JUSTICE, JUSTIFICATION AND SELF-RESPECT

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the role of self-respect in liberal justification and debates about justice. It is argued that self-respect depends on doing certain things with the right self-conception, and thus that there are two sorts of ways in which political institutions and procedures governing the distribution of goods can impede the development of self-respect: by damaging the conditions of self-respect supporting action, and by undermining self-conceptions without which putative self-respect supporting action is impotent.

With respect to questions of liberal justification, acceptance or rejection of opportunity for self-respect as a criterion of justice does not settle hard metaethical questions about the extent to which political justification should mirror moral truth. Nevertheless, positing self-respect as a justificatory value helps in clarifying what is at issue between the two dominant positions, Perfectionism and Neutralism. With respect to justice-related questions about liberty and group membership, appeal to opportunity for self-respect allows for a fine-grained distinction between different sorts of groups, which supports an unequal distribution of the right to exclude consistent with the priority of liberty. With respect to distributive justice, appeal to opportunity for self-respect recommends a sufficiency approach to the distribution of economic goods qua social basis of self-respect, and suggests the adoption of unconditional basic income as policy.
To Dad and Fiona, with love.
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Most people would agree that self-respect is of great importance in their lives. The loss of self-respect is seen as a thing to be feared, associated with personal tragedy and social ostracization. Miners in dole queues, delinquents on council estates, and homeless people under Waterloo bridge form the focus of television news reports lamenting the loss of social conditions—full employment, a sense of community, the provision of housing and welfare benefits—enabling every member of society to see themselves as the equal of all others, and to live a fulfilling life. The loss of self-respect can also serve as the stuff of great drama. In Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman Willy Loman struggles to disguise, from his family and himself, the damage done to his self-respect by his failure to achieve an illusory dream. In Robert Bolt’s A Man For All Seasons Thomas More refuses renounce the authority of the Pope, claiming that ‘The Apostolic Succession of the Pope is—... Why, it’s a theory yes; you can’t see it; can’t touch it; it’s a theory. But what matters to me is not whether it’s true or not but that I believe it to be true, or rather not that I believe it, but that I believe it’. Jude in Hardy’s Jude the Obscure dies in misery and self-loathing after resigning himself to an unhappy marriage, in part a reaction to the abandonment of his academic ambitions. When we react to Willy Loman’s story with pity, to Thomas More’s stance with admiration, and to Jude Fawley’s fate with horror I think we show that we
value self-respect, and understand the enormity of losing it. The tragedy (in the cases of Willy Loman and Jude Fawley) and greatness (in the case of Thomas More) of these stories relates in large part to how the characters fight to protect their self-respect, regardless of their success.

How, if at all, should this intuitive recognition of the importance of self-respect affect our thinking about political issues? In this thesis I explore the idea of self-respect as a critical tool for making progress in two areas of liberal egalitarian thought. The usefulness of self-respect as a conceptual resource has been under-appreciated by liberal thinkers who often make no more than a passing reference to self-respect. In many cases, self-respect is conflated with self-esteem and, implicitly or explicitly, put to one side in political debates as a psychological state like cheerfulness which, although important to the individual, lies outside the remit of political philosophy. I think that this conflation is a mistake, and that important opportunities for making progress in certain liberal debates are missed when it is made.

I will argue that by invoking the concept of self-respect—generated by the achievement of personal goals against a background of appropriate beliefs about one’s value—liberals of different meta-ethical persuasions can move forward in two key areas of debate. These are, first (chapters 4 and 5): the debate about whether the fundamental liberal commitment to individual liberty is compatible

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with ‘multiculturalist’ approaches to difference and diversity. And second (chapters 6 and 7): the debate about whether liberal egalitarianism demands that everyone be given the same or that everyone be given enough. Before entering into these debates I address the question of whether a commitment to self-respect as political value is sufficient to establish a position as either ‘Perfectionist’ or ‘Neutralist’ (chapters 1, 2 and 3). I argue that an appeal to self-respect is possible from either perspective, and furthermore that such an appeal is desirable given how it approximates to an ideal endorsed from both perspectives. Let me outline my aims in more detail.

In chapters 1-3 I argue that a commitment to the conditions of self-respect as an appropriate object of appeal in political justification is consistent with agnosticism with respect to the two dominant meta-ethical approaches to political justification. In chapter 1, ‘Liberal Justification’, I give a general description of the nature and aims of liberal justification, and describe the ‘Perfectionist’ and ‘Neutralist’ approaches to political justification. In chapter 2, ‘The Liberal Dichotomy’, I look in more detail at the challenge posed to Neutralism by Perfectionism by examining Raz’s claim that Neutralism is insupportable. I go on to suggest a possible way for Neutralists to meet Raz’s challenge which depends on the invocation of self-respect in justification. I sketch the outlines of a concept of self-respect as non-subservience, and suggest a way for Neutralists to appeal to this concept as a political value while avoiding Raz’s criticism. I do not argue that this strategy supports a preference for
Neutralism over Perfectionism, but rather merely outline it as a possibility for Neutralists who feel the force of Raz’s challenge. I conclude this chapter by making it explicit how Perfectionists can appeal to self-respect in justification, and by reconsidering the nature of the liberal dichotomy. In chapter 3, ‘Self-Respect’, I put meat on the bones of the concept of self-respect developed in chapter 2, and outline Rawls’ conception of self-respect. Rawls is one of the few philosophers to make an explicit appeal to self-respect in justification. I spend some time clarifying Rawls’ conception of self-respect in order to use it as the starting point for explorations of the role of self-respect in debates about liberty and distributive justice. The overall aim of chapters 1-3 is to show that meta-ethical questions do not have to be settled in advance of appeal to self-respect in justification, and that an appeal to self-respect in justification does not in itself settle these matters.

Putting meta-ethical debates about justification to one side, I move on in chapters 4 and 5 to examine how self-respect supports arguments for the priority of liberty and certain multiculturalist approaches. In chapter 4, ‘Liberty’, I give a detailed analysis and defence of Rawls’ self-respect based arguments—often left unclear in the texts—for the equality and priority of liberty. Claiming priority for liberty means that inequalities in liberty are legitimate only when they are imposed for the sake of liberty itself, that is, in order to protect extant liberties or to move towards conditions in which an unequal distribution of liberty is unnecessary. One way of arguing against the priority of liberty is that
it subverts the protection of certain aspects of our social world which are also—if not more—supportive of self-respect. In chapter 5, ‘Self-Respect and Group Membership’, I address this objection by arguing that a self-respect based commitment to the priority of liberty is compatible with a (‘multiculturalist’) self-respect based justification of special measures designed to protect cultural groups. The overall aim of chapters 4 and 5 is to show how a liberal appeal to self-respect supports (at least some) special measures for the protection of cultural groups, and so makes a genuinely liberal multiculturalism more plausible.

In chapters 6 and 7 I move beyond debates about liberty and culture to look at some questions in liberal distributive justice. In chapter 6, ‘Distributive Justice: Assessing Advantage’, I rule out a connection between self-respect as a liberal value and an interpretation of equality with respect to economic goods which demands that everyone have the same. I argue that the presence of envy in a society does not support a redistribution of economic goods, because envy is not a response to inequality of opportunity for self-respect. This does not mean that a concern for the conditions of self-respect has no implications for economic redistribution, but rather that the pattern of redistribution which equal opportunity for self-respect demands is not strict equality of economic goods. In chapter 7, ‘Distributive Justice: Unconditional Basic Income’, I explore a possible implication of this view for redistributive policy. I suggest that an interpretation of liberal equality as it matters for self-respect suggests the
institutions of unconditional basic income, whereby each citizen receives an equal income regardless of her willingness to work or her income from any other sources. A brief Conclusion follows chapter 7.

As is clear, my thesis does not progress in a linear fashion, and does not build up to a grand denouement. Each part of the thesis—chapters 1-3, chapters 4-5, and chapters 6-7—should be seen as complementary to the others. The overall hypothesis is this: liberals sensitive to the idea that we as a political community ought to think about how our political principles affect the conditions of self-respect can move forward in fresh ways thorny debates about liberty, culture and distributive justice. Liberals have too often ignored self-respect as a tool in political argument, or cast the concept aside as vague and unworkable. By showing how the concept can be put to good work in some liberal debates I hope to prompt liberals to think harder about self-respect and its potential in political argument.
LIBERAL JUSTIFICATION

1.1 Outline

In this chapter I make some general remarks about liberal political justification; its character, aims and methods. I distinguish two forms of liberal justification according to their acceptance or rejection of the necessity and desirability of relying on a comprehensive moral doctrine in the construction of political justifications, and also gesture towards some broad challenges to each approach. My aim here is not to adjudicate between these approaches. Rather, I isolate them as competitors within the liberal tradition in order to show—in Chapters 2 and 3—that the value of self-respect is available to both approaches in the search for liberal values to lend weight to existent principles and to clarify the implications of these principles. Self-respect is available as a conceptual tool both to those who adopt either position, and to those who remain agnostic between them.
1.2 The Need for Justification

I begin with a bland but fundamental observation about states of affairs resulting from political action. This is that they need justification in a way that non-political states of affairs do not. We might be able to explain a person's lack of artistic talent can without being able to justify that lack; in contrast, although we might be able to explain why a person lacks liberty, the more important task is to justify that lack. This is because a lack of liberty is attributable to the actions of others in a way that a lack of artistic talent typically is not. To be deprived of my liberty is to have something done to me; to be unable to paint is, ceteris paribus, just to have lost out along the artistic dimension of the talent lottery.

To be precise, what requires political justification are not states of affairs, but rather the application of principles to them. Political principles can have a deep and pervasive effect on peoples lives. This is because the social structures they shape often carry enforceable prohibitions for individuals. The purpose of political principles is to direct collective action yielding concrete pieces of legislation to structure the way we live together. To break a law derived from these principles is to take serious punitive risks. Thus the content of the law requires justification, and the ultimate form this justification will take is a justification of the political principles from which the law is derived. In this way questions of justification for principles lie at the heart of political philosophy.
But the claim that the issue of principle-justification is central to political philosophy is ambiguous. It could mean either that the question of which principles we adopt is central, or that the central question concerns the type of justification appropriate to ground the principles we adopt. There are many debates in political philosophy which focus on the advantages and disadvantages of competing principles: these kinds of debate will sometimes reduce to debates about the nature of acceptable justification. To take an example, Rawls' powerful complaint that classical utility-maximising principles of justice fail to respect the separateness of persons\(^1\) does not so much impugn the value of utility but rather questions whether such principles could find an acceptable form of justification, that is, a form which acknowledges 'men's desire to treat one another not as means only but as ends in themselves'.\(^2\)

Such justification-based debates occur both across families of political positions and within families of positions. For example, J.S. Mill, Rawls, Nozick and Rorty are all liberals in the sense that they would all unite in defence of a principle of equal liberty. Where they really differ is in the form and content of the justifications they would offer for such a principle.

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Nozick might (and, according to G.A. Cohen, must\(^3\)) make reference to the moral fact of self-ownership; Mill appeals to experiments in living and how they contribute to human progress; Rorty makes pragmatist appeals to democratic consensus;\(^4\) and Rawls (as I will argue later) appeals to the conditions of self-respect. Disagreements about which values are appropriate objects of appeal in political justification, then, do not exclusively track differences in overall political orientation.

My interest in this chapter and the next two is in such justification-based debates within liberalism; chapters 4-7 will address liberal principles. In this chapter I give a description of the general character of liberal justification by identifying two constraints on such justification and drawing out their implications. I then go on to sketch two distinct liberal approaches to justification which meet these constraints: Perfectionism and Neutralism. In Chapter 2 I look more closely at this dichotomy in the liberal approach to justification, with a particular emphasis on Neutralism. I suggest a Neutralist strategy for dealing with a powerful Perfectionist criticism which involves appeal in justification to self-respect as a fundamental value. I go on to describe self-respect by reference to certain fundamental capacities.


\(^4\) R. Rorty, 'The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy' in his *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991). Rorty does offer justifications; his point is that philosophy does not have a privileged position in formulating such justifications.
This conception of self-respect might lend strength to the Neutralist strategy for dealing with Perfectionist criticisms, but it does not—in itself—arbitrate between Perfectionism and Neutralism. Regardless of whether the Neutralist or the Perfectionist wins this particular battle about the nature of political justification, they can agree on the principles yielded by an appeal to self-respect and its social bases. In chapter 3 I say more about self-respect and its social bases, and outline Rawls’ conception of self-respect and its role in political justification.
1.3 Access and Acceptance

Liberals conceive of persons as capable of using their reason so as to access political justifications. Liberal justifications must be such that persons can understand them. This constraint is hardly ever made explicit by liberal thinkers, perhaps because they think it too obvious to state. But the constraint is fundamental if we understand political justification as justification to persons. A genuine attempt at political justification to persons requires an awareness of the likely limits of the understanding of those persons. For example, one wouldn't tell a small child that she can't have an ice cream because the chemical composition of ice cream causes certain reactions in the stomach which are causally related to certain neural events which prompt nausea; one would simply tell her that she can't have

5 One notable recent exception to this claim is C. Bertram in 'Political Justification, Theoretical Complexity, and Democratic Community', *Ethics*, Vol. 107, 1997, 563-583. Bertram argues that those committed to the Enlightenment ideal of 'status egalitarianism' (p. 566) must aim for transparency as a mark of legitimacy in the ideal polity. This enables:

... the reconciliation of each person to the social order, either by supplying reasons why that order is legitimate or by proposing such adjustments as would make it acceptable to reasonable persons. (p. 565)

Taking the ideal of transparency seriously requires political justifications which sincere non-specialist advocates could successfully communicate to sincere non-specialist recipients (p. 575). Bertram argues that such communication is only possible below a certain threshold of theoretical complexity.
an ice cream because it will make her feel sick. The issue here is not degrees of accuracy; it is rather that if we want to justify our decision to the child then invoking biological-chemical concepts is misguided, not only for pragmatic but also for moral reasons. Offering a biological-chemical ‘justification’ to the child does not, regardless of its accuracy, count as a genuine act of justification.

One immediate implication is that liberal justifications must not rely on highly technical or specialised knowledge for their success. To assume that people are capable of reasoning does not imply that they are highly qualified or extensively educated. Liberal justifications must be open to the understanding of persons above a certain minimal level of education and cognitive capacity. The first, ‘access’, constraint is trivially necessary for the second, ‘acceptance’ constraint.

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6 C. Bertram also affirms this point in ‘Political Justification, Theoretical Complexity, and Democratic Community’ by distinguishing explanation from justification. He states that:

... we may sometimes have grounds for preferring [a] theoretical rationale to [a] publicly accessible one. But when we do so, we move away from a model of legitimacy where the social order is justified to each person. (p. 573)

7 One might argue here that it is always possible for people to learn the theory or acquire the cognitive skills necessary for access to complex justification. The question then is how much time and effort we can reasonably expect of people who—as well as being citizens—are also friends, employers, employees, lovers, parents etc.
Since political principles can have a profound and pervasive effect on peoples lives then justifications offered for these principles must be found acceptable by these people: justifications must make it clear to people capable of reasoning appropriately why these principles provide the best structure for their shared political life. Given that all persons are capable of reasoning so as to accept political justifications, these justifications must be found acceptable by all persons. This is the central pillar of liberal justification.

By claiming that political justifications ought to count as justifications for those to whom they are addressed liberals evince their commitment to the moral equality of persons. Offering justifications accessible and acceptable to all those capable of reasoning appropriately is one way of showing equal respect for persons as equals. This does not imply the unattractive claim that the moral worth of persons varies according to their capacity to reason appropriately. Those incapable of reasoning so as to access and accept political justifications are not thereby morally worthless, but they do lie outside the scope of justification. However, there are ways of showing respect for persons which do not require that they be offered justifications for principles which affect them. Although a principle may not have been justified to a person it may nevertheless be justified in respect of that persons interests. We show respect for those incapable of reasoning in the appropriate way by giving consideration to their interests in our choice of principles. Paternalism is appropriate with respect to children, the insane
and animals. It is not appropriate with respect to those capable of understanding political justifications.\(^8\)

Although the access and acceptance constraints model the liberal principle of equal respect, they do not—at this level of abstraction—enable more fine grained distinctions between different forms of liberal justification. Before we can make these distinctions we need to be even clearer about the general character of the liberal approach to justification. This attempt is not futile. At first glance the only feature that the diversity of liberalisms might seem to share is a commitment to the value of liberty. But on closer examination it is clear that this shared commitment is explained by, and is not prior to, a deeper similarity between them. This deeper shared feature is a certain emphasis in the diverse liberal understandings of justification.

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\(^8\) This is not to say that liberals do not face problems in their treatment of children, especially concerning the sorts of interests that paternalistic behaviour can be said to further. Nevertheless, I still think that paternalism as a general strategy for the treatment of children is consistent with—and is perhaps even required by—a liberalism which maintains that children are of the same worth as adults.
1.4 The Liberal Ideal

The deeper shared feature that unites the liberal tradition is an aspiration to a comprehensive or inclusive *constituency of justification*. What I shall mean by a ‘constituency of justification’ is the set of people to whom political justification is addressed, the people who are the targets of political justification, and whose responses to a political justification determine whether that justification meets the access and acceptance constraints. When thinking in general about the possible sets of people constituting the targets of justification, it helps to envisage a scale along which various types of justification can be placed according to the scope of the constituency of justification they (explicitly or implicitly) endorse.

\[
\text{Maximal} \quad \text{Minimal}
\]

100% inclusive constituency  Constituency of one

A justification with a maximal constituency addresses itself to all people: the justification fails if it is not understood and accepted by all. A justification with a minimal constituency, on the other hand, addresses itself—in the most extreme case—to just one person: the justification succeeds if this person understands and accepts it, regardless of whether it is rejected by everyone else, and even if the person offering the justification is the only member of the constituency. Each of these approaches marks the
limits of our understanding of a constituency of justification: neither of them are real positions. The minimal approach might collapse into a form of radical subjectivism whereby principle P is justified if I understand and accept my reasons for thinking that P is justified, regardless of what anyone else thinks. The question of whether or not the extreme minimalist approach is coherent, let alone attractive, can, thankfully, be left to one side, for it is clear that extreme minimalism and approaches close to it are not liberal. Liberals believe that constituencies of justification should tend towards inclusiveness, and extreme minimalism avowedly does not.

At the other end of the spectrum is maximalism, where the access and acceptance constraints are interpreted as demanding actual access and acceptance by all people. *Prima facie*, no justification could meet these demands. People can be mad, bad and stubborn: insisting that justifications must be tailored to the understanding of these sorts of people is no way to show respect for the rest of us. Commitment to an extreme maximal constituency of justification makes it very unlikely that any principles are genuinely justified; extreme maximalism suggests that political legitimacy is a myth.

One way of characterising the differences between extreme minimalism and extreme maximalism is in terms of their different interpretations of the normative demands on justification, embodied in the access and acceptance constraints. For the extreme minimalist, the adequacy of a justification need have little connection with the degree of uptake by actual people, and for
this reason the minimalist constituency of justification can have a population of one. For the extreme maximalist, the adequacy of justification has everything to do with actual uptake, and for this reason the maximalist constituency of justification can include everyone. Where on the scale should we place liberal positions?

It is clear that the liberal tradition as a whole aims at a degree of inclusiveness in its constituency of justification which *prima facie* places it closer to the maximalist end of the scale than the minimalist end. This is not to say that the liberal tradition has, historically, always succeeded in offering justifications with such inclusive scope. Kant's classification of women as passive rather than active citizens is one of the most glaring examples of this failure; Rousseau was also guilty of this attitude towards women. But I would venture that, as time has progressed, the constituency of liberal justification has tended to expand, which suggests to me that the liberal ideal is *inclusiveness without maximalism*, or, as I shall sometimes say, *comprehensiveness*. This spirit of this ideal is perhaps best captured by Jeremy Waldron's remark that 'Liberals demand that the social order should

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in principle be capable of explaining itself at the tribunal of each person’s understanding'. Of course, this statement of the ideal is vague, and there will be a range of different inclusive constituencies that can all be said to approximate to it. But as a rough way of identifying liberal positions, I think it is accurate and useful.

The limits of any liberal constituency of justification are set by the values it appeals to. Any liberal explanation of why values x, y and z are appropriate objects of appeal in justification will reflect the liberal commitment to showing respect for people as equals by giving an account of what it is about these values that makes them accessible and acceptable to a comprehensive range of people. Liberals can defend the exclusion of some persons from the constituency of justification, without impugning their commitment to equality, by giving a good enough account of why commitment to those values outweighs commitment to a greater degree of inclusiveness. Imagine that a liberal justification J for principle P makes reference to how P promotes value V. An account of V is given which establishes it as making a contribution to the accessibility and acceptability of J. In that case the fact that some people who reject J in virtue of its reference to V do not ipso facto form part of the constituency of justification for P does not undermine J as a genuinely liberal justification. For example,

Ku Klux Klan members might reject certain liberal principles on the grounds in virtue of how their justification makes reference to harmonious race relations. But the Ku Klux Klan’s rejection of these principles does not make an insistence on the value of harmonious race relations and associated principles illiberal.

*Prima facie* there are two broad camps within the liberal approach to justification so described. These camps are distinguished according to their explanations of why the values to which they appeal in justification are appropriate values, where the measure of appropriateness is given by the access and acceptance constraints. Roughly, Perfectionists claim that their justificatory values form part of, or are derived from, a true moral theory. Neutralists, on the other hand, eschew appeals to the truth in establishing the appropriateness of their justificatory values. They claim instead that the values to which they appeal are, in some sense, shared.\(^\text{11}\)

It is not my intention here to adjudicate between these different approaches, although I will pay more attention to Neutralism than Perfectionism, because Neutralism has received more attention in the contemporary literature, indicating that people are more puzzled about why Neutralism is thought to be an appropriate form of political justification than why Perfectionism is thought to be appropriate. Remaining agnostic between these two approaches, I want to show, first, how self-respect can serve as an appropriate object of appeal in liberal justification, and second, that appeals to self-respect allow both Perfectionist and Neutralist liberals to clarify some central principles and make progress in teasing out their implications. But for the remainder of this chapter I want to make some more detailed comments on Neutralism and Perfectionism.
1.5 Perfectionist Justification

Perfectionists claim that political principles should be justified by reference to how they promote certain values or ways of life over others. What makes a Perfectionist a liberal is the claim that these values incorporate liberty, or that these ways of life are best promoted by a principle of equal liberty. What makes a liberal a Perfectionist is the claim that these values or ways of life are worth promoting because it is true that they are superior to others, where truth is given by a first-order theory of value. It helps to think of a theory of value as what Rawls describes as a ‘comprehensive moral doctrine’. A comprehensive moral doctrine is one that:

... includes conceptions of what is of value in human life, ideals of personal virtue and character, and the like, that are to inform much of our nonpolitical conduct (in the limit our life as a whole). There is a tendency for religious and philosophical conceptions to be general [i.e. applying to a wide range of subjects - CM] and fully comprehensive; indeed, their being so is sometimes regarded as an ideal to be realized. A doctrine is fully comprehensive when it

\[12\] A first-order theory of value is a theory which purports to tell us what is and what is not valuable, whereas a second-order theory of value is a theory about what values are.
covers all recognised values and virtues within one rather precisely articulated scheme of thought ...

The Perfectionist interpretation of the demands that the access and acceptance constraints place on justification is this: for any value V appealed to in justification J one must show that V is a value according to a true comprehensive moral doctrine. The Perfectionist approach implies that those who reject J in virtue of its reference to V have false beliefs about V. If it is true that V is a value then we should be able to convince those who do not believe that V is a value that they are wrong, on the reasonable assumption that the truth can be learned. This is what makes V-referring justifications accessible and acceptable, even if they are not actually accessed and accepted. Excluding those who reject V from the constituency of justification, even if the exclusion is great, does not damage the liberal ideal of comprehensiveness because this ideal is limited by another ideal, that is, that justifications be accessed and accepted in virtue of their truth. If V is a value according to a true moral theory then this liberal ideal enjoins us to educate those who reject V, not erase from our justification any reference to V.


14 My description of Perfectionism has affinities with Nagel's description of what he calls 'common standpoint' defences of political legitimacy, an example of which it utilitarianism. He claims that according to these types of defence 'A political result is ... rationally acceptable to everyone because by the utilitarian standard it is right; it is not
The key claims of the liberal Perfectionist approach to justification are:

(i) Justification making reference to values \{v_1 \ldots v_n\} is accessible and acceptable to any person, even if such justification is not actually accessed and accepted.\textsuperscript{15}

(ii) It is true that values \{v_1 \ldots v_n\} are superior to any alternative set of values.

(iii) If equal liberty is not a member of the set of values \{v_1 \ldots v_n\} then equal liberty is the means most likely to enable people to access and accept a justification making reference to \{v_1 \ldots v_n\}.

What are the Perfectionist values? \textit{Prima facie} there are, I think, at least three distinct ways of giving content to the set \{v_1 \ldots v_n\}. First, one might claim that these values are moral facts. Perfectionists adopting this strategy must do three things. First, they owe an account of the nature of these facts.

\textsuperscript{15} I am suppressing qualifications like ‘above a certain level of cognitive capacity’: no liberal, whether Perfectionist or Neutralist, thinks that principles must be justified to the cognitively defective.
Second, they must explain how we can come to know about them. Third (and crucial for this position to qualify as liberal) their epistemology must make it plausible that—if it is not a fact that equal liberty is good—then equal liberty is supportive of the process of coming to know these moral facts. These are demanding requirements.

The second, and initially perhaps more plausible, Perfectionist strategy focuses on the knowledge that \{v_1 ... v_n\} are superior to any other set. The idea here is that a world in which people access and accept a justification making reference to \{v_1 ... v_n\} is better than a world in which they don't, not because of the bare fact that in this sort of world \{v_1 ... v_n\} are realised, but rather because a world in which \{v_1 ... v_n\} are realised is a world of better people. The idea here is that it is better that people have a degree of moral sensitivity or perception enabling recognition of \{v_1 ... v_n\} as superior to any other set than that they don't. On reflection, though, this position collapses into the previous Perfectionist approach, in the following way.

The claim that it is better that there exist people with a certain moral sensitivity than not is itself a claim of value. In that case it forms at least part of the set of true values. If it is only a part of this set—the other members constituting the objects of moral sensitivity or perception—then the ‘moral perception’ Perfectionist faces the same metaphysical and
epistemological challenges as the ‘moral fact’ Perfectionist, for she must account for the existence of and our knowledge of moral facts. If, however, it is the only member of this set then the position is empty for we have no account of exactly what it is that acute moral perceivers perceive. Without an account of the other members of \( \{v_1 \ldots v_n\} \)—the values perceived to be values by moral perceivers—we cannot identify moral perception or sensitivity and so cannot refer to the conditions of moral perception or sensitivity in justification. In other words, invoking moral perception as a political value is parasitic on an account of the values perceived by morally sensitive beings.

The third variety of Perfectionism, and by far the most plausible, is found in J.S. Mill and Raz. This form of ‘Capacity Perfectionism’ rests on the claim that the values constitutive of \( \{v_1 \ldots v_n\} \) are not a form of sensitivity or perception, or the objects of such perception, but are rather certain human capacities which can be seen to be valuable from the perspective of a true comprehensive moral doctrine. Capacity Perfectionism is not ‘moral fact’ Perfectionism by another name. Although it is taken to be a fact that the comprehensive moral doctrine is true, the values appealed to in Capacity Perfectionist justifications are not facts, but the capacities themselves: it may be a fact that these capacities are valuable, or a fact that the doctrine bestowing value upon them is true, but this claim does not figure in justification. Mill claimed that people should accept the Liberty Principle

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because it allows for the development of individuality, and individuality is necessary for happiness; he did not claim that the Liberty principle promotes the fact that persons are individuals and can only be happy if they develop their individuality. Raz defends individual rights because of how they enable the exercise of personal autonomy which is essential to well-being; he does not claim that rights promote the fact that autonomy supports well-being. In any case, a justification for a principle claiming that the principle promotes a fact is puzzling and perhaps incoherent, which gives us another reason for avoiding 'moral fact' Perfectionism.

Next, Capacity Perfectionism is not a form of 'moral perception' Perfectionism, for it is not the case that the value of the capacities invoked are explained by a uniform account of what their exercise yields. Mill's claim that the development of individuality is necessary for happiness is asserted to hold universally. But it does not follow that he is committed to a uniform account of what happiness is. In a similar way, although Raz claims that autonomy is necessary for well-being, he argues that levels of well-being are incommensurable. If this is true then his account of well-being cannot be uniform, for if states of well-being are the same across persons then levels of well-being should be comparable across persons, not incommensurable. Any universal account of the conditions under which the exercise of a capacity is valuable or possible will, of course, place limits on these conditions: poetry is better than pushpin, and autonomy is
incompatible with slavery. But setting such limits need not foreclose in any worrying way on the diversity of ways in which the capacity can be exercised. Of course, any form of Perfectionism—Capacity Perfectionism included—faces a task which no other forms of justification face: to defend the comprehensive moral doctrine in which justificatory values are embedded.17

At what point on the scale from maximalism to minimalism do Perfectionist18 constituencies of justification appear? The answer to this question all depends on the values appealed to in Perfectionist justification. That Perfectionist justifications appeal to values embedded in comprehensive moral doctrines does not in itself render such justifications minimalist and illiberal. For example, Perfectionist justifications that refer to values embedded in white supremacist or sexist comprehensive moral doctrines do not have constituencies which approximate to the liberal ideal of

17 The reasonableness of demanding a theory of value from any variety of Perfectionism is registered by one leading contemporary Perfectionist, G. Sher, in Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997) when he states that:

... it is one thing to say that [Perfectionist] conceptions [of the good] can in theory be defended and quite another to actually defend one. Until we take this further step, the bare claim that it is possible will ring somewhat hollow. Thus, before the Neutralist abandons his position, he may reasonably challenge his opponents to specify which ways of living are best and why. (p. 151)

18 From here on in, unless otherwise indicated, when I refer to 'Perfectionism' I shall mean 'Capacity Perfectionism'.
inclusiveness. On the other hand, if the values appealed to in Perfectionist justification are liberal values—for example, autonomy, toleration, respect, and reciprocity—then the constituency of justification will tend towards the comprehensive ideal that I have claimed characterises the liberal tradition as a whole. The other dominant method of modelling this ideal of justification is Neutralism.
1.6 Neutralist Justification

The Neutralist position is captured by the conjunction of a negative claim and a positive claim. The negative claim is that a justificatory value should not have its role in political justification because it stands in a certain relationship with a true comprehensive moral doctrine. The positive claim is that the values appealed to in justification should serve as the objects of appeal because they are, in some sense, shared. In other words, although the values appealed to in justification may in fact be endorsed as values by comprehensive moral doctrines believed to be true by those who hold them (indeed, and for all we know, they may actually be true) this is not the reason why those values figure in political justification.  

Different Neutralist liberals interpret this constraint on justificatory values in different ways. For example, in "The Priority of Right and Ideas of the Good" Rawls claims that his 'political' conception of justice:

... is formulated not in terms of any comprehensive doctrine but in terms of certain fundamental intuitive ideas viewed as latent in the public political culture of a democratic society. (p. 252)

In "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical" (Philosophy and Public Affairs, Vol. 14, 1985) he claims that:

By contrast with liberalism as a comprehensive moral doctrine, justice as fairness tries to present a conception of political justice rooted in the basic intuitive ideas found in the public culture of a constitutional democracy. ... justice as fairness seeks to identify the kernel of an overlapping consensus, that is, the shared intuitive ideas which when worked up into a political conception
between the values appealed to in political justification and the values embedded in a person's comprehensive moral doctrine may be desirable, but is not a criterion of accessibility and acceptability. What makes a Neutralist position a liberal position is that equal liberty is either itself a shared value, or that other shared values support a principle of equal liberty.

The central claims of the Neutralist liberal approach to justification are:

(i) Justification making reference to values \( \{v_1 \ldots v_n\} \) is accessible and acceptable to any person, even if such justification is not actually accessed and accepted.

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of justice turn out to be sufficient to underwrite a just constitutional regime.

(pp. 246-7)

In contrast, in 'Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy' Thomas Nagel appeals to 'a kind of epistemological restraint' (p. 229) to justify the Neutralist distinction between 'what justifies individual belief and what justifies appealing to that belief in support of the exercise of political power' (p. 229). This restraint—demanding 'a higher standard of objectivity' (p. 229) in our reasoning about how to resolve political conflict—means that:

... the parties to ... a disagreement can think of themselves as appealing to a common, objective method of reasoning which each of them interprets and applies imperfectly. They can therefore legitimately claim to be appealing not merely to their personal, subjective beliefs but to a common reason which is available to everyone ... (p. 235)

Although I will make some remarks about the idea of public reason in the next chapter, I will not attempt detailed discussion of Nagel's proposal that we think of the shared values of Neutralism as inherent in 'the view from nowhere'.
(ii) Values \{v_1 \ldots v_n\} are appropriate objects of appeal in political justification just in virtue of the fact that they are shared values.

(iii) If equal liberty is not a member of the set of values \{v_1 \ldots v_n\} then equal liberty is implied by the values which constitute \{v_1 \ldots v_n\}.

Why do Neutralists think, not only that one can, but further that one ought to, avoid appeal to values embedded in comprehensive moral doctrines, just because those values are so embedded? One plausible answer is that Neutralists pay particular attention to questions of stability when thinking about political justification. Justifying principles by reference to values embedded in a comprehensive moral doctrine is, in effect, justification by reference to that doctrine. Given the fact of reasonable pluralism, the fact that there exists a diversity of reasonable comprehensive moral doctrines means that justification referring to just one of these doctrines is unlikely to be accessed and accepted by those who hold different doctrines. One major difference between Neutralists and Perfectionists is that the former make an explicit avowal that they attempt to formulate justifications with constituencies that appear towards the maximalist end of the maximalist-minimalist scale, and this is because they view the fact of reasonable pluralism as, importantly, not something to be regretted, and, anyway, inevitable.\textsuperscript{20} For example, Rawls claims that:

\textsuperscript{20} In 'Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy' Nagel claims that:
... political liberalism assumes the fact of reasonable pluralism as a pluralism of comprehensive doctrines, including both religious and nonreligious doctrines. This pluralism is not seen as a disaster but rather as the natural outcome of the activities of human reason under enduring free institutions.21

Does this mean that Neutralist constituencies of justification better approximate the liberal ideal of inclusiveness than do Perfectionist constituencies? Not necessarily. That Neutralists are more explicit in their loyalty to this ideal does not mean they are actually more successful than Perfectionists in approaching it: as was the case with Perfectionism, this success all depends on the values appealed to.

I will make some more detailed comments on Neutralism in the next chapter, where I suggest that Rawls in particular can avoid a powerful criticism made by Raz by exploiting a conceptual resource he has already built into his theory; the idea of self-respect as a shared value. But here I

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... justifications hope to persuade the reasonable, so these attempts have a practical point: political stability is helped by wide agreement to the principles underlying a political order. But that is not all: for some, the possibility of justifying the system to as many participants as possible is of independent moral importance. Of course this is an ideal. (p. 218)

want to make some general comments about the possibility of Neutralism and some dangers it faces.

The most obvious challenge is the claim that the shared values appealed to in Neutralist justification do not exist. There are two stages in the development of the objection, and its seriousness increases at each stage.

**The First Stage:** The first stage of the objection is to argue that an examination of the diverse cultures, peoples and ways of life in the world suggests the absence of any substratum of shared value. If no such substratum exists then the Neutralist attempt to invoke shared values in justification is nothing but a form of Perfectionism which dare not speak its name. If such value substrata are chimerical then putative 'neutral' justifications are no such thing at all. What the Neutralist liberal actually appeals to are values which she, like the Perfectionist, harvests from a comprehensive moral doctrine. The Neutralist liberal shies away from the demand that such a doctrine be given a defence by denying that it exists,

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22 This charge is levied against Rawls by John Gray in *Liberalisms* (Routledge, London, 1989) when he asks:

Are there, in fact, any 'primary goods' that are truly universal? Life and health look unexceptional items on any list of true primary goods—though such an appearance may be delusive—but it is surely evident that the cultural relativity of the rest of Rawls' candidates restricts the class of primary goods and seriously impoverishes the notion of a rational life plan. Again, one must not follow Rawls in neglecting the possibility that the class of true primary goods is an empty one. (p. 35)
trying instead to vindicate appeal to her justificatory values by claiming that they are shared. But this claim is false. There are no such values and Neutralism collapses into a (dishonest) form of Perfectionism.\textsuperscript{23}

**The Second Stage:** The second—and more serious—stage of the objection is the claim that, not only does Neutralism dishonestly invoke a comprehensive moral doctrine in isolating its justificatory values, but that the doctrine it relies upon is itself morally objectionable. Possible ways of making good this claim are that Neutralist 'shared values' are infected by the particular values of the dominant gender, class, culture or race. But why should we accept that these values are a suitable foundation upon which to erect principles of justice? Dominance is a function of power and there is no reason to think that those with the most power have the best values. Reflecting in justification the values of the dominant groups in society, and calling these values 'shared', brings with it no guarantee of justice. Such justification may ensure a degree of social stability, but the price paid for

\textsuperscript{23} A form of this criticism is found in W.A. Galston's 'Pluralism and Social Unity', *Ethics*, Vol. 99, 1989. He states that:

social philosophy, liberalism included, cannot wholly rest its case on social agreement and must ultimately advert to truth-claims that are bound to prove controversial. (p. 712)
this stability is the absence of political legitimacy:²⁴ 'to each according to 
his threat advantage is not a conception of justice'.²⁵

The best way for the Neutralist to meet this objection is to do what it 
denies can be done: to find a value shared by all and show how an appeal to 
this value in justification is not tantamount to an appeal to a comprehensive 
moral doctrine. In the next chapter I begin by considering Raz's challenge 
to Neutralism, which takes us to the first stage of the objection. I will go on 
to describe a value which might enable Neutralists—in particular, Rawls—to 
meet Raz's challenge and avoid the first—and thus the second—stage of the 
objection described above. This value is self-respect. But whether self-
respect is defended as a value from within, or independent of, a 
comprehensive moral doctrine—whether the objection to Neutralism is well-
grounded or not—has no effect on the principles endorsed by reference to 
self-respect. Perfectionists and Neutralists can disagree about the nature of 
accessible and acceptable political justification while maintaining a united 
front on questions of principle related to self-respect.

²⁴ Rousseau's remark that "Tranquility is found also ... in dungeons; but is that enough to 
make them desirable places to live in?" nicely captures this point. The Social Contract 
(J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London, 1973), Book I, Chapter 4, p. 186.

THE LIBERAL DICHOTOMY

2.1 Outline

In this chapter I begin by narrowing focus to consider Raz’s objections to the ‘epistemic abstinence’ of Neutralism. Raz argues that Rawls’ conception of justice—the most prominent example of a Neutralist conception—must make claims to truth. It follows from this that the only way of distinguishing between different forms of liberalism is according to the comprehensive moral doctrines—taken to be true—from which their justificatory values are harvested. In 2.3 I explore a possible way of responding to Raz’s challenge by building upon Norman Daniels’ account of the role of a theory of the person in the structure of Neutralist justification. In 2.4 and 2.5 I offer an account of self-respect—as part of this theory of the person—which could be developed so as to avoid accusations that it has its

1 Rawls himself eschews the description ‘Neutralist’ but allows that political liberalism is procedurally neutral, so long as it is understood that it also appeals to substantive values, over and above ‘neutral’ values like impartiality and consistency of treatment. See ‘The Priority of Right and Ideas of the Good’, pp. 260-1. Rawls admits that his political liberalism nevertheless ‘seeks common ground—or if one prefers, neutral ground—given the fact of pluralism’ (ibid., p. 262). Given that I have been precise about what sorts of positions I mean to refer to with the term ‘Neutralism’, I do not think that any harm is done by retaining this term.
foundations in a comprehensive moral doctrine. Although I explore this point in 2.6 I remain ultimately uncommitted; the principles yielded by self-respect oriented justification remain the same whether self-respect is a genuinely shared value or a capacity that is valuable only from the point of view of a comprehensive moral doctrine.
2.2 Raz's Challenge

Raz attributes four characteristics to Rawls' Neutralism. First, he claims that Rawls' principles have 'limited applicability'; they apply only to the basic structure of society. Second, he claims that Rawlsian justice has autonomy from 'general moral theory', which is the point I stressed in the last chapter: Neutralist justificatory values are supposed not to be rooted in a comprehensive moral doctrine. Third, Rawlsian justice has 'shallow foundations'; that is, this conception of justice starts with the fact that—pluralism notwithstanding—certain beliefs and values are widespread in constitutional democracies, and utilises these beliefs and values in the construction of justification. Finally, Rawlsian justice requires a form of 'epistemic abstinence' which 'lies in the fact that [Rawls] refrains from claiming that his doctrine of justice is true'. Raz claims that:

Never before has it been suggested that governments should be unconcerned with the truth of the very views (the doctrine of justice) which inform their policies and actions, and never before has it been argued that certain truths should not be taken into

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2 J. Raz, 'Facing Diversity: The Case of Epistemic Abstinence', pp. 6-9. Raz's other target in this paper—which I will not discuss here—is Nagel.

account because, though true, they are of an epistemic class unsuited for public life.⁴

The epistemic abstinence characteristic of Neutralism—the refusal to invoke controversial truth claims when engaged in political discourse—reflects a fundamental distinction between public and private reason.⁵ Although Raz may be right to claim that governments have never before been enjoined to be unconcerned with the truth of the views which inform their policy making, I don’t think he is right in saying that the claim that some truths are epistemically unsuited for public life has never before been made. For consider Kant’s assertions, in An Answer to the Question: ‘What is Enlightenment?’, that:

The public use of one’s reason must always be free, and it alone can bring enlightenment among men; the private use of reason may quite often be very narrowly restricted, however, without undue hindrance to the progress of enlightenment. But by the public use of one’s own reason I mean that use which anyone may make of it as a man of learning addressing the entire reading public. What I

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term a private use of reason is that which a person may make of it in a particular civil post or office with which he is entrusted.\(^6\)

Kant goes on to use these definitions to make distinctions between an officer on duty and a military scholar off duty, the citizen as a tax payer and the citizen as a fiscal expert, a clergyman and a theologian. The former of each of these pairs has a specific public office which demands of them that they restrict their reasoning—in their capacity as holders of that office—in certain ways. On the other hand, the latter of each of these pairs has a freedom lacked by the former, for they can use their reason not in any public capacity but to address the ‘entire reading public’. Rather confusingly, it seems that by ‘private’ reason Kant intended something close to our ‘public’ reason, and vice versa. I am not claiming that Rawls’ account of epistemic abstinence neatly maps on to Kant’s public/private reason distinction. But it does seem that Kant had the idea that Raz claims is entirely new: that some truths are epistemically unsuitable as objects of appeal in public life. Kant thought that the public (read, for us, ‘private’) use of reason should be unrestricted so as to allow an individual ‘to speak in his own person’\(^7\) and offer ‘carefully considered, well-intentioned thoughts on the mistaken


\(^7\) I. Kant, ‘An Answer to the Question: ‘What is Enlightenment?’, in Kant’s Political Writings ed. H. Reiss, p. 57.
aspects of ... doctrines'. This sounds very like freedom to argue the truth of claims embedded in comprehensive moral doctrines, from which we are to epistemically abstain—in our roles as soldier, clergyman and taxpayer—when engaging in private (read, for us, ‘public’) discourse.

Putting questions concerning the accuracy of Raz’s claims about the pedigree of epistemic abstinence to one side, his deceptively simple objection to Rawlsian epistemic abstinence is this:

To recommend one [theory] as a theory of justice for our societies is to recommend it as a just theory of justice, that is, as a true, or reasonable, or valid theory of justice. ... There can be no justice without truth.

Raz’s objection to Rawls is an example of how to get to the first stage of objection to Neutralism mentioned at the end of the last chapter. The idea is that one cannot coherently recommend T as a theory of justice—a theory according to which we should draw up a constitution—without (at least implicitly) relying on the claim that that theory is true (or reasonable, or valid). For what else can one say if pushed to give the reasons why T is a better theory than T'? Merely pointing out that most people around here

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8 I. Kant, ‘An Answer to the Question: ‘What is Enlightenment?’, in Kant's Political Writings ed. H. Reiss, p. 56.

believe that T is true, and believe that T is better than T', will not convince someone who perhaps themselves believes in the superiority of T'. To win such a person to our view we must claim that it is true that our preferred theory T is better than T', and their belief to the contrary is wrong. If this powerful criticism cannot be met then epistemic abstinence is impossible for anyone who sincerely proposes their theory of justice as the theory of justice.

Raz's criticism implies that the public/private reason distinction cannot be made in terms of epistemic abstinence or restraint, for such restraint robs public reason of all content. This suggests that the Perfectionist public/private reason distinction is made from within a particular comprehensive moral doctrine which specifies the values to which we can legitimately appeal in political discourse, and which yields an adequate set of such reasons. In the next section I want to outline a Neutralist strategy for meeting Raz's challenge which relies on exploring the theory of the person with which Neutralist principles are in wide reflective equilibrium. If this strategy were to work then the prospects for a defence of Neutralist epistemic abstinence look brighter. But regardless of whether the strategy works, the value at its centre—self-respect—can also be given a Perfectionist defence from within a comprehensive moral doctrine which conforms to the liberal ideal of inclusiveness. So whether the strategy works or not, self-respect will emerge as an important liberal value.
2.3 A Neutralist Strategy

The Neutralist strategy I will sketch here relies on a particular understanding of Rawls' conception of wide reflective equilibrium as outlined by Norman Daniels. I take it that Rawls' claim that the test of the legitimacy of principles of justice is reflective equilibrium models the Neutralist invocation in justification of what I have called 'shared values'. Rawls claims that:

The point of view ... of you and me—is that from which justice as fairness, and indeed any other political conception, is to be assessed. Here the test is that of reflective equilibrium: how well the view as a whole articulates our more firm considered convictions of political justice, at all levels of generality, after due examination, once all adjustments and revisions that seem compelling have been made.

If principles of justice are taken to be in reflective equilibrium when they articulate the point of view of you and me, then you and I must share

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10 N. Daniels, Justice and Justification: Reflective Equilibrium in Theory and Practice, especially 'Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics' and 'Reflective Equilibrium and Justice as Political'.

11 J. Rawls, Political Liberalism, p. 28.
something which these principles articulate. Daniels claims that there are four levels to, or aspects of, Rawls' wide reflective equilibrium. At level I are the principles of justice we decide upon. At level II is the method of principle selection; for example, the hypothetical contract behind a veil of ignorance, or the device of the impartial spectator. This method of principle selection models our considered moral judgements. Principles are said to be in narrow or partial reflective equilibrium when they are yielded by the method of principle selection, where this method models our considered moral judgements. However, narrow reflective equilibrium is, as Daniels notes:

... particularly ill-suited to provide a basis for a justificational argument ... If we have reason to suspect that the initial judgements are the product of bias, historical accident, or ideology, then these elementary coherence considerations alone give us little basis for comfort, since they provide inadequate pressure to correct for them.  

12 N. Daniels, 'Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics', pp. 22f. Although Daniels focuses exclusively on Rawls, it is important to note that he takes the method of searching for wide reflective equilibrium to be an appropriate method in ethics per se.

13 N. Daniels, 'Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics', pp. 41-2, n. 4.
Leaving principles in narrow reflective equilibrium alone opens the door to the second and most serious stage of the objection to Neutralism I mentioned at the end of the last chapter. This is that we have no guarantee that Neutralist principles do more than just reflect the particular values of the dominant gender, class, culture or race. Insisting that principles are in wide reflective equilibrium can be seen as an attempt to meet this serious worry.

Once we have a set of principles in narrow reflective equilibrium we test them against the relevant background theories. At level III we have 'a theory of the person, a theory of procedural justice, general social theory, and a theory of the role of morality in society'. Finally, at level IV we have theories which enable us to test the feasibility of level I principles and level III theories. In sum:

The method of wide reflective equilibrium is an attempt to produce coherence in an ordered triple of sets of beliefs held by a particular person, namely (a) a set of considered moral judgements, (b) a set of moral principles, and (c) a set of relevant background theories.

Daniels claims many attractive features for the method of wide reflective equilibrium. He argues that it is not foundationalist and allows for a non-

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arbitrary—because theory-based—revision of the considered moral judgements inherent in level III theories, against which the acceptability of level II principle selection mechanisms are tested. He claims that the method is not subjectivist, asserting that the most that critics have shown is that the burden of proof lies with those who adopt the method to show that it is not subjectivist. And, he claims, the method is compatible with a variety of metaethical views. If these claims can be made good then Neutralists have at their disposal an extremely powerful tool. What I want to do here is suggest a certain emphasis in the theory of the person at level III which might enable Neutralists to meet Raz’s challenge.

To recap, Raz claims that to offer a theory of justice as the just theory of justice is to offer it ‘as a true, or reasonable, or valid theory of justice’. Raz goes on to claim, in a footnote, that he equates ‘true’, ‘sound’, ‘valid’, and so on. The important thing to be alert to here is that although Raz implicitly asserts a synonymy of ‘true’, ‘reasonable’ and ‘valid’ in the main


text, he does not do so in the footnote. Raz's hesitation in making this synonymy claim suggests a way for Neutralists to avoid his criticism: Neutralists can claim that asserting that a theory of justice is reasonable, and that it is reasonable to think that that theory is more reasonable than others, provides a way of choosing between and recommending theories which bypasses reference to truth. In that case Neutralists can make the assertions they want—and need—to make about theories of justice while maintaining their epistemic abstinence.

My suggestion is that Neutralists, and Rawls in particular, might claim, first, that the shallow foundations of their theory of justice—'the basic intuitive ideas found in the public culture of a constitutional democracy'—are not harvested from a comprehensive moral doctrine which tells us what the moral truth is. Rather, these justificatory values are rooted in our common culture because of what people are like. The theory of the person that tells us what people are like tells us what it is and is not reasonable for people to accept, regardless of what they believe to be true. The assumptions we make as part of this theory of the person then enable us to test level II apparatus and, consequently, level I principles. In the next few sections I will outline a conception of self-respect which might allow Neutralists to adopt this strategy, but only if they can give a convincing

21 Unless 'and so on' is supposed to refer to 'reasonable'.

argument that this conception of self-respect is genuinely yielded by a theory of the person which is not identical to, or part of, a comprehensive moral doctrine. If such an argument is not constructed then self-respect stands as a value to which Perfectionists can nevertheless appeal.

My strategy in the rest of this chapter is this. After discussion of a puzzle about self-respect I will suggest that self-respect is valuable because of how it protects the capacity to make certain action-guiding evaluative decisions characteristic of human agency. It is then a further question whether this conception of agency must be defended from within a comprehensive moral doctrine. If self-respect is harvested from a level III theory of the person which is not identical with, or does not mask, a comprehensive moral doctrine making claims to truth, then Neutralists can appeal to self-respect as a justificatory value whilst maintaining epistemic abstinence. Neutralists can argue that the extent to which a principle promotes social conditions supportive of self-respect is a measure of the principle’s reasonableness; part of the measure of reasonableness is the (non-moral) theory of the person employed at level III, and this theory makes self-respect fundamental to human agency. Perfectionists will argue that the claim most likely to fail in this Neutralist argument is that the theory of the person, from which self-respect as a political value is derived, is not part of a comprehensive moral doctrine. If Perfectionists are right, and self-respect turns out to be an appropriate justificatory value because the conception of agency with which it is connected is itself part of a comprehensive moral doctrine, then self-respect remains appropriate as a justificatory value, so long as a Perfectionist
defence of the relevant comprehensive moral doctrine can be given. Let me now turn to an examination of self-respect itself.
2.4 Self-Respect: An Intuitive Thought

The place to start an examination of self-respect is with an intuitive thought: self-respect depends on being or striving to be the kind of person one wants to be. Self-respect requires congruence between one’s self-conception and one’s self-expression; it depends upon meeting standards one takes to be definitive of oneself. Self-respect requires that one act in ways at least consistent with and preferably supportive of one’s self-conception. In failing to act in these ways one fails to be as one had thought one was or hoped one could be. This claim about self-respect is minimally controversial. It has no implications, for example, for the kinds of standards relevant to self-respect, the source of these standards, what counts as acting in conformity with these standards, or the phenomenology of self-respect.

Despite its appeal, the intuitive thought is inadequate as a conceptual resource either for Neutralists or for Perfectionists. The intuitive thought as it stands is too coarse grained to provide answers to difficult questions about self-respect and the social conditions which promote or impede its

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23 David Miller expresses the intuitive thought about self-respect nicely in ‘Arguments For Equality’ (Midwest Studies in Philosophy: Vol. III; Social and Political Philosophy, 1982) when he states that:

I have on the one hand an image of myself, a view about the kind of person that I am, and on the other hand a view about my actual performance in a number of areas. When performance falls significantly short of self-image, I am liable to lose self-respect. (p. 79)
development. To see this more clearly I will consider a puzzle about self-respect as characterised by the intuitive thought which suggests a way forward in finessing this conception. Despite the attractions of the intuitive thought a conception of self-respect characterised just by reference to this thought will be of little use to political philosophers. The variations on the intuitive thought which I develop put meat on its bones, and suggest an explanation of its importance which is available to both Neutralists and Perfectionists.

The puzzle I want to focus on can be illustrated by considering the following cases. First, take Eric Cantona, the ex-Manchester United striker. Let us assume that Eric’s self-expression conforms to his self-conception in so far as he performs well according to his standards for all those activities he values, and has no hidden failures or secret despair. According to the intuitive thought, then, Eric has self-respect.

Second, consider the Stepford Wives. Ignoring the fact that the Stepford Wives in the film were automata, let us stipulate that these are

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24 This example is inspired by the made for TV film The Stepford Wives (PPI pictures), adapted from a novel by Ira Levin, directed by Bryan Forbes and starring Nanette Newman and Katharine Ross. Briefly, the story follows a young wife and mother who moves with her husband to the town of Stepford. There she finds that wives like herself entirely devote themselves to satisfying the needs of their husbands and children and attending the occasional perfectly organised barbecue in floral chiffon dresses. The young wife investigates and finds that the husbands of Stepford are co-conspirators in a plot which involves kidnapping their wives and replacing them with physically identical robots.
women who perform well at all the activities at the heart of their self-conceptions: they are maestros at washing up, masters of cake baking and geniuses at keeping their husbands fed, clothed and sexually satisfied. As one of the Stepford husbands in the film says of his Wife, ‘She cooks as good as she looks’.

Combining these descriptions with the intuitive thought, it should follow that Eric and the Stepford Wives respect themselves to more or less the same degree, for they all achieve congruence between their self-conceptions and their self-expressions; Eric is one of the best Premier League players, and no-one touches the Stepford Wives when it comes to house and husband keeping. But do we really want to make this unqualified claim? The intuitive thought on its own seems to demand it, and yet there is also something intuitively disturbing about treating the Stepford Wives as paradigm self-respecters. The puzzle I will examine is why we are reluctant to treat the Stepford Wives as exemplary self-respecters when, *prima facie*, they meet the demands of the intuitive thought about self-respect. If our worries about the Stepford Wives are well grounded then there must be something true of Eric which is not true of the Stepford Wives which explains this unease. Pinpointing this something will pave the way for a more substantive and fine-grained understanding of the intuitive thought about self-respect.

who do all the cooking, cleaning, flattering and entertaining that their recalcitrant human wives would not.
2.5 Self-Respect and the Stepford Wives

At first sight there are four ways to explain the difference between Eric and the Stepford Wives. First, one could focus on what they do. Second, one could concentrate on the extent to which they exercise certain capacities. Third, one could address the nature of their preferences. And fourth, one could examine how they feel. Each of these approaches has counter-intuitive implications. But by examining problems with each of them we can gain an understanding of the subtlety of self-respect and how it can be lost.25

The most obvious way to explain the difference between Eric and the Stepford Wives is simply to claim that footballing is intrinsically and objectively more worthy of respect than housekeeping, and thus Eric respects himself more than the Stepford Wives because his attitude of respect towards himself qua footballer is more well-grounded than their attitudes of respect towards themselves qua housewives. This is an undesirable approach to the problem. Why should self-respect necessarily depend upon the objective value we place upon different personal achievements? The fact that we might think that housekeeping is objectively value-inferior to football (or vice versa) does not explain why we think that a group of housekeepers respect themselves less than a footballer (or vice

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versa). I believe it is better—objectively better—to devote one’s life to
music than to God, but I do not automatically conclude that all successful
pianists respect themselves more than a community of chaste Carmelites.

Focusing on the supposed superior worth of some activities and ways of
life over others in fleshing out the intuitive thought about self-respect is
incompatible with both Capacity Perfectionist and Neutralist approaches.
Advocates of both approaches would agree that it contravenes the liberal
ideal of inclusiveness to expect a person who lives a life taken to be inferior
by those who offer her a justification to access and accept that justification.
Such access and acceptance depends on her agreeing that the activities
according to which she defines herself are inferior. As indicated in chapter
1, what unites Capacity Perfectionists and Neutralists as liberals is their
loyalty to the ideal of an inclusive constituency of justification, which means
that a diversity of ways of life are compatible with membership of this
constituency. This first approach to self-respect as a justificatory value—
tying it closely to certain ways of life and not others—seems unlikely to
yield such a constituency.

The defender of this first strategy for solving the puzzle of the Stepford
Wives could protest that what she meant by claiming that certain activities
provide a better ground for self-respect than other activities was not that
some activities are intrinsically more worthy than others. Rather, what she
meant was that some activities are more suited than others for encouraging
the development and exercise of certain capacities, and the exercise of these
capacities is what grounds self-respect. The claim now is that the difference between Eric and the Stepford Wives is the degree to which they exercise certain capacities. But we cannot evaluate this approach at this level of abstraction: we need to know exactly what capacities the exercise of which are supposed to support self-respect.

So what are these capacities? One obvious candidate is the capacity for autonomy, understood as self-determination independent of others. The Stepford Wives determine their lives according to social norms which prioritise the wishes of their husbands, whereas (the argument would go) Eric stands alone and thinks for himself. Thus Eric has more self-respect than the Stepford Wives.

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26 This is the position Diana Meyers takes in *Self, Society and Personal Choice* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1988) when she states that:

... absorbing and following a socially enforced code manifests a natural capacity comparable to the ant’s ability to carry heavy loads. When self-respect is based on this sort of adaptability rather than on a capacity for reflection and choice, self-respect is directed at a natural capability rather than at one’s distinctive capacities as an agent. Thus this respect is unwarranted, and uncompromised self-respect requires the exercise of the complete range of one’s moral faculties. (p. 226)

Another example of this approach can be found in Elizabeth Telfer’s ‘Self-Respect’ (*Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 18, 1968). She claims that:

When we say that someone has self-respect, we are attributing to him qualities of independence, tenacity and self-control. A man cannot have [conative] self-respect if he does not have these; whether he himself values them or not is immaterial. (p. 118)
The main problem with this version of the ‘capacity’ approach is that positing autonomy-as-independence as a necessary condition for self-respect, regardless of whether the person whose self-respect is in question values autonomy-as-independence, is excessively chauvinistic; it is one conception of self-respect dependent upon one specific and particular set of values which are not shared by all. Like the first approach I considered, this version of the ‘capacity’ approach to self-respect as a justificatory value yields a constituency of justification which appears too far towards the minimalist end of the scale to model the liberal ideal of inclusiveness.

Apart from its unsuitability as a conception for those who are loyal to the liberal ideal of inclusiveness, a conception of self-respect as dependent on autonomy-as-independence is also independently counter-intuitive. One of the pre-analytical hallmarks of self-respect is that all sorts of people with diverse characters and values can all equally well respect themselves. Intuitively, this diversity includes those whose lives are structured according to social norms, those who never rebel or break away. Of course, not any life led according to a social norm is supportive of self-respect: whether this is true all depends on the norm in question. Although the autonomy-as-independence approach does not set the limits to the diversity of ways of life fit to support self-respect in the right place, there may be other versions of this approach that can get these limits right, from a liberal point of view. In due course I shall be considering how to modify the ‘capacity’ approach so as to better approximate the liberal ideal of inclusiveness.
The third approach claims that a person cannot have self-respect unless the preferences she acts upon in pursuing valued goals are authentic. Here, authentic preference formation is a necessary condition for self-respect. One prominent account of authentic preferences defines them as objectively contributing to the development of the person according to an Aristotelian conception, but one could equally well adopt other conceptions of human flourishing to elucidate authenticity. One could argue, then, that Eric’s preferences for football contribute to his flourishing as an individual whereas the Stepford Wives’ preferences for catering for their husbands to the exclusion of all else do not, and thus Eric has, and the Stepford Wives lack, self-respect.

The authenticity based approach shares the basic flaw of the other two approaches; it requires a description of a necessary condition for self-respect in terms of one very specific—in this case Aristotelian—set of values. An analysis of self-respect which proceeds like this cannot reflect the way in which self-respect transcends particular value differences and precludes reference to the concept of self-respect in liberal justification aspiring to an inclusive constituency.

The final approach takes an entirely different tack. Here the claim is that Eric and the Stepford Wives differ in their levels of self-esteem, in how well

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they think of themselves. Eric—this approach would suggest—sees himself as rather grand, a cut above the rest. The Wives, on the other hand, are meek and compliant, suggesting a view of themselves as insignificant, undeserving and of little consequence.

Some philosophers have, in the way illustrated by this approach, simply conflated self-respect and self-esteem. The foundations of the currently fashionable concept of self-esteem are best understood in the psychologist William James's terms. James claimed that self-esteem depends on the ratio of a person's successes to her aspirations, such that the more successful a person is at achieving her goals, the greater the esteem in which she will hold herself.

There are two things wrong with this approach. First, it cannot explain our unease about the Stepford Wives for—it was stipulated—the Wives are extremely successful at housekeeping, just as successful—we could claim—as Eric is at football. So focusing on the degree to which the Wives' deeds fulfil their aspirations cannot distinguish them from Eric. To see the second problem with this approach we have to note that no constraints are placed upon the nature of the goals achievement of which contributes to self-

28 In A Theory of Justice Rawls continually and confusingly treats 'self-respect' and 'self-esteem' as synonyms. This supposed synonymy is absent in Political Liberalism.

esteem. This means that the achievement of any goal forming part of an aspiration is a candidate contributor to self-respect; any goal can be supportive of self-respect. Now it may be the case that the achievement of any goal can contribute to self-esteem—to feeling good about oneself—but it is not so obvious that the achievement of any goal is supportive of self-respect. Is success in achieving one’s slavish goals supportive of self-respect? Success in achieving one’s sado-masochistic goals? Or goals involving killing, maiming or torturing? It may contingently be the case that all those who respect themselves also hold themselves in esteem; we may also be able to make a moral argument that self-respect always provides a ground for self-esteem. But the reverse of these claims are not obviously true, as we can see by reconsidering our reactions to the Stepford Wives. We can admit that the Stepford Wives esteem themselves and still have worries over their self-respect. The possibility of a constant conjunction of self-respect and self-esteem has no implications for the identity of the concepts.30

At this point one could be forgiven for thinking that any attempt to address the puzzle of the Stepford Wives without invoking particular values, which would shrink any constituency of justification so as to move it away

from the liberal ideal, is futile. In what follows I hope to give a satisfactory answer to the puzzle which shows that this is not the case. This answer, while harmonising with the intuitive thought, illustrates how self-respect depends both on what one does as well as on what one values, and illuminates the general structure of the life of a self-respecting person. With this answer in place we can move on to make some more far reaching claims about this conception of self-respect which will provide a rounded account and an explanation of the intuitive thought about self-respect. With this account in hand I will then move on to explain why both Perfectionists and Neutralists can adopt it as an account of self-respect as a justificatory value.

So exactly what is wrong with the Stepford Wives? What is it that they have or do which would explain our reluctance to point them out to children as self-respecting role models?

A clue to explaining this reluctance is found by pinpointing a possible reason why the Stepford Wives so assiduously perform their household tasks. Let us assume that their desire to please their husbands is generated—at least initially—by a fear of the censure or criticisms which they will receive if they fail to keep house well. When an action is explained by a fear of this sort, the fear that one will be in some way punished if one fails to meet standards set for one by others then, I submit, that action cannot serve as a basis for self-respect.
This does not imply that the self-respecting person will not fear failure or attempt to avoid criticism *per se*. As already noted, one of the things we fear most is the loss of self-respect, the failure to succeed by our own lights. But fearing that one will become liable to self-criticism is different from fearing the criticism of others, even though these two worries are often intimately connected. People sometimes internalise the criticisms of others and develop a self-attitude which blinds them to their personal successes. One difference between Eric and the Stepford Wives—given the assumption made in the last paragraph—can be found in the explanations we might give of their respective fears of failure. Eric’s self-criticisms are dependent upon his failure according to what he counts as success, whereas the Stepford Wives self-criticisms are dependent upon a desire to please their spouses, originally inculcated in them by a fear of incurring the censure of their husbands in virtue of what they count as success for their Wives.

We can now pinpoint the source of our worries about the Stepford Wives and their self-respect. One plausible explanation of the Wives’ fear of their husbands censure and their overwhelming desire to promote their husbands’ interests is their perception of them as their moral superiors, that is, as worth more than they are.\(^{31}\) A person who acts as the Stepford Wives do in virtue

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\(^{31}\) Of course, this is not the only possible explanation of the Wives behaviour—perhaps they behave as they do out of a concern for the well-being of their children, or perhaps they simply adore their husbands—but it is the one that explains our worries about their self-respect. If other explanations are the genuine ones then our worries about the Stepford Wives are misplaced. It is then a further question—which I do not pretend to have answered—how we decide which explanation is the most accurate.
of such a belief about their status is subservient, and it is the probable
subservience of the Stepford Wives that distinguishes their case from that of
Eric and explains our unease over their claims to healthy levels of self-
respect. The claim in general is that when a person promotes the interests of
another *primarily* because they believe themselves to be of less value than
that other then they are subservient, and subservience is incompatible with
self-respect however one gains it.\(^{32}\)

This strategy imports no particular or specific values into the explanation
of why the Stepford Wives lack self-respect, and so avoids undesirable
shrinkage of the constituency of (putative) liberal justifications making
reference to self-respect. Pinpointing the source of worries about the
Stepford Wives in their probable subservience avoids addressing the
question of the worthiness of housekeeping *per se* or the Wives’ failure to
live up to various ideals of the good life. To avoid subservience one must
view the other who benefits from one’s actions as no more valuable than
oneself, and this belief is compatible with a wide range of perspectives and
ways of life, enabling a sufficient degree of diversity in the constituency of
self-respect oriented justifications for them to approximate to the liberal
ideal. Eric avoids the self-disrespect of the Stepford Wives as I have

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\(^{32}\) For a similar account of this relationship see Chapter 1 of T.E. Hill’s *Autonomy and
mine in that he defines servility in terms of a failure to appreciate the importance of, or
perhaps even to acknowledge the existence of, one’s rights.
described them partly by avoiding subservient behaviour. But if the activity leading to Eric's footballing successes is explained by a desire to please a dominant wife or father viewed by him as of greater value than he himself, then he too would be subservient and damage his self-respect. Alternatively, if the Stepford Wives excel at housekeeping out of a love for keeping house, or a desire to do their bit in a partnership with their husbands which they view as an equal one, then—in keeping house at least—they avoid self-disrespect. Subservience has been defined such that many different kinds of lives based around diverse sets of values can evince a subservient structure.

In this way subservience, which is one way of losing self-respect, does not arbitrate between different conceptions of the good, and so avoids a constituency of justification appearing towards the minimalist end of the scale. Focusing on the subservience of the Stepford Wives in explaining why they lack self-respect, even given the congruence between their self-conception and their self-expression, reveals the value at the heart of self-respect. In the next section I suggest that what the Stepford Wives qua subservient and qua persons have, but fail to acknowledge in the way they live their lives, are capacities for agency. In other words, I will offer an approach belonging to the same family as the autonomy-as-independence approach described above, but making reference to a set of capacities which yield justifications closer to the liberal ideal.
2.6 Strong Evaluation and Self-Respect

The Stepford Wives are subservient, and in virtue of this attribute they lack self-respect (or at least have less than relevantly similar others like Eric). But why does subservience damage self-respect? Subservience is defined in terms of the value a person perceives herself to have in relation to others towards whose benefit her actions are directed. In the case of the Stepford Wives, their subservience was (we assumed) originally prompted by a fear of the criticisms they would receive were they not to act in a subservient way. But fear of this kind is not strictly necessary for subservience. A person can be subservient towards another without ever having been blatantly threatened or obviously coerced; the person to whom they are subservient may be a kind and gentle master who would never employ force or threat to regain their advantage should they lose it.\(^{33}\) So fear of another is not in itself sufficient to damage self-respect.

The real worry about the effect of subservience on the Stepford Wives' self-respect concerns how their subservient self-conceptions undermine their capacities for agency. I think that the real reason why we are reluctant to ascribe self-respect to the Stepford Wives is that the lesser value which they perceive themselves to have in comparison with their husbands damages

\(^{33}\) Thomas Hill's example of the 'Uncle Tom' figure could easily be adapted to meet this description of subservience by stipulating that he has never been subject to threats or coercion of any kind. See chapter 1 of Hill's Autonomy and Self-Respect.
their agency by impeding their capacity to act for reasons which they themselves find to be good reasons for action, where this evaluation of reasons has—in a way to be explained—depth and articulacy. The explanation of their acting so as to benefit their husbands is that the Wives believe that, in virtue of their husbands' greater value, their husbands deserve such benefits. The Stepford Wives—we have assumed—do not act primarily out of love, affection or concern (although these subsidiary reasons may well be present). The Stepford Wives act to benefit their husbands because they believe that such action is demanded of them in virtue of their husbands' superior value. Were they to cease to feel love, affection or concern for their husbands they would nonetheless still feel bound to promote their interests, even if such action precluded other courses of action which they would, after deep and articulate reflection, find that they have good reason to pursue. The Stepford Wives' reasons for action are determined for them by their beliefs about their place in a hierarchy of value, and these beliefs interfere with a type of reflection on reasons for action which is characteristic of agency.

The rigid prescription of a persons reasons for action which subservience brings endangers capacities for agency. Although the Stepford Wives

34 Again, a full defence of such an assumption requires a description of the method we use to determine whether the Stepford Wives are, in fact, subservient. I am using the Stepford Wives as an example only; the assumptions I make about them are only supposed to help in developing a conception of self-respect. I am not claiming that people who actually live their lives like the Wives are subservient.
achieve congruence between their self-conceptions and their self-expressions, such congruence is, in this case, irrelevant to their self-respect, because their self-conceptions are themselves in conflict with the protection of their capacities for agency. And unless these capacities are protected any conformity between self-conception and self-expression cannot support self-respect. So the real difference between Eric and the Stepford Wives is to be found in aspects of their self-conceptions: Eric protects his capacities for agency through his self-expression, as well as expressing himself in conformity with other aspects of his self-conception. The Stepford Wives' desires to promote the interests of their husbands—in virtue of their perception of them as of superior value—are likely to damage their capacities for agency. Thus the congruence they achieve between their self-conceptions and their self-expressions cannot ground their self-respect.35

Let us take a closer look at the connection between self-respect and agency. To possess the capacity for agency is, in part, to possess the capacity to set ends and rationally pursue them. The exercise of these capacities requires reflection on ends and means; one sets oneself an end, as opposed to having ends set for oneself by others or merely finding oneself with ends, when one discovers through reflection that one has good reason to adopt that end. One pursues that end rationally when one discovers through

35 Questions of responsibility for such a failure will not be addressed here. I do not mean to suggest that the Stepford Wives are necessarily to blame for their failure to achieve self-respect.
reflection that one has good reason to adopt this set of means as opposed to that set. It is the need for reflection on ends and means that explains the connection between agency and action for reasons that one finds good. The term 'the capacity for agency' refers to the set of interconnected capacities to set ends and discover means through the use of reflection which reveals good reasons for adopting these ends and means.

Describing agency in terms of action for reasons which the agent finds good might suggest an overly demanding conception of what it is to be an agent. Surely all of us at one time or another do things we do not want to do, or things that conflict with our interests, or things that prima facie we do not value. When I do things I do not want to do, or things which conflict with my interests, am I ipso facto no longer an agent? Not necessarily: reasons can be good without embodying wants or promoting immediate interests. Consider the following case.

Suppose I embark on a career which I know will leave me unfulfilled and unhappy. At one level my reasons for acting so as to secure this career seem bad: who wants to be unfulfilled and unhappy? But if we look at the bigger picture, that is, if we look at my choice in the context of my life as a whole, we may find that my reasons for embarking on an unfulfilling career are excellent. Perhaps this career is financially rewarding and secure, and this allows me to be sure that I will always have the resources to care properly for a child; or perhaps financial rewards and job security mean that I can live my life without what I hate the most, that is, worry and stress; or perhaps the
security and financial rewards of this job mean that I can be sure of donating substantial amounts to charity in the coming years. All of these are very good reasons for action. The point here is that in assessing whether a person’s reasons for action are found by them to be good or bad we need to make reference to their conception of the good and overall plan of life, which will include an idea of who they are and who they hope to become. Determining whether a reason for action is good does not depend upon determining the degree to which action on the basis of these reasons will ensure immediate contentment or the satisfaction of first-order desires.

In order to set ends and pursue them we must have some capacity to reflect on what we want, what the options are and what is possible. Why should we think that subservience undermines this capacity to set ends and discover means through reflection? Perhaps the Stepford Wives duly reflect upon their desires to serve their husbands and find that, of all the options available to them, serving their husbands is what they want to do the most, even though there are other things unrelated to their husbands’ benefit which they also want to do. To determine whether the Wives’ are subservient in this case requires closer examination of their lines of reflection. Consider these two cases.

A. ‘I want to see a film with my friends this evening, but hubby wants me to cook dinner for his boss, so I’d better cancel the film. After all, his interests are more important than mine’.
B. 'I want to see a film with my friends tonight, but hubby wants me to cook dinner for his boss. Well, so long as this is a one-off I'll cancel the film for this evening and go tomorrow instead. After all, he'd do the same for me.'

I think most of us would react in different ways to each of these lines of reflection were two friends to reveal them to us, even though each line of reflection yields the same course of action. I think that we would worry about a friend's self-respect were she to repeat A to us, but this worry would not be prompted by B. Our differing reactions to A and B are not, I think, explained by the fact that the second line of reflection includes reference to reciprocity; our reactions to A and B would remain different even if we replaced the last sentence of B with 'And I do love him'. Rather, we should make the distinction between A and B in terms of the implications that these reasons have for the nature of other reasons. In the first line of reflection the Wife is moved simply by her perception of her husband's interests as more important than hers, and I think our worry is that this perception will lead her to yield to whatever request he makes: her reasons for action seem rigidly prescribed in virtue of her perception of her interests as less important than her husband's interests. But in the second case the Wife decides what to do on grounds not related to her perception of her own value as less than that of her husband. She chooses instead on grounds related to other aspects of her relationship with her husband—in this case, reciprocity—such that a different request might yield a different decision.
When we make an intuitive self-respect based distinction between A and B I think what we register is the possible harmful effect of the eventual decision on certain capacities constitutive of human or rational agency. In A the Wife’s deference to her husband’s wishes is worrying because the reason she gives for such deference suggests an (actual or nascent) attitude on her behalf such that in all cases deference is appropriate, regardless of the request. In B, however, this suggestion is absent: the Wife reasons that, on this occasion, and given her relationship with him, she will defer to her husband’s wishes. But future requests might not have the same effect, for relationships and circumstances can change. So what makes the universal deference suggested by A so worrying? What capacities does such deference damage? It cannot be the capacity to reflect on reasons per se, for in both A and B the Wives reflect on options, desires, and their relationships with their husbands. What we need to do here is to make a distinction between different kinds of reflection on reasons for action. Making this distinction will suggest that what self-respect protects is the capacity for deep and articulate reflection on reasons, the kind of reflection which is unlikely to yield A. A friend who repeats A to us is, prima facie, a friend whose self-respect is damaged or in danger.

Taylor’s distinction between strong and weak evaluation of options is a good place to start. Taylor claims that when we weakly evaluate a course

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of action X it is sufficient for it to be judged good that it be desired. If there are no desires which conflict with X then weak evaluation yields reasons for action which track the desire to do X. But if there are conflicting desires, and if weak evaluation yields the decision to do Y and not X then this is only on the grounds of Y’s ‘contingent incompatibility’ with X. X is still found good, but Y is weakly evaluated to be better; so given that we cannot do both X and Y, we do Y.\textsuperscript{37} In contrast, strong evaluators:

... deploy a language of evaluative distinctions, [such that] the rejected desire is not so rejected because of some mere contingent or circumstantial conflict with another goal. Being cowardly does not compete with other goods by taking up the time or energy I need to pursue them, and it may not alter my circumstances in such a way as to prevent my pursuing them. The conflict is deeper; it is not contingent.\textsuperscript{38}

The strong evaluator’s evaluation of her options has, as Taylor claims, an \textit{articulacy} and a qualitative \textit{depth} which weak evaluation lacks. The strong evaluator has a ‘vocabulary of worth’ which is of a different nature to that of the weak evaluator. When, on the basis of strong evaluation, we choose to do Y and not X we do so not because we cannot do both X and Y and want

\footnote{\textsuperscript{37} See C. Taylor, ‘What is Human Agency?’, p. 19.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{38} Taylor, ‘What is Human Agency?’, p. 21.}
to do Y more than X, but rather because Y reflects, and X undermines, the quality of life we value.

Returning to the lines of reflection A and B described above, A evinces weak evaluation and B evinces strong evaluation. In A the Wife wants both to see her friends and to please her husband. But courses of action leading to the satisfaction of these two desires are contingently incompatible. The Wife's perception of her husband's interests as more important than her own because of her belief in his greater value leads to her weakly evaluative decision to cook dinner for her husband's boss rather than see her friends. The Wife's subservience precludes strong evaluation of any of her options and, furthermore, prompts the worry that her deference is universal, that she will defer regardless of the circumstances.

In B, however, the Wife's decision to cook dinner for her husband's boss is strongly evaluative; she chooses on the grounds of her conception of herself as the kind of person who fulfils her part of the marriage partnership. In B the Wife's evaluative reflection yielding reasons for action makes reference to her conception of herself as a particular sort of person with certain commitments and obligations which she must fulfil if she is remain recognisable as herself. The point here is not that strong and weak evaluation are mutually exclusive, such that we can be either strong evaluators or weak evaluators, but not both. The point is rather that (at least)
occasional strong evaluation prevents the possibility of universal deference which we found worrying in A.\footnote{But couldn't we argue here that the subservient A-Wife also makes her choice as a result of strong evaluation? The A-Wife feels that she \textit{must} cook dinner for her husband's boss, and so her choice is not a result of weighing contingently incompatible alternatives. Rather, she makes her decision after reflection—however inchoate—on who she is and what she must do to remain recognisable as that same person. If this is true of the A-Wife then she is indeed a strong evaluator and our worries about her self-respect and agency are misplaced. But in the line of reflection A above, there is no analogue of the B-Wife's judgement that fairness demands that she 'do her bit'. Instead, the A-Wife just reflects on her belief that her husband's interests are more important than her own. Now \textit{perhaps} the line of reflection A does mask strong evaluation; but all this suggests is that from the outside it is often extremely difficult to distinguish strong from weak evaluation. But it is nevertheless \textit{possible} that the A-Wife does not strongly evaluate her options. If this is the case, then her subservience—that is, her lack of self-respect—threatens her capacity for agency. Marylin Freedman takes a similar approach to subservience in 'Moral Integrity and the Deferential Wife' (\textit{Philosophical Studies} 47, 1985,141-150). She claims that:}

To the extent that an individual omits to evaluate her preferences, and simply acts uncritically to satisfy them, to that extent she fails to achieve whole moral personhood; she lacks moral integrity. (p. 147)
Agency is in part constituted by the capacity to reflect on—in the sense of 'strongly evaluate'—ends and means. But the exercise of capacities for strong evaluation depends on action which supports and strengthens a self-conception providing the materials for reflection in the search for good reasons. To be a strongly evaluating human agent is to act for reasons found good according to a deep and articulate vocabulary of worth, but one cannot find reasons good or bad in this way unless one possesses a standard by which one can judge them good or bad. This standard is given by one's self-conception, one's idea of oneself as a particular person, be it a footballer or a housewife, a priest or a president. But we are not born with ready-made self-conceptions. We become what we are—we gain the materials upon which our self-conceptions are built—by doing things. We engage in projects, develop values, embark on relationships, accept and demand commitments, and strive towards goals. Self-respect is partially dependent upon congruence between self-conception and self-expression because without such congruence a person will lack a robust self-conception which enables strongly evaluative reflection on reasons for action. Self-conceptions remain robust to the extent that they are developed and supported through action. Self-respect is the state of a person which enables that person to, at least occasionally, strongly evaluate. Having sketched what self-respect is and which capacities it protects, let me turn to the issue of its suitability as a justificatory value for Neutralists and Perfectionists.
2.7 The Liberal Dichotomy

To finish this chapter I want to show how the conception of self-respect I have sketched here can be adopted both by liberal Capacity Perfectionists and by liberal Neutralists. The conception of self-respect I have developed should be attractive from both points of view in virtue of how an appeal to it in justification yields an inclusive constituency. Self-respect provides a robust self-conception which enables strong evaluation, and there are very many self-conceptions which are compatible with strong evaluation. Before moving on let me dispense with an objection: that there is a certain circularity in the account of the relationship between self-respect and strong evaluation.

The supposed circle is this. Strong evaluation yields reasons for action; self-respect depends upon action for reasons, and so some of the reasons for action issuing from strong evaluation must be reasons for performing self-respect supporting actions; but self-respect oriented action is itself supposed to yield a robust self-conception enabling strong evaluation. The problem is: how do we ever get into a position to have reasons for action which enable self-respect, if the existence of these reasons is itself dependent on self-respect?

First, I am not sure that there is, in fact, a problem here, for there may be ways in which self-respect can be nurtured which do not depend on prior
strong evaluation. For example, a person's self-respect can be supported, not through what she does, by through the attitudes of others towards her. In this case the love and respect of family and friends may engender self-respect, yielding a robust self-conception enabling strong evaluation. But even is there is a genuine chicken-and-egg problem here, it should not prevent us from invoking self-respect as a justificatory value. The question of how we ever get into a position to be language-users faces a similar problem, but it does not prevent us from assuming for the purposes of theory construction that people are, in fact, language-users.

Turning now to the liberal dichotomy, it is easy enough to see how Perfectionists might adopt this conception of self-respect as a justificatory value. For Perfectionists, reference to self-respect in political justification is endorsed by a comprehensive moral doctrine: according to this doctrine—which is asserted as true—the exercise of capacities for strong evaluation which self-respect protects is a good thing. The Perfectionist might argue this claim in any number of ways: self-respect is an important aspect of well-being, or promotes happiness, or independence, or is fundamental to self-realisation. In fact, perhaps the most natural way to read Taylor's account of strong evaluation is as a Perfectionist account. The capacity to reflect upon a self-conception and discover non-contingent reasons for action is a capacity which human beings, if they are to realise themselves as human agents, ought to exercise. If, as I have claimed, self-respect is a condition of the exercise of these capacities then we ought to strive for self-respect. To fail to do so is to deny an aspect—perhaps the most fundamental aspect—of
our nature. A comprehensive moral doctrine in which these claims are embedded would stress the moral importance of the self-creating, self-interpreting life.\textsuperscript{40}

Perfectionist strategies for justifying reference to self-respect as protective as capacities for human agency seem clear. What is more puzzling is how Neutralists might explain their appeal to this conception of self-respect. My particular interest here is in showing how this conception might emerge from a level III theory of the person employed by a Neutralist. The important thing to note at the start is that making certain assumptions about persons is unavoidable in the attempt to construct political justification, and need not be tantamount to making Perfectionist assumptions. Here I disagree with Daniels, who claims that Rawls’ approach to justification sails between two alternatives. One ties principles to the ‘actual desires and interests of persons’,\textsuperscript{41} which must be avoided if we are to retain a degree of ‘critical leverage’ with respect to these principles. Losing this critical leverage is one of the dangers to Neutralism I mentioned at the end of chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{40} I do not mean to directly attribute this comprehensive moral view to Taylor, but for more on the ides of human agents as self-interpreting see his ‘Self-Interpreting Animals’, \textit{Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I}.

\textsuperscript{41} N. Daniels, ‘Reflective Equilibrium and Justice as Political’ in \textit{Justice and Justification: Reflective Equilibrium in Theory and Practice}, p. 144.
On the other hand Daniels claims that principles may be justified by invoking 'a priori or perfectionist assumptions about the nature of persons and the social order'.42 These kinds of assumptions are to be rejected, according to Daniels, because they can undermine common agreement on principles and motivation to follow them, if indeed they yield any concrete principles at all. My point of disagreement with Daniels is on the question of whether all a priori assumptions can and should be avoided by Neutralists in the search for justificatory values. Some a priori assumptions—those embedded in a comprehensive moral doctrine—should certainly be avoided by Neutralists; but must all a priori assumptions be so embedded? Are there any a priori assumptions which Neutralists can safely make without risking accusations that they are Perfectionists in disguise?

Rawls states that 'a political conception must draw upon various ideas of the good';43 and goes on to claim that in giving an account of this good—yielding justificatory values—'We do not look to the comprehensive doctrines that in fact exist and then draw up a political conception that strikes some kind of balance between them'.44 If we do not discover justificatory values by finding the 'center of gravity'45 of actually existent

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comprehensive doctrines then in specifying these values we must make some a priori assumptions, assumptions which are not generalisations from the experience of actually existent comprehensive doctrines.

We leave aside those comprehensive doctrines that now exist, or that have existed, or that might exist. The thought is not that primary goods are fair to comprehensive conceptions of the good associated with such doctrines, by striking a fair balance between them, but rather that they are fair to free and equal citizens as persons affirming such conceptions.\(^46\)

Rawls claims here that we must make a priori assumptions about persons as free and equal citizens when we construct principles of justice. Might not a Neutralist also make assumptions about people as self-respecters when constructing such principles? Neutralists can make this assumption only if they can defend a theory of person which claims that the exercise of these capacities is characteristic of human agency, and agency is not a value embedded in a comprehensive moral doctrine, but rather is part of a theory of the person giving content to the idea of the reasonable.

If this case can be made then Neutralists can avoid describing those who reject justifications making reference to self-respect as bad or in possession

\(^46\) J. Rawls, 'The Priority of Right and Ideas of the Good', p. 276, my emphasis. See also 'Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical', p. 233f.
of false moral beliefs. Neutralists might claim instead that such people are unreason­able, for the following reasons. If there is a genuine connection between self-respect and human agency (characterised by strong evaluation) then a lack of concern about the conditions of one’s self-respect indicates a lack of concern about the conditions of one’s agency. But, the Neutralist might venture, a person who is disinterested in the retention of her ability to strongly evaluate options and possibilities is not, so we think, an example of a normally functioning person, but rather an example of a person who needs help. This judgement tells us something important about the content of the level III theory of the person serving as a touchstone according to which we judge whether principles are justified, that is, in wide reflective equilibrium. The argument would be that the level III theory of the person—constituted by ‘the basic intuitive ideas found in the public culture of a constitutional democracy’—has it that the desire for self-respect is fundamental to personhood. In that case Neutralists can argue that an a priori assumption that people value their self-respect does not rely on a comprehensive moral doctrine, for we would not say of those disinterested in their self-respect that they have false moral beliefs. We would say instead that such people are damaged. This strategy allows liberals to claim that those who reject justifications making reference to how principles support the social conditions of self-respect reject justifications for principles which protect

something fundamental to their personhood. Such rejection is not reasonable.

If a priori assumptions about the agentic aspect of personhood are not tantamount to Perfectionist assumptions about moral truth then Neutralists can remain epistemically abstinent with respect to comprehensive moral doctrines. They can do this by making reasonableness the criterion of principle-legitimacy, and by relying on a theory of the person giving content to 'the reasonable' by yielding agentic values like self-respect. But Raz’s challenge pertains to more than just moral truth; Raz claims that Neutralists must make reference to some truths, and the strategy I have so far outlined only enables Neutralists to avoid reference to moral truths. Thus Raz’s challenge has not been fully met.

Epistemic Abstinence or Epistemic Emphasis?

We can reconfigure Raz’s challenge as follows. Admitting that Neutralists can avoid the invocation of moral truth by relying on the reasonable requires a Neutralist theory of the person giving content to the idea of the reasonable. But why should we accept this theory of the person as the relevant theory for constructing the test of wide reflective equilibrium? There are two ways in which Neutralists could answer. First, they might claim that their theory of the person should be accepted because it is itself reasonable; here reasonableness as a criterion of legitimacy goes all the way down. Of course, the danger of this reply is a regress: in order
to know why it is reasonable to accept this theory of the person we need another theory of the person.

The second, and far more obvious, reply is that the theory of the person should be accepted because it is true. Taking this approach means that Raz's challenge cannot be fully met, for whatever else Neutralists remain epistemically abstinent about, they are ultimately committed to the truth of the background theory of the person contributing to wide reflective equilibrium. So the real distinction between Perfectionism and Neutralism may not be the crude one that the former makes reference to truth and the latter does not. We might say instead that the difference is one of epistemic emphasis, of the location and degree of epistemic abstinence each position takes to be appropriate in justification. On this account Perfectionism is the view that, wherever else it is appropriate, epistemic abstinence in political justification is not warranted with respect to comprehensive moral doctrines; Neutralism is the view that epistemic abstinence is essential with respect to comprehensive moral doctrines but insupportable with respect to the theory of the person informing the process of justification.

Adopting this characterisation of Neutralism immediately raises new challenges for Neutralists. Rather than defending this version of Neutralism, I want to briefly register some new questions it raises. Earlier on I suggested that one good reason for remaining epistemically abstinent with respect to comprehensive moral doctrines related to stability. Refraining from implicitly or explicitly pronouncing some comprehensive moral doctrines to
be false increases the likelihood of voluntary acceptance of principles. But if epistemic abstinence with respect to the theory of the person is not possible, do Neutralists lose the stability related gains they made with epistemic abstinence with respect to comprehensive moral doctrines?

A further question relates to the liberal belief that people are deserving of equal respect, a belief modelled by the access and acceptance constraints on liberal justification. I claimed that Neutralists interpret these constraints as demanding justifications which appeal to shared values, and that one way of avoiding grounding these shared values in a comprehensive moral doctrine is by grounding them in a theory of the person. One such value seems to be self-respect. But epistemic abstinence with respect to comprehensive moral doctrines demands epistemic commitment elsewhere, in the theory of the person. This commitment means that Neutralist political justifications constructed according to the strategy I have outlined will imply the falsity of those theories of the person that differ from the one upon which these justifications rely. But why is the claim that a person’s beliefs about personhood are false more consistent with showing respect for that person than the claim that their moral beliefs are false? Can Neutralists give an account of what makes moral beliefs special and different from other sorts of beliefs, so as to explain why epistemic abstinence matters more with respect to moral beliefs than with respect to other sorts of beliefs? Intuitively, there does seem to be a difference: we do not balk at political justifications which imply that the moon is not made of green cheese and that alien life-forms are not among us. But we do care about the implications of political
justifications for the truth of comprehensive moral doctrines which endorse female genital mutilation, for example, or infanticide, even if we decide in the end that such justifications must stand. If Neutralism as I have described it is to be a serious alternative to Perfectionism, these are the issues it must address.

This Neutralist strategy is controversial and I will make no attempt to defend it here. From here on in I want to put to one side the debate between Neutralists and Perfectionists. Defenders of both positions can equally well adopt self-respect as a liberal justificatory value, because appealing to self-respect in justification yields an inclusive constituency, as my analysis of self-respect as related to capacities for human agency shows. A diversity of activities and ways of life are compatible with the strong evaluation characteristic of human agency, and only a few ways of life necessarily involve subservience. Whether self-respect is defend as a justificatory value from a Neutralist or a Perfectionist perspective has no implications for the principles it endorses. In the next chapter I want to make some more broad comments about the structure of self-respect before examining Rawls’ conception of self-respect and its social bases. This will give a clear indication of exactly how self-respect can play a role in justification, and provide a platform for the principle-oriented discussions of the remaining chapters.
SELF-RESPECT

3.1 Outline

In this chapter I want to make some more detailed comments about self-respect in order to establish the concept as a useful tool in an exploration of debates about liberty (chapter 4), group membership (chapter 5) and distributive justice (chapters 6 and 7). As I noted at the end of the last chapter, the issue of whether self-respect is an appropriate object of appeal in political justification because it is embedded in a comprehensive moral doctrine, or alternatively, because it protects capacities characteristic of human agency has been put to one side. Self-respect can serve as a justificatory value without commitment to either side of the liberal dichotomy, for—as I claim in more detail in 3.4—appeal to self-respect yields the desired inclusive constituency of liberal justification. In fact, one of the virtues of self-respect as a justificatory value is that an appeal to it does not arbitrate between accounts of the nature of justificatory value itself; this means that we can get on with the business of actually constructing political justifications without settling in advance deeper questions about the nature of those justifications.
In the last chapter I argued that self-respect protects the capacity for strong evaluation. In this chapter I want to build upon that rather minimal characterisation. I begin in 3.2 by noting five 'meta-features' of self-respect. These meta-features are general or structural characteristics of self-respect which harmonise well with our intuitions about self-respect. Having pinpointed these meta-features I go on in 3.3 to summarise Rawls' account of self-respect and its social bases, an account which, I think, echoes the connections I have already made between self-respect and strong evaluation. Rawls is one of the few philosophers to make explicit his appeal to self-respect in political justification, so getting clear about his approach will allow its use as a touchstone in subsequent chapters, and will help in fleshing out the somewhat abstract account I gave in the last chapter. Rawls makes connections between self-respect and liberty, self-respect and group membership, and self-respect and criteria for the assessment of advantage in distributive justice. Clarifying these connections provides a good starting point in each discussion. Finally, in 3.4, I want to re-emphasise the reasons why self-respect can be adopted as a justificatory value by Perfectionists and Neutralists, by stressing, in the light of these further comments on self-respect, how appeal to this value yields an inclusive constituency of justification.
3.2 Self-Respect: Some Meta-Features

In the last chapter I began my analysis of self-respect with the intuitive thought that a person's self-respect depends on a degree of congruence between her self-conception and her self-expression. I explained the force of this intuitive thought by claiming that the congruence constitutive of self-respect protects fundamental capacities for strong evaluation by supporting a robust self-conception according to which reasons for action are found good or bad. I argued that not all self-conceptions—however robust—provide the materials suitable for genuine strong evaluation. In particular, subservient self-conceptions—whereby the person views herself as of less value than another towards whose benefit her actions are directed—are unsuitable for supporting strong evaluation. But subservient self-conceptions aside, congruence between self-conception and self-expression is normally constitutive of self-respect. I will now tease out some implications of these claims so as to get a clearer picture of the structure of self-respect. The meta-features I outline will show how well this conception of self-respect harmonises with how we think and speak about self-respect.

First, note how describing self-respect in terms of self-conception makes the correct cut between those things that have, and those things that lack, the potential to respect themselves. This description of self-respect makes it the prerogative of sentient beings capable of forming a self-conception, which
presumably requires a degree of reflection on an antecedently existing self. Sticks, stones and insects are not potential self-respecters. Note also, though, that sentience and reflective abilities are not sufficient for the potential for self-respect, for sentient beings capable of reflection may lack the materials appropriate for self-respect upon which to reflect. For example, it is arguable that chronic amnesiacs—lacking any sense of their long-term past—lack selfhood, and thus lack the potential for self-respect. Perhaps similar claims about damaged selfhood could be made with respect to chronic and paranoid schizophrenics. One of the many tragedies of some mental illnesses might be that they prevent sufferers from achieving self-respect.

The second intuitively appealing meta-feature of my conception of self-respect—and one that is intimately connected with the third—is that it allows that the desire for self-respect can be present and yet self-respect itself be absent. Making self-respect dependent on congruence between self-conception and self-expression—that is, dependent on doing something—explains the common thought that weakness of the will often damages self-respect. The weak willed person is one who has certain desires and yet either fails to act so as to satisfy them or acts on other desires which prevent their satisfaction. Sometimes the desires that the weak willed person fails to act so as to satisfy will be self-respect oriented, and sometimes the desires she acts so as to satisfy will prevent satisfaction of other desires which might be supportive of her self-respect: in either case weakness of the will can have serious consequences.
The third attractive meta-feature, then, is that it is not sufficient for self-respect that one have certain mental states, self-respect cannot be conjured up at will. Self-respect depends on doing things. Self-conceptions—without which strong evaluation is not possible—require development and reinforcement by successful action for the reasons they yield. Self-respect requires congruence between a person’s self-conception and her self-expression. Here I want to pause to explore two different ways of understanding this congruence.

Each self-conception will carry with it standards of excellence for the activities upon which that self-conception is focused. For example, if one’s self-conception makes reference to one’s role as a teacher then the standards by which one judges oneself successful as a teacher might make reference to the patience, sensitivity and time management skills one exhibits in the activities associated with one’s teaching. Alternatively, if one’s self-conception revolves around Christian ideals then the standards implicit in one’s self-conception might make reference to the charity, benevolence and self-control in the face of temptation one exhibits across the whole range of one’s life activities. Finally, if one conceives of oneself as an artist then perhaps the relevant standards will make reference to creativity, intellectual independence and emotional insight. When I claim that self-respect requires a degree of congruence between self-conception and self-expression I mean that one must judge oneself successful according to the standards of excellence implicit in one’s self-conception. There are at least two ways in
which this success can be understood. Each of these understandings has
different implications for the nature of self-respect.

**Success According to Social Criteria**

One straightforward way in which a person can achieve congruence is by
meeting social criteria for the activities she values. This is the kind of success
Nozick has in mind in the following examples:

A man living in a isolated mountain village can sink 15 jump shots
with a basket ball out 150 tries. Everyone else in the village can
sink only 1 jump shot out of 150 tries. He thinks (as do the others)
that he's very good at it. One day, along comes Jerry West. Or, a
mathematician works very hard and occasionally thinks up an
interesting conjecture, nicely proves a theorem, and so on. He then
disCOVERS a whole group of whizzes at mathematics. He dreams up
a conjecture, and they quickly prove or disprove it (not in all
possible cases, because of Church's theorem), constructing very
elegant proofs; they themselves also think up deep theorems, and
so on.¹

The idea behind these examples is clear: the measure of a person’s success is dependent upon the criteria employed by her community, given the particular talents and abilities of its members. These social criteria of excellence may change with the discovery of new talent, and it is not necessary for a person to actually live in a community to employ these standards. Robinson Crusoe, alone on his island, might remember what it is to be a good house builder, and the fact that these standards may be out of date and accessed only by memory is irrelevant to their classification as community standards.

Social criteria of excellence are those standards employed by communities or groups to set goals for, distribute rewards (often just taking the form of social approval) to, and provide incentives for their members. Hence, the existence of social criteria of excellence in a group at a given time depends on a degree of consensus within that group with respect to ‘the ideal form’ of that to which the criteria apply.

Should the congruence that matters for self-respect be explained in terms of success according to social criteria of excellence? It is certainly plausible to claim that success according to social criteria of excellence can contribute to self-respect. When we think of such successes we tend to think of people who have very publicly, and often very lucratively, excelled. Sporting celebrities, great artists, film stars and high ranking politicians all fall into this category. But on the flip side of this coin are those who undeniably fail according to social criteria: the terrible actors, disgraced politicians,
footballers who remain forever in the reserve team at the bottom of the Endsleigh League, and the man in Nozick’s example who has his illusions of grandeur dissolved when he meets Jerry West. Should we claim that such people, in virtue of their failure according to social criteria, must experience a decrease in their self-respect? Does Nozick’s assertion that ‘There is no standard of doing something well, independent of how it is or can be done by others’\(^2\) entirely capture the idea of success as it relates to self-respect?\(^3\)

Putting things slightly differently, is an undeniable failure according to social criteria of excellence always sufficient to undermine self-respect? Of course, such ‘social’ failure will have an effect on the self-respect of some people. Those who define themselves according to roles and values upheld by their community will receive a shock to their self-conceptions upon failing according to the very standards that they themselves endorse. But this suggests that what matters for self-respect is not the (social or non-social) origins of standards of excellence themselves, but rather the extent to which a person identifies herself with these standards. Focusing just on social criteria of excellence fails to highlight this important point. We do better in

\(^2\) R. Nozick, Anarchy, State and Utopia, p. 241.

\(^3\) The peculiarity of this idea is captured by Anthony Skillen in his claim that ‘A boat builder is happy if his boat has what a boat needs; he doesn’t need a reserve army of incompetents to maintain his self-esteem’. Quoted in J. Wolff, Robert Nozick: Property, Justice and the Minimal State (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991), p. 126.
explaining the standards relevant to self-respect by examining their relationship with a person’s self-conception.

**Success According to Individual Criteria**

The second way to understand the congruence that matters for self-respect is by analysing it in terms of success according to individual criteria of excellence. Individual criteria of excellence describe a person’s conception of her ‘ideal self’. This is not a person’s conception of what she would be like were the world a perfect place and she had all the talents, abilities and social successes she could wish for, but rather a conception of what she can achieve—of what is possible for her—given her own particular and actual talents and abilities. For example, a place in the chorus of a local amateur opera company would not normally qualify a person as a great diva according to social criteria of excellence for sopranos. But a person might, notwithstanding her poor performance according to social criteria, view herself as having achieved something according to her own lights, given the knowledge she has of her particular limitations. It is clear that, *pace* Nozick,

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4 T.E. Hill Jnr. acknowledges the importance of success according to individual criteria of excellence in his ‘Self-Respect Reconsidered’, *Autonomy and Self-Respect*. He claims that:

... a person can respect himself quite aside from acknowledging his merits and appreciating his rights. This form of self-respect would require that one develop and live by a set of personal standards by which one is prepared to judge oneself even if they are not extended to others ... The sort of personal standards and ideals on which one’s self-respect depends are typically seen as
success can have both a public and a private aspect, and the private aspect of the success that might contribute to self-respect is lost if we fail to make the distinction between social and individual criteria of excellence.

It is important to note that the content and the stringency of individual criteria of excellence will depend entirely on the agent in question, and may well look poor when compared to similar social criteria used by individuals in a group to compare their performance to others in that group. Alternatively, these individual criteria may be identical to, or even more demanding than, counterpart social criteria. The latter is the case with perfectionists who eschew social standards in favour of their own, sometimes impossible, goals. But the point I want to stress here is that individual criteria represent excellence for me as a finite individual with certain talents and limitations. Objective mediocrity, such as that of Nozick’s disappointed basketball player

inescapably part of oneself. Whether one sees them as objective or not, one genuinely takes the attitude that one is, in one’s own view, better or worse according to how one measures up to them. (pp. 22-3)

The relationship between self-respect and rights will be explored in the next chapter.

5 Of course, ‘perfectionist’ here refers only to a character type and not to a philosophical approach to justification. To say that a perfectionist’s goals might be impossible to achieve is not in conflict with the claim that individual criteria of excellence represent a person’s conception of what it is possible for her to achieve. A perfectionist’s conception of what it is possible for her to achieve is not necessarily accurate; it might in fact be the case that, being a limited and finite human being, she simply cannot achieve these goals. Perfectionists of this sort are thus well-advised to engage in some serious self-examination; without such reflection they run the risk, not only of becoming seriously disappointed, but also of suffering a blow to their self-respect.
and his eclipsed mathematician, is not necessarily a form of failure which undermines self-respect, so long as one succeeds according to one’s own lights. A failure according to social criteria of excellence will only affect the self-respect of those who fail if they have adopted these criteria, that is, those for whom the distinction between social and individual criteria of excellence collapses. What really matters for self-respect, then, is success according to individual criteria of excellence.

A few clarifications. First, it is clear that we do not have criteria of excellence for every activity we engage in. I may like singing in the bath, but have never given any thought to what the ‘optimum me’ would sound like, and have very little experience or idea of how well other people in my community sing in the bath. Second, given that one has formed individual criteria of excellence for a particular set of activities, it is not the case that one strives to meet all of them all of the time. To act like this would be obsessive. There are certain criteria of excellence that we do not mind failing to meet some, or all, of the time. We may feel a certain wistfulness or sense of mild regret at this failure, but we learn to live with it.

To further clarify the nature of these two kinds of success I will consider the (Nozickean) objection that the distinction I am making between individual and social criteria is untenable. The objection is as follows: to possess individual criteria of excellence for activity X one must have been involved in activity X at least once. If this were not the case then it would be impossible
for one to form such criteria, for one would have no idea of one's limitations and talents with respect to activity X, and thus have no way of determining subjective standards of excellence for oneself as a concrete individual. If possession of individual criteria of excellence requires some involvement in the relevant activity then it seems impossible for a person who has never attempted X to have an idea of what it would be to be good at X. For example, a childless man could have no idea of what it is to be a good parent. But this is patently false. Thus the distinction between social and individual criteria of excellence should be abandoned. All criteria of excellence are social criteria.

This putative *reductio* rests on a misunderstanding of my argument, for I have not claimed, for example, that a childless man cannot have a conception of what it would be to be a good parent, but only that he cannot (*ceteris paribus*) have a conception of what it would be for him to be a good parent, and this latter kind of conception is what matters for self-respect. A childless man can have a conception of good parenting simply by consulting some set of pre-established social criteria of excellence for child rearing. Such criteria are characterised by their ready availability for consultation, their accessibility to all: they are fully public. But they are distinct from individual criteria which are impossible to form for a given activity unless one has actually attempted that activity at least once.

The fourth attractive meta-feature of my account is that it accords with and explains the intuition that self-respect is rarely totally absent. On my
account, to completely lack self-respect requires either a complete failure of congruence between self-conception and self-expression; or a self-conception all aspects of which are infected with subservient beliefs and desires (making congruence irrelevant to self-respect); or the lack of a coherent, ordered and sane self-conception (which undermines the possibility of congruence). Although there may be some unfortunate people—the severely mentally ill, chronically depressed, abused, downtrodden, exploited or alienated—who meet these descriptions, it is difficult to imagine someone who completely fails in any of these ways. Such an individual would barely be recognisable as a person. To accuse someone of entirely lacking self-respect is, in most cases, hyperbole.

The fifth and last intuitively appealing meta-feature is that self-respect is a matter of degree, for one can be more or less successful in meeting the criteria of excellence which relate to self-respect. Furthermore, even if some of one’s actions are subservient this is unlikely to be true of all of one’s actions. Any non-subservient, congruence promoting actions are possible sources of self-respect.

These reflections on the meta-features of self-respect suggest that self-respect depends on certain states and activities over which it is possible for a person to have control. Self-respect is—at least theoretically—within the grasp of every person. If this is true then liberals who acknowledge the fundamental importance of self-respect must formulate principles which mitigate and hopefully remove those features of social life which stunt,
damage and deform self-respect. Justifying these principles by reference to these effects renders their access and acceptance more likely and expands the liberal constituency of justification. I want to turn now to Rawls’ conception of self-respect as a concrete example of a conception both consonant with the analysis I have given, and put to work in interesting ways in justification. Getting clear about Rawls’ conception of self-respect and its role in justice as fairness here will allow for reference to Rawls as a starting point in the debates examined in later chapters.
3.3 Rawlsian Self-Respect

Rawls is one of the few philosophers to make explicit their use of the concept of self-respect in political argument. Rawls conceives of self-respect as 'perhaps the most important primary good' and, partly on the basis of this claim, argues (in *A Theory of Justice*) that a principle of equal liberty must be given priority in the just society, that inequalities in economic goods are permissible if and only if they work to the advantage of the worst off, and that the just society must meet the 'full publicity condition'. The importance of self-respect to Rawls' political theory has not been sufficiently explored. Rawls claims that:

Without [self-respect] nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us we lack the will to strive for them. All activity becomes empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism. Therefore the parties in the original position would wish

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to avoid at almost any cost the social conditions that undermine self-respect.\textsuperscript{8}

Parties in the original position choose principles of justice from behind a veil of ignorance partly on the grounds of their knowledge that they prefer more primary goods to less. In \textit{A Theory of Justice} primary goods are characterised as all purpose means to the achievement of a diversity of ends. The passage quoted above shows that the parties want to ensure for themselves social conditions conducive to their self-respect. These social conditions are what Rawls calls 'the social bases of self-respect' and they appear last on the list of five categories of primary goods motivating the choice of principles in the original position.\textsuperscript{9}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{8} J. Rawls, \textit{A Theory of Justice}, p.440.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{9} Bernard Williams would presumably view Rawls' inclusion of the social bases of self-respect on the list of primary goods as a virtue in the light of his comments that:

There are ... [not] easily definable characteristics universal to humanity, which may all the more be neglected in political and social arrangements. For instance, there seems to be a characteristic which might be called 'a desire for self-respect'; this phrase is perhaps not too happy in suggesting a particular culturally limited, bourgeois value, but I mean by it a certain human desire to be identified with what one is doing, to be able to realise purposes of one's own, and not to be the instrument of another's will unless one has willingly accepted such a role. ('The Idea of Equality' in his \textit{Problems of the Self}, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973, p. 233)
\end{flushright}
The social bases of self-respect inherit their importance from self-respect per se which, like good health, must be a natural primary good. In the same way that we can ensure social conditions enabling people to improve their health but cannot, because of natural physical contingencies, ensure perfect health for all, so we can ensure social conditions supportive of citizens' self-respect but not such as to guarantee self-respect for all. As was suggested earlier, self-respect is, ceteris paribus, within a person's control, and so it is possible for a person to have little self-respect even in ideal conditions. From the point of view of justice the most we can do is aim at these social conditions. Once these are established the fact that there may be people who fail to achieve self-respect cannot be counted as a failure of justice. The concept of self-respect makes an appearance in Rawlsian political theory by counting certain opportunities for self-respect as a primary good.

There are two senses in which a person can be said to lack opportunity for self-respect. On the one hand, a person can lack opportunity for self-respect because of a mismatch between her talents and standards, which leaves her unable to achieve congruence between self-conception and self-expression, or because of a damaged or subservient self-conception which makes congruence impossible or valueless. In these cases there is often very little that we, as a political community, can do to increase opportunity for self-respect. Moreover, there may actually be good reasons why, even if we can do something, we ought not to, especially in the case of a mismatch between standards and talents. If a person's self-respect related standards are inappropriate because the person herself has not reflected upon them.
properly, or if the person fails to meet her standards because of laziness, then the person abrogates her personal responsibility for her self-respect. If a person is able but unwilling to take responsibility for her own self-respect then we as a political community do not have an obligation to do so.

On the other hand, some people will lack opportunity for self-respect—failing to achieve congruence or developing inappropriate self-conceptions and standards—through no fault of their own, but because aspects of the basic structure of society have prevented them from achieving congruence or have warped their self-conceptions. For example, racist, sexist and homophobic practices in the workplace and school may prevent ethnic minorities, women and homosexuals from achieving congruence, or may deform their self-conceptions so as to encourage self-loathing and subservience rather than self-respect. In these cases we as a political community have an obligation to make changes to the basic structure which denies opportunities for self-respect to some and not others, because we as a political community are responsible for the character of the basic structure. Rawls’ concern is with opportunity for self-respect in this sense, that is, as embedded in aspects of the basic structure.

... self-respect depends upon and is encouraged by certain public features of basic social institutions, how they work together and

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10 From here on in—unless otherwise indicated—when I refer to 'opportunity for self-respect' I mean the sense in which opportunities are embedded in aspects of the basic structure.
how people who accept these arrangements are expected to (and
normally do) regard and treat one another. These features of basic
institutions and publicly expected (and normally honoured) ways of
conduct are the social bases of self-respect.\footnote{J. Rawls, \textit{A Theory of Justice}, p. 319.}

Rawlsian principles of justice aim at social conditions conducive to self-
respect. Unless we know how Rawls conceives of self-respect we cannot
know what these social conditions are. So what is self-respect for Rawls? He
claims that:

[Self-respect] first of all ... includes a person's sense of his own
value, his secure conviction that his conception of the good, his
plan of life, is worth carrying out. And second, self-respect implies
a confidence in one's ability, so far as it is within one's power, to
fulfil one's intentions. When we feel that our plans are of little
value, we cannot pursue them with pleasure or take delight in their
execution. Nor plagued by failure and self-doubt can we continue
in our endeavours.\footnote{J. Rawls, \textit{A Theory of Justice}, p. 440.}

What we strive for, then, in aiming at the just society are social conditions
which, amongst other things, best enable people to conceive of themselves

\footnote{J. Rawls, \textit{A Theory of Justice}, p. 319.}
\footnote{J. Rawls, \textit{A Theory of Justice}, p. 440.}
and their lives as valuable, and to have the confidence that they are able to live those lives. But before we can know which principles of justice best secure these conditions we have to know how the two aspects of Rawlsian self-respect are developed in a person. Rawls says that the development of self-respect depends upon:

(1) Having a rational plan of life, and in particular one that satisfies the Aristotelian principle; and (2) finding our own person and deeds appreciated and confirmed by others who are likewise esteemed and their association enjoyed.\textsuperscript{13}

I will refer to the conditions in which we enjoy the esteem of those we esteem as ‘the conditions of reciprocal esteem’. Satisfying the Aristotelian principle in one’s rational life plan matters for Rawlsian self-respect because of how this satisfaction enhances one’s existence in the conditions of reciprocal esteem.

The fully rational plan of life for any individual is, says Rawls:

... the one that would be chosen [by the agent] with full deliberative rationality, that is, with full awareness of the relevant facts and after careful consideration of the consequences.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} J. Rawls, \textit{A Theory of Justice}, p. 440.

\textsuperscript{14} J. Rawls, \textit{A Theory of Justice}, p. 408.
‘Full deliberative rationality’ refers to the choice of life plans in hypothetical conditions wherein all the facts relevant to that life plan are available to the chooser and the chooser takes the most effective means to the ends she adopts in the light of this knowledge. Full deliberative rationality is not what grounds self-respect. One may suffer regret if one pursues a plan to which one eventually discovers one is not suited, but the fact that one is not omniscient does not detract from one's self-respect. The rationality that matters for Rawlsian self-respect is subjective and reflects our human limitations. As Rawls says, ‘if the agent does the best that a rational person can do with the information available to him, then the plan he follows is a subjectively rational plan’.15

Subjective rationality matters for Rawlsian self-respect because of its connection with the Aristotelian principle. The Aristotelian principle tells us what kinds of ends constitute rational plans of life by stating a principle of human motivation. To that extent it also helps to explain common and important human desires. The principle is that:

... other things being equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities), and this

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enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity.\textsuperscript{16}

An example of someone meeting the Aristotelian principle, thinks Rawls, is a person able to play both chess and draughts but who prefers to play chess because of the superior demands it makes on him and his abilities. Anyone satisfying the Aristotelian principle has developed, will develop, or will continue to develop and refine the talents and assets which promote ends forming part of their rational plan of life. If one lacks a subjectively rational plan of life one will be unable to meet the Aristotelian principle. For example, if one aspires to be an England striker but never practices or trains one fails the test of means-ends rationality and will be unable to develop one’s goal-scoring skills. Alternatively, if one has this footballing aspiration but only one leg then one has framed one’s plan of life irrationally, given that one knows that one’s chances of selection for England are zero. In the pursuit of this life plan one will be unable to meet the Aristotelian principle for the talents and assets one does have will be neglected in favour of the development of talents which one erroneously—and in this case bizarrely—believes oneself to have.

\textsuperscript{16} J. Rawls, \textit{A Theory of Justice}, p. 426. The Aristotelian principle also has a ‘companion effect’ which is that:

As we witness the exercise of well-trained abilities of others, these displays are enjoyed by us and arouse a desire that we should be able to do the same things ourselves. We want to be like those persons who can exercise the abilities we find latent in our nature. (p. 428)
Satisfying the Aristotelian principle matters for self-respect because such satisfaction is likely to prompt the esteem and respect of others, and receiving the esteem and respect of others is conducive to respecting and esteeming oneself. When one exists in some community of shared interests, when one meets the Aristotelian principle by exhibiting intricate and refined talents in the activities which bind one's community together, and when one experiences the admiration and respect of those in one's community that one respects oneself, then one exists in the conditions of reciprocal esteem and one has a secure foundation for one's self-respect. The fact that others believe that you are of worth and have confidence in your abilities to pursue the plans which they themselves want to pursue encourages the development of self-respect. As Rawls puts it:

... the conditions for persons respecting themselves and one another would seem to require that their common plans be rational and

17 Note here that Rawls' conception of self-respect and its development avoids the chicken-and-egg problem as it was posed in 2.6. The problem there was that if self-respect depends only on action for strongly evaluative reasons, and strong evaluation is not possible without a robust self-conception yielded by self-respect, then one seems unable to ever get into a position to have self-respect in the first place. Rawls' conception of communities of shared interests as providers of the conditions of reciprocal esteem breaks the chain.

complementary: they call upon their educated endowments and arouse in each a sense of mastery, and they fit together into one scheme of activity that all can appreciate and enjoy. ¹⁹

The conditions of reciprocal esteem are self-replicating. A person whose self-respect is supported by the esteem and admiration of others will, to put it crudely, be more likely to return the compliment than if she lacked such self-respect, and this disposition on her part will indirectly work to her benefit by disposing others, in virtue of their self-respect, to be more forthcoming with their praise. 'One who is confident in himself is not grudging in the appreciation of others'. ²⁰

Prima facie it might seem here that Rawls is offering an account of the nature of self-respect which makes it the prerogative of a (likely) small number of artistic, scientific or commercial high fliers, given his comments about the development of refined and intricate talents and achievement in communities of shared interests. This would be intuitively implausible, and unacceptable given commitment to the liberal ideal of an inclusive constituency of justification, but it is not Rawls' intention. The Aristotelian principle is not a description of the apex of human capabilities. Instead:

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¹⁹ J. Rawls, A Theory of Justice, p. 441.

²⁰ J. Rawls, A Theory of Justice, p. 441.
The application of the Aristotelian principle is always relative to the individual and therefore to his natural assets and particular situation.\(^{21}\)

The conditions of reciprocal esteem can therefore be generated communities of shared interests who would perhaps be judged poorly according to apex-describing standards for the activities which bind them together. What counts as an excellence fit to elicit the esteem of others will all depend on who you ask.\(^{22}\)

How does Rawls' account of self-respect compare with the structural features of self-respect I outlined earlier? I claimed that one develops and maintains self-respect by achieving congruence between one's self-conception and one's self-expression. For Rawls, this aspect of self-respect is


\(^{22}\) In *A Theory of Justice* Rawls defines the excellences as non-exclusive goods in the sense that 'the excellences are a condition of human flourishing; they are goods from everyone's point of view' (p. 443). If one has excellences pertinent to one's plans and projects, whether they be natural or cultivated talents or virtues, one will have the confidence to pursue those projects and find that, in virtue of how one satisfies the Aristotelian principle in this pursuit, one is in receipt of the self-respect supporting esteem of others. As Rawls says, the excellences:

... enable us to carry out a more satisfying plan of life enhancing our sense of mastery. At the same time, these attributes are appreciated by those with whom we associate, and the pleasure they take in our person and in what we do supports our self-esteem [self-respect—CM] (p. 444)
modelled by the successful pursuit of activities which contribute to one's confidence in one's abilities to carry out one's life plans. One normally engages in these activities in communities of shared interests, and one judges oneself more or less successful at these activities according to standards relativised to the abilities of members of these communities. This does not imply that Rawls, like Nozick, conceives of the success that matters for self-respect as success according to social standards of excellence. To see why not, consider the following two attacks on the Rawlsian account. One critic attacks the idea that success according to social criteria are necessary for self-respect, and the other the idea that such success is sufficient for self-respect. In drawing out the counter-intuitive implications for self-respect of claims at the heart of these criticisms we can show why Rawls should, and can, avoid the position attributed to him by these critics by making self-respect dependent upon individual criteria of excellence.\textsuperscript{23}

If success according to social criteria of excellence is necessary for Rawlsian self-respect then, as Robert Yanal notes:

Rawls presents an economic theory of self-esteem [self-respect].
One puts one's major qualities in the marketplace of the esteem of those one esteems, and hopes that these qualities will be esteemed

\textsuperscript{23} That these attacks fail does not mean that the authors cannot be forgiven for making them, for Rawls does come very close to stating that success according to social criteria of excellence is both necessary and sufficient for self-respect. \textit{A Theory of Justice}, p. 441-2.
in that marketplace ... My self-esteem [self-respect] (on this view) is my merit as others esteem it.²⁴

As Yanal notes, there are two main problems with this approach. First, making self-respect dependent on the esteem of others in this strict way requires some assumption of human epistemic weakness with respect to our judgements about the objective worth of our own achievements; we need the reassurance of others to feel valuable and confident. The problem here is that in one's role as supplier of the benefits of the conditions of reciprocal esteem one must be thought of as more epistemically capable—more able to judge the objective worth of others' achievements—than in one's role as consumer of these benefits. If this is true then we need an explanation of why it is true, and Rawls does not provide one.

Second, if self-respect is wholly dependent upon the esteem of others generated by success according to standards to which others also subscribe—that is, if self-respect is wholly dependent upon social criteria of excellence—then large classes of people are ruled out a priori as potential self-respecters. What is worrying about this consequence is not that some are a priori ruled out as potential self-respecters. The cause for concern is rather who gets ruled out. Understanding self-respect as dependent upon social criteria of excellence implies the impossibility of self-respecting hermits, misanthropes and anti-social perfectionists who eschew others' standards in favour of their

own different, and perhaps more demanding, standards of excellence. Such denials are extremely counter-intuitive and suggest that we should avoid understanding Rawls as claiming that success according to social criteria of excellence is necessary for self-respect.\textsuperscript{25}

The second line of criticism addresses the idea that success according to social criteria of excellence is sufficient for self-respect. To illustrate the implausibility of this claim, L.L. Thomas asks us to imagine two different life plans, K and J.\textsuperscript{26} K is a plan such that everyone could successfully adopt it and everyone knows this, whereas J is a plan such that not everyone could successfully adopt it, and those who can’t know they can’t. J requires years of dedicated training, application, and a certain degree of natural talent, whereas K requires little training, diligence or talent. On Rawls’ account the J plan is \textit{prima facie} more attractive than the K plan because it allows for the

\textsuperscript{25} Yanal suggests a further criticism of the ‘economic’ interpretation on the grounds that it contains an ‘incipient circularity’. The problem is that if self-respect strictly depends on the esteem of others, and a lack of self-respect leads to a disabling apathy and cynicism leaving us unable to pursue our plans and projects, then it is difficult to see how we can ever get into a position to gain self-respect via the esteem of others without having self-respect in the first place. This echoes the chicken-and-egg problem we have already encountered. Self-respect itself would seem to be a precondition of gaining access to the conditions of reciprocal esteem which are themselves meant to represent a precondition for self-respect. See R. Yanal, ‘Self-Esteem’, p. 370f. One way to break this circle would be to claim that we develop our nascent self-respect as children through parental love, which enables us to go out into the adult world with the degree of confidence and self-worth necessary for gaining access to the conditions of reciprocal esteem wherein we are judged on our own merits.

\textsuperscript{26} L.L. Thomas, ‘Morality and Our Self-Concept’.
full realisation of innate capacities which (as the Aristotelian principle states) human beings enjoy. But few people have the talent to follow the J plan and many end up living a K life. But given that the Aristotelian principle is relativised to a person’s aspirations and situation, the K people should be in no worse a position than the J people with respect to their self-respect. Thomas challenges this by asking:

... what about those persons whose abilities are extremely minimal? Are we to suppose that they can have a secure conviction of the worth of their life plan simply by associating with persons whose abilities are equally minimal? Surely not.27

The claim that success according to social criteria of excellence is sufficient for self-respect counter-intuitively rules out and in certain types of

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27 L.L. Thomas, ‘Morality and Our Self-Concept’, p. 261. Thomas invokes the companion effect to the Aristotelian principle to support his criticism, but I don’t think this is necessary or that he gets the companion effect right. He claims that the companion effect implies that K people will want to be like J people for they will want to exercise the abilities latent in their nature that they observe being exercised by the J people. The problem here is that the companion effect only supports this argument on the implausible assumption that all people have the same latent talents and abilities. In this case the K people experience a blow to their self-respect in virtue of their failure to exercise the J talents they have hidden within them. But what if the J plan is cross channel swimming and all K people lack legs, and therefore the latent ability to be a cross channel swimmer? In this case the K people may admire the J people, be glad that they live J lives, and even regret the fact that they lack legs and are themselves unable to live J lives. But there is no reason to think that they will experience a blow to their self-respect just in virtue of having no legs. However, even if Thomas’ specific argument is flawed, the general point he makes remains challenging.
people as candidate self-respecters. Anyone who succeeds according to social criteria of excellence and yet does not identify herself with these criteria must, according to the claim, have self-respect. And anyone who fails according to social criteria and yet rejects these criteria must lack self-respect. Neither of these claims are acceptable.

These criticisms show that the most plausible reading of Rawls’ claims about the relationship between participation in communities of shared interests and self-respect is one that allows that self-respect affecting standards may diverge from social standards. Self-respect affecting standards correspond to what I have called individual criteria of excellence. There is no suggestion on Rawls’ part that we must stake our self-respect on success according to the standards implicit in any or each of the communities of shared interests in which we participate. Instead, our self-respect depends on ‘finding our own person and deeds appreciated and confirmed by others who are likewise esteemed and their association enjoyed’.28 That is, our self-respect depends on success according to the standards adopted by those with whom we identify ourselves. If we do not identify ourselves with many of the communities in which we participate then failure according to the standards of these communities will be irrelevant for self-respect. If we do not identify ourselves with any communities then our self-respect affecting standards will have no social aspect at all. Of course there are, in reality,

very few genuine hermits, and of those that there are there are it is reasonable to think that there are very few self-respecters. Shunning the world is more indicative of a lack of confidence and a sense of one's own value than the reverse. Alternatively, there are very few people who, as a result of their own effort, are undoubted and esteemed successes in their communities (and who know this) who would claim to lack self-respect. Nonetheless, both these types of cases do provide a possible framework for self-respect. The account I have given of self-respect accommodates them, and there is nothing in Rawls to suggest that he cannot.

The second important aspect of my account of self-respect concerns the nature of the self-conceptions enabling self-expression congruent with them to support self-respect. I claimed that self-conceptions capable of supporting self-respect must not undermine agency by preventing or damaging the capacity for strong evaluation. Is there a counterpart claim in Rawls' account of self-respect? Here we must examine claims Rawls' makes about self-respect in *Political Liberalism*:

In a democratic society we expect, and indeed want, citizens to care about their basic liberties and opportunities in order to develop and exercise their moral powers and to pursue their conception of the good. We think they show a lack of self-respect and weakness of character in not doing so.\(^{29}\)

\(^{29}\) J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, pp. 76-77.
Self-respect is rooted in our self-confidence as a fully co-operating member of society capable of pursuing a worthwhile conception of the good over a complete life. Thus self-respect presupposes the development and exercise of both moral powers and therefore an effective sense of justice.\(^{30}\)

Rawls’ claims about the relationship between self-respect and liberty will be examined in chapter 4. For the moment I want to note how these two passages make a connection between self-respect and the exercise of the two moral powers. Rawls claims that:

... since persons can be full participants in a fair system of social co-operation, we ascribe to them the two moral powers ... namely, a capacity for a sense of justice and a capacity for a conception of the good. A sense of justice is the capacity to understand, to apply, and to act from the public conception of justice which characterises the fair terms of social co-operation. Given the nature of the political conception as specifying a public basis of justification, a sense of justice also expresses a willingness, if not the desire, to act in relation to others on terms that they also can publicly endorse. The capacity for a conception of the good is the capacity to form,

to revise, and rationally to pursue a conception of one’s rational advantage or good.\(^{31}\)

Exercising one’s capacity for a conception of the good is a pre-requisite for self-respect because without having exercised this capacity one will lack the substantive sense of self necessary for strong evaluation. If a person has no projects, values, commitments or obligations then it is hard to see how they can make non-contingent judgements about the desirability of this or that course of action. This suggests that my description of self respect as connected with self-conceptions enabling strong evaluation maps on to the Rawlsian conception of self-respect.\(^{32}\)

Explaining the connection between the capacity for a sense of justice and self-respect is more tricky, and will emerge in chapter 4. For the moment let me just assert that action fit to ground self-respect requires a degree of


\(^{32}\) Interpreting Rawlsian self-respect as instantiating my concept of self-respect clarifies the sense in which primary goods should be thought of as all-purpose means. As Gerald Doppelt notes, (what he calls) ‘The Kantian turn’:

... immeasurably strengthens the argument to Rawls’ primary social goods and principles of justice. They no longer appear in the implausible guise of optimal all-purpose means to human ends and goods in general. Rather, they more plausibly appear as the indispensable means, and natural choice, of persons who hope to preserve their powers of self-determination as the precondition of the value of whatever way of life they choose to live. (‘Is Rawls’ Kantian Liberalism Coherent and Defensible?’, *Ethics*, Vol. 99, 1989.)
security and stability which can only be brought about by social co-operation, and such co-operation relies on the willingness of those who co-operate to propose and abide by fair terms of social co-operation. Some aspects of the social co-operation that enable individual self-respect will be explored shortly.

Finally, I want to note the connection between self-respect and what Rawls calls 'the full publicity condition'. He states that:

Publicity ensures, so far as the feasible design of institutions can allow, that free and equal persons are in a position to know and to accept the background social influences that shape their conception of themselves as persons, as well as their character and conception of the good.\(^{33}\)

Full publicity requires publicity at three levels. First, everyone accepts, and knows that others accept, the principles of justice, and everyone knows this. Second, everyone agrees upon 'the theory of human nature and of social institutions generally'\(^{34}\) upon which the first principles of justice are based.

\(^{33}\) J. Rawls, 'Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory: The Dewey Lectures', p. 539.

\(^{34}\) J. Rawls, 'Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory: The Dewey Lectures', p. 537. That the theory of human nature is agreed upon in conditions of full publicity might provide support for my claim in 2.6 that Neutralists can invoke self-respect qua justificatory value without commitment to a comprehensive moral doctrine by defending self-respect as a value with a level III theory of the person. In 'The Priority of Right and Ideas of the Good' Rawls claims that:
And third, the full justification for the principles of justice is known (or at least available to those who want to know it).

One reason why full publicity is important is that social influences (aspects of the basic structure) affect the degree of control a person has over the development of her self-respect. Social influences are a potential danger to self-respect because they can either stunt and deform self-conceptions, leaving them unfit to ground self-respect, or they can prevent self-expression aiming at congruence. If political justifications refer to how principles support social conditions conducive to self-respect then we, qua potential self-respecters, can accept or reject such justifications by assessing whether the self-respect related claims they make are warranted. Full publicity is a way of making explicit the state’s conviction that we are the kind of beings to whom justification can be addressed and makes sense. Justifications meeting the full publicity constraint make reference to the conditions of self-respect

The well-ordered society is one in which the full publicity condition holds, that is, one in which persons’ agree on the theory of the person underwriting the principles of justice. If self-respect is part of that theory then Neutralists can appeal to self-respect without reliance on any comprehensive doctrine.
because they are aimed at beings who—however much they differ—all value self-respect.
3.4 An Inclusive Constituency

Having outlined what self-respect protects, its structural features, and its social bases, we are now in a position to put the concept to use in addressing some principle-based debates. Before doing that I want to stress once more the remarkable suitability of self-respect as a liberal justificatory value.

I have tried to develop an account of self-respect which makes self-respect recognisable as something which we all value—given a Neutralist perspective—or as something which we all ought to value, given a Perfectionist perspective. But I hope that my account also reflects how self-respect will manifest itself in different ways across persons. When one has respect for oneself one really does have respect for one’s self, for the concrete and particular individual that one is. If self-respect were defined just in terms of an abstract feature—like personhood or moral agency—without any explanation of how that feature manifests itself in and is protected by concrete individuals, then self-respect would, as Robin Dillon notes, depend on ‘something abstract and generic, not what distinguishes one individual from another but what makes each equally and indistinguishably a person’ 35. Such a conception of self-respect would be dissonant with how we think and talk about self-respect, and would make our access and acceptance of

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justifications in which self-respect is invoked less likely. When I respect myself I respect a concrete person, not just as a being in possession of abstract capacities. Such capacities may be fundamental to me as a person, but what makes me me are the ways in which I exercise those capacities.\(^{36}\)

Connecting self-respect with the capacity for strong evaluation, but allowing that a diversity of activities can support the congruence constitutive of self-respect which enables strong evaluation, both explains the importance of self-respect at the abstract level, and makes self-respect recognisable as something valuable at the concrete level. That my conception of self-respect reflects both the generality of self-respect, and the specificity of the ways in which a person can have self-respect, makes it particularly suitable for liberal justification which takes seriously the access and acceptance constraints in striving towards an inclusive constituency. Let me now move on to put this conception of self-respect to use in some principle-based debates.

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\(^{36}\) Diana Meyers reflects this sentiment in ‘The Politics of Self-Respect: A Feminist Perspective’, *Hypatia*, Vol. 1, No.1, 1986, when she states that:

Strangers who know almost nothing about us can only be expected to respect our humanity, but self-respect involves a more intimate scrutiny and appraisal of our distinctive attributes. We do not respect ourselves for being persons but rather for ourselves. (p. 87)
4

LIBERTY

4.1 Outline

This chapter explores and attempts to clarify the relationship between self-respect and liberty by an analysis and defence of Rawlsian arguments for the priority of a principle of equal liberty. As already noted, Rawls is just about the only contemporary political philosopher to make explicit reference to self-respect in important political arguments, and this is especially true of his arguments for the priority of a principle of equal liberty. But although Rawls' reference to the concept of self-respect is explicit, it is not always clear precisely what role the concept plays in the justifications in which it is invoked. By clarifying this aspect of Rawlsian theory I hope to lend support to the thesis that we ought to give priority to a principle of equal liberty. In the next chapter I address criticisms of self-respect based arguments for the priority of equal liberty which assert that such arguments overlook or underestimate the contribution that membership of a group makes to self-respect.

In 4.2 I look more closely at the idea of the social bases of self-respect, their relationship with other primary goods, and how they are to be distributed. 4.3 examines why a principle equal liberty is a social basis of
self-respect. In 4.4 I look at what it means to claim priority for such a principle, and explore a suggestion for supporting such a priority claim by reference to self-respect. Rejecting the suggestion made in 4.4, in 4.5 I clarify connections between self-respect and the two moral powers in order to explain why a principle of equal liberty taking priority over other principles constitutes a powerful social basis of self-respect.
4.2 The Social Bases of Self-Respect

All social primary goods—liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect—are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured.¹

As noted in the last chapter, it is the social primary good of the social bases of self-respect—and not the natural primary good of self-respect itself—that, for Rawls, is to be distributed by the principles of justice. But what are the social bases of self-respect, and which principle governs their distribution? The social bases of self-respect stand out as a special category of primary good because, whereas all the other primary goods have principles explicitly designed to achieve their direct distribution, the social bases of self-respect do not.²


² The First principle (equal liberty) distributes basic rights and liberties. The first part of the Second principle distributes economic goods, and the second part of the Second principle ensures the background conditions of equal opportunity that is a component of the primary good of freedom of movement and free choice of occupation. This leaves only powers and prerogatives of offices and positions of responsibility in the political and economic institutions of the basic structure, and the social bases of self-respect. In ‘Social Unity and Primary Goods’, Utilitarianism and Beyond eds. A. Sen and B. Williams, pp. 162-3 Rawls says of the former that the principles of justice ‘in their simplest form’ do not
If, as Rawls has it, the basic structure is the subject of justice, and principles of justice distribute—amongst other goods—the social bases of self-respect, then these bases must be related to aspects of the basic structure. He claims that:

self-respect depends upon and is encouraged by certain public features of basic social institutions, how they work together and how people who accept these arrangements are expected to (and normally do) regard and treat one another. These features of basic institutions and publicly expected (and normally honoured) ways of conduct are the social bases of self-respect.³

Rawls' two principles of justice govern the basic structure, and so these two principles must govern the distribution of the social bases of self-respect—albeit not directly and explicitly—by shaping the basic structure in certain ways. The distribution of primary goods achieved by the institutions of the basic structure provides the supervenience base for the distribution of treat this primary good, but by providing a supervenience base they do treat the social bases of self-respect.

³ J. Rawls, A Theory of Justice, p. 319. This description of the social bases of self-respect is also affirmed in Political Liberalism where Rawls claims that:

The social bases of self-respect are explained by the structure and content of just institutions together with features of the public political culture, such as the recognition and acceptance of principles of justice. (p. 181)
the social bases of self-respect. To claim that X supervenes on Y is to claim that there is no difference in X without a difference in Y. Thus the claim here is that any difference between people in levels of opportunity for self-respect is explained by differences in their bundles of other primary goods.

One way of making this supervenience claim clearer is with Joshua Cohen's description of the social bases of self-respect. Cohen states that:

The parties in the original position must ... assess the effects of different principles on both the resource and recognitional foundations of self-respect, taking into account both associational and framework conditions.\(^4\)

'Resource' bases of self-respect are those practical means which enable us to develop ourselves according to the self-conceptions appropriate to self-respect. ‘Recognitional’ bases of self-respect are the attitudes of others towards us that support and foster the self-conceptions appropriate to self-respect. Both resource and recognitional bases of self-respect can be found either in the associational or in the framework conditions of society. The

\(^{4}\) Note: not self-respect itself, which people can lack even when opportunities for self-respect are given a perfectly just distribution. Note also—as I emphasised in the last chapter—when I refer to 'opportunities for self-respect' I mean to refer to the effect that aspects of the basic structure have on beliefs, desires etc. as they relate to self-respect.

associational bases of self-respect are the communities of shared interests providing the conditions of reciprocal esteem, and the framework bases are 'the framework of institutions and associated forms of public argument [which] support and foster the associational conditions'. These distinctions allow us to classify all the possible social bases of self-respect as follows.

**Resource/associational** bases of self-respect are the resources available within communities of shared interests which promote self-respect.

**Resource/framework** bases of self-respect are the resources available within the framework of the basic structure which promote self-respect.

**Recognitional/associational** bases of self-respect are aspects of communities of shared interests reflecting the aspects of one's self-conception that matter for self-respect.

**Recognitional/framework** bases of self-respect are aspects of the basic structure reflecting aspects of one's self-conception that matter for self-respect.

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7 More will be said in the next chapter to clarify the nature of these communities and how they support self-respect.
This classification helps us to understand the criteria used by parties in the original position to determine which principles best support opportunities for self-respect. Parties judge each set of principles both according to how they promote the resource and recognitional bases of self-respect in aspects of the basic structure and according to how they promote these bases within communities of shared interests. Given that the basic structure is the subject of justice for Rawls, the resource/associational and recognitional/associational bases of self-respect can only be promoted by aspects of the basic structure, and so it is the effect that principles have on the basic structure alone that provides the parties with the criteria of acceptability for principles in terms of how they affect self-respect. In other words, justice is done if the resource/associational and recognitional/associational bases of self-respect are supported by the resource/framework and recognitional/framework bases. The distribution of primary goods forming the framework bases of self-respect should themselves provide a supervenience base for the associational bases of self-respect. It is in this sense that the distribution of the social bases of self-respect per se supervenes on the distribution of other primary goods achieved through the institutions of the basic structure.

A further clarification. The social bases of self-respect are included on the list of primary goods subject to maximin distribution. This means that we can allow inequalities in the social bases of self-respect only if these inequalities work to the advantage of the worst off group in terms of their social bases of self-respect. But note that this does not imply either of the
following claims. First, that some inequalities in the distribution of some primary goods constitutive of the social bases of self-respect necessarily implies a non-maximin distribution of the social bases of self-respect. And second, that a strictly equal distribution of all primary goods constitutive of the social bases of self-respect guarantees a maximin distribution of the social bases of self-respect. In sum, a maximin distribution of the social bases of self-respect need not require that each of the goods constitutive of these bases be given an equal distribution. To assess whether a maximin strategy with respect to the social bases of self-respect demands an equal distribution of all goods constitutive of these social bases requires a clarification of the way in which each of these goods provide opportunities for self-respect.
4.3 Equal Liberty

The account of self-respect as perhaps the most important primary good has stressed the great significance of how we think others value us. But in a well-ordered society the need for status is met by the public recognition of just institutions, together with the full and diverse internal life of the many free communities of interests that equal liberty allows.\(^8\)

Granting a person a degree of political liberty suggests two things. First, that this person has the freedom to do certain things which she would not have been able to do without this liberty. And second, that she is deserving of this freedom in virtue of certain of her features. These reflections about what it means to accord a person political liberty explain why Rawls thinks there are two ways in which a principle of equal liberty supports the social bases of self-respect. First, equal liberty for all ensures equal access for all to communities of shared interests, participation in which is normally necessary for self-respect.\(^9\) And second, the public affirmation of a principle

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\(^9\) In the discussion of self-respect in *A Theory of Justice* Rawls claims that:

what is necessary is that there should be for each person at least one community of shared interests to which he belongs and where he finds his endeavors confirmed by his associates. (p. 442)
of equal liberty discourages the development of self-conceptions unfit to ground self-respect by encouraging people to think of themselves as equal in worth to all others. I will refer to these arguments respectively as the access and status arguments. The status argument is concerned with the recognitional bases of self-respect, and the access argument with the resource bases of self-respect. Given the claim above that the resource/framework and recognitional/framework bases of self-respect are aspects of the basic structure providing a supervenience base for the resource/associational and recognitional/associational bases, I will focus first on arguments that equal liberty ensures the resource/framework and recognitional/framework bases of self-respect. I will then—briefly in this chapter and more fully in the next—assess arguments claiming that the framework bases support the associational bases.

Let me begin with the access argument for equal liberty as a resource/framework basis of self-respect. This is simply that without equal liberty not all persons will be equally able to form and participate in the communities of shared interests normally providing the empirical conditions for self-respect. This argument reveals a hidden assumption about liberty as

One page prior to this claim he states that:

It normally suffices that for each person there is some association (one or more) to which he belongs and within which the activities that are rational for him are publicly affirmed by others. (ibid., p. 441)

Membership of a community of shared interests is, for Rawls, normally necessary and sufficient for self-respect.
a social basis of self-respect. This is that maximin with respect to the social bases of self-respect demands an equal distribution of liberty as one such basis. The access argument establishes equality in the resource/framework liberty-bases of self-respect because equal liberty ensures equal access to the relevant communities of shared interests.

Moving on to the status argument for equal liberty as a recognitional/framework basis of self-respect, this argument relies on the idea that a subservient conception of oneself as of less value than others—and, in virtue of this perception, as bound to promote their interests over one's own—undermines self-respect. A political system in which all have—and know they have—equal basic rights and liberties is one which encourages all, as far as politically possible, to conceive of themselves as equal in worth to all others. Affirming a principle of equal liberty encourages the development of self-conceptions appropriate to self-respect. Rawls states that when rights and liberties are given an equal distribution:

... everyone has a similar and secure status when they meet to conduct the common affairs of the wider society. No one is inclined to look beyond the constitutional affirmation of equality for further political ways of assuring his status. Nor, on the other hand, are men disposed to accept a lesser than equal liberty ...

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10 This hidden assumption is well brought out by Henry Shue in 'Liberty and Self-Respect', *Ethics*, Vol. 85, 1975.
[This would have] the effect of publicly establishing their inferiority as defined by the basic structure of society. This subordinate ranking in the public forum experienced in the attempt to take part in political and economic life, and felt in dealing with those who have a greater liberty, would indeed be humiliating and destructive of self-esteem.  

Self-respect depends on a conception of oneself as equal (in value to others) and thus free (from the necessity of promoting the interests of others in virtue of their perceived greater value). The best way to promote framework conditions conducive to these self-respect supporting self-conceptions is by asserting that people are free and equal with a principle of equal liberty.  

A publicly affirmed principle of equal liberty shows that


12 This aspect of the relationship between self-respect and rights & liberties has been noted by many. For example, in ‘Self-Respect: Theory and Practice’ (in R.S. Dillon (ed.) Dignity, Character and Self-Respect L.L. Thomas claims that:

A person has self-respect ... if and only if he has the conviction that he is deserving of full moral status, and so the basic rights of that status, simply in virtue of the fact that he is a person ... Everyone, including oneself, is equally deserving of full moral status and so of being treated in accordance with the basic rights that come with that status. And the reason for this is just that one is a person. (p. 264)

In his sensitive discussions of servility as a moral defect T.E. Hill Jnr. states that:

Basic respect as a human being, one feels, does not need to be earned; and if respect is having proper regard for rights, then at least some respect is due each person without his needing to earn it. A person may lack self-respect not
others think of us, and encourages us to think of ourselves, as valuable in a way necessary for self-respect. The status argument establishes equal liberty as a recognitional/framework basis of self-respect because requiring that the institutions of the basic structure meet the demands of a principle of equal liberty evinces a conviction on the part of those who accept these institutions as legitimate that all persons are equal in value.

merely be underestimating his merits and achievements but also by misunderstanding and undervaluing his equal rights as a human being. (Autonomy and Self-Respect, p. 19).


Having rights enables us to "stand up like men", to look others in the eye, and to feel in some fundamental way the equal of anyone. To think of oneself as the holder of rights is not to be unduly but properly proud, to have that minimal self-respect that is necessary to be worthy of the love and esteem of others ... these are facts about the possession of rights that argue well their supreme moral importance. (p. 252)

Ronald Dworkin interprets Rawlsian justice as fairness as expressing the liberal ideal of showing equal concern and respect for all. It is this basic egalitarian commitment which explains the Rawlsian connection between self-respect and liberty:

... men in the original position would protect the basic liberties in the interest of their right to equality, once a certain level of material comfort has been reached, because they would understand that a threat to self-respect, which the basic liberties protect, is then the most serious threat to equal respect. ('Justice and Rights' in Taking Rights Seriously, (Duckworth, London, 1977), p. 182-3).

Finally, for a good general discussion see chapter 2 of Avishai Margalit’s The Decent Society (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1996).
So far I have only addressed status and access arguments for equal liberty as a framework basis of self-respect. But equal liberty can also be conceived of as a resource/associational or recognitional/associational basis of self-respect. If the basic structure is the subject of justice then principles of justice cannot sanction direct interference in the internal life of communities of shared interests supplying the conditions of reciprocal esteem wherein the associational bases of self-respect are found. What we have to consider, then, is the extent to which principles establishing self-respect supporting equality in the framework bases of self-respect will encourage self-respect supporting equality in the associational bases of self-respect. With respect to liberty, the question is: what self-respect related effect does a publicly affirmed principle of equal liberty have on the internal life of communities of shared interests? Does equal political liberty encourage resource and recognitional support for self-respect within communities of shared interests, over and above the effect it might have on the overall framework of society?

To be brief—for I return to these issues in the next chapter—we could argue as follows. First, equal political liberty promotes the resource/associational bases of self-respect by acting as a safeguard for those belonging to communities of shared interests. Individual rights and liberties prevent, as far as possible, self-respect depleting abuses of the individual by those with whom she associates. If one finds oneself in a community of shared interests which begins to undermine one’s self-respect one can, given a background of equal liberty, exit that community by insisting on one’s right to do so, even if one’s peers attempt to coerce one to stay.
Second, equal liberty supports the recognitional/associational bases of self-respect by encouraging persons qua citizens to view themselves as equals. This self-respect supporting self-conception is likely to be carried over into the communities of shared interests in their private lives and thus provide those with whom they associate a non-public basis for their self-respect supporting egalitarian self-conceptions. Equal liberty creates a public culture within which private self-respect supporting activities are likely to flourish.

A principle of equal liberty provides the framework conditions of self-respect and, as far as justice allows, makes available the associational bases of self-respect. Of course, nothing can guarantee the associational bases of self-respect for particular individuals, for we cannot force people to join and reap the benefits of communities of shared interests. But, as I have noted, those who fail to do this in a well-ordered society are not the victims of a failure of justice.
4.4 The Priority of Liberty

Given this explanation of the senses in which equal liberty is a social basis of self-respect, we can now examine Rawls’ self-respect based argument for the priority of a principle of equal liberty qua social basis of self-respect. But before doing this we need to get clearer about what it means to claim priority for liberty. The revised principle of liberty Rawls presents in *Political Liberalism* is:

> each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties which is compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all.\(^{13}\)

To claim priority for this principle is to claim that the liberties it protects\(^{14}\) ‘can be restricted only for the sake of liberty itself’.\(^{15}\) Or, alternatively, that these liberties have ‘an absolute weight with respect to

\(^{13}\) J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 291.

\(^{14}\) These liberties are given by a list which may be refined and modified when our knowledge of social conditions increases as we move from the original position to the constitutional, legislative and judicial stages of articulation of the principles of justice. See *Political Liberalism*, pp. 293-299.

\(^{15}\) J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 244.
reasons of public good and perfectionist values'. The consequences of assigning such priority to a principle of equal liberty are that individual liberties can never be sacrificed for utilitarian public goods—whereby we aim to maximise total or average levels of utility—or for 'perfectionist' goods, whereby, for example, we might aim to encourage adoption of a certain religion. In particular, Rawls claims that liberty cannot be made unequal across persons in order to promote economic efficiency or safeguard national security with minimal social disruption.

Are we to insist on the equal distribution of a fully adequate set of liberties whatever the circumstances? Here we have to keep apart the ideas of the priority of liberty and equal liberty, for there are situations in which the priority of liberty permits inequality of liberty, or an equal distribution of a less than adequate set of liberties. In *A Theory of Justice* Rawls makes an important distinction between 'ideal' and 'nonideal' theory which allows us to identify circumstances in which priority does not demand equality or full adequacy. Nonideal theorising is concerned with the application of principles of justice in 'less happy conditions' than those we assume for the purposes of constructing these principles. In nonideal conditions the priority of liberty can sanction an equal distribution of a less than adequate

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set of liberties, or an unequal distribution of basic liberties, if and only if these reductions are imposed either so as to move closer to a situation in which equality and full adequacy are possible, or in order to protect the liberties that people already have, or both. Carrying over the distinction between ideal and nonideal theory to claims for the priority of the principle of liberty as it appears in Political Liberalism, there are two ways in which liberty can be restricted without undermining its priority. First, basic liberties can be restricted in a uniform way across persons, such that all have an equal but not fully adequate scheme of liberties. And second, basic liberties can be restricted in a non-uniform way across persons by reducing the scope of some persons’ liberties, such that some have more freedoms than others.

What are the nonideal conditions in which such reductions are legitimate? In A Theory of Justice Rawls claims that the scope of liberty might justifiably be reduced by denying rights to freedom of thought given the ‘natural limitations’ of human nature leading (perhaps) to an intolerance (a form of ‘partial compliance’) which undermines public order. Alternatively, we might accept temporary inequalities in liberty between people ‘when the long-run benefits are great enough to transform a less fortunate society into one where the equal liberties can be fully enjoyed’.

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In either case our practice is guided by the principles arrived at against a background of assumptions characteristic of ideal theory.

So, in tracing the connection between the priority of liberty and self-respect, what needs clarifying are the assumptions made about self-respect in ideal theory which support the priority of liberty guiding the application of principles in nonideal conditions. Getting clear about these assumptions will explain why caring about the social bases of self-respect makes reductions in the distribution of liberty, or the set of liberties distributed, legitimate only in special conditions.

One way of arguing for the priority of liberty might be this. Maximin demands that each social basis of self-respect be equalised, because allowing inequalities in any opportunity for self-respect cannot work to the advantage of the worst of in terms of their opportunity for self-respect. Any principle of equality upon which a maximin distribution of the social bases of self-respect supervenes must be stable; that is, the equal distribution of goods that it recommends must be capable of being reasonably maintained over time, so that the social bases of self-respect which supervene upon these goods can be kept equal over time. Now there are two main candidate goods for this principle of equality: basic rights & liberties, and income & wealth. It is

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21 For more on the differences between ideal and nonideal theory see J. Rawls, A Theory of Justice, p. 8f, 245f, 351, 241, 315, 391 & 577.
unreasonable to insist on a equal distribution of income & wealth, for everyone might be worse off—in terms of income & wealth—under an equal distribution than under an unequal distribution. In that case, the argument would go, income and wealth cannot serve as a social basis of self-respect because an equal distribution of income and wealth cannot be reasonably maintained over time. Maximin allows inequalities in income & wealth but—the argument stipulates—does not allow inequalities in the social bases of self-respect. Thus the distribution of income & wealth cannot serve as a supervenience base for the social bases of self-respect. This leaves only basic rights and liberties as putative social bases of self-respect. Given that an equal distribution of rights and liberties can reasonably be kept equal over time, the argument concludes—by a process of elimination—that only liberty can serve as a supervenience base for the social bases of self-respect. Thus a principle of equal liberty is to be given priority, given that self-respect is perhaps the most important primary good.

The problem with this argument is its hidden assumption that maximin with respect to the social bases of self-respect per se demands strict equality with respect to each particular good constitutive of the social bases of self-respect. A number of primary goods constitute the supervenience base for the social bases of self-respect, and it is not obvious that each of these goods—just in virtue of being part of this base—must be given an equal distribution, in order for opportunity for self-respect as a whole to be maximinined. That maximin demands equality with respect to rights & liberties qua social basis of self-respect does not imply that income &
wealth, qua social basis of self-respect, must also be equalised. Moving, via considerations of stability, from an assumption that maximin demands equality in every the social basis of self-respect to the priority of liberty is not convincing. If income & wealth, for example, should be given an equal distribution to genuinely contribute to a maximin distribution of the social bases of self-respect overall, then presumably it is reasonable to insist on an equal distribution of income & wealth. In that case liberty does not take priority over other primary goods, for trade-offs between liberty and income & wealth which support strict economic equality might be justifiable by reference to self-respect. Ruling out strict economic equality as integral to a maximin distribution of opportunities for self-respect needs to be argued, not asserted. I construct such an argument in chapter 6. For the moment we need an argument—not reliant on the assumption that maximin with respect to the social bases of self-respect demands equality with respect to each good constitutive of these bases—which shows that there is something special about equal and fully adequate liberty as a particular social basis of self-respect which supports the priority of liberty.

Before constructing such an argument I want to underline the fact that Rawls would indeed endorse the priority of liberty on self-respect related grounds by examining a dilemma posed by Stephen Massey.22 This will also help to crystallise the nature of Rawlsian self-respect.

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22 S.J. Massey, 'Is Self-Respect a Moral or a Psychological Concept?'.

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Massey attempts to impale Rawls on the horns of a dilemma by examining the moral content of Rawlsian self-respect. He claims that a conception of self-respect is subjective if 'it is both necessary and sufficient for respecting oneself that one have a certain kind of favourable self-attitude, which can be adequately defined in psychological terms'. Alternatively, a conception of self-respect is moral or objective if a person must value herself in the "proper" way to have self-respect, regardless of her psychological self-attitude. The dilemma is as follows.

If Rawlsian self-respect is objective then it can serve, as Rawls claims, as the most important primary good and ground arguments for the priority of liberty, although there is then a danger of circularity in using this conception of self-respect in discussions of, say, rights. Alternatively, if self-respect is psychological then it can play a useful, non-circular role in discussions of, say, rights, but cannot be used to argue for the priority of liberty. Although I think that the argument for the second horn of the dilemma is flawed,

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23 S.J. Massey, 'Is Self-Respect a Moral or a Psychological Concept?', p. 247. It should be clear that the concept of self-respect I developed in chapters 2 and 3 does not allow for such subjective conceptions which, I have claimed, are closer to self-esteem than self-respect. Given that I am claiming that the Rawlsian conception of self-respect instantiates my concept, defending Rawls from Massey’s attack without collapsing his conception into a subjective conception is crucial.

24 In 'Is Self-Respect a Moral or a Psychological Concept?' Massey sees a danger in defining self-respect in moral terms and then going on to use considerations of self-respect to argue for the importance of other moral notions like rights. The circularity (which he finds in Joel Feinberg’s 'The Nature and Value of Rights') emerges if we define self-
examination of the first horn helps to clarify exactly what is at issue when we claim that liberty should be given priority if it is genuinely to form part of the supervenience base for the social bases of self-respect.

Massey asks us to imagine two societies, A and B. Society A is rigid and hierarchical with well-defined roles into which people are born and educated. The successful socialisation and education of A-citizens ensures that they value themselves and have confidence that they are able to meet the duties and obligations of their socially defined roles. A-people, then, have much Rawlsian self-respect, understood as a psychological concept. But the price of this abundance is a dearth of opportunities and a lack of autonomy amongst the A-people. Society B, on the other hand, is egalitarian and meritocratic. B-people choose their own course of life from a wide range of options and are free to take advantage of as many opportunities as their time and energy permits them. The cost of this freedom, however, is a greater danger to their (psychologically conceived) self-respect, for B-people may unwisely adopt plans and projects for which they are not suited, and their consequent failures will deplete their self-respect.

respect in terms of, say, a view of oneself as a rights-bearer, and then go on to argue for rights in virtue of how they support self-respect. But there is only circularity here if we argue that the sole reason why rights are important is because of how they support self-respect (which Feinberg does not do). Furthermore, just because there is a danger of circularity when using conceptions of self-respect in political argument does not mean that it cannot be avoided with care and attention. There is nothing necessarily circular in arguing for, say, rights on the grounds of their relation to self-respect, so long as self-respect is not defined in terms of rights.
Which society should Rawls choose, given the importance of self-respect? If self-respect is the most important primary good then we should be able to determine the justice of social organisations by the extent to which they encourage self-respect among citizens. This is not to say that this is the only criterion of justice, but if self-respect is the most important primary good then this should be the most important criterion. A-people certainly think better of themselves than B-people, but we know that Rawls would choose society B over society A. So Rawlsian self-respect must be bound up with more than a favourable psychological self-attitude. Rawls must conceive of the freedom and conditions of autonomy enjoyed by the B-people, even in the presence of economic inequality (which is not tantamount to material inadequacy), as more conducive to self-respect than strict economic equality absent equal liberty, and this tells us that his conception of self-respect is objective and not a mere psychological attitude. Rawls divorces self-respect from just feeling good about oneself, and connects it instead to the exercise of the two moral powers. This is what allows him to urge the priority of liberty without reliance on a general premise that maximin with respect to the social bases of self-respect demands equality in each particular basis of self-respect.
4.5 Self-Respect and the Two Moral Powers

Rawls claims—most notably in Political Liberalism—that citizens are to be thought of as possessing two moral powers: the capacity for a sense of justice and the capacity for a conception of the good. The capacity for a sense of justice enables citizens to 'understand, apply, and to act from the reasonable principles of justice that specify fair terms of social cooperation'. \(^{25}\) The capacity for a conception of the good enables 'a conception of the ends and purposes worthy of our devoted pursuit, together with an ordering of those elements to guide us over an complete life'. \(^{26}\)

**The Capacity for a Conception of the Good**

What is involved in the exercise of the capacity for a conception of the good? And does the relationship between the exercise of this capacity and self-respect explain why special circumstances must obtain for reductions in liberty to be justified? To answer this question we have to get clear about the nature of a ‘conception of the good’ itself. In A Theory of Justice Rawls is surprisingly reticent about this key idea, but in Political Liberalism he defines a conception of the good as:

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a more or less determinate scheme of final ends, that is, ends we want to realise for their own sake, as well as attachments to other persons and loyalties to various groups and associations. These attachments and loyalties give rise to devotions and affections, and so the flourishing of the persons and associations who are the objects of these sentiments is also a part of our conception of the good. We also connect with such a conception a view of our relation to the world—religious, philosophical, moral—by reference to which the value and significance of our ends and attachments are understood. Finally, persons’ conceptions of the good are not fixed but form and develop as they mature, and may change more or less radically over the course of a life.27

Determinate conceptions of the good express the various sources of value in an individual’s life, giving content to individual life plans. Rawls thinks that determinate conceptions of the good emerge naturally for individuals who exercise their capacities for a conception of the good and a sense of justice.28 The most important aspect of the relationship between self-respect and exercise of the capacity for a conception of the good should now be clear. As noted in Chapter 3, Rawls thinks that self-respect depends upon


the pursuit of a rational life plan in accordance with the Aristotelian principle enabling one to enjoy the benefits of existence in the conditions of reciprocal esteem.\textsuperscript{29} Given that such life plans are a subset of life plans per se, and the pursuit of any life plan depends upon the exercise of one's capacity for a conception of the good, the pursuit of self-respect supporting life plans depends upon the exercise of one's capacity for a conception of the good.\textsuperscript{30} Conditions which impede the exercise of this capacity are conditions which impede the development of self-respect.\textsuperscript{31}

A second, subsidiary way in which the exercise of the capacity for a conception of the good might support self-respect relates to the nature of the deliberations partly constitutive of the exercise of this capacity. Rawls

\textsuperscript{29} See J. Rawls, \textit{A Theory of Justice}, p. 440.

\textsuperscript{30} See \textit{Political Liberalism}, pp. 312-313.

\textsuperscript{31} There is a confusion in \textit{Political Liberalism} about whether the two moral powers are pre-requisites for self-respect, or vice versa. Remarking on the right to private property, Rawls states that ‘The role of this liberty is to allow a sufficient material basis for a sense of personal independence and self-respect, \textit{both of which are essential for the development and exercise of the moral powers}’ (p. 298, my emphasis). Again in \textit{Political Liberalism} he claims that the social bases of self-respect are ‘those aspects of basic institutions normally essential if citizens are to have a lively sense of their own worth as persons \textit{and to be able to develop and exercise their moral powers} and to advance their aims and ends with self-confidence’ (p. 309, my emphasis). But later on in a more substantial discussion of self-respect and its relationship with the capacity for a sense of justice he claims that ‘self-respect presupposes the development and exercise of both moral powers and therefore an effective sense of justice’ (p. 318). The most plausible way of removing the tensions between these remarks is to claim that the exercise of the moral powers and self-respect are mutually supportive.
claims that ‘in addition to our beliefs being true, our actions right, and our ends good, we may also strive to appreciate why our beliefs are true, our actions right and our ends good and suitable for us’. In seeking to discover why our beliefs are true, our actions right and our ends good and suitable for us we exercise capacities for rational deliberation inherent in the capacity for a conception of the good. Although Rawls does not describe these capacities for rational deliberation in terms of considering the degree of congruence that holds between our beliefs, our actions and our ends, it is plausible to think that some self-respect related considerations will enter into the deliberations partly constitutive of the exercise of the capacity for a conception of the good. For example, in questioning whether X is an end suitable for me I might consider whether achieving X would be supportive of, or detrimental to, my self-respect. If such considerations are sometimes involved in the exercise of the capacity for a conception of the good then conditions enabling the exercise of this capacity not only indirectly contribute to self-respect by enabling the development of a conception of the good itself, but also directly support self-respect because of an overlap between the deliberative capacities involved in the exercise of the capacity for a conception of the good and the deliberative capacities involved in the development of self-respect.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{32} J. Rawls, \textit{Political Liberalism}, p. 313.

\textsuperscript{33} As I noted in chapter 2, such deliberation need not take the form of a rejection of traditions and social norms. That Rawls makes the same claims about the rational deliberation involved in the exercise of the capacity for a conception of the good lends
The Capacity for a Sense of Justice

Turning now to the capacity for a sense of justice, how does a willingness to propose and abide by fair principles of social co-operation support self-respect? Rawls is unclear on this point, but I think we can discern two separate answers to this question. First, in *A Theory of Justice* Rawls claims that parties in the original position would accept the 'natural duty of mutual respect which asks them to treat one another civilly and to be willing to explain the grounds of their actions, especially when the claims of others are overruled'.\(^{34}\) Acceptance of a natural duty of mutual respect helps to ensure that principles chosen in the original position will be fair, because they will support to my claim that the exercise of this capacity and self-respect supporting deliberation overlap. See *Political Liberalism*, pp. 311-312.

\(^{34}\) J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 178-9. The willingness to offer a certain kind of explanation to others when their claims are overruled has an obvious affiliation with T.M. Scanlon's main contractualist principle of moral motivation. In ‘Contractualism and Utilitarianism’ (*Utilitarianism and Beyond* eds. A. Sen and B. Williams) Scanlon claims that:

> According to contractualism, the source of motivation that is directly triggered by the belief that an action is wrong is the desire to be able to justify one’s actions to others on grounds they could not reasonably reject. (p. 116)

In *Political Liberalism* Rawls acknowledges that being motivated in this way is part of what it is part of what it is to exercise one’s capacity for a sense of justice (p. 49, n. 2). He characterises this desire as conception dependent in so far as it depends upon 'a certain rational or reasonable conception, or a political ideal' (p. 84). This conception dependent desire largely defines the ideal of citizenship for the purposes of justice.
be justifiable even to those who would, as individuals, be more advantaged under a different set of principles. In the original position, behind the veil of ignorance, parties would choose principles of justice on the assumption that everyone subject to those principles accepts, and is motivated to act in accordance with, the natural duty of mutual respect; in other words, part of what it is to assume that people have the capacity for a sense of justice is that people accept the natural duty of mutual respect. Such an assumption is rational—as well as reasonable—because if the parties know that they value and desire self-respect but do not know the determinate conception of the good upon which their self-respect rests, then choosing principles on the assumption that everyone accepts the natural duty of mutual respect will yield principles which do not unfairly disadvantage any person with respect to their opportunities for self-respect. This assumption means that they can be sure of arriving at principles which will not undermine their self-respect, whoever they turn out to be and even if, in fact, no-one does accept the natural duty of mutual respect. As Rawls states:

... our self-respect normally depends upon the respect of others. Unless we feel that our endeavours are honoured by them, it is difficult if not impossible for us to maintain the conviction that our ends are worth advancing. Hence for this reason the parties would

35 Other aspects of the capacity for a sense of justice which help to ensure the fairness of principles arrived at via its exercise are a reasonable moral psychology (Political Liberalism, pp. 80-81), and acceptance of the burdens of judgement (Political Liberalism, pp. 54-8).
accept the natural duty of mutual respect which asks them to treat one another civilly and to be willing to explain the grounds of their actions, especially when the claims of others are overruled ... one may assume that those who respect themselves are more likely to respect each other and conversely. Self-contempt leads to contempt of others and threatens their good as much as envy does. Self-respect is reciprocally self-supporting.  

Choosing principles on the assumption that everyone accepts the natural duty of mutual respect—a crucial component of the capacity for a sense of justice—protects everyone’s self-respect by ensuring a social structure which discourages self-contempt; those who have contempt for themselves are unlikely to provide others with the conditions of reciprocal esteem. In a sense, self-respect could be viewed as a special sort of public good, for self-respecters provide the conditions of reciprocal esteem which support everyone’s self-respect.


37 That parties consider the effect of principles on self-conceptions is made explicit in Political Liberalism, where Rawls claims that:

... in selecting principles of justice the parties must ... take into account the consequences of those principles being mutually recognised and how this affects citizens’ conceptions of themselves and their motivation to act from those principles. (p. 104)
The second way in which the capacity for a sense of justice is connected with self-respect is that the exercise of this capacity ensures the sort of stability conducive to self-respect\textsuperscript{38}. If—\textit{in virtue} of their concern for their self-respect—parties in the original position choose principles on the assumption that those subject to them are motivated by the natural duty of mutual respect, then it is in the interests of \textit{actual} people subject to these principles to accept the natural duty of mutual respect, given that they care about their self-respect. Principles designed on a certain assumption will work best if that assumption proves to be true. Rawls' principles of justice are designed on the assumption that all people accept a natural duty of mutual respect, which it is rational for them to do behind the veil of ignorance given their interest in their self-respect. Thus the principles will work best—where 'work best' here means 'promote conditions conducive to self-respect'—if people actually do accept the natural duty of mutual respect. In accepting such a duty they exercise their capacity for a sense of justice. So the exercise of this capacity contributes to self-respect.

Another way to express this idea is that in accepting this duty (and acting so as to meet it) individuals realise the ideal of citizenship upon which the

\textsuperscript{38} Rawls describes the stability provided by his principles of justice as follows:

... clear and perspicuous to our reason, congruent and unconditionally concerned with our good, and rooted not in abnegation but in affirmation of our person. (\textit{Political Liberalism}, p. 317).

All three of these aspects of stability are self-respect supporting.
principles of justice governing their social co-operation rest. In realising this ideal individuals not only empower principles premised upon the ideal to support self-respect, but also make themselves deserving of the self-respect supporting respect of other individuals who also strive to realise this ideal of citizenship. Rawls claims that:

When we say ... that not only are citizens normal and fully co-operating members of society, but further they want to be, and to be recognised, as such members, we are saying that they want to realise in their person, and have it recognised that they realise, that ideal of citizens.  

The reason why people want to be, and want to be recognised as, normal and fully co-operating members of society, claims Rawls, is that realisation of this ideal attended by the recognition of others supports their self-respect. In summary, if we choose principles of justice on the assumption that citizens will exercise the capacity for a sense of justice because this assumption yields principles most supportive of self-respect, then those subject to these principles maximise the self-respect supporting power of these principles by actually exercising their capacities for a sense of justice, thereby realising the ideal of citizens.

39 J. Rawls, Political Liberalism, p. 84.

40 J. Rawls, Political Liberalism, pp. 81-82.
How do these connections between the two moral powers and self-respect explain the priority of liberty qua social basis of self-respect? Liberty qua resource/framework and recognitional/framework basis of self-respect must be kept equal—even though we can perhaps allow inequalities in other goods constitutive of the resource/framework and recognitional/framework bases of self-respect—because a conceptual and a practical pre-requisite for the exercise of the moral powers contributing to self-respect is a choice over the courses of action that one will adopt. The conceptual and practical connections between liberty, the capacity for a conception of the good, and self-respect, will be addressed in the next chapter. Here I want to reflect only on these connections with respect to liberty and the capacity for a sense of justice. The conceptual connection between liberty and the natural duty of mutual respect—qua crucial component of the capacity for a sense of justice—generates an argument for the equality and priority of liberty on the grounds of how liberty constitutes a recognitional/framework bases of self-respect. The practical connection between liberty and the natural duty of mutual respect generates an argument for the equality and priority of liberty on the grounds of how liberty constitutes a resource/framework bases of self-respect.

The conceptual argument starts with the claim that one cannot think of oneself as genuinely accepting the natural duty of mutual respect unless one can conceive of oneself as not having accepted it. If genuine acceptance of this duty is part of what it means to realise the ideal of citizenship, and
realising this ideal supports self-respect, then basic liberties—allowing for rejection or acceptance of this duty—support self-respect. A further conceptual point concerns what it is that one accepts when one accepts the natural duty of mutual respect, over and above the fact of acceptance.

A person who accepts the natural duty of mutual respect believes, not only that she must respect others in virtue of the fact that they are persons, but also that others must respect her in virtue of her personhood. Without this qualification the duty of mutual respect would be merely ‘I must respect others’ rather than ‘We should all respect one another’. Constructing principles that will work best if everyone accepts the natural duty of mutual respect means that these principles will work best if each person, not only considers others to be worthy of respect, but also considers herself to be worthy of respect. The beliefs involved in acceptance of the duty of mutual respect imply a self-conception fit to support self-respect, or at least not damaging to self-respect; principles which encourage these beliefs will encourage, or at least not undermine, self-respect.

How do these two points support the priority of liberty? If, as I have argued, the state of affairs ideal from the point of view of self-respect is that the assumptions constitutive of ideal theory informing the choice of principles of justice turn out to be accurate, then we can mount the following argument for the priority of liberty. Disallowing restrictions on liberty apart from those that are made for the sake of liberty encourages every person to think of themselves as deserving of the respect of others, and so encourages
a state of affairs in which principles designed to promote the conditions of self-respect can do their job most effectively. Maintaining an equal distribution of a fully adequate scheme of liberties—or allowing inequality of liberty or less-than-full adequacy so long as these restrictions protect existing liberties, or enable movement towards more ideal conditions—does two things. First, it makes possible genuine acceptance of the natural duty of mutual respect, where such acceptance is necessary for a person to realise the ideal of citizenship and receive the self-respect supporting respect of others in virtue of this realisation. Second, in making this acceptance possible it encourages those who aspire to the ideal of which such acceptance is partly constitutive to think, not only of others, but also of themselves, as worthy of respect. The development of such self-conceptions is supportive of self-respect.

To turn now to the more straightforward practical argument, conditions ideal for self-respect depend not only on individuals accepting the duty of mutual respect—and thereby viewing themselves as deserving of respect—but also on individuals acting in accordance with this duty. Acting in accordance with this duty supports self-respect not only by enabling principles to do their self-respect supporting work, but also by prompting the respect of others who recognise action—over and above talk—which meets the ideal of citizenship. Such action will only prompt the respect of others if it is done freely. Putative acts of good citizenship lose their praiseworthy characteristics once we discover they are done out of fear or greed or indoctrination. Enabling people to be good citizens in a way that supports
their self-respect means allowing them to fail without fear of punishment. The best way to secure for people the freedom they need for their citizenly actions to be self-respect supporting is by giving priority to a principle of equal liberty.

In this chapter I have reconstructed Rawlsian arguments for the priority of a principle of equal liberty by making clear the connections between self-respect and the exercise of the two moral powers, especially the capacity for a sense of justice. By requiring that the institutions of the basic structure meet the demands of a principle of equal liberty taking priority over other principles we build opportunities for self-respect into the framework of society. Taking these self-respect related justifications for according priority to a principle ensuring an equal distribution of a fully adequate set of liberties as a point of reference, we can now move on to look at problems which arise with respect to this principle once the way in which membership of a group can support self-respect has been acknowledged.
SELF-RESPECT AND GROUP MEMBERSHIP

5.1 Outline

In the last chapter I made a self-respect based case for giving priority to a principle of liberty. What this means is that in ideal conditions a fully adequate set of liberties should be distributed equally across persons; in nonideal conditions we can allow inequality of liberty—or equal but less than adequate liberty—when these restrictions are imposed in order to protect existing liberties, or promote movement towards ideal conditions in which the restrictions can be dropped. In this chapter I want to show how a self-respect based commitment to the priority of liberty does not preclude measures needed to protect the existence of a diversity of groups in society (qua resource/associational and recognition/associational bases of self-respect).

To be specific, the thesis I want to advance in this chapter is this: given that the existence of a diversity of groups in society does provide opportunity for self-respect, liberals committed to the priority of liberty as a social basis of self-respect are not thereby precluded from taking special ('multiculturalist') measures to protect the existence of a diversity of groups qua social basis of self-respect. But why might one think that liberals would
be so precluded? This thought arises once we realise that the measures
needed to protect certain groups might require an unequal distribution of
individual rights, and this might be in tension with the priority of liberty. If
giving priority to liberty conflicts with other principles protecting
opportunities for self-respect then the self-respect based case for the priority
of liberty is weakened.

My overarching aim in this chapter is to argue for a practical account of
the importance of group membership which explains why a diversity of
groups in society is a social basis of self-respect. I will argue that this
practical account is superior to other accounts in that it supports a certain
distinction between cultural and non-cultural groups; this distinction enables
arguments for an unequal distribution of at least one right—the right to
exclude—as a way of giving special protection to cultural groups.
Furthermore, I will argue, this unequal distribution is not necessarily in
tension with the priority of liberty, for the position I advance recommends
this distribution only in nonideal conditions, and only in order to protect
freedom of association as supportive of self-respect in these conditions.

The first step is to get clear about how group membership can support
self-respect; in 5.2 I consider, and reject, a ‘communitarian’ account.
Although this account provides a straightforward argument for the protection
of diversity, it does not obviously support the priority of liberty and,
anyway, relies on an implausible conception of the person. In 5.3 I consider
Kymlicka’s and Raz’s ‘conceptual’ answers to the question of why group
membership supports self-respect. These answers support ‘multiculturalism’, the view that the importance of group membership mandates state action to give special protection to groups which transcends general prohibitions on discrimination. I will argue that these conceptual accounts do not provide a clear distinction between cultural and noncultural groups needed for a multiculturalist approach. In 5.4 I offer a more modest, ‘practical’ explanation of why group membership supports self-respect, which also delivers on a promise made in the last chapter to explain the connection between self-respect and the exercise of the capacity for a conception of the good. The ‘practical’ approach provides a clear way of distinguishing between cultural and non-cultural groups, and so may be better suited to support multiculturalism. This point will emerge most clearly in 5.6. In 5.5 I consider the distribution of rights of exit and entry yielded by the practical approach, and confront a liberal dilemma concerning group membership as supportive of self-respect, and the right to exclude as an aspect of freedom of association. In 5.6 I consider a way of resolving this dilemma which reveals more fully a plausible criterion for distinguishing between cultural and non-cultural groups.
5.2 The ‘Communitarian’ Approach

Understanding why a diversity of groups within society is a social basis of self-respect requires an explanation of why membership of any particular group might support a person’s self-respect. One such explanation relies on a distinction between ‘communitarian’ and liberal approaches to political philosophy.

It is sometimes claimed that the distinction between ‘communitarian’ and liberal approaches is best understood in terms of the differences between their respective conceptions of the person. Liberals—so the story goes—conceive of persons as choosers of their ends, and communitarians conceive of persons as discoverers of their ends. In Michael Sandel’s terminology, liberal political theory proceeds on the assumption of an ‘unencumbered self’, and communitarian theory on the assumption of an ‘encumbered self’. Unencumbered selves choose their ends and values; encumbered selves discover their ends and values. What is it, exactly, that encumbered selves are supposed to discover? Sandel claims that:

to say that members of a society are bound by a sense of community ... describes not just what they have as fellow citizens but also what they are, not a relationship they choose (as in a
voluntary association) but an attachment they discover, not merely an attribute but a constituent of their identity.¹

The view of selves as essentially encumbered places them in a network of unchosen roles and relationships which define their ends and values. A person’s identity is connected with her successful pursuit of ends in conformity with her values, such that anything which prevents this pursuit or damages these values damages the person. But if a person’s identity—her ends and values—is constituted by the relationships she has with others in her community then, if we aim to promote the good of the individual, we should promote the good of her community.

The ‘liberal’ position according to which this communitarian—or better, ‘constitutive’—view is defined in opposition to is that persons have an extensive, perhaps total, control over the ends and values yielding their identity. The ‘liberal’ self is ‘unencumbered’ in virtue of the supposed liberal assumption that it is possible for persons to stand back from and assess any of their ends or values. This supposed assumption is taken to explain the liberal emphasis on the priority of liberty: liberty enables people to exercise choice and control over their ends, and in this way promotes their good.

Some philosophers who take seriously this unrealistic position\(^\text{1}\) argue that the language of choice and rejection it employs belies a false picture of the relationship between a person and her conception of the good. Persons are instead *discoverers* and not choosers of ends. The content of one's conception of the good is not something over which one can deliberate because there is no such self that can stand back from its ends and assess them in this way. Rather, persons are in some way constituted by aspects of their social world.

The constitutive approach yields a simple explanation of why group membership supports self-respect by identifying the promotion of a person's good with promoting the good of her community, via the claim that a person's identity—her self-conception—is constituted by the ends and values of her community. An argument for principles protecting a diversity of groups in society is now relatively easy to mount. Measures which protect the continued existence of groups promote the good of members of these groups, even if these measures require restrictions on their individual liberty. This approach gives an account of how group membership supports

\(^{1}\) Most notably, Michael Sandel in *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*. Sandel's specific criticism of the Rawlsian 'unencumbered self' is that although it is fit to support the priority of liberty, it cannot support the redistribution of economic goods recommended by the Difference Principle. This is because the Difference Principle relies on a conception of individual talents as common assets, the fruits of which are legitimate targets of redistribution. But, thinks Sandel, conceiving of individuals as unencumbered is incompatible with a conception of individual talents as common assets. I will not discuss this argument.
self-respect which yields an explanation of the value of diversity militating against the priority of liberty. Giving priority to liberty is in tension with the protection of identity-conferring groups, because such protection might sometimes demand restrictions on individual liberty which are not imposed for the sake of individual liberty itself. If individual identity, and thus self-respect, is intimately connected with group identity and group good then insisting on the priority of a principle of equal liberty which can prevent the protection and promotion of group identity and good, far from benefiting individuals, may actually damage them. Thus, so the argument goes, people who care about the conditions of self-respect should not insist on the priority of liberty.

The constitutive approach as I have described it does not pose a threat to liberalism, for the conception of the person around which it revolves is not attractive. Apart from Sandel, there is no communitarian who conceives of the relationship between a person, her ends and her community in this way. Furthermore, there are no liberals who conceive of people as 'unencumbered' or 'radically disembodied', able to stand back from all of their ends and assess them all at once. Each of these positions lie at either end of a spectrum of possible conceptions of the relationship between a

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7 I do not want to get involved in exegetical questions here, but I will just mention that I think much of Sandel's criticism of the Rawls of A Theory of Justice can be explained by a failure to remember that the original position, with choosing parties behind a veil of ignorance etc., is just a heuristic device, a way of modelling deeply held convictions about fairness, and not a way of theorising personal identity or selfhood.
person, her ends and values, and the community or group to which she belongs, and most people—apart, perhaps, from Sandel—have views which appear somewhere along this spectrum, not at either end of it.

If the difference between liberal and communitarian conceptions of the person is overstated then what is the conception of the person upon which they actually converge? And if liberals and communitarians are not to be distinguished by reference to differences between the conceptions of the person with which they operate, then what is it that liberals and communitarians disagree about? Indicating answers to these two questions will clear the ground for a more detailed consideration of Raz and Kymlicka on the importance of group membership.

To address the first issue, both liberals and communitarians sensibly converge on a general picture of the person as capable of rejecting certain roles in which she finds herself and choosing or developing new ones. That is, both liberals and communitarians will agree that a person cannot change all her ends and values all at once, and can change some ends and values over time. But can a person change all her ends and values over time? Is there a limit to the process of self-reconstruction which both positions agree is possible? Perhaps liberals and communitarians will disagree about the capacities of persons at this lower level. Such a debate over the possibility of extensive self-reconstruction may reveal differences between communitarians and liberals that help us map their positions without appeal to their supposedly different conceptions of the person. This takes me to the
second issue mentioned earlier, that of how we are to distinguish liberals from communitarians without reference to constitutive or unencumbered selves.

It might be that when liberals and communitarians disagree about the possibility of extensive self-reconstruction they are not arguing about *empirical facts*, but rather that their disagreement is a disagreement about *value*. Perhaps the argument is not over whether people can, as a matter of fact, engage in extensive self-reconstruction mediated by self-reflection, but rather whether people ought, as a matter of value, to do so. This aspect of the liberal/communitarian debate could be viewed as a disagreement about whether reflection on certain ends—making possible repudiation of those ends—is valuable, where liberals stand as inheritors of the 'Enlightenment project' with its emphasis on the exercise of individual reason in scrutinising traditions and social assumptions. Communitarians, on the other hand, could be viewed not as abrogating the value of self-reflection altogether, but rather as reminding Enlightenment-minded approaches that encouraging the unbridled exercise of individual reason might erode other valuable aspects of our world, such as communities, traditions, and the social bonds they forge and support.\(^4\) Thus the communitarian position might be that an emphasis

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\(^4\) Will Kymlicka registers this interpretation in *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989), stating that:

Some people ... think ... we only have confidence in our moral judgements if they are protected socially from the eroding effects of our own individual rational scrutiny. We lack faith in our own judgements, and social
on conditions conducive to unbridled self-reflection with the possibility of extensive self-reconstruction may fail to promote other values which are at least as important—if not more important—than the exercise of reason in self-reflection. On this rendition of the liberal/communitarian debate, the disagreement is about the degree of self-reflection and self-reconstruction that is desirable, not about the possibility of such reflection, or the fact that some self-reflection is desirable.

The attraction of recasting the liberal/communitarian debate in these terms is that it opens up the possibility of making progress without liberal and communitarian participants rightly complaining that their positions are being misrepresented by their opponents. Nevertheless, the liberal/communitarian debate, construed in these terms, does not map on to the debate about whether protecting a diversity of groups qua social basis of confirmation must come in to guide or even limit individual reflection and choice. (p. 62)

Another possible reading of the liberal/communitarian debate might be that their disagreement is over the purpose of reflective activity itself. Both liberals and communitarians might agree that individual reflection is an essential component of the good life, but liberals might claim that such reflection should be essentially critical whereas communitarians might claim that reflection should deepen one’s understanding of one’s place in an on-going social narrative. For an interpretation of Kant which accords with this construal of the liberal side of the debate see T.W. Pogge, ‘Kant on Ends and the Meaning of Life’ in Reclaiming the History of Ethics: Essays for John Rawls eds. A. Reath, B. Herman & C.M. Korsgaard. For (what I believe) to be an example of this construal of the communitarian side of the debate see A. MacIntyre’s After Virtue (Duckworth, London, 1981).
self-respect is compatible with the priority of liberty qua social basis of self-respect. For even if we adopt the communitarian position outlined in the last paragraph, we will still admit that some self-reconstruction is possible and desirable. If this is the case then we will be committed to the value of liberty, albeit perhaps not as strongly as the liberal. But even this minimal communitarian commitment allows for possible conflicts between individual liberty and measures designed to protect groups; a communitarian is not necessarily more able provide the answers to hard questions about how to balance individual self-respect supporting liberty against the interests of groups lending support to the self-respect of their members. Both liberals and communitarians have to address this problem.

Given a sensible liberal, or communitarian, acknowledgement of the importance of group membership to the good of the individual, we are still left with the worry that urging the priority of a principle of equal liberty precludes measures necessary for the protection of self-respect supporting groups, or that protecting groups undermines the priority of liberty. To see why this is an important worry we still need an account of how group membership can contribute to self-respect. In the next section I consider the accounts given by Raz and Kymlicka.

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5.3 Group Membership: Kymlicka and Raz

Before giving my account of why group membership matters for self-respect I want to consider the *prima facie* similar accounts given by Kymlicka and Raz. I want to treat their accounts together for two reasons. First, both thinkers focus primarily on cultural groups, and give a ‘conceptual’ account of the importance of membership in such groups to self-respect. In claiming that their accounts are ‘conceptual’ I mean to highlight how they both insist that membership of a cultural group is necessary for an individual to be able to conceive of her options in a meaningful way, over and above the practical benefits that membership of a group brings.

The second reason for bracketing Kymlicka and Raz together is that they are both declared ‘multiculturalists’. What marks out an approach as multiculturalist are the special measures it recommends for coping with problems of identity and difference.\(^7\) Raz gives a threefold classification of responses to cultural difference which helps in understanding the nature of multiculturalism. Each category should be thought of as transcending its predecessor.

\(^7\) Arising, for Kymlicka, either from ‘incorporation of previously self-governing, territorially concentrated cultures into a larger state’, (*Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 10), or from group or individual immigration.
Toleration: An attitude and policies of toleration revolve around ‘letting minorities conduct themselves as they wish without being criminalised, so long as they do not interfere with the culture of the majority, and with the ability of members of the majority to enjoy the lifestyle of their culture’.

An attitude and policies of toleration are justified by the Harm Principle—that coercion of those whose actions do not cause harm to others is unjustified—or by reference to reasons of social stability and peace, as evinced in the emergence of pleas for toleration after the wars of religion in the 17th century.

Non-Discrimination Rights: Non-discrimination rights are individual rights not to be discriminated against. These rights often interfere with policies barring the access of particular individuals to important social institutions—schools, workplace, political office—on the grounds of their membership of a group. Policies of non-discrimination transcend Toleration because Toleration alone merely prevents certain forms of coercive interference with groups; it does not recommend granting access to important social institutions to members of tolerated groups.

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* The classic text here is, of course, John Locke’s A Letter Concerning Toleration.

**Multiculturalism**: 'While incorporating policies of non-discrimination, liberal multiculturalism transcends the individualistic approach which they tend to incorporate, and recognises the importance of unimpeded membership in a respected and flourishing cultural group for individual well-being.' Only multiculturalism can yield policies, thinks Raz, which give wholehearted protection to cultural groups, given the importance of membership in these groups.

It is a truism that liberal multicultural approaches require a workable distinction between cultural and non-cultural groups to be convincing. I will argue in this section that Kymlicka’s and Raz’s conceptual accounts of the importance of cultural membership do not support a workable distinction between cultural and non-cultural groups. In the next section I offer a practical account of the importance of group membership for self-respect which suggests a workable distinction between cultural and non-cultural groups.

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12 Examples of such policies given by Raz are: education in one’s own culture and about the cultures of others; respect in public and private companies—within the limits of toleration—for the cultural practices of employees; economic policies to remove the link between certain cultural groups and poverty; public support for ‘autonomous cultural institutions’; a fair division of public space. ‘Multiculturalism’, *Ethics in the Public Domain*, pp. 174-175.
... *cultural membership is not a means* used in the pursuit of one's ends. It is rather the context within which we choose our ends, and come to see their value, and this is a precondition of self-respect, of the sense that one's ends are worth pursuing. And it affects our very sense of personal identity and capacity. When we take cultural identity seriously, we'll understand that asking someone to trade off her cultural identity for some amount of money is like expecting someone to trade off her self-respect for some amount of money. Having money for the pursuit of one's ends is of little help if the price involves giving up the context within which those ends are worth pursuing.¹³

Kymlicka's claim is that cultural membership is a special sort of primary good in virtue of its relationship to self-respect. Unlike, for example, the relationship between self-respect and income and wealth (about which I will have more to say in chapters 6 and 7), the relationship between self-respect and cultural membership is not a practical, means-ends one. Rather, cultural membership is conceptually necessary for self-respect: cultural membership

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provides the context without which we could not make choices supportive of self-respect. In *Multicultural Citizenship* Kymlicka claims that:

Whether or not a course of action has any significance for us depends on whether, and how, our language renders vivid to us the point of that activity. And the way in which language renders vivid these activities is shaped by our history, our ‘traditions and conventions’. Understanding these cultural narratives is a precondition of making intelligent judgements about how to lead our lives.

When one deliberates about courses of action and how they will affect one’s self-respect one reflects—however inchoately—on one’s self-conception; one thinks about the kind of person one is and wants to be, and makes decisions on the basis of these beliefs and desires. Relating this conception of self-respect to Kymlicka’s claim: one’s understanding of who

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The long history of a person’s cultural groupings are the media through which each individual becomes aware of the options available to him and of the relative value his group assigns to those options. Cultural membership is crucial to self-respect because it provides salience to the options from which a person selects in making the judgements about how he can best live his life. (p. 584)

one is and who one wants to become is couched in a language informed by, or possibly representative of, ‘cultural narratives’. Cultural narratives impart meaning to choices and options which may affect our self-respect through language, and access to language and the narratives informing it is given by membership of a cultural group. Without such membership self-respect supporting choice of options one finds valuable and congruent with one’s self-conception is not possible.

Kymlicka’s conceptual interpretation of the relationship between cultural membership and self-respect might appear to capture the special value that cultural membership can seem to have. But on reflection we can see that Kymlicka’s account does not support a clear distinction between groups per se and cultural groups, and so cannot support his multiculturalism, which depends on our ability to identify groups as cultural. This is well brought out in a dilemma posed for Kymlicka by John Tomasi.16

Tomasi claims that Kymlicka is fundamentally unclear about why cultural membership, as a context of choice, is a good. On the one hand we might adopt an existential interpretation of this good: cultural membership is a good just because it provides a background without which choice is impossible. The problem with this interpretation is that everyone has such a background, regardless of their cultural membership: no-one exists outside of any context at all. The ‘existential’ interpretation suggests that cultural

16 J. Tomasi, ‘Kymlicka, Liberalism and Respect for Cultural Minorities’.
membership is just one way among many of having a good which—'like oxygen'everyone has. But if everyone has it then everyone is equally advantaged with respect to it, in which case there is no need for special group rights to protect cultural minorities.18

Given Kymlicka's understanding of the relationship between cultural membership and self-respect in conceptual terms, his multiculturalism requires the claim that there is something special about the contexts of choice which cultural groups provide that makes them particularly deserving of protection. The only way to distinguish such cultural groups qua contexts of choice from other contexts of choice, thinks Tomasi, is by highlighting their stability: cultural contexts have an enduring character but the character of non-cultural contexts is in constant flux. Thus cultural contexts lend more support to self-respect than non-cultural contexts by enabling choices which remain constant in their value because of the stability of the vocabulary of worth used in making them. The problem with the stability interpretation is that cultures are not static. If any change in a culture destabilises it as a context of self-respect supporting choice then all groups subject to change have the special rights endorsed by multiculturalism, for all groups provide some context of choice. If only some changes to cultures are destabilising

17 J. Tomasi, 'Kymlicka, Liberalism and Respect for Cultural Minorities', p. 589.

18 This claim holds because of the special nature of the good in question. Existence in a context making meaningful choice possible is not a matter of degree; one person cannot 'have more' existence in such a context than another.
then Kymlicka owes us criteria which support a distinction between relevant changes to cultural groups and non-relevant changes to non-cultural groups. Summing up, Tomasi claims that:

Either the good [of cultural membership] is so abstract and distant that no one is differentially disadvantaged with respect to it, or it is so closely tied to the character of the community that multicultural societies are pervaded by inequalities with respect to it.19

Kymlicka is right to explain the importance of cultural membership by reference to self-respect, but the weakness in his account is his denial that the relationship between self-respect and cultural membership is a practical, means-ends one.

**Raz**

We find an account similar to Kymlicka's of the importance of group membership to self-respect in Raz.

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19 J. Tomasi, 'Kymlicka, Liberalism and Respect for Cultural Minorities', p. 594. Tomasi's proposal for an alternative justification for special rights for cultural minorities draws on the distinction between basic rights and liberal freedoms. He argues that 'Universalist Liberalism' can accord special group rights—perhaps even the right to secession—to communities existent in liberal territories so long as these communities, while eschewing liberal freedoms, protect basic rights.
For most people, membership in their cultural group is a major determinant of who they are; it provides a strong focus of identification; it contributes to what we have come to call their sense of their own identity. I am what I am, but equally I am what I can become or could have been. To understand a person we need to know not just what he is but how he came to be what he is, i.e. to understand what he might have been and why he is some of those things and not others. In this way one’s culture constitutes (contributes to) one’s identity.²⁰

There are two problem with this description of the importance of cultural membership. First, I think Raz is open to the same criticism as that levelled at Kymlicka by Tomasi. Given that no-one exists outside of any context at all, the claim that cultural membership matters for self-respect because it provides a context within which meaningful self-respect supporting choices can be made is insufficient to distinguish cultural from non-cultural groups.

²⁰ J. Raz, ‘Multiculturalism’, Ethics in the Public Domain. Raz also gives the fact that membership of cultural group facilitates close personal relationships as a further reason for thinking that such membership is important. See also ibid., p. 162 where Raz claims that a cultural group’s prosperity ‘contributes to the richness and variety of the opportunities the culture provides access to’. This leaves it ambiguous whether Raz also conceives of cultural membership in practical terms for, unlike Kymlicka, he does not explicitly disavow a practical approach. If such a practical approach is also implicit in Raz then my subsequent arguments should be taken as recommending that he give greater prominence to the practical approach.
The second problem is that Raz equivocates between the claim that one's culture 'constitutes' one's identity and that one's culture 'contributes to' one's identity. As we saw in the discussion of communitarian approaches to questions of culture and identity, the claim that one's culture constitutes one's identity has implications which differ from the claim that one's culture influences or has an effect on one's identity. Sensible liberals and communitarians converge on the latter, weaker claim. In any case, no liberal can assert the constitutive claim: holding fast to a strong constitutive account endangers the priority of liberty; but without claims for the priority of liberty it is hard to see how a position could qualify as liberal.21

In summary, conceptual claims about the importance for self-respect of group membership are problematical for liberal multiculturalists for at least two reasons. First, if these claims are strong constitutive claims—like those considered in the last section—then the priority of liberty is threatened. Second, if these claims are weaker claims about how group membership provides a context of self-respect supporting choice, the grounds of the distinction between cultural and non-cultural groups remains unclear, for everyone is a member of some group, and all groups provide a context of choice.

21 This is because it is hard to see how aiming for an inclusive constituency of justification could fail to carry with it commitment to the priority of liberty.
Perhaps the appropriate response here is just to deny that there is any meaningful distinction to be made between cultural and non-cultural groups. This denial is consistent with the priority of liberty, and is certainly a possibility for liberals. But before moving this quickly I want to consider another way of understanding the importance of group membership for self-respect. The practical approach I will explore in the next section yields criteria for distinguishing cultural from non-cultural groups which focus on differences in the conditions under which cultural and non-cultural groups can provide *practical opportunities* for self-respect. The application of these criteria yields an unequal distribution of (at least) one right, the right to exclude. This measure is an example of the sort of differential protection defended by multiculturalism. Furthermore, this unequal distribution is consistent with the priority of liberty because it is recommended only in nonideal conditions, and in order to protect freedom of association—of which the right to exclude is an aspect—as supportive of self-respect. By adopting a practical approach to group membership liberal multiculturalists gain a sound way of distinguishing cultural from non-cultural groups, and can remain committed to the priority of liberty.
5.4 Group Membership: Practical Opportunities

The practical connection between group membership and self-respect becomes clear once we focus on the criteria of excellence success according to which generates self-respect. In chapter 2 I analysed self-respect in terms of congruence between one’s self-conception and one’s self-expression. Each self-conception carries with it standards of excellence for the activities upon which that self-conception is focused. By claiming that self-respect requires a degree of congruence between self-conception and self-expression I mean that a person’s self-respect demands success according to the standards of excellence implicit in their self-conception. As we saw, there are at least two ways in which this success can be understood: success according to social criteria of excellence and success according to individual criteria of excellence. Social criteria of excellence are publicly accessible, transparent standards employed by groups to measure excellence in the activities around which the group is organised. Individual criteria, on the other hand, are not transparent, and represent a person’s conception of what it would be to succeed according to ‘her own lights’. I argued—in chapter 3—that what matters for self-respect is success according to standards with which the person identifies, regardless of their social or non-social origins. In other words, what matters for self-respect is that a person succeeds according to her individual criteria of excellence. How does group membership support success according to individual criteria of excellence, and thus support self-respect?
Group Membership and Individual Criteria

Individual criteria of excellence are impossible to form without some involvement or participation in the activity to which they pertain. This is because I cannot know, in a particular activity $x$, what the best I can do is—as opposed to what the best that can be done is—without actually trying $x$. I can know what constitutes excellent flute-playing without ever having played a flute; I simply consult some set of pre-established social criteria of excellence for flute-playing used by flautists and their fans. But I cannot know, without actually picking up a flute, taking lessons and attempting to play, what constitutes excellent flute-playing for me. The very possession of individual criteria of excellence requires involvement in the activity to which they relate at least once.

One begins to develop individual criteria of excellence by joining in certain activities with others. Although such participation with others does not determine the grounds of one’s self-respect, it is a means to the end of constructing a normative self-conception reflecting one’s particular identity which serves as the basis for self-respect. One way—probably the most common way—in which one can engage in such activities is by being a member of a group. This practical account of the relationship between self-respect and group membership characterises the latter as a means to the
former not because one’s ‘group identity’ is constitutive of the ‘self’ in ‘self-respect’, and not because self-respect supporting choice is conceptually impossible without cultural contexts. Rather, the claim is that—to the extent that group membership suggests participation in activities around which the group is organised—group membership is a way of acquiring standards necessary for self-respect.

The claim that self-respect depends on success according to individual criteria of excellence counts against Nozick’s claim that ‘There is no standard of doing something well, independent of how it is or can be done by others’. Nozick overstates his point because one way of doing something well is doing it in a way that supports one’s self-respect, that is, in accordance with standards one endorses, even if these standards diverge from publicly accessible social standards attached to groups. But denying this connection between self-respect, the standards it employs and group membership does not mean that there is no connection at all between social criteria and self-respect.

**Social Criteria Revisited**

Rejecting a Nozickean interpretation of the connection between self-respect and social standards does not exhaust all the options for understanding how these standards contribute to self-respect. Although it is

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a mistake to think of the success that matters for self-respect as success according to social criteria, these criteria nevertheless have a role to play in the development of self-respect in virtue of how the activities towards which they are directed bind together certain kinds of groups which—in addition to enabling the formation of individual criteria—also serve to support self-respect. One way of getting clear about the real connection between self-respect and social standards is to recall Rawls’ claims about self-respect and membership of a community of shared interests, as outlined in chapter 2.

Rawls claims that the development of self-respect depends upon existence in conditions in which we enjoy the esteem of those we esteem; ‘the conditions of reciprocal esteem’. These conditions are enhanced by satisfying the Aristotelian principle in one’s rational life plan. This principle is that:

... other things being 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.\(^{23}\)

The Aristotelian principle also has a ‘companion effect’ which is that:

As we witness the exercise of well-trained abilities of others, these displays are enjoyed by us and arouse a desire that we should be able to do the same things ourselves. We want to be like those persons who can exercise the abilities we find latent in our nature.  

The Aristotelian principle and its companion effect point to the correct analysis of the relationship between self-respect and social criteria of excellence. Satisfying the principle and experiencing its effect matters for self-respect because, in certain kinds of groups focused on Ø-activities, Ø-ing enables one to be recognised by other group members as a group member oneself, and—in these groups—such recognition leads to ‘our own person and deeds [being] appreciated and confirmed by others who are likewise esteemed and their association enjoyed’. Such groups employ social criteria of excellence in order to identify themselves as groups, but the relationship between these criteria and self-respect in such groups is limited to enabling the mutual recognition which supports self-respect. In groups such as these a person’s degree of success according to social criteria of excellence for Ø-ing is—as I have claimed—irrelevant to their self-respect; all that matters is that they Ø, where Ø is that activity, or set of activities, towards which the group’s social criteria are directed. Social criteria are related to self-respect because they make possible group identification—by


both members and others—without which self-respect supporting mutual recognition would not occur.

But why should being recognised by others as a member of their group in virtue of the activities in which one participates matter for self-respect? Remembering that the Aristotelian principle and its companion effect can be viewed as stating a principle of human motivation, one reason why receiving the esteem of others is supportive of self-respect is that without such esteem many people will lack the motivation to engage in projects and activities which might support their self-respect. A further reason is that being in receipt of the esteem of others is likely to foster the sense of one's own status needed for self-respect. Being valued by group X members as a member of group X may supplement (in ideal conditions) the sense of status attached to citizenship, or provide a surrogate (in nonideal conditions) for the status-related support absent from the basic structure. We can see that admitting the relevance of social criteria of excellence to self-respect in virtue of how they bind together groups providing the conditions of reciprocal esteem does not necessarily preclude a practical account of the importance of group membership; the claim that group membership provides motivational and status support for self-respect is a second aspect of such a practical account.

In summary, the key to understanding the relationship between self-respect and group membership is the standards essential for both. The first element of this account is that the success upon which self-respect depends
requires standards which are likely to be acquired—and then suitably modified—in the context of a group; membership of a group is a way of acquiring standards enabling one to do things which might support one’s self-respect. The second practical connection I made between group membership and self-respect relied on the effect that the attitudes of others can have on self-respect. Group membership can have an edifying effect on self-respect if one is recognised and esteemed as a group member, which requires that one engage in activities around which the group is organised, and such recognition and esteem may be forthcoming even if one does not excel according to social criteria. Instead, the relationship between self-respect and social criteria here is that the presence of the latter is a condition of group identification without which mutual recognition is impossible.

Armed with this practical understanding of the importance of group membership to self-respect, we can now move on to look at the policies it warrants, and the extent to which they are compatible with the priority of liberty. In particular, I want to focus on rights of exit and exclusion as background conditions for group membership and group diversity to be supportive of self-respect. I will argue that group membership qua social basis of self-respect warrants an equal distribution of rights of exit under all conditions, an equal distribution of the right to exclude in ideal conditions, and (characteristic of multiculturalism) an unequal distribution of the right to exclude in nonideal conditions. These ways of distributing these rights are compatible with claims for the priority of liberty, so liberals can adopt the practical account of groups membership and self-respect with a clear
conscience. An examination of how these rights—especially the right to exclude—are best distributed so as to be supportive of self-respect also suggests a good way of making the essential multiculturalist distinction between cultural and non-cultural groups.
5.5 Exit and Entry

The first, and perhaps most obvious, right relevant to membership of a group qua social basis of self-respect is the right of exit. Forcing a person to stay in a group can seriously damage their self-respect. Such coercion can prevent a person from engaging in activities not indexed to those of the group which may provide them with new and more attractive, suitable or exciting materials to serve as the focus of their self-respect. Forcing a person to stay in a group can damage their self-respect by restricting their reasons for action to those given by a self-conception structured around the core activities, and social criteria of excellence for those activities, of the group. Now it may be that there is a perfect fit between the self-conceptions of members and the activities and standards of the group to which they belong, but this cannot be taken for granted if we as a political community are concerned to protect the conditions of each person’s self-respect. If this perfect fit does not obtain then coercion will damage the coerced member’s opportunity to achieve congruence between her self-conception and self-expression.

The possibility of exit matters for liberals because of their commitment to the value of self-respect, and basic rights and liberties secure this possibility. Of course, coercion can take many different forms, and each type of coercion requires a different exit-protecting right. For example, depriving people of the information necessary for them to know that exit is an option
constitutes a form of coercion. So we need some form of civic education programme to ensure the knowledge necessary for possible self-respect supporting exit. Furthermore, a lack of economic means may prevent exit, and so principles of distributive justice will be relevant here. The hope is that people will not have to insist upon their rights or call upon the coercive force of the state to aid their exit, but this cannot be assumed.

But individual exit rights are not on their own sufficient to secure the conditions of meaningful exit, which is also demanded by a concern with self-respect. Exit from a group will be meaningless (from the point of view of self-respect) if there are no other groups to exit to. The fact that not everyone has identical talents, abilities and tastes means that not everyone will be equally able to ground their self-respect in one kind of activity. Freedom to exit a group is necessary but not sufficient to secure the conditions of self-respect, given certain realistic assumptions about how people differ and change. Freedom to meaningfully exit a group also requires that society as a whole contain a rich and diverse variety of

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26 This suggestion is also made by Rawls in Political Liberalism:

[Political liberalism] will ask that children's education include such things as knowledge of their constitutional and civic rights so that, for example, they know that liberty of conscience exists in their society and apostasy is not a legal crime, all this to insure that their continued membership when they come of age is not based simply on ignorance of their basic rights or fear of punishment for offences that do not exist. (p. 199).
activities in which we can participate after we have left, or while we remain within, our original or primary group.

Such diversity is also, and for the same reasons, a condition of protecting the self-respect of those who, rather than voluntarily leaving their groups, are either forcibly excluded from groups, or prevented from making initial entry into groups, by members exercising their right to freedom of association via the application of exclusion rules. Exclusion or forcible ejection from a group is damaging to self-respect, first, if the ejected or excluded member's self-respect is premised on activities and standards peculiar to the group which rejects her, and second, if there exist no other suitable groups willing to accept her as a member. So there are two reasons why a diversity of groups in society constitutes a social basis of self-respect. First, even if no movement between groups is necessary for self-respect, everyone is different and so needs membership of a different group to gain access to opportunities for self-respect suitable for them. Second, when movement across groups is necessary for self-respect, there has to exist a diversity of groups for such movement to be possible.

Now it may be the case that some are unable to find groups suitable to support their self-respect simply because the activities upon which it is premised are too obscure or specialised to attract mass participation. That such people fail to find support for their self-respect in extant groups does not suggest a failure of justice: persons have some degree of responsibility for the development of their self-respect. But putting these cases to one side,
we are now faced with a problem. Groups with exclusionary membership policies undermine the status of group diversity as a social basis of self-respect on the realistic assumption that a person’s interests and character are likely to change over a life, prompting her to seek out new groups to support her self-respect. When exclusionary groups prevent the entry of new members, is interfering with their right to exclude legitimate from a liberal point of view? Is securing the possibility of entry to groups a matter of justice?^27

On the one hand, we might think that a concern with the conditions of self-respect mandates such interference under any circumstances. But such a response is in tension with a concern for the conditions of self-respect for all, because interfering with the exclusion rules of a given group may damage the self-respect of extant members. This interference undermines their right to freedom of association and, as we saw in the last chapter, self-respect ideally demands the priority of liberty, including, presumably, this

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^27 Stuart White expresses this question as follows:

When is the freedom to exclude essential to meaningful freedom of association and, therefore, something which a state may not legitimately restrict or prohibit; and when may, and should, a state legitimately curtail the freedom to exclude in the interests of securing other important values? (‘Freedom of Association and the Right to Exclude’, Journal of Political Philosophy, Vol. 5, 1997, p. 373.)
liberty. So should we never interfere with exclusion rules? The problem with this option is that a blanket policy of non-interference can prevent group diversity from serving as a social basis of self-respect for all: if many groups shun potential new members then they only provide extant members with the conditions of self-respect.

In the next section I want to focus on this problem—hereafter ‘the liberal dilemma’—by developing Stuart White’s self-respect based criteria for determining when interference is justified. I will argue that in ideal conditions the question of interference with exclusion rules does not arise, because individual self-respect supporting movement across groups does not occur. That the question of interference with exclusion rules arises suggests that conditions are nonideal. In nonideal conditions the priority of liberty mandates an unequal distribution of rights and liberties. I will argue that in nonideal conditions the right to exclude should be given an unequal distribution between members of cultural and non-cultural groups. This unequal distribution is legitimate from a liberal perspective when it is done in order protect freedom of association as a condition of self-respect.

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I did not list the rights and liberties to be distributed by principles of justice, but freedom of association has a distinguished pedigree as one of the most fundamental liberal freedoms.
5.6 The Right to Exclude

The liberal dilemma is that the exercise by some of one of the most cherished liberal freedoms—freedom of association—can undermine the conditions enabling others to pursue fundamental interests related to self-respect. White calls these ‘integrity’ interests.

Integrity interests are related to the individual’s physical security, and, more broadly, to his/her freedom to shape and live authentically in accordance with a distinctive ethical personality. By ‘ethical personality’ I mean the cluster of commitments—philosophical, religious, affective—which represent the individual’s personal response to fundamental questions of value and meaning, and which thereby give his/her life its basic normative shape and direction.29

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29 Stuart White, ‘Freedom of Association and the Right to Exclude’, p. 378, my emphasis. White describes integrity interests in terms of various commitments grounding a distinctive ethical personality. He suggests that the pursuit of these interests is connected with generating a kind of normativity which, I have suggested, is basic to our human agency. This ‘ethical personality’ is what self-respect protects and makes possible. In addition to her integrity interests, a person also has opportunity interests which ‘... relate centrally, though not exclusively, to having fair access to income and wealth, and to other goods, like education and employment, which have a clear instrumental value in enabling the individual to realise his/her ethical personality’ (p. 378). Having one’s opportunity interests damaged matters because of the importance of integrity interests per se.
White proposes that we resolve the dilemma, first, by acknowledging that freedom of association—of which the freedom to exclude is an aspect—is valuable to the extent that the association the freedom protects enables the pursuit of important 'integrity interests'. Given this acknowledgement, he claims that:

... it is always a strong consideration in favour of restricting or regulating a practice, X, that those engaged in X thereby damage the integrity and/or opportunity interests of others in a significant way.\(^{30}\)

When freedom of association damages integrity interests we can contemplate state interference with the exercise of that freedom, including the application of exclusion rules. In other words, when freedom from state interference with exclusion rules begins to prevent those excluded by such rules from pursuing their integrity interests—from taking advantage of opportunities for self-respect—then the exercise of the right to freedom of association begins to undermine its own justification, which relies on freedom of association being instrumental to the pursuit of integrity interests.

White goes on to finesse this criterion by introducing three further interconnected criteria: (1) exclusion rules are presumptively legitimate if they protect the purposes of the group, (2) exclusion rules are presumptively illegitimate—regardless of how they satisfy (1)—if they damage the opportunity interests of others, and (3) exclusion rules are strongly presumptively legitimate if they protect the integrity of the group, and thus the integrity interests of its members. So White’s suggestion for answering the question about entry is that we ask three further questions. (1) Is the exclusion rule we are proposing to interfere with in making entry to a particular group a matter of justice purpose-protecting? (2) Does the exclusion rule interfere with others’ opportunities to pursue their integrity interests? (3) Is the exclusion rule integrity protecting? If the answer to (2) is ‘yes’ then entry is a matter of justice, even if the answer to (1) is also ‘yes’. But what if the answer to (3) is also ‘yes’? That is, what if the exclusion rule protects the integrity interests of members while denying opportunities to pursue integrity interests to non-members by withholding membership? Here we encounter the liberal dilemma again, in a more nuanced form.

The liberal dilemma about the right to exclude is that both entry and exclusion are—from different points of view—conditions of self-respect. Those excluded have the conditions of their self-respect undermined by those who exclude them, and those who exclude have the conditions of their

self-respect undermined if we override the application of their exclusion rule. It seems that whatever we do in this situation, we cannot give equal protection to the conditions of each person’s self-respect.

My proposal is that only in certain nonideal conditions is the attempt to apply exclusion rules potentially a matter of justice. In such conditions we can—consistent with the priority of liberty—give an unequal distribution to the right to exclude. As we saw in the last chapter, there are two ways of restricting liberty in nonideal conditions without undermining its priority. First, a uniform restriction of liberties across persons, such that all have an equal but not fully adequate scheme of liberties. And second, a non-uniform restriction of liberties across persons, via reduction of the scope of some persons’ liberties, such that some have more than others. Such restrictions are legitimate in nonideal conditions when they are imposed to enable movement towards ideal conditions, or in order to protect extant liberties.

A situation in which a group wishes to exclude others for the purposes of protecting the integrity of the group—and thus the conditions of the self-respect of its members—is not in itself nonideal. If it is the case that each will be capable of finding the grounds of their self-respect—given their talents—somewhere in the network of ‘communities of shared interests’ spread throughout society, regardless of the exclusion rules applied by these groups, then circumstances are ideal, regardless of the existence of exclusion rules. In these conditions exclusion rules might prevent the unbridled
movement of individuals in and out of groups, but given that people have responsibility for the nature of their self-respect related standards, the fact that some groups exclude some people is not sufficient to deprive these people of opportunity for self-respect, given that there are other groups which will accept them. Some restriction on movement between groups in virtue of the existence of exclusion rules is not—at least from the point of view of opportunity for self-respect—a matter of justice. On this ideal assumption, we might argue that each should have an equal right to apply exclusion rules in forming self-respect supporting groups, because the exercise of this right by all would not prevent any from gaining entry to some group supportive of their self-respect.

The liberal dilemma only arises in nonideal conditions, where individuals lacking any associational support for their self-respect want to enter groups but are prevented from doing so by the application of exclusion rules. White’s third criterion—that exclusion rules have strong presumptive legitimacy if they protect the integrity of the group—is appropriate here, and recommends a policy of non-interference with exclusion rules, which in effect deprives the excluded of the associational bases of self-respect, and creates the liberal dilemma.

To escape the dilemma we need to note that the integrity-conditions of groups—qua sets of opportunities for self-respect—differ. Noting this enables us to apply White’s criterion so as to recommend a principled unequal distribution of the right to freedom of association in nonideal
circumstances, a distribution which does not have the undesirable effect of depriving the excluded of every associational basis of self-respect. This unequal distribution is an example of the sort of special protection that multiculturalists want to extend to certain groups.

The integrity condition which I want to claim is an opportunity for self-respect is *mutual recognition*. The integrity of some groups—call them *cultural*—depends on mutual recognition between members, whereas the integrity of other groups—call them *non-cultural*—lacks this feature. This marks a difference between the ways in which each type of group supports the self-respect of its members. As I explained in 5.5, group membership can contribute to self-respect in two ways. First, membership may enable participation in activities which inform individual criteria of excellence; and second, groups may provide the conditions of reciprocal esteem, which depends on mutual recognition between members. When we interfere with exclusion rules we affect the social criteria of excellence upon which mutual recognition depends, because exclusion rules will reflect the values, standards and activities with which a group identifies itself. By interfering with the social criteria of excellence of such groups we dilute the bonds of mutual recognition and thereby weaken their provision of the conditions of reciprocal esteem.

This suggests that in considering whether to override a group's exclusion rule we should first get clear about how it supports the self-respect of its members. There are two possibilities. On the one hand, if the group
supplies its members with the conditions of reciprocal esteem then integrity
damaging interference with its exclusion rules will likely undermine its
ability to play this role. On the other hand, if the group contributes to its
members self-respect primarily because of how it enables participation in
activities informing individual criteria of excellence, then interference with
its integrity—which affects the ability of group members to recognise each
other as members—is not likely to undermine its provision of opportunity
for self-respect. This distinction—made only in terms of the practical
benefits to self-respect of membership of a group—improves on a
conceptual approach whereby cultural and non-cultural groups are
indistinguishable. This strategy allows us to take different approaches to the
question of entry to different groups in nonideal conditions by clarifying
whether the group would be threatened as a provider of opportunities for
self-respect by overriding its exclusion rules and subverting mutual
recognition.

But surely protecting the self-respect of cultural group members in
nonideal conditions by refusing to force them to accept new members will
damage the self-respect of these prospective members: to which groups are
these people to turn when cultural groups refuse them entry? Here I think
the distinction between cultural and non-cultural groups is especially salient.
That the entry of new members to cultural groups in nonideal conditions
cannot be forced does not mean that the entry of these members to non-
cultural groups in these conditions cannot be imposed. Non-cultural groups
do not depend upon mutual recognition in order to provide opportunities for
self-respect, and so forcing non-cultural groups to accept new members does not threaten the self-respect of extant members. Forcing golf clubs to accept black members or military organisations to admit homosexuals does not alter the character of the group such that it can no longer support the self-respect of extant members. Of course, extant members may not like having new and different members forced upon them, but not liking something is not tantamount to having damage done to one’s self-respect.

This argument for a differential distribution of rights and duties does not conflict with the priority of a principle of equal liberty, given that the conditions under consideration are nonideal. Asserting that liberty takes priority only sanctions an equal distribution of a fully adequate set of liberties in ideal conditions. In nonideal conditions—when exclusion rules deprive some people of the associational bases of self-respect altogether—interference with the exclusion rules of certain groups is justified given the priority of liberty. Interfering with exclusion rules provides the excluded with opportunity for self-respect. Self-respect and the exercise of the capacity for a sense of justice are mutually reinforcing. Thus, enabling people to develop self-respect enables them to become ideal citizens, and ideal citizens support principles and institutions protecting an equal distribution of a fully adequate set of liberties. In this way an unequal distribution of the right to exclude in nonideal conditions enables progress towards ideal conditions in which such inequality can be erased.
In summary, the arguments I have made here have been as follows. First, that a constitutive approach to the relationship between group membership and self-respect is unconvincing and weakens arguments for the priority of liberty. Second, that Kymlicka’s and Raz’s conceptual approaches to group membership and self-respect do not support a clear distinction between cultural and non-cultural groups, and so lend inadequate support to multiculturalism, defined in broad terms as an attempt to give special protection to cultural groups. Third, that a practical approach to the relationship between group membership and self-respect—whereby groups provide sets of opportunities for self-respect—supports a meaningful distinction between cultural and non-cultural groups, once we realise that there are two different ways in which groups can offer sets of opportunities for self-respect. And last, that making a distinction between cultural and non-cultural groups allows us to adopt, in nonideal conditions, at least one multiculturalist measure for the protection of cultural groups, that is, an unequal distribution of the right to exclude.

Throughout this chapter and the last I have stressed the practical nature of opportunities for self-respect, which is explained by the fact that self-respect depends, ceteris paribus, on doing things. I now want to leave behind debates about liberty and membership as social bases of self-respect and to see how progress might be made by appeal to self-respect as a justificatory value in debates about distributive justice.
DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE: ADVANTAGE

6.1 Outline

In chapters 4 and 5 I argued that rights and liberties matter for self-respect as a condition of the exercise of the two moral powers, and I outlined the conditions in which liberty must be kept equal, and the conditions in which one liberty—freedom of association—may be unequal. But an ideally equal, and nonideally unequal, distribution of rights and liberties does not on its own guarantee the conditions of self-respect. Rights and liberties are opportunities for self-respect because self-respect depends on doing things. But a certain degree of material well-being is a condition of doing anything at all. Rights and liberties lose significance as opportunities for self-respect unless material conditions enabling self-respect supporting action also obtain. This suggests that some distributions of material goods—distributions in which some are materially disadvantaged to an extent that they are unable to do things supportive of their self-respect—might undermine a maximin distribution of the social bases of self-respect. This means that a liberal concern for the conditions of self-respect can affect answers to questions of distributive justice.
The dimensions of distributive justice can be broken down by asking the following three questions.

1. How should we assess levels of advantage for the purposes of distributive justice?

2. What is a fair distribution of this advantage?

3. What practical measures can be taken to achieve this fair distribution of advantage?

Question 1 concerns the criteria we should use for making interpersonal comparisons of advantage: the answer to Question 1 helps to explain what we mean when we claim that one person is ‘better off’ than another. The answer to Question 2 specifies the distribution of the advantage contained in the answer to 1. Question 3 raises policy and institutional issues about how best to achieve the distribution specified in the answer to 2. Full answers to questions 1-3 would constitute a theory of distributive justice. In this chapter I want to explore some self-respect based answers to Questions 1 and 2 to provide part of a liberal theory of distributive justice. Showing how self-respect forms part of the liberal understanding of advantage as it relates to distributive justice suggests maximin ways of distributing that advantage which enable rights and liberties to serve as meaningful opportunities for self-respect. In the next chapter I point towards answers to Question 3 by examining self-respect based justifications for unconditional basic income.
In this chapter I begin in 6.2 by examining some remarks Rawls makes about the relationship between self-respect and envy. I suggest that if liberals take these remarks seriously then they face two problems: one concerning the effectiveness of opportunity for self-respect as a criterion for the assessment of advantage, and one concerning certain consequences for our understanding of egalitarianism with respect to economic goods. The first problem is that making a connection between envy and opportunity for self-respect makes opportunity for self-respect dependent upon first-person judgements about levels of advantage in comparison with others: this implies an implausible conception of self-respect and its sources. The second problem is that this connection counter-intuitively loads the dice from the start in favour of strict economic equality as a way of realising a maximin distribution of the social bases of self-respect.

In 6.3 I look at one way of arguing from envy to strict economic equality, but reject the argument on the grounds that no convincing case is made for envy as a politically relevant aspect of advantage. In 6.4 I examine a more subtle envy-based argument for strict economic equality which arises once envy is made politically relevant by connecting it with opportunity for self-respect; this is the approach which I think Rawls (and other liberals) must avoid, but to which certain of Rawls' remarks about self-respect and envy seem to commit him. In 6.5 I refute the argument by undermining two interpretations of the connection it makes between envy and opportunity for self-respect. Severing the connection between opportunity for self-respect
and envy makes it easier to employ opportunity for self-respect as a criterion for the assessment of advantage, and does not load the dice in favour of strict economic equality in advance. In 6.6 I extrapolate an understanding of maximin economic opportunity for self-respect from the refutation of the ‘envy argument’ given in 6.5. I suggest that this understanding mandates a ‘sufficiency’ approach to the distribution of economic goods (insofar as they function as social bases of self-respect), whereby what matters from the point of view of opportunity for self-respect is not what each has in comparison with others, but whether what each has is enough. This suggestion is taken up in more detail in the next chapter, where I consider unconditional basic income as a distributive strategy for liberals interested in securing maximin with respect to the social bases of self-respect.

The overall aims of this chapter are twofold. First, I want to show that employing opportunity for self-respect as a politically relevant aspect of advantage need not commit liberals to an understanding of advantage as dependent on a person’s first-person comparisons of her level of economic advantage with that of others. Rejecting this understanding of opportunity for self-respect enables rejection of self-respect based arguments for strict economic equality, which suggests that—at least with respect to maximin opportunity for self-respect—liberals should aim for policies and institutions which secure enough material goods for each, but that this does not demand aiming to secure the same for all.
6.2 Two Problems for Rawls

Rawls includes the social bases of self-respect on the list of primary goods, a list which defines politically relevant advantage and enables interpersonal comparisons. The social bases of self-respect are opportunities for self-respect which supervene on the distribution of the other primary goods and inhere in aspects of the basic structure. When we refer to 'the social bases of self-respect' we are referring to the distributions of other goods which support self-respect. For example, we have seen that in ideal conditions liberty must be given an equal distribution qua social basis of self-respect. Describing a distribution of primary goods as a 'social basis of self-respect' highlights its contribution to self-respect, the way in which it contributes to a maximin distribution of the social bases of self-respect as a whole. Maximinining the social bases of self-respect means that we allow inequalities in the goods constitutive of these bases only if such inequalities work to the advantage of the worst off in terms of their opportunity for self-respect. Maximin with respect to liberty qua social basis of self-respect demands, in ideal conditions, equality of liberty. The parallel question in distributive justice is: what distribution of economic goods qua social basis of self-respect is demanded by maximin with respect to the social bases of self-respect?

In *A Theory of Justice* Rawls makes some puzzling remarks which suggest that he conceives of envy as detrimental to opportunity for self-
respect, in which case envy too must be a politically relevant aspect of advantage. If Rawls is right about the connection between opportunity for self-respect and envy then there may be consequences for what maximin demands with respect to economic goods qua social basis of self-respect. If a given distribution of economic goods prompts envy, and envy flags damage to opportunity for self-respect, then we can legitimately consider a redistribution of economic goods so as to eradicate envy. Of course, we may decide that, envy notwithstanding, the given distribution does satisfy maximin with respect to the social bases of self-respect, in which case redistribution is not appropriate. The point upon which I shall focus in this section is not whether we should or should not opt for redistribution, but rather why we might think that the presence of envy makes deliberation about redistribution appropriate.

Rawls makes a connection between envy and opportunity for self-respect as follows:

1 I should make it clear from the outset that my discussion of the relevance of envy to distributive justice should not be taken to have any bearing on R. Dworkin's claim that distributive justice demands equality of resources, where 'equality' is understood in terms of a distribution of goods meeting the 'envy test'. For Dworkin, this is a distribution in which each person prefers their own bundle of goods to anyone else's, which is quite consistent with the bundle of goods they have making no contribution to their self-respect. Dworkin's 'envy test' for distributive justice is supposed to make distributions sensitive to individual preferences, and has no relation to envy in the 'thick' sense, as I shall consider it. See R. Dworkin, 'What is Equality? Part II: Equality of Resources', Philosophy and Public Affairs, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1981.
... sometimes the circumstances evoking envy are so compelling that given human beings as they are no one can reasonably be asked to overcome his rancorous feelings. A person's lesser position as measured by the index of objective primary goods may be so great as to wound his self-respect; and given his situation, we may sympathise with his sense of loss. Indeed, we can resent being made envious, for society may permit such large disparities in these goods that under existing social conditions these differences cannot help but cause a loss of self-esteem. For those suffering this hurt, envious feelings are not irrational; the satisfaction of their rancour would make them better off. When envy is a reaction to the loss of self-respect in circumstances where it would be unreasonable to expect someone to feel differently, I shall say that it is excusable. Since self-respect is the main primary good, the parties would not agree, I shall assume, to count this subjective loss as irrelevant. Therefore the question is whether a basic structure which satisfies the principles of justice is likely to arouse so much excusable envy that the choice of these principles should be reconsidered.  

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A central cluster of emotions—pride, shame, envy—is related to the need to believe in one's own worth. When we attempt to take stock of ourselves, the first impulse is to look at others. The serenity of mind that allows us to determine whether we are happy without comparing ourselves with others is
Rawls claims that the presence of envy stimulated by a given distribution of primary goods can signal a loss of self-respect prompted by the distribution of those goods. In other words, some distributions fail to provide a fair distribution of opportunity for self-respect, and those who are disadvantaged as a result of this unfair distribution will experience a loss of self-respect prompting envy. Of course, envy is possible even given a perfectly just distribution, and sometimes a loss of self-respect is explained by factors unrelated to a lack of opportunity for self-respect. Rawls is not claiming that the presence of envy always shows that the given distribution is not a social basis of self-respect; neither is he claiming that a loss of self-respect is always explained by a lack of opportunity for self-respect. Rawls' claim is just that in some circumstances the presence of envy indicates an unfair (because non-maximin) inequality of economic opportunity for self-respect.

I want to claim that making a connection between envy and opportunity for self-respect creates at least two problems for Rawls. First, the claim that envy undermines opportunity for self-respect depends on a counter-intuitive conception of self-respect as competitive, that is, as dependent on success according to shared standards. I expand on this claim in 6.5. Second, making this connection between opportunity for self-respect and envy is rare. If the comparison is unfavourable, we feel a pang of envy, a fleeting rage.

(p. 69)
overwhelmingly likely to sanction strict economic equality and nothing else; versions of this argument are considered in 6.3 and 6.4. This is in part an *ad hominem* objection, for Rawls repeatedly allows that the difference principle—which governs the distribution of economic goods—is consistent with economic inequalities. But both problems should also be seen as general problems for liberals who are attracted to the idea of opportunity for self-respect as a politically relevant aspect of advantage and want to adopt maximin with respect to the distribution of this advantage, but are seduced by claims about how envy indicates damaged opportunity for self-respect.

There are at least three possible responses to these problems. The first, Rawlsian, response (present in the passage quoted) relies on a distinction between *excusable* and *inexcusable* envy. The claim is that envy in general is a vice, and as such in inexcusable, but in special conditions envy is excusable. These are conditions in which it is a response to a state of affairs damaging to self-respect. The problem with this strategy is that the

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3 See, for example, J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 151:

the parties start with a principle establishing equal liberty for all, including equality of opportunity, as well as an equal distribution of income and wealth. But there is no reason why this acknowledgement should be final. If there are inequalities in the basic structure that work to make everyone better off in comparison with the benchmark of initial equality, why not permit them?

See also *ibid.*, p. 538.

distinction between excusable and inexcusable envy still leaves it unclear why we need to refer to envy to argue that self-respect damaging conditions are unacceptable. I will argue that if opportunity for self-respect is a primary good then conditions damaging to self-respect are ipso facto unacceptable, regardless of whether or not they stimulate certain unpleasant feelings of envy which we would, admittedly, rather be without. Rawls’ commitment to the social bases of self-respect should allow him to condemn as unacceptable circumstances which undermine a maximin distribution of this good without making any reference to envy, excusable or not.

The two further responses are each a form of ‘biting the bullet’. The first recommends that we admit a connection between envy and opportunity for self-respect, but jettison opportunity for self-respect as a politically relevant aspect of advantage. This is a route I think we can avoid. But avoiding this route requires meeting the intuitive insistence that it is plausible that envy undermines opportunity for self-respect. Envy can be crippling and all-consuming; it can interfere with motivation and leave a person impotent and unable to act. Surely this is damaging to self-respect? Here we encounter another response: that we admit a connection between self-respect and envy, retain opportunity for self-respect as a politically relevant aspect of advantage, but ‘dig our heels in’ and defend strict economic equality. I think that a denial that the presence of envy is a reliable indicator of unfair inequality of opportunity for self-respect also enables avoidance of this route. But before any of these arguments can be mounted, we need to clarify the nature of envy.
Envy

Rawls discusses envy as an example of a ‘special psychology’, knowledge of which is denied to parties choosing principles in the original position.\(^5\) The question of whether a distribution of economic goods sanctioned by the difference principle prompts envy becomes relevant once we consider whether the inequalities allowed by this principle are ‘socially dangerous’,\(^6\) or destabilising. As we have seen, Rawls thinks that inequalities have this effect when they cause damage to self-respect.

Rawls identifies two types of envy.\(^7\) ‘Particular’ envy is envy of another’s possession of a particular good or object: a car, or a house, or a husband. ‘General’ envy is envy of another’s possession of a type of good: money, or fame, or a career. The kind of envy which has a putative bearing on questions of distributive justice is general envy, for particular envy is

\(^5\) J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 530. Rawls’ insistence that envy is a psychological state and not a moral feeling (see especially *ibid.* p. 533) suggests to me that he faces the two problems I have pinpointed because of his conflation, in *A Theory of Justice*, of self-respect with self-esteem. Self-esteem is a psychological state of which it seems reasonable to say that envy is damaging. If self-esteem is conflated with self-respect the claim that envy damages self-respect makes more sense.


probably endemic to the human condition, and is likely to occur under any
distribution.

What is envy? Rawls states that:

envy [is] the propensity to view with hostility the greater good of
others even though their being more fortunate than we are does not
detract from our advantages. We envy people whose situation is
superior to ours ... and we are willing to deprive them of their
greater benefits even if it necessary to give up something ourselves
... the individual who envies another is prepared to do things that
make them both worse off, if only the discrepancy between them is
sufficiently reduced.\(^8\)

It helps to represent this state a set of preference rankings.\(^9\) The envious
person's preferences are ranked as follows:

1. I have it, you don't have it.
2. I have it, you have it.
3. I don't have it, you don't have it.
4. I don't have it, you have it.


\(^9\) This characterisation is based on R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, p. 239, n.
If A’s envy is prompted by B’s possession of x, what A wants most, *ceteris paribus*, is to get x for herself and deprive B of x.\(^\text{10}\) Failing that, A wants to get x even if B also has x because, we are assuming, A wants x. Next, A wants to deprive B of x even if B’s deprivation does not work to A’s advantage with respect to x. What envious A wants least is for the x-inequality between herself and B to persist, as this will only foster her envy. Thus there are three ways to ensure that A’s envious preferences are satisfied: either we reverse the asymmetry between A and B by taking x from B and giving x to A; or we give x to A without taking x from B; or we remove the asymmetry between A and B by taking x from B. The ‘first best’ way to satisfy an envious preference is to get what others have by depriving them of it, the ‘second best’ way is to get what you want to deprive others of without actually depriving them of it, and the ‘third best’ way is to bring others down to your level. In the last two cases we eliminate any differences fit to prompt envy.\(^\text{11}\) In all cases what we do is remove the cause of envy, a certain inequality.

\(^{10}\) Given that (putatively) politically relevant envy is general envy, ‘x’ here stands for a type of good.

\(^{11}\) An anecdote in Terence Kealey’s piece on Envy, *New Scientist*, 28 March 1998, No. 2127, illustrates this preference ranking perfectly:

Robert Reich used to teach economics at Harvard, where he would ask his students if they would prefer for both the US and Japan to grow at 1 per cent a year, or for the US to grow at 2 per cent and for Japan at 3 per cent. Overwhelmingly, his students chose the first option. They preferred to be absolutely poor but relatively rich rather than the opposite. (p. 27)
So although envious A’s ideal is that she has what others lack, she will settle either for having what they have, or for deprivation herself so long as no-one has what she lacks. In this way envy differs from jealousy. The jealous person wants what others have but is indifferent to whether others retain their goods after she has had her jealous preferences satisfied. In terms of the preference ranking outlined above, the jealous person prefers the disjunction of ‘‘I have it, you don’t have it’ or ‘I have it, you have it’’ to the disjunction of ‘‘I don’t have it, you don’t have it’ or ‘I don’t have it, you have it’’, but is indifferent between the disjuncts of the first pair and the disjuncts of the second pair. The envious person is not indifferent to others’ holdings in this way: in both pairs, she prefers the first disjunct to the second disjunct. Envy looks primarily to the greater holdings of others; getting what one wants to deprive others of in striving to satisfy an envious preference is an added bonus. Envy is a more destructive passion than jealousy because the ideal state, from the point of view of the envious person, is one in which another person is deprived of something.

Now that we know what envy is and the conditions under which Rawls thinks its presence is relevant to questions of distributive justice, let me turn

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12 This way of distinguishing between envy and jealousy maps on to Rawls’ distinction between benign and malign envy (A Theory of Justice, p. 533). My characterisation of jealousy, though, differs from Rawls’: he takes ‘jealousy’ to be synonymous with ‘possessiveness’.
in the next section to one possible way of mounting an argument for strict economic equality from a consideration of how economic inequality can prompt envy. This argument is crude, but by refuting it we can see more clearly the exact role of the claim that envy undermines opportunity for self-respect in a more sophisticated envy-based argument for strict economic equality. Refuting this argument shows how Rawls in particular, and liberals in general, can avoid problematical claims about the relationship between envy and opportunity for self-respect which will very probably endorse strict economic equality, and furthermore weaken opportunity for self-respect as a conceptual tool for making progress in other important areas of liberal theory.
6.3 Envy and Equality: A First Look

Assuming that envious preferences are preferences people would rather be without we can now mount the following (crude) argument for strict economic equality.

We start with an assertion: the liberal egalitarian ideal of equal respect is embodied in principles of justice recommending distributions of economic goods which enable equal levels of preference satisfaction. Next, we note a problem: a distribution enabling any one person to satisfy her 'first best' envious preferences with respect to economic goods is a distribution which prevents every other person from satisfying her 'first best' envious preferences with respect to these goods. This is because any person's 'first best' satisfaction of her envious preference with respect to $x$ aims at getting $x$ and depriving others of $x$. But there is no possible world in which every person can achieve the ideal satisfaction of their envious preferences. The world in which my 'first best' envious preference is satisfied with respect to economic goods is a world in which your 'first best' envious preferences with respect to these goods are not satisfied. There is no possible world in which every person can both have $x$ and lack $x$.

The next step is to consider 'second best' envious preferences: if distributions enabling the 'first best' satisfaction of any one person's envious preferences are inegalitarian in thwarting the satisfaction of all other
persons' 'first best' envious preferences, then should we instead distribute economic goods so as to enable the satisfaction of each person's 'second best' envious preferences? Here we would attempt to bring each individual up to a level $n$ in their possession of economic goods, where $n$ is that level of economic goods necessary to relieve the envious person of her envy; call this the 'levelling up' argument. The argument is that commitment to the ideal of equality, combined with clarity concerning envious preference rankings, yields principles recommending strict economic equality, given the likelihood that at least one person in any society will experience envy on contemplating the greater economic benefits of others.

The 'levelling up' argument recommends a wildly unrealistic approach to distributive justice. It would sanction a constant redistribution to reflect changes in envious whims. This illustrates a more fundamental problem; the argument fails to register the idea that persons are responsible for the nature of their tastes and preferences. It sanctions economic redistribution—involving taking from some to give to others—to satisfy preferences for which the person herself may be responsible. Treating all preferences as analogous to handicaps—as disadvantages beyond a person’s control for which she ought to be compensated—is unconvincing in the case of envious preferences, which can often be nurtured and obsessively developed.\footnote{For an excellent general discussion of the choice/chance distinction in the liberal approach to distributive justice see W. Kymlicka, \textit{Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction} (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990), pp. 71-77.}
The next step is to ask whether we can mount an argument for strict economic equality from a consideration of 'third best' envious preferences. Conditions enabling the satisfaction of my 'third best' envious preferences are certainly compatible with conditions enabling the satisfaction of every other person's 'third best' envious preferences, for these conditions are all identical: 'third best' envious preferences also require equality for their satisfaction, but (unlike 'second best' preferences) in the sense of 'levelling down', which is another form of strict economic equality.

The 'levelling down' argument is just as unattractive as its predecessor, for it too severs desert from personal responsibility. Taking the 'levelling down' approach, the fact that a person has an envious preference—regardless of other facts about that person—is sufficient to prompt state action to take goods from others, regardless of how they obtained those goods. Liberal principles of justice are constructed on the assumption that persons have a degree of responsibility for the nature and development of their tastes and preferences. This assumption prevents a blanket characterisation of politically relevant advantage as preference satisfaction, regardless of the preferences or their genesis. Both the 'levelling up' and the 'levelling down' arguments fail to register this important consideration.

The 'levelling up' and the 'levelling down' approaches are not real positions. I have mentioned them in order to show that a mere consideration of the nature of envy, combined with an egalitarian commitment to
conditions which to some degree enable preference satisfaction, is insufficient to motivate principles of strict economic equality. So rather than devoting any time to developing these arguments further, I want to look at the specifically self-respect oriented ‘envy argument’ for strict economic equality, as a way of making reference to envy in debates about distributive justice more plausible.

We start by asking a fundamental question: why—from the point of view of justice—should liberals care about establishing conditions enabling the satisfaction of envious preferences at all? This question can be answered either by claiming that:

(a) a concern with the conditions of envious preference satisfaction in distributive justice is implied by a general concern with the conditions of preference satisfaction per se in distributive justice;

or by claiming that:

(b) a concern with the conditions of envious preference satisfaction in distributive justice is warranted given the special nature of envious preferences.

Reflection on the liberal ideal of personal responsibility cited in response to the ‘levelling up’ and the ‘levelling down’ arguments should be sufficient to disqualify (a). But there is also another way to challenge (a). Imagine
that I have an extremely expensive preference (EEP) requiring vast amounts of resources for its satisfaction. The distribution enabling the satisfaction of my EEP differs from the distribution enabling the satisfaction of any person’s envious preference (EP). The satisfaction of my EEP requires resource inequality, but the satisfaction of anyone’s EP requires (at least) resource equality. In that case one cannot move to strict economic equality from a general concern with preference satisfaction via a consideration of envious preference satisfaction. Not all preferences are envious, and conditions enabling the satisfaction of non-envious preferences will sometimes be conditions necessitating the non-satisfaction of envious preferences. In that case the defender of envy-based strict economic equality must argue that there is something special about envious preferences which explains why they take priority over other preferences in questions of distributive justice. A defence of (a) depends on a defence of (b), although (b) could stand on its own as an answer to the question of why envy matters. So let us concentrate on the claim made in (b). 

The best way to make out a special case for envious preferences is to claim that their satisfaction contributes to a fundamental and universal human good. In other words, it is not the fact that envious preferences are preferences that makes the conditions of their satisfaction relevant to the assessment of advantage. Rather, it is the fact that the non-satisfaction of an

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14 Further arguments against (a) can be found in R. Dworkin’s ‘What Is Equality? Part 1: Equality of Welfare’.
envious preference impedes the realisation of a value which is, or ought to be, shared by all people: self-respect. In that case conditions which prevent the satisfaction of envious preferences—like economic inequality—are conditions which prevent the satisfaction of self-respect oriented preferences. The putative connection here between self-respect and envy is that the non-satisfaction of envious preferences does harm to self-respect. This yields a more sophisticated argument for strict economic equality, an argument upon which the *ad hominem* objection to Rawls focuses. So let me turn to this argument.\(^\text{15}\)

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\(^{15}\) There are other possible self-respect based arguments for strict economic equality which do not make reference to envy. The materials for one such argument are found in Robin Dillon's conception of basal self-respect (R.S. Dillon, 'Self-Respect: Moral, Emotional, Political', *Ethics*, Vol. 107, No. 2, January 1997), which she defines as follows:

Basal self-respect concerns our primordial interpretation of self and self-worth, the invisible lens through which everything connected with the self is viewed and presumed to be disclosed, that is, experienced as real and true ... it is the ground for the other kinds of self-respect, inasmuch as it serves as the interpretive medium for anything one could take as relevant to recognition and evaluative self-respect, thereby structuring their conceptual, emotional and behavioral possibilities. (pp. 241-2)

Socio-political arrangements can, thinks Dillon, cause deep and perhaps irreparable damage to basal self-respect. Such damage underlies the self-conceptions upon which other kinds of self-respect are built. Basal self-respect does not consist of a set of propositional attitudes and so is not amenable to a cognitivist analysis. In fact, basal self-respect is not an attitude towards oneself at all, but rather that which colours and conditions one's attitudes towards oneself. If it could be shown that economic inequality is a source of damage to basal self-respect then we could argue for strict economic equality without invoking envy, which as I have characterised it, is a propositional attitude (Dillon herself does not attempt to do this).
6.4 Envy and Equality: A Second Look

Characterising envious preferences as self-respect oriented yields the following, more sophisticated, envy-based argument for strict economic equality qua social basis of self-respect. By refuting this argument we can show how Rawls can avoid his two problems, and open up the possibility that liberals in general can endorse maximin opportunity for self-respect as a criterion of justice, without being committed in advance to strict economic equality. The argument is this.

(1) Distributive justice requires equality in the distribution of advantage throughout society, unless inequalities work to the advantage of the worst off.

(2) Opportunity for self-respect is the most important aspect of advantage.

Is an argument like this worth taking seriously? An investigation of its plausibility would take me too far afield. But let me briefly note that I think we should be immediately suspicious of the relevance of basal self-respect to the assessment of advantage. Positing aspects of political advantage deeply rooted in the psyche that lie beyond our grasp seems to hold our levels of political advantage hostage to early childhood experiences and subliminal social conditioning. Even if an understanding of advantage in these terms has a place in psychoanalytic theory, its place in contemporary political philosophy is at best doubtful.
(3) Inequality of opportunity for self-respect can never work to the advantage of the worst off in terms of their opportunities for self-respect.

(4) Therefore, justice demands equality of opportunity for self-respect.

(5) A person's self-respect depends upon the extent to which her self-respect oriented preferences are satisfied.

(6) Therefore, justice aims at equality of opportunity for the satisfaction of self-respect oriented preferences.

(7) The envious person prefers that another not have what she lacks.

(8) Therefore, envy damages self-respect.

(9) Economic inequality stimulates envy.

(10) Therefore, economic inequalities thwart opportunities for self-respect.

(11) Therefore, distributive justice requires the removal of all economic inequalities.

The envious person is, by definition, a person who has not had certain of her preferences satisfied. These are her 'first best', 'second best', or 'third best' envious preferences. The sophisticated envy argument claims that a
distribution which prevents the satisfaction of any of these preferences is a distribution which prevents the satisfaction of self-respect oriented preferences. To prevent someone from satisfying their self-respect oriented preferences is to deny them an opportunity for satisfying these preferences. Thus to say that inequalities prompt envy is, according to the argument, another way of saying that inequalities cause damage to self-respect, by preventing the satisfaction of self-respect oriented (envious) preferences: such prevention is tantamount to a lack of opportunity for self-respect.

One easy way to debunk the argument in this form is with a blanket denial that levels of opportunity for preference satisfaction bear any relation to levels of politically relevant advantage. Thus questions about the extent to which principles of justice recommend distributions which enable the satisfaction of envious preferences—a subset of preferences per se—are irrelevant to assessing the justice of these principles, and the argument fails.

This response throws out the baby with the bath water. We can argue that opportunities for envious preference satisfaction are irrelevant to questions of distributive justice without being committed to the much stronger claim that the justice of a distribution should be assessed without any reference at all to how that distribution provides opportunities for the satisfaction of certain preferences. In particular, the claim that questions about the extent to which distributions impede or enable the satisfaction of self-respect oriented preferences are questions of justice.
The way in which we gain self-respect is by satisfying our self-respect oriented preferences. I have claimed that self-respect is not indexed to one particular way of life or set of values, and the desire for self-respect is, or ought to be, fundamental and universal. Self-respect requires congruence between a person's self-conception and her self-expression. Self-respect depends upon meeting standards one takes to be definitive of oneself; it requires of a person that she act in ways at least consistent with and preferably supportive of her self-conception. In failing to act in these ways one fails to be as one had thought one was or hoped one could be. One achieves self-respect supporting congruence between one's self-conception and one's self-expression by succeeding according to standards of personal achievement implicit in one's self-conception.

So a person's self-respect depends upon the satisfaction of her preference that she behave as and become one sort of person rather than another; self-respect supervenes on the structure of a person's life and the extent to which her behaviour expresses and reflects her values. The fact that self-respect is fundamental and the desire for it is, or ought to be, universal suggests that any sensitive and rounded understanding of politically relevant advantage will incorporate reference to self-respect. But if self-respect is an important aspect of advantage, and self-respect depends on satisfying self-respect oriented preferences, then questions about the extent to which a distribution enables the satisfaction of preferences are not always irrelevant to questions about the justice of that distribution. The questions about preferences that are relevant to the questions about justice are questions about self-respect.
oriented preferences. What is important from the point of view of justice is the extent to which distributions of goods and services ensure a maximin distribution of opportunity for the satisfaction of self-respect oriented preferences.

To return now to the more sophisticated envy-based argument for strict economic equality, the reason why we should avoid endorsing this argument is that premise (8) is false, which means that the presence of envy does not in itself flag a non-maximin distribution of opportunities for self-respect. Although opportunities for the satisfaction of self-respect oriented preferences are a matter of justice, a lack of opportunity for the satisfaction of envious preferences is not tantamount to a lack of opportunity for the satisfaction of self-respect oriented preferences. Thus, if economic inequality is tantamount to inequality of opportunity for the satisfaction of envious preferences, it does not follow that economic inequality is tantamount to unfair inequality of opportunity for the satisfaction of self-respect oriented preferences.

My concern in the next section is negative and narrow: I want to show why economic inequalities stimulating envy are not to be eradicated on the grounds that such inequalities undermine maximin opportunity for self-respect, as evinced by the presence of envy. If envy can be shown to be unconnected with opportunity for self-respect then liberals can avoid Rawls’ problems: opportunity for self-respect can be an effective criterion for interpersonal comparisons of advantage, and it is not a foregone conclusion
that maximin with respect to opportunity for self-respect demands strict economic equality.
6.5 Self-Respect and Envy

Envy evolves out of a comparison of oneself with others; one envies those who have, or have more of, a certain kind of thing than one does oneself, and one prefers that they not have it. If \( x \) is the object of envy then it is necessary that \( A \) lack or have less of \( x \)—or at least believe that she lacks or has less of \( x \)—than someone else for \( A \) to experience envy. Given this we can see that the crucial premise (8) of the sophisticated envy argument is ambiguous on two points. The first ambiguity concerns the object of (putative) self-respect damaging envy. The second ambiguity concerns why the lack of that object serves to undermine self-respect. By disambiguating these issues we can arrive at different interpretations of premise (8). I will argue that none of these interpretations is plausible, and so the argument as a whole fails.

The First Interpretation

The first interpretation is that the object of self-respect damaging envy is another's self-respect itself. On this view, when \( A \) envies \( B \) what \( A \) wants most, ceteris paribus, is for \( B \) to lose self-respect and for her to gain self-respect, but she will settle for both herself and \( B \) having equal levels of self-respect. A distribution of goods which prevents \( A \) from satisfying any of these preferences is a distribution which, according to the sophisticated envy argument, denies opportunity for self-respect to \( A \). Apart from being a
peculiarly strong claim about envy—that it is always a response to another’s greater levels of self-respect—this interpretation is also committed to a counter-intuitive conception of self-respect, for the following reasons.

To complete this interpretation of premise (8) we need an explanation of how another’s greater self-respect can serve to undermine my self-respect, where this undermining is experienced as envy. The best way to provide this explanation is by claiming that, given the interests and pursuits that matter for my self-respect, my evaluation of myself as a pursuer of these interests depends on a comparison of myself with other pursuers of these interests. On this view, a failure according to shared standards undermines self-respect: what matters for my self-respect is how my performance according to standards which I share with others compares to how others perform according to these standards. This analysis yields a competitive conception of self-respect. The claim is that if person B succeeds along some dimension j and I don’t succeed along this dimension then (given my involvement in the activities for which j is a measure of success) B’s j-success serves to highlight to me my j-failure. The mere awareness that B has succeeded where I have failed undermines my self-respect by negatively affecting my self-evaluation. Consequently, B’s gain in self-respect in virtue of her j-success must, if B’s j-success is known to me, be my loss in self-respect in virtue of my j-failure.16

16 R. Nozick has this competitive conception of self-respect. See Anarchy State and Utopia, p. 240-1.
The ‘competitive’ conception of self-respect provides an explanation of how another’s having greater self-respect than me damages my self-respect—where this damage is experienced as envy—in the following way. To care about one’s self-respect is to desire its protection and continuation. If another’s being better at something that supports their self-respect, and matters for one’s own self-respect, undermines one’s self-respect then, given that one cares about one’s self-respect, one will at least desire that that other lack this something, and in addition hope that one can get or achieve this something oneself. But this characterisation of damaged self-respect is identical to the description of envy given earlier: the envious person wants ideally to deprive others of something and hopes to obtain it for herself.

One quick way to counter the envy argument as dependent upon this interpretation of premise (8) starts by distinguishing two kinds of self-respect: one connected with recognition of oneself as an agent, an equal amongst equals, or an individual, and one connected with judgements about one’s merits according to the appropriate standards. Robin Dillon thinks there are (at least) two kinds of self-respect and characterises each of them as follows:

Recognition respect for oneself as a person involves recognising and valuing oneself as a being with dignity, appreciating the moral constraints to which the dignity of persons gives rise, and living in the light of this normative self-understanding. Since the dominant
Western conception of personhood grounds dignity in three things—equality, agency, and individuality—there are three correlative forms of recognition self-respect.\footnote{17} 

In contrast, evaluative self-respect is understood as:

\ldots confidence in one's merit as a person, which rests on an evaluation of oneself in terms of a normative self-conception—the view one has of the sort of person one ought to be or that it would be good to be, and of the kind of life such a person should live.\footnote{18} 

We could invoke this distinction between different kinds of self-respect to counter the envy argument as follows. The scope of justice extends to a concern with ensuring the conditions of recognition self-respect and no further. Recognition self-respect can clearly be damaged by the design of political institutions; if all are not equal before the law, for example, then some may find their conception of themselves as moral equals undermined, or even fail to develop such a self-conception in the first place. But evaluative self-respect is beyond the control of political institutions; these institutions cannot affect the judgements we make about the extent to which

\footnotetext{17}{R.S. Dillon, 'Self-Respect: Moral, Emotional, Political', p. 229.}

\footnotetext{18}{R.S. Dillon, 'Self-Respect: Moral, Emotional, Political', p. 231.}
we have succeeded in meeting the standards implicit in our normative self-conceptions.

Given this one might argue that principles of distributive justice which structure political institutions are required only to be sensitive to recognition self-respect, and recognition self-respect is not undermined by economic inequalities. The judgement of the economically worst off that they are worth less than the economically well off, in virtue just of their lack of economic affluence, is a judgement which affects their evaluative self-respect. As such, it is a judgement for which they, and not the state, are to be held responsible. A failure of the individual to achieve and maintain evaluative self-respect cannot be attributed to a failure of justice, in the sense of a lack of provision of the appropriate opportunities for self-respect.

This way of countering the envy argument fails, I think, because the separation of recognition from evaluative self-respect upon which it depends is not convincing. It can be helpful to talk of self-respect in terms of two dimensions or aspects, but this does not imply that there are two different kinds of self-respect, one connected with agency and one with evaluation of one’s merit. I have argued that judgements about the extent to which one satisfies standards implicit in one’s normative self-conception cannot be treated as unconnected with the degree to which one protects and maintains the conditions of strong evaluation, characteristic of human agency. Congruence between self-conception and self-expression ensures a robust
self-conception capable of yielding reasons for action characteristic of strong evaluation.

If this is true then we cannot at one and the same time admit that political institutions can affect the recognition aspect of self-respect while denying that these institutions can also affect the evaluative aspect of self-respect. On my account, institutions can undermine the recognitional aspect of self-respect by undermining the evaluative aspect of self-respect. For example, a failure to provide free education for all means that the poor will not gain access to the most fulfilling, interesting and challenging jobs. Continuous employment in a dreary, mundane and monotonous job can lead one to think of oneself as a dreary and mundane person. Such a self-attitude can be a manifestation of, or a precursor to, a damaged sense of self-worth, a conviction that one is worth less than others. In that case envy stimulated by economic inequalities, which has been touted as a negative aspect of evaluative self-respect only, is still a candidate underminer of recognitional self-respect and so should concern those who care about self-respect and justice.

A better way of arguing against this disambiguation of premise (8) is to show that it is committed to a counter-intuitive conception of self-respect. Conceiving of self-respect as competitive is only plausible given an understanding of the success that matters for self-respect as success according to shared standards of excellence. Unless I share standards of excellence with another then we cannot be said to be in competition at all,
and so her improvement in self-respect in virtue of her success according to these standards will not be to the detriment of my self-respect. Now shared standards play important roles in the internal life of various groups. They set goals for, distribute rewards to, provide incentives for and encourage cohesion between their members. As I argued in chapter 5, shared standards (incorporating exclusionary membership criteria) can enable mutual recognition between group members allowing a group to provide the conditions of reciprocal esteem. But what shared standards do not do is provide the measure of success that matters for self-respect.

To recap, understanding self-respect as connected with shared standards means that anyone who fails according to these standards must have lower levels of self-respect than someone who succeeds, given that this success is known to them. But if the putative connection between self-respect and shared standards is genuine then levels of self-respect should be transparent; we should have no qualms about ranking people we see around us and do not know in terms of their self-respect. We should be able to do this because of our confidence that the standards we employ to evaluate people as x-ers are identical to the standards those same people employ to evaluate themselves. But this is not how we think about self-respect. Making an accurate judgement about another person's level of self-respect requires intimate knowledge of their hopes, fears, values, abilities and character. This suggests that self-respect itself depends on meeting standards which are intimately connected with these aspects of a person, and shared standards for given activities are too coarse grained for success according to them to be a
reliable indicator of self-respect. Self-respect depends instead on success according to one's own lights.

Furthermore, understanding self-respect as dependent on success according to social criteria of excellence calls into question the progress made with respect to questions of liberal multiculturalism in the last chapter. I claimed there that social criteria of excellence contribute to the conditions of self-respect to the extent that these criteria can be a condition of the mutual recognition characteristic of the conditions of reciprocal esteem. I argued that making the much stronger claim that such criteria define a person's identity is either counter-intuitive (if the claim is 'constitutive'), or is ineffectual in making much needed distinctions between cultural and non-cultural groups (if the claim is 'conceptual'). Commitment to this interpretation of premise (8) of the more sophisticated envy argument depends on a conception of social criteria as definitive of a person's identity, in either the constitutive or the conceptual sense. Thus commitment to this first interpretation of premise (8) threatens progress made in the last chapter, over and above being independently unconvincing.

One way of responding here is to retain the competitive conception of self-respect and look for other ways forward in the multiculturalist debate. This response is, I think, unwise: insisting that the object of envy is another's self-respect itself, and claiming that envy responds to economic inequalities, seems to set up a strict correlation between relative levels of economic advantage and levels of self-respect. A universal claim that such
The correlation holds is only plausible if the possession of certain levels of economic goods indicates possession of a quality which matters for everyone's self-respect. What could this quality be? In his discussion of whether we should understand economic income as deserved in the same way that prizes won in competitions are deserved, Joel Feinberg confronts the same question. He asks:

But what, then, is the ground for the competition which brings all classes and professions together in the same arena? I can think of no one single skill (apart from commercial canniness) in respect to which all members of all professions are in explicit competition, or any one game at which we all play.\(^{19}\)

Given the implausibility of claiming that commercial canniness serves as a ground for self-respect for all, the claim that levels of economic advantage track levels of self-respect collapses.

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**The Second Interpretation**

The second interpretation of premise (8) avoids counter-intuitive claims about the nature of self-respect but is insufficient to support the argument

overall. In this interpretation we claim that *opportunities* for self-respect are the object of envy. That another has more opportunity for self-respect than one does oneself undermines one’s self-respect not because that other makes good use of her opportunities and achieves self-respect itself, but rather because to lack opportunity for self-respect is to lack the necessary means for self-respect. This avoids the problems associated with the first interpretation because the claim that opportunities for self-respect are transparent is not counter-intuitive. To the contrary, the point of using opportunities as criteria for the assessment of advantage is that they are supposed to allow for plausible interpersonal comparisons of advantage, and so must be transparent. This interpretation also avoids making counter-intuitive correlations between levels of self-respect and economic advantage: correlating levels of opportunity for self-respect with levels of economic advantage does not imply that those with more money have more self-respect, for the rich may not make good use of their opportunities for self-respect.

So why is it implausible to think that another’s having more money than me indicates her greater opportunity for self-respect, and damages my opportunity for self-respect? I have two objections to this interpretation. First, although it may be true that envy responds to *perceived* inequalities of opportunity for self-respect, it does not follow that such perceptions are reliable indicators of *actual* inequalities of opportunity for self-respect. Envy may be widespread even when opportunities for self-respect are
distributed equally, or envy may be absent when there is great inequality of opportunity for self-respect.

That the presence or absence of envy is not a good ground for judgements about the presence or absence of opportunity for self-respect can be seen once we remind ourselves of the sense in which self-respect itself is opaque. Levels of self-respect are normally opaque from a third-person perspective. Individual criteria of excellence depend upon a person's knowledge of her tastes, talents and limitations: knowing whether a person has succeeded according to these sorts of standards requires an intimate knowledge of the person themselves. But it is also plausible to think that levels of self-respect are often opaque from the first-person perspective. That self-respect does not depend upon a favourable psychological self-attitude—'feeling good' about oneself, experiencing a 'warm glow', or thinking oneself a cut above the rest—suggests that self-respect is not a state over which people necessarily have first-person authority. If we cannot assume first-person authority over the presence or absence of one's own self-respect then first-person judgements about the presence or absence of one's own opportunities for self-respect are, plausibly, also not reliable. In this case envy—which depends upon such first-person judgements—does not necessarily respond to the actual absence of an opportunity for self-respect. On the other hand, a person can lack an actual opportunity for self-respect and yet be unaware of

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20 A quote from Louis-Ferdinand Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night* (John Calder, London, 1997) nicely illustrates this point: 'Everything that's important goes on in the darkness, no doubt about it. We never know anyone's real inside story' (p. 62).
this lack, either believing that she has self-respect—and thus has made use of opportunities for self-respect—when she doesn’t, or believing that such opportunities exist for her to make use of when they don’t. Envy is neither necessary nor sufficient for the well-groundedness of judgements about the presence or absence of opportunities for self-respect. This does not mean, of course, that we should abandon opportunity for self-respect as a politically relevant aspect of advantage. Rather, it means that we should search for an understanding of this aspect of advantage which does not reduce it to first-person judgements about levels of opportunity for self-respect. Such first-person judgements are not constitutive of opportunity for self-respect whether, as in the argument I have been considering, they emerge from comparisons of oneself with others, or whether they are arrived at independently of such comparisons. Robinson Crusoe, alone on his island and assuming only a dim memory of his past life, may have nobody to compare his levels of opportunity for self-respect against, and yet, free of envy, might still judge that he has little opportunity for self-respect. But for all that, he might be wrong.

My second objection to this interpretation is that if the object of envy is taken to be opportunities for self-respect then the preference ranking constitutive of damaged self-respect cannot be successfully mapped on to the preference ranking constitutive of envy. ‘First best’ envious preferences aim at depriving another of x. If the value of x is ‘opportunity for self-respect’, and a lack of this good is tantamount to a lack of the necessary means for
self-respect, then it is unclear why the person whose self-respect is damaged by a lack of opportunity will want—in virtue of her desire to protect the conditions of her self-respect—to deprive another of their opportunities for self-respect. Depriving another of their opportunities does not create opportunities for oneself, and this is what the person who cares about her self-respect and lacks the opportunity to develop it wants most of all. Jealousy, as I have characterised it, may be a response to inequality of opportunity for self-respect, for the jealous person is indifferent to the holdings of others. But that is a different matter. This response suggests that a person's opportunity for self-respect is damaged, not when that person has less than others, but when that person does not have enough. This suggestion will be followed up in 6.6.

In summary, neither way of disambiguating the crucial premise (8) of the argument is convincing. The first claim—that the object of envy is another's self-respect—relies on a counter-intuitive understanding of self-respect as competitive, and a somewhat offensive assumption that levels of self-respect can be gauged by levels of economic advantage. The second claim—that the object of envy is another's opportunity for self-respect—depends on questionable claims about the accuracy of the envious person's perceptions of her own, and others, levels of opportunity for self-respect. It also fails to explain how the state of affairs to which envy responds—that is, another's having more—is tantamount to a lack of opportunity for self-respect.
Liberals like Rawls who want to assert that the distribution of economic goods can have an deleterious effect on the distribution of opportunities for self-respect do best to avoid characterising this effect by reference to envy. Denying that the presence of envy, of whatever kind, indicates unfair inequality of opportunity for self-respect avoids an understanding of opportunity for self-respect as dependent on first-person judgements about comparative levels of advantage, where such an understanding militates against allowing maximin inequalities of economic goods. But if maximin with respect to the social bases of self-respect does not require strict economic equality, then what does maximin with respect to the social bases of self-respect recommend when it comes to economic goods? In the next section and the next chapter I want to pursue the suggestion that maximin opportunity for self-respect mandates a distribution of economic goods wherein everyone has enough, rather than everyone having the same.
6.6 Maximin Opportunity for Self-Respect: Towards Sufficiency?

Maximin with respect to the social bases of self-respect requires maximin opportunity for the satisfaction of self-respect oriented preferences. The fact that a distribution might prevent the satisfaction of some preferences does not imply that it does not realise maximin opportunity for self-respect, for not all preferences are self-respect oriented. In particular, economic inequalities prompting envy are not thereby unfair from the point of view of self-respect, because envious preferences are not self-respect oriented.

So how should we determine whether an economic distribution realises maximin opportunity for self-respect? One thing is clear: the fact that a person has self-respect should not be taken as a reliable indicator that she had political opportunity for self-respect. Those who face political problems of poverty, exclusion and harassment might, with great effort, keep their self-respect intact. The fact that it is possible for politically disadvantaged people to keep self-respect in adverse conditions should not lead us to claim that such political disadvantages are irrelevant to self-respect; we say that people in such conditions do well, or struggle, to keep their self-respect. No-one should be so politically disadvantaged that we marvel at the effort required for the retention of their self-respect.
I argued in the last section that what we should think about when assessing how a distribution of goods affects opportunity for self-respect is not how that distribution affects persons' judgements about their level of advantage relative to others. What we should instead think about is whether the distribution is such that everyone has enough economic goods to support their pursuit of interests and activities which contribute to their self-respect. But everyone can have enough without everyone having the same. Determining whether people have enough can be done without consideration of their first-person judgements about what they have in comparison with others. Adopting criteria for the assessment of self-respect related advantage which divorces this advantage from first-person judgements enables the degree of transparency necessary for such criteria to be effective in interpersonal comparisons. It also means that strict economic equality can be avoided.

Harry Frankfurt is perhaps the best known proponent of a sufficiency view. He claims that the moral intuition upon which egalitarianism is claimed to rest—that 'economic inequality, considered as such, just seems wrong'—is revealed, upon examination, to be not so much a response to inequality, as a response to insufficiency: 'What [people] find intuitively to be morally objectionable, in the types of situation characteristically cited as instances of economic inequality, is not the fact that some of the individuals

in those situations have less money than others but the fact that those with less have too little.²² What is it to have enough? For Frankfurt, the ideal of sufficiency is not an ideal of satiation. With respect to money, Frankfurt claims that:

if a person is (or ought reasonably to be) content with the amount of money he has, then insofar as he is or has reason to be unhappy with the way his life is going, he does not (or cannot reasonably) suppose that more money would—either as a sufficient or as a necessary condition—enable him to become (or to have reason to be) significantly less unhappy with it.²³

Let me explain the sense in which maximin demands sufficiency with respect economic goods qua social basis of self-respect. One important argument I isolated in my discussion of equal liberty as a social basis of self-respect was the 'status' argument: equal liberty encourages a conception of oneself as equal in value to all others, and so deserving of such liberty. There is no parallel status argument which establishes strict economic equality as a social basis of self-respect. There would be such an argument if there was a genuine connection between opportunity for self-respect and

²² H. Frankfurt, 'Equality as a Moral Ideal', The Importance of What We Care About, p. 146.

²³ H. Frankfurt, 'Equality as a Moral Ideal', The Importance of What We Care About, p. 152.
envy, but I have spent much of this chapter arguing against such a connection. Making this connection suggested that what is worrying about economic inequality from the point of view of self-respect is that another’s having more than me (regardless of how much I have myself) deprives me of opportunity for self-respect by preventing me from satisfying certain self-respect oriented preferences, directed ideally at depriving others of what I lack and want. To make a status argument for strict economic equality we would have to claim that those deprived of the opportunity to satisfy these envious/self-respect oriented preferences are thereby encouraged to think of themselves as worth less than others. My main strategy in this chapter was to prevent such an argument by denying the identification of envious preferences as self-respect oriented, thus removing one reason for thinking that envious preferences are politically relevant. But even if this refutation of the status argument as it relates to economic goods is rejected, there is still the argument that levels of economic advantage do not track levels of self-respect; so allowing some economic inequalities is not necessarily an invitation to those with the least money to think of themselves as the least worthy.

Denying that strict economic equality is necessary for ensuring the sense of status needed for healthy self-respect does not mean that all questions about how economic goods are distributed are irrelevant from the point of view of self-respect. In particular, a distribution of economic goods will contribute to a maximin distribution of the social bases of self-respect if it ensures that each person has enough to enable pursuit of self-respect.
supporting activities. The fact that another person has more than me does not in itself impede my pursuit of these activities; what impedes my pursuit of these activities is my not having enough. Were that person to be brought down to my level I would still not have enough to successfully act so as to support my self-respect. If I were brought up to that person’s level I might then have enough to successfully act so as to support my self-respect, but not in virtue of my now having the same as that person. Levels of economic advantage relative to others are, from the point of view of self-respect alone, irrelevant with respect to the question of whether a given distribution supports maximin opportunity for self-respect.

'Having enough', from the point of view of self-respect, means having enough to gain access to activities and groups supportive of self-respect. Here there is a parallel with the ‘access’ argument for equal liberty given in chapter 4. And although status related considerations do not support strict economic equality, I will argue that the method according to which redistribution is undertaken can have a crucially important effect on the sense of self-worth needed for self-respect. Caring about maximin opportunity for self-respect when thinking about distributive justice means being concerned that everyone has enough, but also being concerned that redistribution is undertaken in such a way as to support the status related 'self-worth' aspect of self-respect. In the next chapter I will argue liberals who care about equality of opportunity for self-respect—characterised by these two concerns—should adopt unconditional basic income as policy.
7

DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE: UNCONDITIONAL BASIC INCOME

7.1 Outline

I concluded in the last chapter that a liberal concern to maximin the social bases of self-respect points towards sufficiency with respect to economic goods. A person’s opportunity for self-respect—understood in terms of a sense of status and access to activities fit to support self-respect—is not diminished just in virtue of the fact that she has less economic goods than another. Economic goods, and the manner of their distribution, matter for self-respect because of their potential effect on status-related beliefs and access to self-respect supporting activities.¹ What I want to explore in this final chapter are the effects of unconditional basic income on the status and access related conditions of self-respect.

¹ A different way to argue that economic goods are a social basis of self-respect is to insist, as G.A. Cohen does in *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality* that ‘A sum of money is a license to perform a disjunction of conjunctions of actions ... To have money is to have freedom ....’ (p. 58). If having money is having freedom then people can’t be fully free when all they have are formal rights and liberties. If Cohen is right then the self-respect based arguments for the equality and priority of liberty might also support egalitarian redistributions of economic goods.
The idea behind unconditional basic income (UBI) is extremely simple. Under a UBI scheme each individual would receive a grant fixed at the highest sustainable level\(^2\) regardless of their past, present or future work contribution, their willingness to work and their income from any other source.\(^3\) UBI is a genuinely radical proposal for reform not exclusive to any one school of political thought. It also has a history. As far back as *Agrarian Justice* Tom Paine argued on the grounds of common ownership of the earth, that:

... there shall be paid to every person, when arrived at the age of twenty-one years, the sum of fifteen pounds sterling, as a compensation in part, for the loss of his or her natural inheritance, by the introduction of the system of landed property. And also, the

\(^2\) My assumption throughout this chapter will be that this level is above subsistence. Most defenders of UBI recognise that UBI set at this level would be initially unfeasible, and that even achieving subsistence levels might take decades. Nevertheless, the long-term aim is to achieve this level. Given that my interests are not in the transformation from current policy to UBI, I ignore this transitional level of UBI. For a policy-based discussion of UBI in relation to the current tax and benefit system see H. Parker, *Instead of the Dole* (Routledge, London, 1989).

\(^3\) The Basic Income European Network, founded in 1986 to promote Europe-wide discussion of UBI, defines it as: an income unconditionally paid to all on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement. The Citizen’s Income Trust (http://www.citizens-income.org.uk), which evolved out of the Basic Income Research Group (founded 1984) and is devoted to the promotion of UBI as a social security reform, defines UBI as an income paid by the state to every man, woman and child as a right of citizenship.
sum of ten pounds per annum, during life, to every person now living, of the age of fifty years, and to all others as they shall arrive at that age. It is proposed that the payments ... be made to every person, rich or poor. It is best to make it so, to prevent invidious distinctions. It is also right it should be so, because it is in lieu of the natural inheritance, which, as a right, belongs to every man, over and above the property he may have created, or inherited from those who did. Such persons as do not choose to receive it can throw it into the common fund.\(^4\)

For Paine a prototype UBI functioned as a form of compensation for the loss of ‘natural inheritance’. Others—liberal egalitarians, libertarians, socialists, Marxists, ‘Green’ theorists and feminists\(^5\)—have taken different approaches, arguing for UBI on the grounds of efficiency, or community, or equality, or freedom. These arguments have not been entirely impotent in

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policy terms. In 1943 Lady Juliet Rhys Williams proposed an alternative to the scheme suggested by the Beveridge Report which differed from UBI only in incorporating a willingness to work condition. The Liberal Democrats have in the past had UBI as their official policy and the Green Party retains this policy.6

With the exception of some of Philippe Van Parijs' claims, I do not propose to review any of these aspects of UBI as an idea or a policy here. Nor do I intend to defend the practicality of UBI as policy. What I want to do instead is to mount a self-respect based argument for UBI. This argument turns on the relationship between UBI and self-respect supporting group membership, and status-related considerations attaching to the unconditionality of UBI. I stress again that this chapter will concern self-respect related arguments for UBI in principle; the question of how UBI would work in practice is separate and not one which I am qualified to address. But all principled arguments for UBI face a similar non-practical challenge: to meet the objection that UBI violates justice as reciprocity and is therefore unacceptable. I will address this objection by examining different interpretations of reciprocity and the role they play in liberal thinking about justice which places an emphasis on self-respect.

6 For more on the history of UBI as policy see http://www.citizens-income.org.uk/citizens-income/4.html

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In 7.2 I give a brief review of the current system of conditional benefits in order to emphasise the radicalism of a departure from this system to an unconditional basic income. In 7.3 I make an argument that removing work-related conditions from the receipt of funds does not undermine a maximin distribution of the economic bases of self-respect, remembering that maximin with respect to this good demands sufficiency. The argument in 7.3 focuses on the access to self-respect supporting activities delivered by unconditional income granting freedom from work. In 7.4 I turn to the more thorny question of why we should remove income-related conditions from receipt of funds. Here I focus on status-related considerations, arguing that the removal of demeaning procedures for assessing eligibility for funds takes the self-respect depleting stigma out of receipt of, and dependence upon, public funds.

Many people reject UBI out of hand on the grounds that it violates reciprocity. In 7.5 I assess one type of reciprocity based objection to UBI, and reject it as question-begging. 7.6 analyses Rawls' version of the reciprocity based objection to UBI, and rejects it on the grounds that reasonable principles of justice can tolerate a lack of reciprocity when other values—like self-respect—are supported. In 7.7 I conclude.
7.2 Current Conditional Benefits

UBI has two characteristics which distinguish it from more traditional forms of benefit: first, no work related conditions attach to the receipt of UBI, and second, UBI is not means-tested or income-related. It is worth giving a brief review of the conditions attaching to currently available benefits to show just how radical these two characteristics of UBI are.

To treat work-related conditions first, of the 51 benefits listed on the Benefits Agency home page, only 11 clearly depend on prior National Insurance contributions which are usually, but need not be, paid from a job-related income. More telling are the work-related conditions placed on benefits which are not pensions, compensation, disability-related or targeted at childbirth and child-care; that is, benefits targeted at the able-bodied permanently unemployed below pensionable age (henceforth Group x). Of the 4 benefits which specifically target this group, only one clearly depends on prior National Insurance contributions but all depend on a willingness to work. Of the 47 benefits not targeted directly at Group x, 9 are tied to

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7 http://www.dss.gov.uk/ba/GBI/index.htm

8 These four benefits are Back to Work Bonus, Employment Rehabilitation Allowance, Jobseeker’s Allowance, Redundancy Payments. Back to Work Bonus is the only benefit clearly dependent on prior NI contributions. Back to Work Bonus, Employment Rehabilitation Allowance and Jobseeker’s Allowance obviously depend on a willingness to work. Redundancy Payments depend on a willingness to work in the sense that they depend on prior employment and genuine redundancy.
receipt either of one of the 4 benefits targeted at Group x (normally Jobseeker’s Allowance) or to receipt of Income Support, or a disability-related benefit. Ignoring for the moment the avenue to receipt of one or more of these 9 benefits provided by Income Support and disability benefits, making receipt of at least one of the 4 benefits targeted at Group x one of two avenues to receipt of one of the 9 benefits places additional restrictions on qualification for one of these 9 benefits. One avenue to receipt of one of the 9 benefits is receipt of Income Support or disability-related benefits—which are not dependent on a willingness to work—but the only other avenue requires a willingness to work. So imposition of a willingness to work condition on receipt of benefits targeted at Group x affects not only this groups’ eligibility for the 4 benefits targeted directly at them, but also their eligibility for a host of other benefits.

Restrictions on receipt of a grant are much the same with respect to income-related conditions. Of the 51 benefits listed by the Benefits Agency,

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9 These 9 benefits are: Child Maintenance Bonus, Cold Weather Payment, Council Tax Extended Payment, Disability Working Allowance, Earnings Top-Up, Education Welfare Benefits, Housing Benefit, Housing Benefit Extended Payment, and Independent Living Fund.

10 One straightforward argument for UBI is just that it vastly increases the efficiency of the grants administration procedure by replacing in one fell swoop all existing benefits. I will not address this argument here, for any practical advantages of UBI are neither here nor there without a principled defence.
25 are not income related. Of these 25, 7 are a form of compensation, 10 relate to disability or illness, 4 are pensions or pension related, and the remaining 4 are related to childbirth and child care. These last 4 benefits are the only ones which are not contingent on the recipient’s physical or mental disadvantage or incapacity. Of these 4 only 2—Child Benefit and Guardians Allowance—are genuinely unconditional with respect to past,

11 These benefits are: Attendance Allowance, Child Benefits, Constant Attendance Allowance, Criminal Injuries Compensation, Disability Living Allowance, Guardians Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Industrial Death Benefit, Industrial Injuries Disability Benefit, Invalid Care Allowance, Maternity Allowance, Medical Expenses Incurred in the EC, Motability, Over 80s Pension Category ‘D’, Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis & Misc. Disease Scheme Benefits, Reduced Earnings Allowance, Redundancy Payments, Retirement Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance, Vaccine Damage, Widow’s Payment, Widowed Mother’s Allowance, Workmen’s Compensation (Supplementation) Scheme.

12 These are: Criminal Injuries Compensation, Industrial Death Benefit, Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis & Misc. Disease Scheme Benefits, Redundancy Payments, Vaccine Damage, Widow’s Payment, and Workmen’s Compensation (Supplementation) Scheme.

13 These are: Attendance Allowance, Constant Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Industrial Injuries Disability Benefit, Invalid Care Allowance, Medical Expenses Incurred in the EC, Motability, Reduced Earnings Allowance, and Severe Disablement Allowance.

14 These are: Over 80s Pension category ‘D’, Retirement Allowance, Retirement Pension, and Widow’s Pension.

15 These are: Child Benefits, Guardians Allowance, Maternity Allowance and Widowed Mother’s Allowance.
present or future work contributions or income from any other sources.\textsuperscript{16} In fact, defenders of UBI often cite Child Benefit as an existing form of UBI targeted at children.

The point of all this number-crunching is to show that, under the current system of benefits, those able-bodied, permanently unemployed people below pensionable age who are unwilling to take a job have no benefits available to them. If they also lack independent means then they will lack any income at all. So given the current system of benefits, there is no way for those lacking independent means to survive without meeting willingness to work conditions. To show that UBI is preferable to a conditional system of benefits, then, requires showing that a society in which able-bodied, permanently unemployed people below pensionable age who are unwilling to take a job \textit{receive} benefits enabling them to survive is preferable to a society in which able-bodied, permanently unemployed people below pensionable age who are unwilling to take a job \textit{do not receive} such benefits. Showing that the former society is preferable to the latter society requires a standard enabling us to rank these societies. The standard I will apply in comparing these two types of society is the extent to which they achieve a maximin distribution of the social bases of self-respect.

\textsuperscript{16} Maternity Allowance and Widowed Mother’s Allowance are both conditional upon prior NI contributions.
7.3 Willingness to Work

The real difference in work-related conditions between UBI and more traditional schemes is that UBI does not incorporate a willingness to work as a condition on receipt of a grant. As we have seen, four major traditional benefits do impose this work-related condition, which has a knock-on effect on qualification conditions for a number of other benefits. So if UBI has self-respect related maximin advantages lacked by more traditional schemes then the removal of a willingness to work condition from receipt of a grant must make those worst off under this system better off than they would be under any alternative system. How can this be argued?

In 4.4 I mounted an argument for the priority of a principle of equal liberty as a way of maximinining the distribution of the social bases of self-respect. Equal liberty grants equal access to communities of shared interests (the 'access' argument) and encourages the development of egalitarian self-conceptions fit to ground self-respect (the 'status' argument). The reasons why removing a willingness to work condition from the receipt of benefits achieves a maximin distribution of the social bases of self-respect parallel the reasons—given in the access argument—why giving priority to a principle of equal liberty achieves such a maximin distribution. (Considerations of status relate to the removal of means-testing from the grants administration procedure, and will be discussed shortly).
To treat the issue of access to self-respect supporting activities first, I will assume for the moment that there are more jobs than people. In these conditions the imposition of a willingness to work condition means that everyone without independent means has no option but to work. Of course, many people do find opportunities for self-respect in their work. Some people are lucky enough to find a job which coincides with their conception of the good and coheres with the plans which, if successfully executed, yield self-respect. But even when the nature of their job is tangential to a person’s conception of the good, it may still afford them opportunity for self-respect: a job is often necessary for feeling that one is contributing to society, that one is a participant not a bystander. Even when a job is not in this way necessary for self-respect—perhaps because a person’s self-respect is not staked on satisfaction of a desire to participate, or because non-job related activity is for them sufficient for the satisfaction of this desire—it may generate opportunity for self-respect just in virtue of the economic rewards it brings which enable participation in non-job related communities of shared interests. Having a job can, in all of these ways, provide opportunities for self-respect.

But the question is whether forcing people to take a job by imposing a willingness to work condition on receipt of a grant maximins opportunity for self-respect, that is, makes those worst off in terms of their opportunities for self-respect.
self-respect as well off as they could be.\textsuperscript{17} Now although many people are provided with opportunities for self-respect through a job, some people are not for any (combination of) the following reasons: no job coincides with their conception of the good; the societal participation supportive of their self-respect is unconnected with work; their self-respect is not staked on societal participation at all; or the economic rewards of a job do not grant access to the particular community of shared interests reflecting the grounds of their self-respect, which instead demands of its members time and a constant presence. Imposition of a willingness to work condition on receipt of a grant for people in any of these categories decreases their opportunities for self-respect because the work which they are forced to do carries with it less self-respect related benefits than activities in which they would otherwise engage. So taking into account only the opportunities for self-respect of those people whose self-respect is not connected with their job,

\textsuperscript{17} One objection here might be that no-one is literally forced to work by a willingness to work condition, for they are free not to work and not to receive benefits. This response trades on a Nozickean conception of freedom whereby one is free if one’s actions are not constrained by the rights-violating actions of others (See R. Nozick, \textit{Anarchy, State and Utopia}, pp. 26ff) . The objection would be that as it has not yet been established that anyone has a right to UBI, it can’t be claimed that denying them a UBI by imposing a willingness to work condition upon their receipt of a grant is a form of coercion. I reject the assumption hidden in this approach that we can determine the degree of freedom of a person’s state by examining the causal antecedents of that state. A person who gets trapped in a natural ravine through their own carelessness is not less unfree than a person who has been lured into a hidden man-trap by wily natives. In a similar vein, the freedom of a person who is starving because of her refusal to meet a willingness to work condition so as to qualify for a grant is just as compromised as that of a person who is starving because of a natural disaster.
the way to maximise their opportunities for self-respect is to remove a willingness to work condition from receipt of a grant, thus enabling them to engage in the non-job related activities supportive of their self-respect.

But when we assess the effects of UBI on opportunities for self-respect we also have to take into account the self-respect related advantage of those who do find opportunities for self-respect in their job. The question here is whether the removal of a willingness to work condition lessens their job-related opportunities for self-respect. But how could it? Remembering that, for the moment, I am assuming conditions of job abundance, exempting all from the necessity of taking a job does not prevent any who want a job from taking one, if that is what their self-respect requires. In that case, given that removing a willingness to work condition from receipt of a grant increases the opportunities for self-respect of those whose self-respect is not job-related, and leaves intact the opportunities for self-respect of those whose self-respect is job-related, maximin with respect to the social bases of self-respect demands the removal of a willingness to work condition from the receipt of funds. This argument suggests that objections to the removal of a willingness to work condition are not motivated by concerns about self-respect, but rather by loyalty to the very different value of reciprocity. Reciprocity based objections to UBI will be considered in due course.
Job Scarcity

The case for removal of a willingness to work condition from the receipt of grants is even stronger once we drop the assumption of job abundance. If, as is likely, there are some for whom a job does not represent a set of opportunities for self-respect, a willingness to work condition forcing them into a job in conditions of job scarcity is likely to deprive others—whose opportunities for self-respect are job-related—of a job. In that case a scheme incorporating a willingness to work condition makes everyone worse off in terms of opportunities for self-respect than they would be under a scheme lacking a willingness to work condition. In conditions of job abundance and job scarcity—the only two alternatives—a willingness to work condition does not maximin the distribution of the social bases of self-respect.

This ‘access’ argument for the removal of a willingness to work condition turns on how the presence of such a condition limits the access of some to self-respect supporting communities of shared interests without increasing the access of others. Removing this condition achieves a maximin distribution of opportunities to participate in self-respect supporting communities, because the level of economic advantage necessary for such participation is no longer tied to a job, so those without a job are not thereby excluded from activities fit to support their self-respect. Introduction of UBI is tantamount to freedom from work, which implies freedom to do other things. So a side-effect of the introduction of UBI might be an increase in
the number and variety of groups participation in which is normally necessary for self-respect. However, UBI should not be thought of as an encouragement not to work: rather, it expands the set of opportunities of which people might take advantage, without advocating any one set over another. Those who choose not to work and live off their UBI eschew the opportunities that a job represents, and so forfeit the benefits which accompany a job: increased income, structure, collegiality etc. Such a choice makes sense, however, if one’s self-respect is unrelated to the activities and benefits of paid employment.
7.4 Means-Testing

The arguments advanced in the last section are in themselves insufficient to support the removal of means-testing from the receipt of a grant. UBI maximins opportunities for self-respect by allowing those without independent means to choose not to work if their self-respect demands it. But those with independent means already have the option not to work, and so already have the means to enter self-respect supporting communities of shared interests. This suggests that means-testing should be retained as a condition on receipt of a grant, because denying grants to those with independent means does not decrease their opportunities for self-respect.

Contrary to many reciprocity-oriented thinkers who discuss UBI, I think that the removal of means-testing is more difficult to justify than removal of a willingness to work condition. There is force to the thought that money raised from taxes should be directed only at those who have least. Nevertheless, I think there is an argument for the removal of means-testing which is motivated by a concern to make the worst off as well off as possible in terms of their opportunities for self-respect. This argument has affinities with the 'status' argument for equal liberty set out in Chapter 4. The status argument highlighted how self-respect depends on a conception of oneself as equal in value to all others. Giving priority to liberty is the best political way of ensuring—at least in ideal conditions—that people do conceive of themselves in this way and can thus make genuine self-respect supporting use of the opportunities afforded to them by membership of a community of
shared interests. Similar status related considerations can be advanced which support removal of means-testing, given the aim of maximinining the social bases of self-respect.

The first consideration concerns the large amount of intrusion into the lives of applicants demanded by means-testing to ensure that they really do meet the conditions laid down. Interviews, forms requesting personal information on oneself and one’s partner—bank statements, medical records, employment history etc.—spot checks, follow-up procedures etc. all engender the feeling that one is being examined, assessed and judged from a standpoint of suspicion. In 4.5 I outlined the connections between self-respect and the exercise of the capacity for a sense of justice, which explains Rawls’ claim that a person’s self-respect depends upon her realisation of the ideal of citizenship, and others’ recognition that she has achieved this ideal. The intrusion demanded by means-testing does not encourage a person to believe that others recognise and acknowledge her attempts to be a good citizen, and her application for a grant is not sufficient evidence that she is not in fact striving to be a good citizen. Given the fact that most people who apply for grants with conditions attached will be genuinely needy—that is, without independent means—the retention of intrusive means-testing will damage the status-related opportunities for self-respect of those already impoverished in terms of their access-related opportunities for self-respect.

The second consideration in favour of removing means-testing is that payments under a conditional system tend to carry with them a social stigma.
Wrong as it is, people surviving on benefits tend to be perceived as socially useless or personally inadequate. Again, people in receipt of benefits tend to be those who genuinely need them, and thus are already impoverished in their opportunities for self-respect. Removing conditions from the receipt of a grant removes this stigma: if everyone gets UBI then receipt of UBI cannot be seen as singling out certain people as different from others.\(^\text{18}\)

Removing means-testing increases the status-related opportunities for self-respect of those least advantaged in terms of their self-respect. But does it damage the opportunities for self-respect of those most advantaged, that is, of those with independent means granting freedom from work and access to communities of shared interests? One argument might be that the most advantaged are damaged by the increased tax demands to which they are subject. Crudely, the money the best off pay in taxes can be seen as lost opportunities for self-respect. If the best off were exempt from these increased taxes they would have more opportunity for self-respect.

This objection—that the best off are worse off under a system without means-testing than under a system with means-testing—is misconceived as an objection to the proposal that UBI achieves a maximin distribution of the social bases of self-respect. Maximin strategies of distribution aim to make

the worst off as well off as possible; if this prevents the best off from being as well off as possible, then so be it. Maximin allows inequalities only in so far as they work to the advantage of the worst off; that the best off could be even better off is no objection to UBI if making the best off even better off requires making the worst off even worse off. Means-testing in the grants administration procedure might improve the position of the best off by reducing their tax bills, but this improvement works to the disadvantage of the worst off by undermining the status related conditions of self-respect. So a concern to maximin the social bases of self-respect suggests the removal of means-testing, even if this means that the best off are not as well off as they could possibly be.

A more fundamental way of replying to this objection is simply to deny that increased tax bills decrease opportunity for self-respect. In the last chapter I argued that a proper understanding of how economic goods serve as a social basis of self-respect suggests that egalitarians aim at sufficiency with respect to these goods. But either the economic advantage of the best off provides a sufficient degree of opportunity for self-respect, or it does not. If it does not then they are not genuinely amongst the best off and should not be subject to redistributive taxation. If it does then taxing their income will not detract from their opportunities for self-respect, so long as they remain above the sufficiency threshold, whatever that is. In Chapter 6 I argued that levels of opportunity for self-respect are absolute and not relative: so the fact that the inequality between one of the best off and one of the worst off is lessened is not *in itself* sufficient to increase the opportunity for self-respect
of either person. Thus we cannot conclude that lessening the income of one of the best off decreases their opportunities for self-respect.

Removing means-testing increases opportunity for self-respect for those worst off in terms of these opportunities, and does not detract from the opportunities for self-respect of those best off in terms of those opportunities; therefore, maximin demands the removal of means-testing. Given that we reached the same conclusion about removal of a willingness to work condition, it seems that maximin with respect to the social bases of self-respect translates as public policy into UBI.

One objection to consider is that although UBI may remove non-maximin inequalities in opportunity for self-respect created by the current system of benefits, it could create new non-maximin inequalities in opportunity for self-respect of its own. The idea here is that the prima facie self-respect oriented virtues of UBI disguise actual self-respect related vices. For example, I have claimed that for many people work provides a set of opportunities for self-respect. But UBI might transform patterns of work so as to undermine work as a site of self-respect related opportunities. UBI might encourage the proliferation of part-time or casual jobs lacking the self-respect related benefits of permanent or full-time work. Or perhaps UBI would undermine the obligations of employer towards employee. André Gorz claims that:

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Basic income would ... be a way of subsidising the employers and would-be employers who want very cheap labour and no kind of commitment whatsoever to the people who work for them.\textsuperscript{19}

This type of criticism needs to be taken seriously. If UBI just replaces current non-maximin inequalities in opportunity for self-respect with new inequalities of this type then we may do better to keep the devil we know. On the positive side, very few defenders of UBI propose that it be introduced on its own without any concurrent changes to other legislation. It might be possible to incorporate UBI into a package which would avoid changes to work patterns and other aspects of society which are damaging to self-respect. If UBI on its own would indeed introduce new non-maximin inequalities in the social bases of self-respect then such packages of policies are required.

\textsuperscript{19} A. Gorz, 'On the Difference between Society and Community, and Why Basic Income Cannot by Itself Confer Full Membership of Either' in P. Van Parijs (ed.) Arguing for Basic Income.
7.5 Contribution-Reciprocity: Surfers as Scroungers

The self-respect based argument for UBI I have mounted is just one of a plethora of possible arguments. Perhaps the most prominent are: libertarian arguments that UBI maximises ‘real freedom’,\textsuperscript{20} or is justified on the grounds of joint ownership of the world;\textsuperscript{21} market socialist arguments that UBI should form part of a package of market reforms fit to realise socialist ideals;\textsuperscript{22} and arguments invoking the ideal of equality.\textsuperscript{23} With all these arguments from leading thinkers in its favour, why have debates about UBI not entered mainstream political theory? If UBI has just one of the benefits claimed for it, why aren’t we all thinking about it more, even if only to find reasons for rejecting it?

Speculating a little, I think the reason why many people dismiss UBI out of hand is the pervasiveness of a seductive intuition. Put starkly, the

\textsuperscript{20} The term belongs, of course, to Van Parijs.

\textsuperscript{21} See H. Steiner, \textit{An Essay on Rights} (Blackwell, Oxford, 1994), and ‘Three Just Taxes’ in \textit{Arguing for Basic Income} ed. P Van Parijs.


intuition is that UBI allows unscrupulous people to live as scroungers, and this is unacceptable. As Rawls puts it: 'those who surf all day off Malibu must find a way to support themselves and would not be entitled to public funds.' If UBI-collecting surfers are scroungers, and scrounging is unacceptable, then surfers should be prevented from scrounging by being subject to scrutiny about their willingness to work and income from other sources, before they are given public money. The intuition is that UBI is an invitation to scrounge. What does it mean to claim that someone is a 'scrounger'? And do the surfers actually scrounge?

The 'no scroungers' intuition finds its most respectable expression in the language of reciprocity. Stated in this vocabulary, the 'no scroungers' intuition is that, whatever other benefits UBI might have, it offends against the ideal of reciprocity. What is reciprocity? In this section I want to focus on a contribution-based conception of reciprocity, and utilise some of Van Parijs' arguments to undermine the objection that surfers in receipt of UBI offend against contribution-reciprocity. The second way of understanding reciprocity as it relates to UBI will be challenged in the next section.

The contribution-based conception of reciprocity is evinced in E.V. Torisky's claim that liberal justice is not damaged by our refusal to fund those unwilling to work. He states that 'no member has an unconditional

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right to full support from society in the absence of any return to society'.

Acceptable returns to society involve:

... a willingness to contribute in some significant social, political or cultural way to the continued existence of just institutions in society—that is, to live as a member and not as a stranger or parasite.

Another, more subtle, interpretation of the ideal of reciprocity is advocated by Stuart White. White conceives of the 'reciprocity principle' as one of three fundamental egalitarian tenets. He identifies the key feature of this reciprocity principle in the idea that there is an appropriate amount of proportionality between contribution and benefit without which justice is

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26 E.V. Torisky, 'Van Parijs, Rawls and Unconditional Basic Income', pp. 294-5.


28 The other two are the 'brute luck principle' (whereby compensation is owed to those adversely affected by brute bad luck) and the 'market vulnerability' principle (whereby we strive to ameliorate the vulnerability of those involved in market transactions). See S. White, 'What Do Egalitarians Want?' in *Equality* ed. J. Franklin, pp. 61-65.
undermined: 'where others bear some cost in order to contribute to a scheme of co-operation, then it is unfair for one willingly to enjoy the intended benefits of their co-operative efforts ... unless one is willing to bear the cost of making relevantly proportionate contribution to this scheme of co-operation in return'. The problem with this proportionality based interpretation of the ideal of equality is that it is in tension with the liberal egalitarian commitment to equality of opportunity (as embodied in the 'brute luck' principle). Those subject to brute bad luck will often be unable to make contributions sufficient to mandate non-negligible returns to them. White’s strategy for dissolving this tension is to remove reference to proportionality in a refined principle of baseline reciprocity, with affinities to the Marx’s needs-principle: ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs’. White’s version of baseline reciprocity is:

Each person is entitled to a share of the economic benefits of social co-operation conferring equal opportunity (or real freedom) in return for the performance of an equal handicap-weighted quantum of contributive activity (hours of socially useful work, let us say, weighted by labour intensity).^29^30

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White's baseline reciprocity principle militates against UBI because UBI ‘completely [detaches] the receipt of a decent minimum of the economic benefits of social co-operation from the satisfaction of a suitably defined reasonable work expectation’\(^\text{31}\) According to the ideal of baseline reciprocity, the surfers exploit those whose labour makes possible the funds which yield their grant. The surfers—it is assumed by White and Torisky—do not contribute and exploit the contributions of others. Reciprocity demands contribution to the co-operative activity which yields the advantages from which one benefits. The most obvious question, then, is: is it true that the surfers do not contribute?\(^\text{32}\)

One way of arguing against White and Torisky is that, by keeping alive a certain subculture and tradition of skills and expertise, the surfers do indeed contribute, by adding to the *cultural capital* of society. I alluded to this argument earlier in 7.3 when I claimed that a valuable side-effect of UBI might be a proliferation of communities of shared interests fit to support self-respect. Although this side-effect would tell in favour of UBI, it is insufficient on its own to support the whole case for UBI, for it is naive to think that all those who live off their grant without working will make this


kind of contribution to society's cultural capital. Consider those who, unlike the surfers, do not use their grant to support pursuit of activities in communities of shared interests, but instead spend their time drinking beer and watching TV. If the sole argument for UBI were that it increased the cultural capital of society by enabling individuals to participate in self-respect supporting groups then beer-guzzling TV watchers would stand as counterexamples to this claim. In sum, even if surfers do contribute, some others will very likely not contribute, in which case, we might claim, UBI still violates reciprocity by allowing these people to benefit without contributing. Should this lead us to conclude that a concern with maximinining the social bases of self-respect can only support targeted grants to particular groups providing conditions supportive of self-respect, and contributing to the cultural capital of society?

It should not. Before using (handicap-weighted) non-contribution as a criterion for denial of a grant we should first establish whether, in fact, contribution is a criterion of entitlement. It is true that UBI would allow some to live off others without contributing. But the question relevant to the assessment of the fairness of UBI is not, 'Would UBI allow some to live off others without contributing?', but rather, 'Would UBI allow some to unfairly live off others without contributing?' It is not obvious that non-contribution is sufficient to ground judgements about the unfairness of a redistribution from which a non-contributor will benefit. To assume that this is obvious begs the question. Public goods like clean air and water are received by non-contributors, but we do not claim this to be unfair, or argue that these
non-contributors 'scrounge' our air and water. The reason, I think, why we
do not condemn as scroungers non-contributing consumers of air and water,
is that we do not feel that we have private property rights in air and water
which justify our exclusion of others from consumption. Private
appropriation of the only local water source does not justify excluding
others. Is there an analogy between the appropriation of scarce water
supplies and the possession of a job, the income from which is available for
taxation? If there is, we might be able to mount an argument that, just as no
injustice is done in forcing owners of scarce water supplies to give access to
water in the absence of alternative supplies, so no injustice is done in taxing
people to fund UBI.

Van Parijs makes just this kind of argument. He asks us to imagine two
identically talented people: Crazy (who chooses to spend her days working
hard), and Lazy (who chooses to spend her days surfing). Given the desire
to find a justification which does not rely on claims about the superiority of
conceptions of the good that commend hard work over those that don’t (and
vice versa) we should not reject UBI on the grounds that the work ethic is a
virtue and laziness a vice. Eschewing such justifications suggests an equal
distribution of external goods, at least as a starting point. Taking equality of
external goods as our starting point models the desire to abstain from
comparative judgements about whether hard-working, or lazy, ways of life are better than other.  

We have stipulated that Crazy and Lazy are different: Crazy likes to work hard and Lazy likes to play hard. Unless we allow Crazy and Lazy to trade their initially equal external endowments, neither of them will be ideally placed to pursue their conception of the good: Crazy will not be able to expand her empire through her hard work, and Lazy will be faced with the prospect of working her land to survive, which will erode her leisure time. If we care about equalising levels of 'real freedom', thinks Van Parijs, then we should also allow Crazy and Lazy to trade their external goods. Lazy can sell her land to Crazy, which gives her an income and time to spend it; Crazy can buy land from Lazy, upon which she can labour and increase its yield.

What does all of this mean for the Crazies and Lazies of the real world? Van Parijs claims that those who have appropriated external assets should pay a rent on these assets. These rents can fund a UBI scheme, which models the payments Crazy makes to Lazy in the imaginary initial scenario.

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34 'Real freedom' 'consists in not being prevented from doing not just what one wants to do, but whatever one might want to do', P. Van Parijs, Real Freedom for All, p. 19.
Rents will differ across persons according to how their external assets compare to their per capita share of these assets. Those who have appropriated more than their per capita share pay a rent greater than their basic income; those who have appropriated less, pay less; and those who have appropriated only their per capita share pay a rent identical to their basic income. This means that:

Without lifting a finger—beyond what is needed to press his right to an equal share at the auction—Lazy is thus entitled, in the form of a basic income, to some share—possibly quite substantial—of what may look like nothing but the product of Crazy’s labour.\(^{35}\)

A big problem with funding UBI from rents collected on external assets is that the level of basic income such a funding source could support goes ‘from the pathetically low to the frankly negligible’.\(^{36}\) One way of expanding funding for UBI is to find another type of asset for which rents can be charged. In an economy which revolves around wage labour and the employment relation, claims Van Parijs, a job constitutes just such an asset.\(^{37}\)

\(^{35}\) P. Van Parijs, *Real Freedom for All*, p. 100.

\(^{36}\) P. Van Parijs, *Real Freedom for All*, p. 102.

\(^{37}\) P. Van Parijs, *Real Freedom for All*, p. 108.
Jobs are a source of increased income, intrinsic rewards and better future prospects.

If there are less jobs than people then those in employment monopolise an asset: jobs. To make this asset available to the unemployed would require imposing pay cuts on those in employment, in order to pay the wages of the currently unemployed. The difference between what an employed person earns, and what she would have to earn in order for all to have jobs, is what Van Parijs calls an ‘employment rent’. Adding employment rents to rents on external assets greatly increases the tax base for UBI, suggesting a non-negligible level of grant.

in the case of scarce jobs, let us give each member of the society concerned a tradable entitlement to an equal share of those jobs. The endowment-equalizing level of the (additional) basic income will then similarly be given by the per capita competitive value of all the available jobs. If involuntary unemployment is high, the corresponding basic income will be high. If all unemployment is voluntary, no additional basic income is justified by this procedure.  

38 P. Van Parijs, _Real Freedom for All_, p. 108.

39 P. Van Parijs, _Real Freedom for All_, p. 108.
Van Parijs’ argument against the contribution-reciprocity objection to UBI is that the objection assumes that non-contributors do something other than live off their own share when they collect their basic income. But this assumption begs the question.\(^{40}\) The contribution that surfers make is (in virtually all cases) irrelevant to their entitlement, which is decided by considerations about how best to maximise ‘real freedom’ for all, represented by axioms of equality with respect to external assets. This is, I think, sufficient to undermine in principle the contribution-reciprocity objection to UBI.

Ingenious as it is, I do not want to defend Van Parijs’ ‘real freedom’ based argument for UBI. Instead, I want to pick out something useful to my argument about UBI as a social basis of self-respect. This can best be seen by noting a prima facie problem in Van Parijs’ argument: charging rents on jobs monopolised by the employed seems justified only on two related assumptions, both of which require argument. First, that there are more people than jobs (to justify the claim that the employed monopolise a scarce

\(^{40}\) P. Van Parijs presses this point in various places. For example, in ‘Why Surfers Should Be Fed: The Liberal Case for an Unconditional Basic Income’ (Philosophy and Public Affairs, Vol. 20, No. 4, 1991) he claims that ‘feeding [the surfers] does not go against the widely held view that it is “unfair for able-bodied people to live off the labour of others.”’ For this is a serious misdescription of what Malibu surfers are doing if all they live off is their share.’ And in ‘Reciprocity and the Justification of an Unconditional Basic Income. Reply to Stuart White.’ he claims that we should ‘... first get people’s basic entitlements right, and then let reciprocity rule over the allocation of privileges.’ (p. 330)
from which follows the second assumption, that all unemployment is involuntary.\(^{42}\) I want to argue that Van Parijs’ approach works, even when the assumptions are false, if we substitute ‘the social bases of self-respect’ for ‘real freedom’ as the currency of distributive justice, or at least place more emphasis on opportunity for self-respect as an aspect of real freedom. If this is true then the contribution-reciprocity based objection to UBI is thoroughly undermined, for non-contribution does not imply a lack of entitlement in every possible scenario: when jobs are scarce, and when they are not; and concomitantly, when all unemployment is involuntary, and when it is not.

\textit{Job Scarcity Revisited}

When there are more people than jobs, argues Van Parijs, we can charge rent on jobs to finance UBI. What if there are more jobs than people? How can one argue that those who lack a job in these conditions have a right to UBI in virtue of others having appropriated their per capita share of jobs? The jobs are there for those who lack them, which suggests that those who lack jobs have \textit{chosen} not to work. But there is a world of difference

\(^{41}\) Van Parijs does in fact provide argument for this assumption, \textit{Real Freedom for All}, pp. 107-8.

\(^{42}\) To say that unemployment is involuntary when there are more jobs than people is to say that if all people wanted a job, not all people could get what they want. This assumption is counterfactual; it is not a statement about actual preferences and desires.
between choosing not to take possession of one's per capita share of jobs, and being unable to so take possession because other people have already done so. In the latter scenario, employment-rents might be appropriate; in the former scenario, they certainly are not.

Job abundance, in itself, is not sufficient to establish that employment-rents are inappropriate, for the following reason. What matters when deciding whether employment-rents are appropriate is not simply whether there are more jobs than people, but the quality of the jobs available. We can imagine a scenario in which a 'job-elite' monopolise the interesting and challenging jobs, leaving mundane and demeaning work to others. There might, admittedly, be a surfeit of mundane and demeaning jobs. But if we care about maximinining the conditions of self-respect, then—to use Van Parijs' vocabulary—what matters is that we distribute to Crazy and Lazy equal tradable bundles of external goods fit to support their self-respect. Mundane and demeaning jobs will often not be fit to support self-respect, so an abundance of these jobs does not mean that those with interesting and challenging jobs have not appropriated more than their per capita share of self-respect supporting jobs. In which case they still owe an employment-rent which we can use to finance UBI and maximin opportunity for self-respect. Under a UBI scheme those with mundane and demeaning jobs are able to leave them—or finance parallel activities—in order to gain access to
self-respect supporting groups, which may also nurture a sense of status, if this is damaged. 43, 44

The objection to this reply will be that in conditions of job abundance, where each has access to her per capita share of self-respect supporting work, UBI is not justified. In these conditions, does the contribution-reciprocity based objection win? It does not. The contribution-reciprocity objection only succeeds in eliminating employment-rents in these conditions, which still leaves rents on external assets to fund UBI, albeit tiny. That the contribution-reciprocity objection might eliminate employment rents in utopian conditions is small comfort to those who oppose UBI on contribution based grounds. Debate about UBI needs to continue because we are very far from a utopia in which there is an abundance of jobs fit to

43. Van Parijs uses this strategy to argue for employment rents when there is little or no involuntary unemployment.

as soon as there are several types of jobs, the existence of employment rents no longer needs to be coextensive with involuntary unemployment: there may be huge employment rents even if everyone has a job, because many people with lousy jobs may be willing and able to do other existing jobs far more attractive (financially or intrinsically) than theirs at the going wage. (Real Freedom for All, p. 109. See also p. 113)

44. Van Parijs gives a very good practical discussion of methods and problems involved in implementing his basic income proposal (Real Freedom for All, 4.5-4.8). At the risk of labouring a point, I want to stress again that my interest here is only in UBI as a principled method of redistribution.
support the self-respect of each. Until we reach this utopia a concern with self-respect mandates UBI.
7.6 Rawlsian Reciprocity: Surfers as Cheats

Or does it? Contribution-reciprocity is not the only available conception of reciprocity: Rawls implicitly endorses a version of the reciprocity objection to UBI which does not focus on contribution. This may seem surprising, given Rawls’ emphasis on the social bases of self-respect as ‘perhaps the most important primary good’. In this section I want to lay out and question Rawls’ objection to UBI, again invoking some considerations raised by Van Parijs.

As we have seen, one immediate effect of UBI is that it allows people to live their lives without ever working, even if they are able-bodied and jobs are in abundance. Rawls says of such people: ‘those who surf all day off Malibu must find a way to support themselves and would not be entitled to public funds’. This is tantamount to a rejection of UBI. Rawls’ technical strategy for avoiding UBI is that:

Those who were unwilling to work when there is much work that needs to be done (I assume that positions or jobs are not scarce or

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rationed) would have extra leisure stipulated as equal to the index of the least advantaged.\footnote{J. Rawls, \textit{Political Liberalism}, pp. 181-2, fn. 9.}

If, with Rawls, we assume that 'twenty-four hours less a standard working day' counts as leisure time, and the standard working day is eight hours long, then the amount of leisure one has in a twenty-four hour period is sixteen hours. Rawls' suggestion, then, is the Malibu surfers who are unwilling to work should be held to be at least as well off as the worst off worker in society. The stipulation is that the extra leisure time of the surfers is equivalent to the bundle of primary goods that the worst off worker in society would receive as a result of their being in paid employment for the same amount of hours that the surfers spend surfing. This means that the surfers are not entitled to benefit from the state redistribution of income and wealth, for what they lack in this primary good they make up for in leisure time, which is another primary good. Let me first question the adequacy of Rawls' strategy for excluding the surfers.

First, if Rawls is serious in his proposal that we should add leisure time to the list of primary goods, then he must provide criteria for what is to count as work. Without these criteria we will be unable to accurately judge how much leisure time each person has. And without being able to make these judgements we cannot make the interpersonal comparisons of advantage that
primary goods were supposed to make possible. Van Parijs presses this point when he asks:

What shall we count as work? (Cleaning one’s clients shoes, cleaning one’s children’s shoes, cleaning one’s own shoes?) How should hours of work be made comparable? (Should one hour of effort-intensive work be equivalent to one hour of relaxed work, one hour of dangerous work to one hour of safe work, one hour of useless work to one hour of useful work, one hour of pathetically inefficient work to one hour of highly productive work?)

Second, and following Van Parijs again, Rawls’ blanket denial that the work-averse surfers deserve any share of society’s funds seems ad hoc and counter-intuitive in the following type of situation. Van Parijs asks us to imagine a situation in which—as a result of ‘exogenous change’—the total amount of income and wealth available for redistribution increases. In this situation the index of primary goods attached to the least advantaged workers would increase. If we are stipulating that the Malibu surfers’ bundle of primary goods is equivalent to that of the least advantaged worker then, given this exogenous change, their bundle of primary goods would also increase. But, in reality, the surfers position has not improved at all: they

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have not gained more leisure time and are still not in receipt of public funds. In this way Van Parijs argues that the Rawlsian strategy:

... hides a stagnation of [the surfers'] situation in absolute terms and a worsening of their relative position, and simply reflects the fact that their leisure time is postulated to be equivalent, at any particular time, to the income enjoyed at that same time by the least advantaged full-time workers. Why could this subcategory of the least advantaged not claim a real share in the exogenously generated benefit, instead of being treated to a sheer semantic trick?  

These two problems with Rawls' strategy for avoiding UBI raise serious questions for justice as fairness. The addition of leisure time to the list of primary goods might undermine the list's ability to enable effective interpersonal comparisons of advantage, and—without further argument—seems ill-motivated and unwise.

But why should Rawls want to exclude the surfers from the receipt of public funds in the first place? Again, I think this exclusion is motivated by intuitions about reciprocity. Rawls' conception of reciprocity does not tie it to (handicap-weighted) contribution. Instead, Rawls claims that:

... people are unreasonable ... when they plan to engage in co-operative schemes but are unwilling to honour, or even to propose, except as a necessary public pretence, any general principles or standards for specifying fair terms of co-operation. They are ready to violate such terms as suits their interests when circumstances allow.\(^{50}\)

Those who offend against the Rawlsian ideal of reciprocity are *cheats*: they agree to certain rules governing their co-operation with others but subvert them whenever doing so works to their personal advantage. UBI might be thought to undermine the Rawlsian ideal of reciprocity by enabling work-averse surfers to free-ride the system: their avoidance of work depends on others complying with fair standards of social co-operation. The problem with this claim is that it only holds on the assumption that fair principles of social co-operation will stipulate that persons must work in order to abide by these principles. But what reason have we to think that this is true? After all, it is not a foregone conclusion that reasonable people will decide upon principles specifying that fair social co-operation demands of each able person that they work.

Persons are reasonable in one basic aspect when, among equals say, they are ready to propose principles and standards as fair terms

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\(^{50}\) J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 50.
of co-operation and abide by them willingly, given the assurance that others will likewise do so.\textsuperscript{51}

Divorcing reciprocity from contribution as Rawls does makes it even less clear that the surfers do in fact offend against reciprocity. Merely because the surfers are unwilling to work does not mean that they are unwilling to propose and abide by fair terms of social co-operation. To assume that fair terms of social co-operation will stipulate that those in receipt of the benefits of social co-operation must be willing to contribute to society \textit{through paid employment} simply begs the question against UBI. To decide whether people have a fair claim on the income they receive as a result of social co-operation we have to first decide what fairness demands with respect to the distribution of the benefits of social co-operation, and there is no advance guarantee that the receipts of such benefits should depend upon contribution through paid employment. If UBI promotes other values in virtue of its unconditionality then we have good reason for preferring UBI to schemes which make benefit dependent upon contribution through paid work.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{51} J. Rawls, \textit{Political Liberalism}, p. 49.

\textsuperscript{52} J. Wolff makes a persuasive case for this view in his ‘Fairness, Respect, and the Egalitarian Ethos’. He argues that the liberal egalitarian values of fairness (of which reciprocity is an aspect) and respect can come into tension, and that libertarian challenges to egalitarian redistribution have led egalitarians to place too much emphasis on fairness. This is worrying, from an egalitarian point of view, because:
7.7 Conclusion

I have argued that UBI does indeed promote a value fundamental to liberalism, self-respect. In the last chapter I argued that a proper understanding of the non-competitive nature of opportunities for self-respect mandates sufficiency with respect to economic opportunities for self-respect: that is, once everyone has reached a point of sufficiency with respect to these opportunities any further inequalities are maximin. In this case the removal of willingness to work and means tests from receipt of a grant cannot be assumed to be detrimental to the opportunities for self-respect of those whose co-operation in society takes the form of paid employment. This is because, given UBI, those who contribute through work do so freely: if their work fails to provide them with opportunity for self-respect then this is not a failure of justice but rather a choice on the part of the individual, for UBI supports exit from activities and groups damaging to self-respect. UBI maximins opportunity for self-respect because those for whom self-respect is work-related can continue to work while those for whom self-respect is not

a society which attempts to realize exact egalitarian fairness will undermine the respect of at least some of its citizens by treating them precisely in the way that is inconsistent with respecting them, or allowing them to retain their self-respect. (p. 107)

It might be that Wolff’s intuitionistic approach is not the only way to ensure that liberal egalitarian practice reflects liberal egalitarian values; if such values are genuine then no principle—principles of fairness included—qualifies as a principle of justice if it undermines them.
work-related—who would otherwise have restricted opportunity for self-respect by being forced into work—can find opportunities for self-respect in non-work related conditions. Add to this ‘access’ oriented argument the points I made about status and UBI in 7.4 and the self-respect based case in favour of UBI becomes clear. If opportunity for self-respect is a primary good and the just society is one in which primary goods are give a fair distribution then liberals should defend UBI, regardless of how it allows those without an appropriate history of contribution to benefit.
CONCLUSION

Self-respect depends on doing certain things with the right self-conception. Thus there are two sorts of ways in which political institutions and procedures governing the distribution of goods can impede the development of self-respect: by damaging the conditions of self-respect supporting action, and by undermining self-conceptions without which putative self-respect supporting action is impotent. I have analysed the type of action supportive of self-respect in terms of success according to individual criteria of excellence, generating congruence between self-conception and self-expression; I have argued that only non-subservient and egalitarian self-conceptions are fit to generate self-respect supporting congruence.

This characterisation of self-respect does not arbitrate between the two dominant conceptions of liberal justification, Neutralism and Perfectionism. My conception of self-respect is available to liberals of either stripe in their search for justificatory values, because the political importance of principles supportive of the conditions of self-respect can be explained either by reference to self-respect as a shared value, or by reference to self-respect as a value embedded in a comprehensive moral doctrine. Neutralists who take the former approach might, I suggested, defend the claim that self-respect is a shared value by invoking the theory of the person partly constitutive of the wide reflective equilibrium according to which principles of justice are justified. A theory of the person according to which human agency and self-respect are interdependent might allow Neutralists to answer critics who claim that reference to a true comprehensive moral doctrine is unavoidable in
political justification. Perfectionists who make this sort of criticism can make an initially more straightforward appeal to self-respect as a value according to such a comprehensive moral doctrine; but Perfectionists owe us an account of this doctrine, its relation to self-respect, and an argument for its truth. These admittedly important challenges to Neutralism and Perfectionism should not, however, delay thinking about difficult debates in various areas of liberal theory: modelling the importance of self-respect as a politically relevant aspect of advantage by treating the distribution of opportunity for self-respect as a criterion of justice might enable new perspectives on these debates. In chapters 4–7 I imported into these debates some self-respect related considerations about access and status, as a way of testing this hypothesis. Let me briefly recap on these arguments.

In chapter 4 I claimed that liberty serves as a means to self-respect by granting access to activities—often inside groups—around which individual criteria of excellence can be constructed; equal liberty also institutionalises convictions about the equality of persons, which militates in favour of egalitarian self-conceptions. A concern with the conditions of each person’s self-respect, therefore, mandates a principle of equal liberty. Giving priority to liberty—by refusing to shrink the sphere of liberty, or make it unequal across persons, unless by doing so liberty itself can be safeguarded or expanded—is also important from the point of view of self-respect. Liberty deserves to be prioritised over other goods because it is a condition of the full exercise of the two moral powers, the capacity for a sense of justice and the capacity for a conception of the good. Exercising the capacity for a conception of the good matters for self-respect because self-respect depends
upon hopes, fears, plans, projects, values and commitments constitutive of a conception of the good. Exercising the capacity for a sense of justice matters for self-respect, first, because the exercise of this capacity partly defines the ideal of citizenship which, when realised by an individual, prompts the self-respect supporting esteem of her fellow citizens. And second, by exercising one's capacity for a sense of justice, one makes it more likely that principles of justice—designed to support self-respect on the assumption that people will try to realise the ideal of citizenship—will be successful in protecting the conditions of self-respect, therefore making it more likely that one will find no obstacles to the development of one's self-respect in the political institutions of one's society.

Having established the way in which equal liberty constitutes a social basis of self-respect, I moved on to ask how we can reconcile claims about the priority and equality of individual liberty with sensitivity to the importance of group membership as a means to self-respect. Membership of certain groups seems important for self-respect; taking special (multiculturalist) measures to protect these groups is in tension with according priority to liberty, it seems, for the sense in which these measures are undertaken for the sake securing or expanding individual liberty itself is not clear. If this is true, then a concern to maximin opportunity for self-respect pulls two ways: one the one hand, towards the priority of liberty, which seems to militate against multiculturalism; and on the other, towards multiculturalism, which seems incompatible with the priority of liberty.
I argued that getting clear about the different ways in which different groups provide opportunity for self-respect helps to resolve this tension in liberal thought. Some groups provide opportunity for self-respect in virtue of giving access to activities around which self-respect related criteria can be constructed; other groups offer opportunity for self-respect in virtue of the mutual recognition between members, which supports a sense of status and bolsters motivation. Taking exclusion rules as a prism through which this tension in liberal multiculturalism can be viewed, I argued that, from the fact that overriding the exclusion rules of ‘mutual recognition’ groups damages them as providers of opportunity for self-respect, it does not follow that overriding these rules causes damage to every group as a provider of opportunity for self-respect. This is because groups provide opportunity for self-respect in different ways. Recognising differences between groups as providers of opportunity for self-respect yields guidelines for interference: if the group primarily provides access to activities, then there is a strong case for interference; if the group supports self-respect primarily in virtue of mutual recognition between members, then the case for interference is weakened, for interference will undermine the group as a site of opportunity for self-respect for extant and prospective members. Interference with groups providing access to self-respect supporting activities is not in conflict with the priority of liberty, because the aim of such interference is to move towards ideal conditions in which all have an equal right to exclude, but wherein the exercise of that right damages no-one’s self-respect, because no-one is excluded from all groups.
Liberty and group membership are both important means to self-respect, and so the distribution of these goods constitute social bases of self-respect. One reason why liberty and group membership are means to self-respect is the way in which they enable self-respect supporting action. But a further condition of doing things supportive of self-respect is the possession of economic goods; so the distribution of these goods is also a putative social basis of self-respect. I argued that a proper understanding of how economic goods might contribute to self-respect—an understanding which avoids correlating decreased opportunity for self-respect with envy—suggests that economic inequality per se is not damaging to opportunity for self-respect; what matters instead is insufficiency. In the final chapter I explored the idea of unconditional basic income as a way of achieving self-respect supporting sufficiency with respect to economic goods, and offered further status related considerations for favouring this minimally insulting system of redistribution.

My aim in this thesis has been to focus on some difficult areas of contemporary liberal theory, and explore the ways in self-respect might provide liberals with a fresh perspective. With respect to questions of liberal justification, acceptance or rejection of opportunity for self-respect as a criterion of justice does not settle hard metaethical questions about the extent to which political justification should mirror moral truth. Nevertheless, positing self-respect as a justificatory value helps in clarifying what is at issue between the two dominant positions, and so may at least enable advocates of each position to see more clearly what the alternative is. With respect to questions about liberty and group membership, appeal to
opportunity for self-respect allows for a more fine-grained distinction between different sorts of groups which might support an unequal distribution of rights consistent with the liberal ideal of equality. Keeping the important connections between self-respect and liberty in mind helps in discriminating between acceptable and unacceptable inequalities of liberty; rights of exit must always be kept equal, but exclusion rules preventing entry may sometimes be permitted. Finally, with respect to distributive justice, appeal to opportunity for self-respect—recommending a sufficiency approach to the distribution of economic goods qua social basis of self-respect—suggests, at least, that liberals ought to think harder about their position on the welfare state.

There are doubtless other debates in contemporary liberal theory which could benefit from having self-respect related considerations superimposed upon them. Questions about the liberal approach to education, to freedom of speech and pornography, to affirmative action, and to the nature of work immediately spring to mind. If liberalism is to be reinvigorated so as to provide a radical approach to pressing problems, liberals must find new ways of interacting with such questions. Placing self-respect more firmly at the heart of liberal theory might be one such way.
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