Meaningful Work, Worthwhile Life, and Self-Respect: Reexamination of Rawlsian Perspective on Basic Income in Property-Owning Democracy

Satoshi Fukuma

Introduction

As is well known, John Rawls opposes the idea and policy of basic income (BI). However, this paper posits that his view of self-respect and activity could accommodate its implementation. Rawls lists the social basis of self-respect in social primary goods as the most important good, but does not assume that it is derived from wage labor alone. According to his Aristotelian Principle and social union, one’s self-respect can come from activities other than market labor. Additionally, the right to work itself is not included in his two principles of justice, nor is the duty of work discussed in his books. It is my opinion that his theory of justice aims to criticize the work-centered (wage-labor) society and to overcome it. One person finds value in labor; another does not. The bases of self-respect for people should not be sought only in labor. Rawls dismisses the perfectionist principle as a principle of justice, because it does not fit with the plurality of conceptions of the good in our liberal society. In A Theory of Justice (1971/1999) (hereafter “OTJ” and “TJ” respectively), he positsthat any activities accorded by the Aristotelian Principle are socially approved to be useful and reciprocal with the activities of others, and that this should be the social basis of self-respect for people. To enable everyone to engage in such activities, we need a social minimum in the form of a BI. As a matter of course, it is desirable that labor ought to be one such activity. In The Law of Peoples (1999) (hereafter “LP”) and Political Liberalism (2005) (hereafter “PL”), Rawls insists that the opportunity for meaningful work is fundamental to citizens’ self-respect. Additionally, Rawls holds that in a property-owning democracy (POD), which is his model of the fully just society, a society’s basic institutions themselves “make possible a worthwhile life for all its citizens” (LP 107). For our work to be meaningful and our life worthwhile, I will argue that we should institutionalize BI because it can improve workers’ bargaining power and their attitude toward work, in addition to enhancing their leisure time. In this paper, by considering the normative relationship between meaningful work, worthwhile life, and self-respect from a Rawlsian perspective, I inquire into the potential of BI in his well-ordered society.

1. Why does Rawls oppose BI?
John Rawls, the best-known egalitarian liberal of the 20th century, may appear to oppose the idea
and policy of BI. According to Van Parijs (1995; 2004), in a just society, it is required to implement a BI to fairly distribute the real freedom — the freedom to do whatever one might want to do — among all citizens in order to pursue the realization of one’s conception of the good life, whatever that may be. By providing the material resources that one needs to pursue one’s aims, BI would grant real value to the right to do whatever one might want to do, thus promoting real freedom for all. However, for three reasons, Rawls does not consider BI to be a desirable policy. First, he posits that liberal constitutional regimes must guarantee the fair value of the equal political liberties that enable citizens to participate in public life (JF sec. 45; PL lec.8). However, he denies a wide guarantee of the fair value for all basic liberties; in his terminology, real freedom denotes the fair value of all basic civic and political liberties. His justification is that if BI “means that a certain level of income and wealth is to be assured to everyone in order to express the ideal of equal worth of the basic liberties, it is superfluous, given the difference principle” (JF 151). He believes that this assurance surpasses the idea of equality that his two principles of justice can guarantee.

Second, in Rawls’ view, leisure time can be included in the social primary goods (CP 253, 455n; JF 179). Therefore, the most disadvantagedable-bodied non-workers are not worse-off than the most disadvantagedable-bodied workers in the index of primary goods, because the former have more leisure time—forty hours per week — compared with the latter if they spend the standard labor hours at work. Including leisure in the index would require Malibu surfers to support themselves (PL 181f).

Third, Rawls explains “the conception of moral persons” that includes a “social division of responsibility” (CP 371; PL 189). Society accepts responsibility for maintaining a fair distribution of primary goods (the equal basic liberties, opportunities, and requisite all-purpose means) for everyone, while citizens accept “the responsibility for revising and adjusting their ends and aspirations in view of the all-purpose means they can expect, given their present and foreseeable situation” (ibid.). In his assumption, citizens as moral persons are responsible for their conception of a good life. If they want to be a Malibu surfer, which is his conception of a good life, they must find their own means of livelihood by themselves without relying on social institutions.

From these reasons, it seems that Rawls might disapprove of the BI proposal. However, in my opinion, his view of self-respect, meaningful work, and worthwhile life could accommodate implementation of a BI policy.

2. The Bases of Self-Respect and Equal Citizenship

In Rawls’ conception of justice, the bases of self-respect are the most important primary goods. According to him, self-respect has two aspects: first, it consists in the conviction that one’s conception of the good or plan of life is worth carrying out; and second, it implies the confidence that one has the ability to pursue one’s plan of life successfully (TJ 386). Why is self-respect necessary and why should it be guaranteed for citizens? Because self-respect is needed to realize each person’s conception of a good life and thereby achieve the stability of society. By what is self-respect guaranteed? In essence, what are the bases of self-respect?

Rawls argues that in a well-ordered society, the bases for self-respect are not “one’s income share but the publicly affirmed distribution of fundamental rights and liberties…[Self-respect is secured through the public affirmation of the status of equal citizenship for all” (TJ 477f). This supports both aspects of self-respect: while in “the public forum each person is treated with the respect due to a sovereign equal” (TJ 470), which supports the sense of one’s own worth or value, equal liberties also allow for a plurality of associations that provide the needed associative ties (ibid.). In arguing for the priority of liberty in TJ, it is crucial that inequalities in material prospects need not undermine citizens’ self-respect. He maintains that material inequalities would not undermine self-respect provided such inequalities are allowed only when they benefit the least advantaged.
principle of equal liberty (especially freedom of association) makes it possible for citizens to form various associations; they have the opportunity to belong to the associations in which they can partake in activities they want with others, which can support their self-respect, according to the “Aristotelian Principle.”

Therefore, Rawls believes that one’s self-respect could not be based on the comparison of social and economic status. The guarantee of equal liberties and rights (a formal guarantee of participation in politics as an equal) has a key role in assuring self-respect for all. This is why the principle of equal liberty has priority over the second principle (TJ 477-80).

The best solution is to support the primary good of self-respect as far as possible by the assignment of the basic liberties that can indeed be made equal, defining the same status for all. At the same time, relative shares of material means are relegated to a subordinate place. Thus we arrive at another reason for factoring the social order into two parts as indicated by the principles of justice. While these principles permit inequalities in return for contributions that are for the benefit of all, the precedence of liberty entails equality in the social bases of respect (TJ 478).

For society to be stable, it is necessary for our envy and jealousy not to be excessive. To that end, all members of society must have a sense of self-respect.

In his early writing, Rawls explained primary goods as follows: “[r]ational individuals, whatever else they want, desire certain things as prerequisites for carrying out their plans of life” (OT J 396). However, he later changed his account of primary goods as follows: they are “characterized as what persons need in their status as free and equal citizens, and as normal and fully cooperating members of society over a complete life” (TJ xiii). Citizens have three fundamental interests: in exercising their capacities for a sense of justice, a conception of the good, and in pursuing their rational plan (PL 74).

Primary goods are necessary for citizens to realize their interests in this regard. In this account, the principle of equal liberty has priority over the second principle as well, but its weight is changed. To exercise two moral powers and to be fully cooperating member of society, which are the bases of self-respect, not only formal rights and liberties, but also the following are necessary for citizens’ self-respect:

(a) the right to hold and to have the exclusive use of personal property (including certain forms of real property, such as dwellings and private grounds) (JF 114);
(b) the guarantee of the fair value of equal political liberties (JF sec. 45; PL 356-362);
(c) the provision for basic levels of health care (JF sec. 51); and
(d) the opportunity for meaningful work and occupation (LP 50; PL lvii).

For these rights and opportunities to be assured, it is necessary to expand and improve both the second principle and the first principle. It seems that the formal equal citizenship is altered to be more substantive, which includes extended primary goods.

The following are expanded and more defined primary goods and citizenship:

Social primary goods:

a. The basic rights and liberties (freedom of thought and liberty of conscience; freedom of association; the freedom defined by the liberty and integrity of the person and by the rule of law; political liberties (CP 362); and the right to personal property (JF 114)).
b. Freedom of movement and free choice of occupation against a background of diverse opportunities (CP 362; JF 58; PL 308).
c. Powers and prerogatives of offices and positions of responsibility, particularly those in the main political and economic institutions (CP 362, JF 58) and that give scope to various self-
Equal Citizenship:
With these primary goods provided for all citizens, thus securing the fair value of political liberties, then citizens, as free and equal, become “normal and fully cooperating members of society over a complete live.” (PL 20)

In LP and PL, it should be noted that Rawls recognizes that the opportunity to engage in meaningful work is the basis of self-respect for citizens (LP 50, PL lvii). Does this recognition suggest an inclination toward work-centrism in his just society? Does Rawls consider that meaningful work is a more distinguished activity for citizens’ self-respect than other activities? Although he does not explicitly define “meaningful work,” he does, however, say:

[A] well-ordered society does not do away with the division of labor in the most general sense. To be sure, the worst aspects of this division can be surmounted: no one need be servilely dependent on others and made to choose between monotonous and routine occupations which are deadening to human thought and sensibility. Each can be offered a variety of tasks so that the different elements of his nature find a suitable expression (TJ 463f).

From only this description, it seems that, in Rawls’ view, work that is “servilely dependent on others” and “deadening to human thought and sensibility,” is meaningless. Adam Smith highlights the problem of the elaborate division of labor for workers:

In the progress of the division of labour, the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labour, that is, of the great body of the people, comes to be confined to a few very simple operations; frequently to one or two. But the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments. 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. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become (Smith 1994, 840).

If workers become stupid and ignorant, their thoughts and sensibility deadened by the division of labor, their moral powers cannot be expected to develop. Consequently their social bases of self-respect would be also eroded. Rawls might regard this situation as bringing about a grave effect for a just society. He suggests that this situation can be surmounted by offering “a variety of tasks so that the different elements of his nature find a suitable expression.” However, what is this “a variety of tasks”? In the following part of this paper, I will examine what constitutes meaningful work and a variety of tasks.

3. What is Meaningful Work?
Rawls explains the importance of work in developing personality:
The social system shapes the wants and aspirations that its citizens come to have. It determines in part the sort of persons they want to be as well as the sort of persons they are. Thus an economic system is not only an institutional device for satisfying existing wants and needs but a way of creating and fashioning wants in the future. How men work together now to satisfy their present desires affects the desires they will have later on, the kind of persons they will be (TJ 229).

Rawls considers that an economic system or work itself can affect people's personality. If so, work is meaningful where it bears upon people's personality significantly in a positive way. What, then, are the conditions for meaningful work? While meaningful work may have many meanings, Norman E. Bowie defines it form a Kantian perspective as:

(a) freely entered into;  
(b) allowing the worker to exercise their autonomy and independence;  
(c) enabling the worker to develop their rational capacities;  
(d) providing a wage sufficient for physical welfare;  
(e) supporting the moral development of employees; and  
(f) not interfering with the worker's conception of how they wish to obtain happiness (Bowie 1998, 1083).

Most people would not disagree with this definition; Rawls could also possibly agree with it. I believe, that, in his view, meaningful work is that which meetsthe Aristotelian Principle. One of the most vital aspects of meaningful work is to enable the development of a worker's rational capacities. For this purpose, what kind of workplace is needed?

Richard Arneson characterizes the meaningful work as linked to workplace democracy. He defines meaningful work as that which “gives the worker considerable freedom to decide how the work is to be done and a democratic say over the character of the work process and the policies pursued by the employing enterprise” (Arneson 1987, 522). Common definitions of workplace democracy include features of equality, joint decision-making, and participation. Can Rawlsian meaningful work be realized in the context of the workplace democracy?

I believe that institutionalizing workplace democracy is one way to make work meaningful, and implementing BI policy is an alternative way. The first way may be desirable if we want to perpetuate a society characterized by wage-labor. This position aspires to the emancipation of work while simultaneously preserving the work-centered (wage-labor) society. It does not revise the modern thought that labor is anessential human activity, but aims, through improvement of labor circumstances (democratization of the workplace), to foster a situation in which anyone can engage in meaningful work. The young Marx and the republican Sandel support this position.

The second way is the approach that posits implementing BI to disarticulate the work-centered (wage-labor) society and to guarantee institutionally both “the right to meaningful work” and “the right not to work” by reconstructing the meaning of work. This is the position I believe to be the most desirable from consideration of the POD that Rawls espouses. It includes both the rights seemingly contradict each other. However to the extent that it does so, this is because we understand the two rights without changing the existing meaning of work, even after implementing BI.

In this paper I support and examine the second way. In this exploration, I refer to Gregory Pence's analysis of work (Pence 2001). He categorizes the work into three concepts: Labor is generally: (1) repetitious, (2) not intrinsically satisfying, (3) done out of necessity; labor also involves (4) few higher human faculties, and (5) little chance about how and when the work is done.

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Labor is generally: (1) repetitious, (2) not intrinsically satisfying, (3) done out of necessity; labor also involves (4) few higher human faculties, and (5) little chance about how and when the work is done.
**Workmanship** means that: individuals have (1) use of higher human faculties, (2) some intrinsic satisfaction in the activity itself, (3) some degree of choice about when work is done and how, and (4) pride of the worker in the products of their work.

**Calling** means that: individuals (1) find intrinsic pleasure in their work, (2) identify themselves with their work, and (3) believe that their unique abilities “call” them to a certain kind of work (Pence 2001, 93f).

These concepts of work are neither economic nor sociological, but rather moral and axiological analyses. They imply that workmanship is preferable to labor and, in turn, calling is preferable to workmanship. Therefore, we can define that work is better and meaningful in direct proportion to the degree to which the following are realized: (1) development and exercise of unique personal qualities, (2) intrinsic satisfaction in the activity, and (3) personal choice in accepting job (ibid. 94)

What matters here is to focus heavily on the “view of the worker” (ibid. 95)—the worker’s rational perspective and interpretation—as to what work constitutes workmanship or a calling. We cannot automatically classify works into these concept categories, for example, by labelling doctor as calling, shoemaker as workmanship, and cleaning as labor. The same work could be labor for one person, but a calling for another. In addition, the work as which they regard calling can become labor for them sometimes, and vice versa. For example, being employed as a university professor, which is recognized by herself and others as a high-status job, may, however, be considered to be labor at a given time if the individual in question lacks a sense of fulfillment and is rather wearied by non-academic tasks. By contrast, a worker engaging in typical manual labor, such as a parcel-sorting task, may, however, find meaning in that activity (e.g., in sorting Christmas presents, the worker may think: “Which children will receive them? How delighted will they be? They will be happy because I perform this task.”); at that time, their labor becomes workmanship.

Furthermore, if it is possible to enjoy a desired standard of living, the amount of income does not become a factor for deciding whether a job is labor, workmanship, or a calling. There can be “high income labor.” In essence, the rational subjectivity of workers constitutes a key element in defining which concept of work is applicable to their present activities.

In light of these concepts of work, I wish to contend that the policy of BI could establish the basis and opportunity to render all jobs meaningful and endorse the right not to work if non-work (non-paid labor) is a rational activity from one’s rational perspectives. In the case of introducing BI and securing livelihood, the distinction between labor, workmanship, and a calling is made by the worker’s subjective rational appraisal. Even should one decide not to engage in paid labor, provided this decision is based on rational judgment, inoccupation is a calling for that individual. As a matter of course, inoccupation means only that one does not engage in traditional paid work; one might participate in some activities that one chooses willingly. Even when unoccupied, some would engage in such civic activities as volunteering in NGOs, NPOs, and regional development, others would be devoted to avocations. As these activities are associational lives of shared interests that can accord with the Aristotelian principle, they thereby form the basis of self-respect. Rawls explains about overcoming the division of labor through willing and meaningful work:

> The division of labor is overcome not by each becoming complete in himself, but by willing and meaningful work within a just social union of social unions in which all can freely participate as they so incline (TJ 464).

In my opinion, this “willing and meaningful work” does not mean only paid work, rather, it can include a “variety of tasks.” Otherwise, people could not “freely participate in” it “as they so incline.” Additionally, this work is performed “within a just social union of social unions,” not within an economic system. From this aspect, “willing and meaningful work” is not only paid work: it
incorporates diversified activities in a just society, encompassing social and political ones. For people to freely participate in even paid work or other activities, they need BI that can both give them bargaining power and guarantee their livelihood. I believe that, from a Rawlsian perspective, by enabling both those who engage in paid work and other activities to participate freely in them, their activities become the meaningful work that can overcome the division of labor that would diminish citizens’ moral powers. Therefore, a BI policy must be implemented in a just society. Rawls describes a just society as follows:

It is a mistake to believe that a just and good society must wait upon a high material standard of life. What men want is meaningful work in free association with others, these associations regulating their relations to one another within a framework of just basic institutions (TJ 257).

Rawls describes a just society as a POD and believes that people can live a worthwhile life within it.

4. Property-Owning Democracy (POD) and Worthwhile Life

A POD “tries to disperse the ownership of wealth and capital, and thus to prevent a small part of society from controlling the economy and indirectly political life itself”; it ensures “the widespread ownership of productive assets and human capital (educated abilities and trained skills) at the beginning of each period.” The aim of a POD is “not simply to assist those who lose out through accident or misfortune” after the fact, but instead, in advance, “to put all citizens in a position to manage their own affairs and to take part in social cooperation on a footing of mutual respect under appropriately equal conditions” (TJ xivf). Rawls believes that a POD can prevent the generation of an inferior class, frustrated and dispirited in a capitalist welfare state that is chronically dependent on welfare, not only by redistribution of income but also by “ex-ante distribution” of wealth, a capital asset, and human capital.

Rawls advocates the POD as a fully just society, and indicates that this society can be the one in “the stationary state” (JF 159f), which would not aim at the unlimited expansion of capital and economic growth like a capitalist welfare state. He believes that as long as wealth is available “to establish (reasonably) just basic institutions” and “to secure a social world that makes possible a worthwhile life for all its citizens,” the further accumulation of wealth is not necessary (LP 107).

What is a “worthwhile life”? The worthwhile and the meaningful are commonly used synonymously; however, the worthwhile life is not exactly identical to the meaningful one. A worthwhile life for one person is also worthwhile for others, but a meaningful life is not necessarily so: a meaningful life for one person is not necessarily meaningful for others. For example, we believe that the lives of saints and great figures are (or indeed were) meaningful; however, not everyone wants to experience a life like theirs. Conversely, a worthwhile life is the one that most of us want to live.

From a Rawlsian perspective, the worthwhile life is the one that makes it institutionally possible for us to pursue the realization of our own conception of a good life. As one of the institutional conditions forenabling its pursuit, it is essential for each person to be able to have a sense of self-respect through an institutionally supported way. Therefore, BI, as characterized by a payment that is unconditional, individually based, ex ante, not means-tested, and not conditional on willingness-to-work, should be secured for all citizens as a requirement of justice, because it can provide the social basis of self-respect needed to live a worthwhile life.

Rawls himself insists that self-respect “is rooted in our self-confidence as a fully cooperating member of society capable of pursuing a worthwhile conception of the good over a complete life” (PL 318). In his view, self-respect depends on certain public features of the basic structure of society that make it possible for citizens to pursue it. To explain the connection between BI and self-respect from this perspective, I rely on the Cohen-McKinnon analysis of the bases of self-respect (Cohen...
BI can be the recognitional and resource bases of self-respect more than any other welfare policies (e.g., negative income tax, workfare, participation income, or job guarantee).\(^{18}\) Omitting a willingness-to-work condition will support the resource basis of self-respect for people who find meaning in activities other than work. Moreover, not subject BI to means testing will provide the recognitional basis of self-respect for people who would be stigmatized under the test.

It seems that implementing BI can also assist in realizing those institutions that are required for social stability for the right reasons, and that also constitute the bedrock of a POD:

(a) A certain fair equality of opportunity, especially in education and training.
(b) A decent distribution of income and wealth meeting the third condition of liberalism: all citizens must be assured the all-purpose means necessary for them to take intelligent and effective advantage of their basic freedoms.
(c) Society as employer of last resort through general or local government, or other social and economic policies (the opportunity for meaningful work and occupation).
(d) Basic health care assured for all citizens.
(e) Public financing of elections and ways of assuring the availability of public information on matters of policy (LP 50; PL lvif).\(^ {19}\)

For (a), BI makes it possible for citizens to leave their job to pursue higher education and training, thereby advancing fair equality of opportunity in society. Regarding (b), this is the main aim of implementing BI from a Rawlsian perspective. For (c), as explained above, BI can render all jobs meaningful. Regarding (d), in addition to the difference principle, BI executed in a POD can contribute to decrease the socio-economic gap between the most and the least disadvantaged. From the relative income hypothesis of social epidemiology, the more the gap in society narrows, the more its citizens’ health status is improved (e.g., by decreasing cardiocirculatory diseases and increasing in life expectancy).\(^ {20}\) This effect can contribute significantly to citizens’ basic health care upstream by means other than guaranteed in-kind service. For (e), through BI, the candidates in political elections are able to be relatively independent of particular social and economic interests; furthermore, the constituents can have time to attend public forums that form the policies and assess the campaign agendas to which they are committed. In these ways, BI can implement or complement these social arrangements of a POD effectively.

I argue that BI is required by and included in the principle of fair equality of opportunity, not the difference principle. If the former aims to maintain the bases of self-respect for all citizens by providing opportunities for development and exercise of their capacities (especially moral powers), this argument is reasonable and consistent with the configuration of the two principle of justice. In a POD, subsidizing the most disadvantaged employing the difference principle is a last resort. If equal political liberties and fair equality of opportunities (including BI) are effectively maintained, most people can live a worthwhile life, in the sense that they can cooperate with others in democratic society, participate in social activities, and pursue their conception of good.\(^ {21}\)

5. Against Freeman’s view on BI in a POD

According to Samuel Freeman, who is the best-known Rawlsian, “Rawls affirms the idea that all able-bodied persons should be encouraged to work in a well-ordered democracy [POD]… Rawls thinks that part of being an independent person with a sense of self-respect is to be in a position to provide for oneself while working in a job that itself is not demeaning and does not undermine self-respect” (Freeman 2007, 229).\(^ {22}\) Freeman admits that the able-bodied non-workers can be provided a social minimum as a matter of right; however, they cannot receive full payment. In his view, “if the social minimum is $100 per day per adult person… and we subtract eight hours at a minimum wage, let’s say $6 per hour, then the surfer will receive $52 per day.” It seems that this
argument is liable to regard jobholders as the privileged class in the society. I consider that Freeman regards a POD as still being a work-centered society, like a capitalist welfare state; it appears that he holds the conventional and perfectionist view of productive labor, specifically that it is the most recommended human activity. However, given the predicted decline of employment resulting from computerization (artificial intelligence) of jobs in the future, unless a POD can effectively increase the opportunities for employment than the capitalist welfare state, the consequence will be according a privilege to jobholders. In the conventional view of work, there are nonpecuniary benefits of working:

Work — having a regular job offering an income — can provide a number of nonpecuniary benefits. It can be an opportunity for self-realization. It can be a source of the esteem of others and hence of self-esteem. It can provide a social environment, an escape from isolation. It can impose structure on everyday life, an escape from limitless and alienating freedom (Elster 1988, 62).

In Freeman’s view of a POD, jobholders would have these special benefits in addition to a steady income and full BI. From the aspect of self-respect, especially its recognitional basis, his view is undesirable and could not comply with justice as fairness that aims to maximin the opportunity of self-respect for the least advantaged. Rawls’ definition of the least advantaged is changed from “the unskilled worker” (OT J 98) to the group that “includes persons whose family and class origins are more disadvantaged than others, whose natural endowments (as realized) permit them to fare less well, and whose fortune and luck in the course of life turn out to be less happy” (TJ 83). Some able-bodied non-workers might fall within the category of the latter definition; therefore, it would appear that they could find less value and meaning in productive labor than in other activities. It is to some extent a matter of luck. In my opinion, the person who does not engage in productive labor but instead engages both in maintaining democratic society (e.g., jury service, voting, national service, and conscription during wartime) and in some activities accorded to the Aristotelian Principle, is entitled to the full BI, because they can be regarded as partaking in contributive social activities.

Conclusion

In section 1, I described the three reasons why Rawls opposes BI. I will conclude by replying to his opposition, on the basis of what has been considered in this paper.

Regarding his first reason, implementing BI can guarantee the fair value of the equal political liberties more effectively. In my opinion, the difference principle can only take a complementary role in the POD system that emphasizes and reinforces the principle of equal liberty and the principle of fair equality of opportunity. As BI is necessary to fulfill the ideal of equal worth of the basic liberties, then it is not superfluous.

Regarding his second reason, even granting that leisure is included in social primary goods, since work has nonpecuniary benefits that can enhance the self-respect of workers, contrary to Rawls’ supposition, the most disadvantaged workers are still better off than the most disadvantaged non-workers in the index of primary goods. Therefore, BI is needed for non-workers to partake in some activities that can strengthen their self-respect.

Regarding his third reason, for citizens as moral persons to be able to be responsible for their conception of a good life, society has to accept its responsibility for implementing BI as a requisite all-purpose means. Rawls’ social division of responsibility will become a truly appropriate conception by this measure.
In writing this paper, I have continued to keep James Meade’s vision of a POD in my mind. According to him, the essential feature of a POD would be that:

Work had become rather more a matter of personal choice…At the other extreme those who wished to devote themselves to quite uncommercial activities would be able to do so with a reduced standard of living, but without starving in a garret. Above all labour-intensive services would flourish of a kind which (unlike old-fashioned domestic service) might be produced by one man for another of equal income and status. Play-acting, ballet-dancing, painting, writing, sporting activities and all such ‘unproductive’ work as Adam Smith would have called it would flourish on a semi-professional semi-amateur basis; and those who produced such services would no longer be degraded as the poor sycophants of immoderately rich patrons” (Meade 1964, 40f).

In this paper, by considering the normative relationship between meaningful work, worthwhile life, and self-respect from a Rawlsian perspective, I inquired into the potential of BI in his well-ordered society. I believe that my paper clearly demonstrates that BI needs to be institutionalized for our work to be meaningful and our life to be worthwhile in the Rawlsian POD. A BI is indispensable to substantialize the Rawlsian POD and to make it better than Rawls’ original version of a POD. It is in this POD that the bases of self-respect, the most important primary goods, can be guaranteed more than any other social form.

Note

1) See (TJ 266).

First principle: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.

Second Principle: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) [the difference principle] to the greatest benefit to the least advantaged, consistent with the just saving principle, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

2) See (TJ sec. 50).


6) The Aristotelian Principle is “a deep psychological fact” (TJ 379); it states that “other things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities), and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity” (TJ 374). This principle also has a companion effect: “As we witness the exercise of well-trained abilities by others, these displays are enjoyed by us and arouse a desire that we should be able to do the same things ourselves” (TJ 375f). This effect “ties in with the primary good of self-respect” (TJ 380) because the activities accorded to the Aristotelian Principle are the ones that are valued by others. See also Wall (2015).

7) Whether (f) is social primary good would be debatable, however (f) is also the object of distribution by the principle of fair equality of opportunity, then (f) can be included in social primary goods.

8) This problem is examined in more detail in my book: see Fukuma (2014, Ch. 4). The explanation of meaningful work in this section is based on this work.


13) In this paper, I use the concept of “rational” in the sense of judgment that considers all relevant matters, and that would not be regretted by oneself retrospectively.
14) My understanding of POD is owe a lot to O’Neill & Williamson (2012).
15) See (JF, part IV) for more detailed explanation of POD.
16) Thaddeus Metz (2012) proffers definitions of “meaningful” and “worthwhile” that indicate clearly how they are distinct. I believe that this distinction is also applicable in the case of work.
17) For instance, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, and Muhammad Ali, etc.
18) From the viewpoint of the recognitional and resource bases of self-respect, the defect of negative income tax concerns its ex-post payment: when one has lost one’s employment, one cannot receive the payment until the following fiscal year. The defect of workfare is concerns the conditions of work that it imposes on recipients: unduly low wages; being abused in unfavorable conditions; no leave system; despite a lack of appropriate preparation and skill, they are compelled to engage in dangerous work without sufficient information. The defect of participation income concerns what kind of activity is defined as contributive: in pluralistic society, we may not reach agreement on this (McKinnon 2003). The defect of job guarantee concerns its work (wage-labor) centrism: it denies the freedom that one can live by partaking in other socially beneficial activities without engaging in wage labor.
19) See also (JF 176).
21) I believe that the difference principle would perform only a subsidiary role in a POD. I cannot consider this issue in detail here due to limited space.
22) See also Freeman (2013, 23).
24) In the index of social primary goods that gives weight to the bases of self-respect, it would be assessed that Freeman’s able-bodied worker, who receives $100 per day, is better off than the surfer, who has 8 hours of leisure time and $52 per day.

References

Daniels, Norman, Kennedy, Bruce and Kawachi, Ichiro (2001)*Is Inequality Bad For Our Health?*, Beacon Press.


