'The Republican Case for Basic Income: A plea for difficulty'; Richard Dagger, 'Neo-Republicanism and the Civic Economy', *Politics, Philosophy, Economics*, 151: 5 (2006); Richard Dagger, 'Property-Owning Democracy, Civic Education and the Reasonable Surfer', *The Good Society*, 21:1 (2012). The latter essay especially recognises the need for a substantially qualified version of liberal neutrality. Also see Robert Jubb, 'Basic Income, Republican Freedom and Effective Market Power', *Basic Income Studies*, 3:2 (2008).

<sup>472</sup> Barry, 'UBI and the Work Ethic', esp. p 67-68. Barry broadly agrees with UBI while rejecting Van Parijs' attempt to justify it from the basis of liberal neutrality. From the same volume Elizabeth

Perhaps it is resistance to being pushed onto this terrain of the voluntary that has made certain trade unions sceptical of UBI. When work is made an optional extra, one possible component of the good life amongst many others, workers' active involvement with struggles that emerge out of engagement with employers and capital more generally might considerably decline. In other words, agitation is made a less lively or vital a (possible) part of people's activity within the workplace: the solidarity required between members of the working class is released from much of its meaning. Rather than staying on to fight collectively workers choose instead to look elsewhere or drop out altogether: the exercise of exit preferred over voice. Work and the terms of employment no longer establish a terrain upon which employers can be engaged with in a sustained way, a space of contestation where significant gains can be made so long as workers organise and stand together. Instead, employers can defer demands for wage increases back to the state and urge union representatives to negotiate with public bodies in order to increase UBI, effectively treating it as a wage subsidy and state-sponsored shock absorber.<sup>473</sup>

### *Conclusion*

An unconditional basic income is a potentially effective means of protecting the two characters I have singled out of particular worth. With UBI, craftsmanship becomes a more readily available way of life. The discipline and long-term involvement necessary for the depth that is an important aspect of craftsmanship is made possible by the security of an income that is not tied to people's employment status. Agitators are also funded by UBI. Citizens can press their employers and governments for potentially transformative initiatives whilst enjoying a guaranteed income that sustains a minimum standard of living to see them through their campaigns. What is more, UBI allows craftsmen to behave like agitators when the need arises and the agitator to act like a craftsman, learning the ropes of successful agitation and what needs to be done in order to ensure success.

My support for basic income is not based primarily on the particular variety of freedom some have suggested it could offer individuals. I do not support the idea that basic

---

Anderson, 'Optional Freedoms', Van Parijs, ed., *What's Wrong with a Free Lunch*, pp. 70 – 74 argues much the same, saying that any transfer of resources must be done with an eye on protecting the 'particular' freedoms we owe to one another- i.e. freedoms which protect the capabilities individuals need in order to function within a democratic state.

<sup>473</sup> See Yannick Vanderborght, 'Why Trade Unions Oppose Basic Income', 1:1 (2006) esp. pp. 7 & 9-11 on the Belgian trade union situation where membership density is still relatively high and scepticism regarding UBI is especially strong. For advocacy of union advocacy of basic income see Guy Standing, 'Income Security: why unions should campaign for a basic income', *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 4:4 (2004) pp.606 – 619.

income is of value because it allows us to do what we want. Work is important as an ethical experience in our lives because it involves referring to something other than our preferences. Changes in the economy that reduce possibilities to gain full-time employment should alter what we mean by work but not eliminate that aspect of it which refers to needs and wants beyond our own. There should remain a sense of things that we do because they need to be done. This sense of having to do things because we experience them as such is a notion of submission that is complementary to – and should be preserved alongside – the submission demanded of craftsmen.

Involvements and relationships that are experienced as involuntary and necessary are an important part of our ethical lives. These experiences are unwittingly denigrated by both the position that wishes to expand liberal neutrality and the celebration of possibilities to massively reduce work. I am not necessarily suggesting that the skills and habits of craftsmen and agitators can only be learned in the workplace. Indeed, given my example of unemployed people in underprivileged areas of the United States possibly coming together to agitate, my approach *requires* the possibility for meaningful and craftsman-like associations beyond the workplace. But I do want to suggest that where work is no longer a large part of our socialisation, an aspect of our constitutions and identities, other mechanisms and spheres of association should be found to replace them in order for us to retain the habits and capacities necessary for preserving forms of life we have reason to value.

This is particularly salient for the agitator. She is someone who refuses the demand of reciprocity, denying its authority over her actions. However, she can still gain a sense of other people's demands by referring her agitation to the needs and worries of her comrades and fellow-sufferers and then positing proposals that either articulate their concerns or seek to meet their demands. In so referring her complaints she is responding both to the needs of others as well as to the demands of the craft of agitation. Historically, effective agitation has mostly been performed by groups and not by individuals. Indeed, to withdraw one's labour without appeal to others is unlikely to count as a political act, lacking the numbers to act as an example of voice. It would be a simple act of exit, ineffectively communicating sentiments of dissent and discontent.

This chapter has not only further articulated the perfectionism of my position, it has also argued *against* a policy that does not take this minimally perfectionist stance. Rather than advocate for UBI because it means individuals have more freedom to do

whatever it is they might want to do, I argue that any defence of basic income must attend to the types of socialisation it produces and the kinds of people it wishes to see populate society. Craftsmen and agitators are two particular characters we have reason to value and thus further reason to create environments suitable for developing the skills and capacities associated with them. However, they are *not* intended as an exhaustive list of valuable lives.

## Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to examine the concept of effort within political theory. While the thesis ends with a distributive proposal, my concern throughout has not been with traditionally distributive questions of who gets what and why. Indeed, the first two chapters signal my belief that these distributional concerns have only minimal relevance for matters relating to effort. Instead, I turn to various philosophies of action and value to inductively develop an account of what effort does for us, the ways in which we use it to create meaning and purpose in our lives. It is as a protection of the possibilities for particular kinds of meaning and effort that leads me to my final distributive recommendation.

This distributive proposal is for an Unconditional Basic Income (UBI). It is through UBI that the characters of craftsmen and agitators can be protected and encouraged. Craftsmen are exemplars of depth and complex involvement. UBI operates to mitigate the vulnerability that is a condition of craftsmanship, a condition currently exacerbated by contemporary economic demands. The security provided by a constant source of sufficiently high income separate from employment, creates the space necessary for the long-term planning that is a pre-requisite for depth both in and out of the workplace. UBI acts as a boon for the agitator by allowing strategic disengagement from exploitative practices and degrading activity. It can then precipitate possibilities for strategic re-engagement with the terms of those practices and relations. Moreover, skills associated with agitation are made more available to be learned as a craft for those who so wish it.

This proposal is the result of the inductive approach to effort I adopted in the second half of the thesis. I focused on the actual processes that occur when individuals make decisions regarding what they want to do with their finite time and energies. We use our effort to involve ourselves in practices and activity we have reason to value. This effort is disciplined by the standards and expectations which are definitive of what it means to produce a 'good' performance in that specific practice.

The common thread across all three accounts considered in the first half of the thesis – effort as burden; effort as responsibility; effort as reciprocity – is their fashioning of a role for effort without attending to the actual complex subjective experiences of those whose effort is being expended. Instead, effort performs the role of a proxy. It is either that which creates costs and merits deserts; that for which we are in control and thus as the

sole justifier of inequality; or else it is that by which we express respect for our fellow citizens.

Using effort as a proxy in this way means important contemporary economic and political tendencies have been overlooked. Although this has the potential to give the accounts I considered a quality of universal applicability because they can purport to be relevant as a template across all places and times, it also blinds them to possible consequences regarding changes to how we think of and use effort in our current situations. The option of depth that is the accompaniment to the concept of burden, for instance, is not recognised as being particularly vulnerable to deterioration in the current epoch.

Burden is a complex notion that is insufficiently understood when it is collapsed into definitions of disutility and used as a way of determining deserts. The 'non-renewable' time and energy we expend in pursuit of things we have reason to value make it possible for our lives to go well but also for them to fail. By caring about something we suffer when the objects of our care suffer or no longer exist. The burdens we assume are thus tied up both with the value and meaning life is able to have for us, as well as with the vulnerability to failure to which such care exposes us. The way in which I develop George Sher's notion of burden allows this vulnerability to be better understood, particularly in light of the current climate of increased flexibility and insecurity in the labour market and society more generally.

It is through this appreciation of vulnerability and depth that the character of the craftsman emerges as both a fragile and valuable way of life. Vulnerability is the complement of depth: involving ourselves deeply with something is to increase the amount of time and energy we spend approximating and learning the standards of excellence associated with a specific practice. When we do this we open ourselves up to possibly intense loss when our involvement with that practice is ruptured for reasons beyond our control: where before we recognised value and purpose such disruption causes only a sense of loss and perhaps regret. To have avoided depth is to avoid vulnerability and thus exposure to such costs. UBI is a way of supporting craftsmanship by mitigating this vulnerability and therefore facilitating depth.

The proxy of control is also an inappropriate concept with which to conflate effort. People have vastly different experiences of their own effort depending on the types of injustice they face and the challenges that these represent. The complexity of social

relations and the inequalities and unjust structures which influence how we live our lives do not leave some pristine, 'sterile' residual of effort beyond the vagaries of circumstance for which we can take ultimate responsibility. This involves an abstraction from the effects of injustice which distorts rather than clarifies its effects. In the fourth and fifth chapters I developed an account of a certain kind of injustice being wrought by tendencies in contemporary political economy. These injustices are the result of the ways in which current social and economic structures make it increasingly difficult for people to choose and enjoy particularly deep 'conceptions of the good' .

From my discussion of reciprocity in the third chapter the character of the agitator emerged as someone who adopts a defiant stance against injustice. Agitators agitate instead of produce: agitation – and political activism more generally – is thus an alternative response to alternative obligations that arise in situations of injustice. By locating the 'civic minimums' as ideals to be approximated we are not necessarily given a sense of other urgent obligations which emerge when these ideals are a long way from being approximated, i.e. in the non-ideal and actual worlds. Stuart White suggests at various points that any distance from those ideal standards will result in a dialled down demand to contribute productively. Or, in the case of extreme injustices, like slavery, there is no obligation whatsoever. But there is something missing in this account about the *qualitative* changes that take place in our obligations depending on the justice of those background conditions. Changes can be wrought in our sense of what we owe others between situations where we do not regard the backgrounds shaping our interactions as sufficiently just but are not as yet confronting severe and life-threatening injustices.

By finding the means to preserve agitation as an important part of political life, at least so long as we continue to experience significant injustice, my approach offers a bridge between the non-ideal and ideal worlds. We can continue to theorise about justice, what it looks like and what it demands. Through instituting UBI we invent a means by which we can more readily bring such questions out of the academic seminar and discussion group and into the daily life of politics. It is a way, in other words, of opening up a dialogue between the ideals we hope to approximate and the battles by which we can achieve them.

This open dialogue is especially important in light of changes to our contemporary political and economic realities. New challenges have emerged as a consequence of these changes. The old welfare state and its presumption of 50 year long-term and stable careers is no longer either an attractive or feasible option for most people. The account of these

realities that I provide draws on a particular section of the sociological literature as a way of highlighting the increased vulnerability and risk to which individuals are exposed. Because people have to first and foremost navigate the insecurity characteristic of this epoch, they cannot as readily embrace the character-types I describe and defend.

UBI is thus conceived as a preservative measure. I have not invented the characters of agitator and craftsmen. History and contemporary society provide us with examples of these kinds of people and the activities with which they engage. I have argued these are valuable ways of living – without claiming they possess a monopoly on valuable lives – and should be preserved in the names of plurality and the demands of justice. ‘Shallower’ practice-participation, involvement with practices which do not expose people to the vulnerability accompanying depth, should not be the only way in which our lives can go well. The deeper engagement characteristic of craftsmen should also be a viable option for people. Agitation is necessary for responding to the demands of justice. Rather than assume agitation must necessarily come with significant costs and sacrifice, we must find the means to preserve and democratise it as an activity, open it up to a wide variety of people from all walks of life. We owe a lot to agitators and we could do with some more of them.

\*

In terms of the shortcomings of the thesis, the descriptions of the economy and contemporary society are admittedly unsystematic and even somewhat anecdotal. I have been unable, for reasons of space, to properly analyse and interrogate the various accounts of the modern economy and its tendencies vis-à-vis work and workers. However, this does not mean I have painted the modern economic and social environment as destructive of all values. I can perfectly accommodate the argument that the contemporary economy is an exciting, vibrant place to work for certain kinds of people. I have been at pains to avoid an image of the apocalypse, even though certain trends emerging since the recent financial crisis might seem to justify such a picture. My approach limits itself to the description of particular forms of life, valuable because of the deeper patterns of meaning and complexity that it engenders, which is becoming harder to sustain without undue risk or vulnerability on the part of the person.

Moreover, I limit myself to saying that a *specific* valuable form of life is being negatively affected by the processes undergirding what Zygmunt Bauman has called ‘liquid



modernity'. My additional claim is that this is a valuable part of the plurality we should be able to enjoy. I oblige nobody to adopt the imperatives of the craftsman and the depth, care and long-termism that it implies. I am therefore making no claims about the necessary conditions of the good life. Rather, what I argue is that any society that has only one way of relating to the projects, commitments and causes that make up a person's life, suffers from a certain flattening homogeneity that we should resist.

It is against this homogeneity that I take an admittedly perfectionist stance. For those who reject that stance there has been, I admit, no knock-down argument in the preceding pages that could convince them otherwise. However, I have raised the stakes somewhat: those who reject the need for this dimension of plurality have to defend the homogeneity that I am describing as a consequence of an at least plausible description of our political economy. If certain distributions or institutional designs *do* produce this kind of undifferentiated flatness, however unintentionally, this move now has to be defended with consideration of the effects it has on possibilities for depth. The argument of the above thesis is therefore better stated as a conditional: if the description I supply is an accurate portrayal of either current or a coming state of affairs then the concerns I raise are important.

Further work would thus have to attend to both these issues by providing, first, a more systematic analysis of the workings of the contemporary economy. This would also include a more detailed account of the relationship between the depth I identify as valuable and my final proposal of UBI, especially in light of the concerns I raise regarding the possibly different framings of such a policy. Second, further work could be done to provide a more detailed defence of the implications of the perfectionism of my position. Moreover, it is necessary to consider it alongside other accounts of perfectionism and distinguish their various implications and consequences.

Finally, it is necessary to supplement the final chapter by giving a more systematic account of the socialisation necessary for protecting the characters of craftsmen and agitators where the stipulation and enforcement of conditions are unavailable. This would have to take into account the different ways in which certain behaviours can be promoted without the threat of legal or financial sanction or the force of necessity. Of course, censure currently attaches to idleness, both of the very wealthy and the poorer, and so this form of socialising would be in some ways a preservation of such an ethic, expanded to include the contributions made by agitators. Furthermore, the mastering of the complexity and skills

associated with the craftsman remains a draw for people even in the contemporary context. Again then, this is also an imperative of preservation and emphasis of tendencies already implicit in our social worlds, rather than an invention of such imperatives.

## Bibliography

- Ackerman, Bruce & Anne Alstott. *The Stakeholder Society* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2000).
- Alstott, Anne. 'Good for 'Women'', in Philippe Van Parijs. ed. *What's Wrong with a Free Lunch* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001) pp. 75 – 79.
- Anderson, Elizabeth. 'What is the Point of Equality?', *Ethics*, 109:2 (1999) pp. 287-337.
- Anderson, Elizabeth. 'Optional Freedoms', Van Parijs, ed. *What's Wrong with a Free Lunch*, pp. 70 – 74.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958]).
- Arneson, Richard. 'Meaningful Work and Market Socialism', *Ethics*, 97:3 (1987) pp. 517 – 545.
- Arneson, Richard. 'Equality and Equality Opportunity of Welfare', *Philosophical Studies*, 56:1 (1989) pp. 77 - 93.
- Arneson, Richard. 'Is Socialism Dead? A Comment on Market Socialism and Basic Income Capitalism', *Ethics*, 102: 3 (1992) pp. 485 – 511.
- Arneson, Richard. 'Human Flourishing versus Desire Satisfaction', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 16:4 (1999) pp. 113- 142.
- Arneson, Richard. 'Perfectionism and Politics', *Ethics*, 111:1 (2000) pp. 37 – 63.
- Arneson, Richard. "Rawls, Responsibility, and Distributive Justice," in *Justice, Political Liberalism, and Utilitarianism: Themes from Harsanyi*, ed. Maurice Salles and John A.Weymark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) pp. 80 – 107.
- Arneson, Richard. 'Meaningful Work and Market Socialism Revisited', *Analyse und Kritik* 31:1 (2009) pp. 139 – 151.
- Arneson, Richard & Ian Shapiro, 'Democratic Autonomy and Religious Freedom: A Critique of *Wisconsin V. Yoder*', in Ian Shapiro & Russell Hardin, eds. *Political Order* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) pp. 265 – 411.
- Aron, Leon. 'Darkness on the Edge of Monotown', *The New York Times* (October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

Atkinson, A.B. 'The Case for a Participation Income', *The Political Quarterly*, 67:1 (1996) pp. 67–70.

Audard, Catherine. 'The Ideal of Self-development: Personal or Political?', in Axel Gosseries & Yannick Vanderborght, eds. *Arguing About Justice* (Louvain: Louvain University Press, 2011) pp. 71-78.

Baldwin, James. *No Name in the Street* (New York: The Dial Press, 1972).

Barry, Brian. 'UBI and the Work Ethic', in Philippe Van Parijs. ed. *What's Wrong with a Free Lunch* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001) pp. 60 – 69.

Barry, Brian. *Why Social Justice Matters* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

Barry, Nicholas. 'Defending Luck Egalitarianism', *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 23:1 (2006) pp. 89 – 107.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (Open University Press: Milton Keynes, 1998).

Bauman, Zygmunt. *In Search of Politics* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1999).

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Modernity* (London: Polity Press, 2000).

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Consuming Life* (London: Polity Press, 2007).

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

Beck, Ulrich. *The Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1992)

Becker, Lawrence. 'The Obligation to Work', *Ethics*, 91:1 (1980) pp 35 – 49.

Becker, Lawrence. *Reciprocity* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).

Bellah, Robert et al. *Habits of the Heart* (London: California University Press, 1985).

Benhabib, Seyla. 'Feminist Theory and Hannah Arendt's concept of public space', *History of the Human Sciences*, 97:6 (1993) pp. 97 – 115.

Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air* (London: Penguin, 1988).

Berman, Marshall 'Emerging from the Ruins', *Dissent* (Winter, 2014).

- Berofsky, Bernard. 'Identification, the Self and Autonomy', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 20:2 (2003) pp. 199-220
- Björkland, Anders, Markus Jäntti & John Roemer. 'Equality of Opportunity and the Distribution of long-run Income in Sweden', *Social Choice and Welfare*, 39 (2012) pp. 675 – 696.
- Brennan, David. 'Defending the Indefensible? Culture's Role in the Productive/Unproductive Dichotomy', *Feminist Economics*, 12:3 (2006) pp. 403 – 425.
- Carlin, George. *When Will Jesus Bring the Pork Chops* (New York: Hyperion, 2005).
- Carter, Ian. 'Respect and the basis of equality', *Ethics*, 121:3 (2011) pp. 538 – 571.
- Brody, David. *In Labor's Cause: Main Themes on the History of the American Worker* (Oxford: OUP, 1993).
- Brody, David. 'The Breakdown of Labour's Social Contract', in Nicolaus Mills, (ed.) *Legacy of Dissent* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1994) pp. 371 – 386.
- Callinicos, Alex. *Equality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).
- Casassas, David. 'Basic Income and the Republican Ideal: Rethinking Material Independence in Contemporary Societies', *Basic Income Studies*, 2: 2 (2007) pp. 1 – 7.
- Cohen, G.A. *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).
- Cohen, G.A. 'On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice' *Ethics*, 99:4 (1989) pp. 906 – 944.
- Cohen, G.A. *History, Labour & Freedom: Themes from Marx* (Oxford: OUP, 1988).
- Cohen, G.A. *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (London: Harvard University Press, 2008)
- Cohen, G.A. *On The Currency of Egalitarian Justice and other essays in political philosophy* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011).
- Cohen, Mitchell. 'The Value of Dissent', *Dissent* (Winter, 2014).
- Dagger, Richard. 'Neo-Republicanism and the Civic Economy', *Politics, Philosophy, Economics*, 151: 5 (2006) pp. 151 – 173.
- Dagger, Richard. 'Property-Owning Democracy, Civic Education and the Reasonable Surfer', *The Good Society*, 21:1 (2012) pp. 36 – 46.

Department for Business Innovation and Skills, *Trade Union Membership 2011: National Statistics Publication* (April 2012).

Dewey, John. *The Public and its Problems* (Athens, NY.: Swallow Press, 1954).

Dewey, John. *The Moral Writings of John Dewey* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1994).

Dewey, John. *How we Think* (Kansas: Digireads, 2004).

Dowding, Keith et al. eds. *The Ethics of Stakeholding* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).

Dreyfus, Hubert. *Being in the World: Commentary on Heidegger's "Being and Time", Division 1* (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1991) .

Dworkin, Ronald. *Sovereign Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Dworkin, Ronald. *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011).

Eistenstein, Charles. *Sacred Economics* (Berkley, California: Evolver Editions, 2011).

Elster, Jon. 'Self-Realisation in Work and Politics', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 3:2 (1986) pp. 97 – 126.

Elster, Jon. 'Comment on van der Veen and Van Parijs', *Theory and Society* 15 (1987) pp 709 – 721.

Feinberg, Joel. 'The Interest of Liberty on the Scales' in Alvin I. Goldman, & Jaegwon Kim, eds. *Value and Morals* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1978) pp. 21 – 35.

Fitzpatrick, Tony. *Freedom and Security: An Introduction to the Basic Income Debate* (Oxford: Palgrave, 1999).

Fitzpatrick, Tony. 'Basic Income, Post-Productivism and Liberalism', *Basic Income Studies*, 4: 2 (2009) pp. 1 – 11.

Fleurbaey, Marc. 'Egalitarian Opportunities', *Law and Philosophy*, 20:5 (2001) pp. 499 – 530.

Folbre, Nancy. *Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the Structures of Constraint* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Frankfurt, Harry. 'Freedom of Will and the Concept of a Person', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 68:1 (1971) pp. 5 – 20.

- Frankfurt, Harry. *The Importance of what we care about* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- Frankfurt, Harry. *Necessity, Volition & Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999);
- Frankfurt, Harry. *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton: PUP, 2006);
- Frankfurt, Harry. *Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting it Right* (Tanner lectures, 2004)
- Frankfurt, Harry. *On Bullshit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
- Freeman, Samuel. *Rawls* (London: Routledge, 2007).
- Friedman, Marilyn. 'Autonomy, Social Disruption and Women', in Catriona Mackenzie & Natalie Stoljar, eds. *Relational Autonomy* (NYC: New York University Press, 2000) pp. 35 – 51.
- Galston, William. 'Two Concepts of Liberalism', *Ethics*, 105:3 (1995) pp. 516 – 534.
- Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self Identity* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991).
- Gladwell, Malcolm. *Outliers* (London: Penguin, 2009).
- Glasman, Maurice. 'Labour as a Radical Tradition', *Soundings*, 46 (2010) pp. 31- 41
- Goodin, Robert. *Motivating Political Morality* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992).
- Goodin, Robert. 'Something for Nothing', in Philippe Van Parijs, ed. *What's Wrong with a Free Lunch* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001) pp. 90 – 97.
- Gorz, Andre. *Farewell to the Working Class*, (London: Pluto Press, 1980).
- Gorz, Andre. *Paths to Paradise: On the Liberation from Work* (London: Pluto Press, 1986).
- Gorz, Andre. *Critique of Economic Reason* (London: Verso, 1989).
- Gorz, Andre *Reclaiming Work* (London: Pluto Press, 1999).
- Graeber, David. 'On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs', *Strike! Magazine* (August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013).
- Graeber, David. *The Democracy Project* (London: Penguin, 2014).
- Harvey, David. *The Enigma of Capital* (London: Profile Books, 2010).
- Heilbroner, Robert L. *Behind the Veil of Economics* (London: W.W. Norton, 1988).

Hoffman, Paul. *The Man Who Only Loved Numbers* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998).

Hochschild, Arlie R. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (London: University of California Press, 2003).

Hurka, Thomas. 'Why Value Autonomy?', *Social Theory and Practice*, 13:3 (1987) pp. 361 – 382.

Hurka, Thomas. *Perfectionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Hurley, S.L. *Justice, Luck and Knowledge* (Oxford: Harvard University Press, 2003).

James, Oliver. *They f\*\*\* you up: How to survive family life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

Jones, Owen. *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (London: Verso Books, 2012).

Jubb, Robert. 'Basic Income, Republican Freedom and Effective Market Power', *Basic Income Studies*, 3:2 (2008) pp. 1 – 19.

Keat, Russell. 'Anti-Perfectionism, Market Economies and the Right to Meaningful Work', *Analyse und Kritik*, 31:1 (2009) pp. 121 – 138.

Keat, Russell. 'Ethics, Market and MacIntyre', in Kelvin Knight and Paul Blackledge, eds. *Revolutionary Aristotelianism: Ethics, Resistance and Utopia* (Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius, 2008) pp. 243-257.

Knight, Carl. *Luck Egalitarianism: Equality, Responsibility and Justice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

Koestler, Arthur. *Sleepwalkers* (London: Penguin, 1964).

Kolodny, Niko. 'Love as Valuing a Relationship', *The Philosophical Review*, 2:112 (2003) pp. 135-189.

Koschmann, Timothy Kari Kuutti, & Larry Hickman. 'The Concept of Breakdown in Heidegger, Leont'ev, and Dewey and Its Implications for Education', *Mind, Culture & Activity*, 5:1 (1998) pp. 25 – 41.

Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Kundera, Milan. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984).



Kymlicka, Will. 'Left Liberalism Revisited', in Christine Sypnowich, ed. *Egalitarian Conscience: Essays in Honour of G.A. Cohen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) pp. 9 – 35.

Kynge, James. *China Shakes the World* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006).

Liechtenstein, Nelson. 'Two Roads Forward for Labor: The AFL-CIO's New Agenda', *Dissent* (Jan, 2014).

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *A Short History of Ethics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967).

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth Press, 1981).

Marx, Karl. *Capital* (A New Abridgement) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Mason, Paul. *Live Working or Die Fighting* (London: Harvill Secker, 2007).

McCabe, Daniel. 'Joseph Raz and the Contextual Argument for Liberal Perfectionism', *Ethics*, 111:3 (2001) pp. 493 – 522.

McLellan, David. *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1973)

Mead, Lawrence. *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Free Press, 2006)

Miller, David. *Social Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

Miller, David. *Market, States and Community* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

Miller, David & Michael Walzer, eds., *Pluralism, Justice and Equality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Miller, David. *Principles of Social Justice* (London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

Mills, Charles. 'Ideal Theory as Ideology', *Hypatia*, 20:3 (2005) pp. 165-184.

Mills, Claudia. 'Choice and Circumstances', *Ethics*, 109:9 (1998) pp. 154 – 165.

Morris, William. *News from Nowhere and Selected Writings and Designs* (London: Penguin, 1962).

Muirhead, Russell. *Just Work* (London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Mulhall, Stephen. *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996).

Nagel, Thomas. 'Moral Luck', in Gary Watson, ed. *Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) pp. 174 – 186.

Nielsen, Kai. *Equality and Liberty* (New Jersey: Rowan & Allanheld, 1985).

Nesbit, Huw. 'Are we facing an inter-generational housing crisis?', *Guardian* (August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012).

Oakeshott, Michael. *Rationalism in Politics and other essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991).

Offe, Claus. 'Basic Income and the Labour Contract', *Basic Income Studies*, 3:1 (2008) pp. 1 – 30.

Offer, Avner. *The Challenge of Affluence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Ollman, Bertell. *Social and Sexual Revolution* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1978).

Olsaretti, Serena. *Liberty, Desert and the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Paine, Thomas. 'Agrarian Justice', in Mark Philp, ed. *Rights of Man, Common Sense, and Other Political Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995 [1795]).

Parfit, Derek. *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

Pateman, Carole. *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970)

Pateman, Carole. 'Freedom and Democratization: Why Basic Income is to be Preferred to Basic Capital', in Keith Dowding, et al. eds. *Ethics of Stakeholding* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003) pp. 130 – 148.

Pateman, Carole. 'Democratising Citizenship: Some Advantages of a Basic Income', *Politics and Society*, 32: 1 (2004) pp. 89 – 105.

Pateman, Carole. 'Why Republicanism?', *Basic Income Studies*, 2:2 (2007) pp. 1 – 6.

Paxton, Will & Stuart White, 'Universal capital grants: The issue of responsible use', in Will Paxton, & Stuart White, with Dominic Maxwell, eds. *The Citizen's Stake: Exploring the future of universal assets policies* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2006) pp. 121- 134.

Perlin, Ross. *Intern Nation* (London: Verso, 2011).

Pettit, Phillip. 'Freedom as Anti-power', *Ethics*, 106:3 (1996) pp. 576 – 604.

Pettit, Phillip. 'A Republican Right to Basic Income', *Basic Income Studies*, 2:2 (2007) pp. 1 – 8.

Phillips, Anne. "'Really" Equal: Opportunities and Autonomy', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 14:1 (2006) pp. 18 – 32.

Phillips, Anne. 'Egalitarians and the market: dangerous ideals', *Social Theory and Practice*, 34:3 (2008) pp. 439 – 462.

Walter Powell, 'The Capitalist Firm in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Emerging Patterns in Western Enterprise', in Paul DiMaggio, ed. *The Twenty-First Century Firm* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press) pp. 33 – 68.

Radin, Margaret. 'Market Inalienability', *Harvard Law Review*, 100: 8 (1987) pp. 1849-1937.

Raventos, Daniel & Antoni Domenech. 'Property and Republican Freedom: An Institutional Approach to Basic Income', *Basic Income Studies*, 2:2 (2007) pp. 1 – 8.

Raventos, Daniel. *Basic Income: The Material Conditions of Freedom* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Belknap Press, 1999 [1971]).

Rawls, John. *Political Liberalism* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1993)

Rawls, John. *Justice as Fairness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Belknap Press, 2001).

Raz, Joseph. *Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Raz, Joseph. *Value, Respect and Attachment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Raz, Joseph. *Engaging Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Raz, Joseph. 'The Role of Well-Being', *Philosophical Perspectives*, 18: 1 (2004) pp. 269 – 294.

Raz, Joseph. *From Normativity to Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Risse, Mathias. 'What equality of Opportunity could not be', *Ethics*, 112:4 (2002) pp. 720 – 747.

- Robeyns, Ingrid. 'Ideal Theory in Theory and Practice', *Social Theory and Practice*, 34:3 (2008) pp. 319 – 340.
- Roemer, John. 'Equality and Responsibility', *Boston Review*, 20 (April/May, 1995).
- Roemer, John. *Theories of Distributive Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).
- Roemer, John. *Egalitarian Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- Roemer, John. *Equality of Opportunity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- Roemer, John. 'Three Egalitarian Rules and American Law', *Law and Philosophy*, 20:4, (2001) pp. 433 – 460.
- Roemer, John. 'Equality of Opportunity: A progress report', *Social Choice and Welfare*, 19:2 (2002) pp. 455 – 472.
- Roemer, John. 'Defending equality of opportunity', *The Monist*, 86 (2003) pp. 261 – 282.
- Roessler, Beate. 'Meaningful Work: Arguments from Autonomy', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 20:1 (2012) pp. 71 – 93.
- Roosevelt, Frank & David Belkin. *Why Market Socialism? Voices from Dissent* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994).
- Rorty, Richard. *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982)
- Ross, Andrew. 'The new Geography of Work: Power to the Precarious?', *Theory Culture and Society*, 25:7-8, (2008) pp. 31 – 49.
- Sabl, Andrew. 'Looking Forward to Justice: Rawlsian Civil Disobedience and its Non-Rawlsian Lessons', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 9:3 (2001) pp. 307 – 330.
- Sadurski, Wojciech. *Giving Desert its Due* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985).
- Sandel, Michael. *Democracy's Discontents* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Harvard University Press, 1996).
- Sandel, Michael. *The Case Against Perfection* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Harvard University Press, 2007).

Sangiovanni, Andrea. 'Justice and the Priority of Politics to Morality', *The Journal of Political Philosophy* (16:2, 2008) pp. 1 – 28.

Sayers, Sean. *Marxism and Human Nature* (London: Routledge, 1998).

Sayers, Sean. *Marx and Alienation: Essays on Hegelian Themes* (Basingstoke: Palgrave & Macmillan, 2011)

Scanlon, T.M. 'Equality of Resources and Equality of Welfare: A Forced Marriage?', *Ethics*, 97:1 (1986) pp. 111 – 118.

Scanlon, T.M. 'The Status of Well-Being', *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (1996).

Scanlon, T.M. *What we Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Scheffler, Samuel. 'Responsibility, Reactive Attitudes and Liberalism in Philosophy and Politics', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 21:4 (1992) pp. 299 – 323.

Scheffler, Samuel. 'What is Egalitarianism?' *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 31: 1 (2003) pp. 5 – 39.

Scheffler, Samuel. 'Choice, Circumstance and the Value of Equality' *Politics, Philosophy and Economics*, 4:1 (2005) pp. 5 – 28.

Schwartz, Adina. 'Meaningful Work', *Ethics*, 92: 4 (1982) pp. 634 – 646.

Sen, Amartya. *Standard of Living* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Sen, Amartya. 'Capability and Well-Being', in Martha Nussbaum & Amartya Sen. eds. *The Quality of Life* (Oxford: OUP, 1993) pp. 30 – 53.

Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Sen, Amartya. *The Idea of Justice* (London: Penguin, 2009).

Sennett, Richard. *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Random House, 1974).

Sennett, Richard. 'Why good workers might be bad people', *New Statesman*, 9<sup>th</sup> October (1998) pp. 25 – 27.

Sennett, Richard. *The Corrosion of Character* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998)

- Sennett, Richard. 'Growth and Failure: The new political economy and its culture', in Mike Featherstone & Scott Lash ed., *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World* (London: Sage Publications, 2000) pp. 14 – 26.
- Sennett, Richard. *The Culture of New Capitalism* (London: YUP, 2006).
- Sennett, Richard. *The Craftsman* (London: Penguin, 2009).
- Sennett, Richard. *Together* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).
- Shelby, Tommie. 'Justice, Deviance and the Dark Ghetto', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 35:2 (2007) pp. 126 – 160.
- Shelby, Tommie. *We Who Are Dark* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Belknap University Press, 2007).
- Shelter et al. *The Housing Report 2* (May 2012).
- Sher, George. 'Effort, Ability and Personal Desert', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 8:4 (1979) pp. 361 – 376.
- Sher, George. *Desert* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987).
- Simmons, A.J. *Moral Principles and Political Obligation* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1979).
- Smith, Adam. *The Wealth of Nations* (New York: Bantam Dell, [1776] 2003).
- Standing, Guy. 'Income Security: why unions should campaign for a basic income', *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 4:4 (2004) pp.606 – 619.
- Standing, Guy. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011).
- Strawson, Peter. 'Freedom and Resentment', in Gary Watson, ed. *Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) pp. 59 – 80.
- Tanizaki, Junichiro. *In Praise of Shadows* (London: Lette's Book, 1997).
- Tanizaki, Junichiro. *Some Prefer Nettles* (London: Vintage Classic, 2001).
- Taylor, Charles. 'Responsibility for Self', in Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, ed. *The Identities of Persons* (London: University of California Press, 1984) pp. 281 – 299.

- Taylor, Charles. *Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985).
- Taylor, Charles. *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).
- Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- Unger, Roberto. *Self-Awakened: Pragmatism Unbound* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).
- Vanderborght, Yannick. 'Why Trade Unions Oppose Basic Income', 1:1 (2006) pp. 1 – 20.
- Van Donselaar, Gijs. *The Right to Exploit* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2008).
- Van der Veen, Robert & Van Parijs, Philippe. 'A Capitalist Road to Communism', *Theory and Society*, 15:5 (1986) pp. 635 – 655.
- Van Parijs, Philippe. 'Why Surfers Should be Fed: The Liberal Case for an Unconditional Basic Income', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 20:2 (1991) pp. 101 – 131.
- Van Parijs, Philippe. ed. *Arguing for Basic Income* (London: Verso, 1992).
- Van Parijs, Philippe. *Real Freedom for All* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- Van Parijs, Philippe. 'Reciprocity and the Justification of an Unconditional Basic Income. Reply to Stuart White', *Political Studies*, 45: 2 (1997) pp. 327 – 330.
- Van Parijs, Philippe. 'Political Ecology: From Autonomous Sphere to Basic Income', *Basic Income Studies*, 4:2 (2009) pp. 1 - 9.
- Walzer, Michael. 'The Obligations of Oppressed Minorities', *Obligations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).
- Walzer, Michael. *Radical Principles* (NY: Basic Books, 1980).
- Walzer, Michael. *Spheres of Justice* (USA: Basic Books, 1983).
- Walzer, Michael. 'The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism', *Political Theory*, 18:1 (1990) pp. 6 – 23.
- Walzer, Michael. *On Toleration* (London: Yale University Press, 1997).
- Walzer, Michael. *Politics and Passion* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2005).

- Weeks, Kathi. *The Problem with Work* (London: Duke University Press, 2011).
- White, Stuart. 'What do Egalitarians Want?' in Jane Franklin, ed. *Equality* (London: London Institute for Policy Research, 1997) pp. 59 – 82.
- White, Stuart. 'Liberal Equality, Exploitation and the Case for an Unconditional Basic Income', *Political Studies*, 45 (1997) pp.312 – 236.
- White, Stuart. 'Should Talent be Taxed?', in Catriona McKinnon & Iain Hampsher-Monk, eds. *The Demands of Citizenship* (London: Continuum, 2000) pp. 70 – 90.
- White, Stuart. 'Fair Reciprocity and Basic Income', in Andrew Reeve, & Andrew Williams. eds. *Real Libertarianism Assessed* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) pp. 136 – 160.
- White, Stuart. 'Freedom, Reciprocity and the Citizen's Stake' in Keith Dowding, et al. *The Ethics of Stakeholding*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003) pp. 79 – 93.
- White, Stuart. *The Civic Minimum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- White, Stuart. 'Markets, Time and Citizenship.' *Renewal*, 12:3 (2004) pp. 50 – 63.
- White, Stuart. 'A Progressive Politics of Responsibility: What would it look like?', *Public Policy Research*, 12:1 (2005) pp. 7 – 14.
- White, Stuart. 'Reconsidering the Exploitation Objection to Basic Income', *Basic Income Studies*, 1:2 (2006) pp. 1 – 6.
- White, Stuart. O'Neill, Martin & Williamson, Thad. eds. *Property Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) pp. 129 – 146.
- Williams, Bernard. *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
- Williams, William Julius. *When Work Disappears* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).
- Wittell, Andreas. 'Counter-commodification: the economy of contribution in the digital commons', *Culture and Organisation*, 19:4 (2013) pp. 314 – 331.
- Wolf, Susan. *The Meaning of Life and Why it Matters* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010).
- Wolff, Jonathan. 'Fairness, Respect, and the Egalitarian Ethos', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 27:2, (1998) pp. 97 – 122.



Wolff, Jonathan. & De-Shalit, Avner. *Disadvantage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

World Bank, *Reshaping Economic Geography: World Development Report* (2009).

Wright, Richard. *Black Boy* (London: Vintage Books, 2000 (1937)).

Young, Iris Marion. *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

Young, Iris Marion. *Responsibility for Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Young, Robert. *Personal Autonomy* (London: St Martin's Press, 1986).

Ypi, Lea. *Global Justice and Avant-Garde Political Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Zaitchik, Alan. 'On Deserving to Deserve', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 6:4 (1977) pp. 370-388.