

Tom Sawyer's Fence

On the Border between Leisure and Income*

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“What do you call work?”
“Why ain't *that* work?” (..)
“Well, maybe it is, and maybe it aint.
All I know, is, it suits Tom Sawyer.”

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

1. Tom Sawyer was terribly annoyed when, on a hot summer day, his aunt told him to whitewash the fence in the garden. Tom had rather gone to the river to engage in his usual tomfoolery but there is no escape from his aunt's orders: the fence must be whitewashed. Yet, that afternoon Tom ends up enjoying his off-school leisure after all, sitting in the shade watching his friends doing the hard labour on the fence. Meanwhile he has become the owner of some of their highly valued possessions (among which half an apple, a dead rat, a piece of blue glass to look through, a key that wouldn't unlock anything). How did he manage? Well, cunning Tom succeeded to convince his friends (who came by to tease him) that whitewashing a fence on a hot summer day is not at all a depressing activity, that, on the contrary, it is a spectacular, prestigious and very desirable thing to do. So successful was Tom, so inspiring his faked interest in the job, that his envious friends willingly parted with their property in return for a share in the glorious whitewashing business (Twain 1866).

Many of us may be more like Tom's friends than like Tom. Under certain conditions we may be willing to part with both consumer goods and leisure, just in order to gain the opportunity to do the thing we commonly call “work”. In this paper I will argue that if our preferences are really so structured, there is good ground to be cautious with social policies, including the Basic Income policy, that are predominantly concerned with monetary compensation for

* [Draft, August 2000, references and citations are not fully in order - please no quoting without permission] This paper, prepared for the BIEN-conference, October 6-7, in Berlin, is partly based on Chapter V (“Shelling Labour”) in: Van Donselaar 1997.

those who are not engaged in paid labour. At worst such policies may provide incentives to reproduce the current division of opportunities and responsibilities between the sexes, and thereby they fail take advantage of a possibility for true social innovation.

In part my points are made on a fairly abstract level and they depend on a host of assumptions and conditions that I cannot all hope to make explicit, let alone justify. I will begin in Section 2 by explaining in more “micro-economic” detail what is involved in the type of preferences of Tom Sawyer’s friends. I will then, in Section 3 to 5, give a sketchy account of the social and philosophical background of such preferences. In Sections 6 to 9, I will point out how such preferences may interfere with the legitimacy of concentrating on monetary compensation for the unemployed, hence with Basic Income.

2. Suppose we had a choice between three options:

- (A) full-time work with a regular (weekly) income W_1 ,
- (B) part-time work with a regular (weekly) income W_2 , or
- (C) full-time leisure with a regular (weekly) income W_3 ,

And let us assume that W_1 is higher than W_3 , and W_3 is higher than W_2 , then it is not excluded that, for some values for W_1 , W_2 and W_3 , some people prefer A to B and B to C, or even that they prefer B to both alternatives A and C. People’s preferences for work need not merely reflect a *trade-off* between income and leisure to the effect that they would always prefer more of both these goods regardless of the ratio of the increases. This is an observation, then, on the shape of people’s so-called indifference curves over income and leisure.

When a person’s preferences for two goods are considered, economists usually expect to find indifference curves such as in Figure 1. A single indifference curve represents a number of combinations of amounts of goods (bundles) among which a person would be indifferent. If one indifference curve is “higher” than another, which means: further removed from the axes, it means that each bundle on the higher curve is preferred to each bundle on the lower curve.

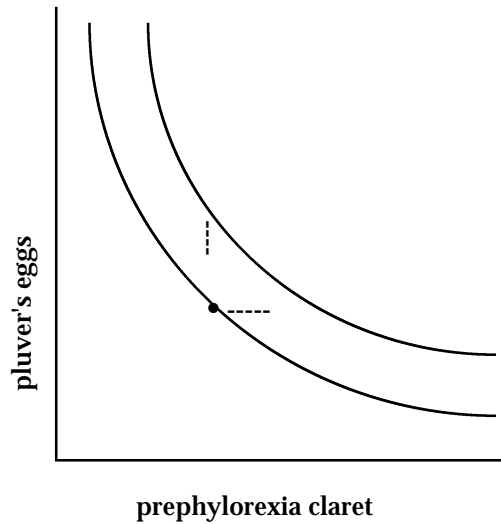


Figure 1: eggs and claret.

Indifference curves as in Figure 1, over (consuming) bundles of prephylorexia claret and plover's eggs (Dworkin's fantasy), indicate that if we hold the amount of one of these goods constant and increase the other, then preference for the bundle always increases as well. Given that you have two baskets of plovers egg's you prefer two bottles of claret to one. But this would also be true if you had only one basket of eggs, or just one egg. And vice versa: given that you have one bottle of wine you will prefer two baskets of eggs to one basket, and this would also be so if you had just a glass of wine, or two bottles.

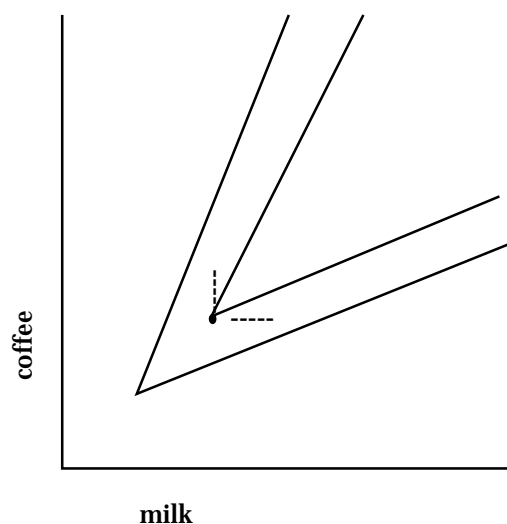


Figure 2: Cappuccino.

Under certain "conditions of consumption" however increases of the amount of either good do not necessarily increase one's preference for the bundle. Think of

coffee and hot milk as things that have to be consumed in a mixed form - e.g. when served as cappuccino, as depicted in Figure 2. Suppose that I have what I consider as the ideal taste, hence ideal mix, of cappuccino in my cup. I may very well like more of the same, e.g. twice as big a cup. But both an addition of pure milk or an addition of pure coffee would spoil the taste. So, unless both goods, coffee and milk, are added in the proper ratio, I will not care for a larger amount of either. Thus there are also mixes such that either a reduction of one of the goods or an increase of the other will be preferred.

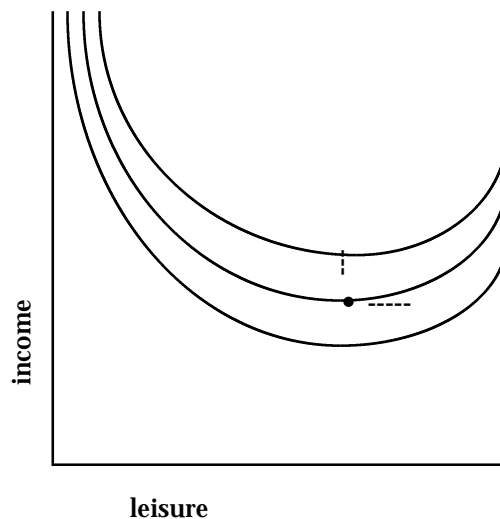


Figure 3: income and leisure.

My claim is that the behaviour of our preferences, at least many people's preferences, over bundles of leisure and income, is a hybrid between the former two types, as in Figure 3. Beyond a certain amount of leisure it is not true that given any fixed amount of income any increase in leisure is preferred. But vice versa: given a fixed amount of leisure an increase of income is always preferred (moving North from a given point you will always hit a higher curve, but moving East from some points you will hit a lower curve). This also implies that an increase of both may not be preferred unless the increase in income *compensates* for the increase in leisure. And, by the same token, under certain conditions some reductions of both goods may be preferred to maintaining status quo.

Let me tag technical terms to the distinction: I will call a good A “value expansive” relative to a good B iff for all bundles (A, B) , (A_1, B_1) is preferred to (A_2, B_1) if A_1 is a larger amount than A_2 . I will call a good A “value contractive” relative to a good B iff for some bundles (A, B) , (A_1, B_1) is

preferred to (A2, B1) while A1 is not a larger amount than A2. In these terms prephyloresia claret and plover's eggs are value expansive relative to each other, while hot milk and coffee are value contractive relative to each other. Income is value expansive relative to leisure, but leisure is value contractive relative to income.¹

So, were some people's preferences for leisure/income bundles as indicated in figure 3, it is easy to see how under certain conditions they could come to put a higher value on a part-time job than on full-time leisure, even if the pay for that part-time job is lower than the "compensation" for being full-time unemployed. In figure 4 that claim is illustrated: assuming a standard working week of five days (and setting aside the daily non-working time that is needed to stay in shape, such as for sleep and eating), W2, associated with part-time work, is preferred to W3, associated with full-time leisure, even if W3 is higher than W2.

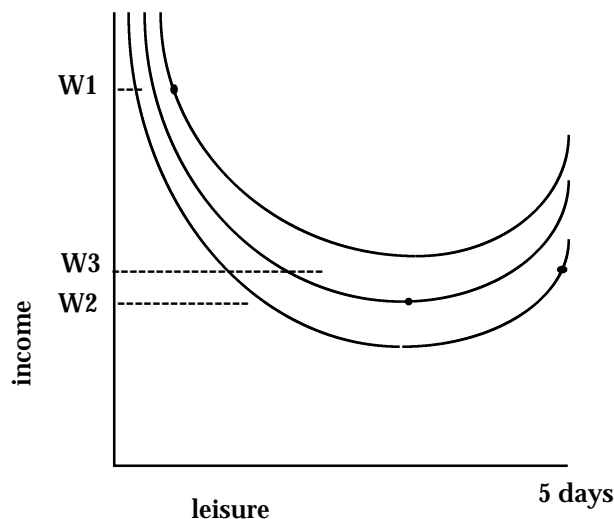


Figure 4: weekly wages and leisure.

3. We are very much inclined to regard both leisure and income as enjoyable goods in their own right, but, if taken absolutely, that view cannot fully accommodate the way that positively appreciated, but non-transferable features of work may influence our preference for it. Among the non-transferable goods associated with work is certainly its so-called intrinsic value, those aspects of

¹ On this analysis we can note that Rawls (1972, 92) is right in a strictly technical sense to include income as a so-called "economic primary good": every rational person would rather have more of it than less, whatever else she wants (e.g. in terms of leisure). Leisure itself however would not technically be a primary good because more of it is not always preferred to less.

work through which we may get a sense of accomplishment or achievement. They are rewards that are non-instrumentally related to work, because they presuppose that doing the job is perceived as worthwhile “for its own sake”. But not all goods that are instrumentally related to work, are also transferable in the way that income is transferable. For instance, I mentioned that Tom managed to persuade his friends that whitewashing a fence is “prestigious”, but prestige (or status), as an essentially social phenomenon, is hardly intrinsically related to work (and in fact we can remember times when prestige was mainly reserved for members of the leisure class).

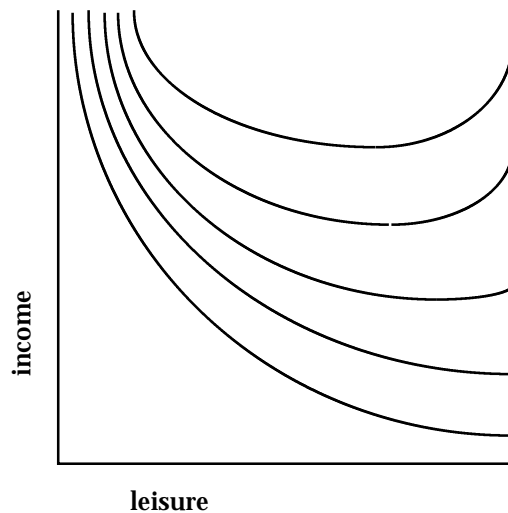


Figure 5: luxury curves.

Let me sketch what I believe to be some of the most important background conditions of the Tom Sawyer-effect. First, I think it is likely that the non-transferrable advantages of work may only acquire priority over increases in income when income levels are securely beyond a certain critical threshold. E.g. people are not likely to seek intrinsic rewards at the expense of income when they (or their kin) are still hungry or cold or inadequately insured. In a certain sense, then, the value contraction of leisure relative to income is a luxury phenomenon to be expected only in affluent societies, or else in affluent classes in less affluent societies. In fact we should expect people's indifference curves to be as in Figure 5: the lower curves will be standard (expansive) trade-off functions, and only at higher levels of income do we find the contraction.

But of course, secondly, the phenomenon depends on various characteristics of work itself, and of the surrounding social situation. Without trying to be exhaustive, I list some of the most salient of those that I believe

characterize modern western society compared to its own predecessors or some contemporary non-western societies: Machines have taken over many of the most degrading, depressing, boring, burdensome, risky and unhealthy aspects of work. Besides, trade unions have bargained, and legislators have passed laws, for an improvement of working conditions (other than the pay). Work nowadays often requires the exercise of “higher” faculties than those that humans merely share with the beasts. Many jobs require technical, social and organizational skills and moreover a certain responsiveness to challenge and at least a certain capacity for assuming responsibility and autonomous decision making.

The working of the market has resulted in social mobility, both vertically and horizontally. Baldersar Castiglione, in his once famous book of manners *The Courtier*, noted already in the early sixteenth century that

“(..) Nature has not set such limits on human dignities that a man may not ascend from one to another. Thus common soldiers often become captains; private persons, kings; priests, popes; and pupils, masters.” (Castiglione 1967)

But for a long time it was generally assumed that nature *had* set such limits. So, one can now purposely pursue a *career*, aim at the highest, aim at excellence and, indeed, prestige. Work can be a personal project over (part of) one's lifetime. But not only within occupations, also among them a much larger array of opportunities opened up. Where the ancient guild system, or systems resembling it, had one born as a member of a professional cast from which there was no escape, one can now choose training and education, and engage in a type of work, which matches one's spontaneous interests, and one's talents and capacities.

Then: outside the nuclear family, work as a cooperative venture is, and has always been, one of the principle sources of social life, companionship. However, it is a feature of modern times that many other institutions which used to have important social functions as well, have lost them. The extended family, religious communities, the neighbourhood or the village no longer secure the (overlapping) social networks they used to. People who do not work are often isolated, out of contact with others. Today, very often one's only friends (outside the family) are one's colleagues.

Of course it cannot be my claim here that some of these tendencies of modernity do not have their regrettable aspects, not even that they have all

unambiguously contributed to the attractiveness of labour,² but nevertheless they provide considerations that a person might want to factor in when she wonders what good their might be for her in a certain job.

4. I should also briefly discuss the suggestion one sometimes encounters that people are not so much moved by a desire to work but rather by a desire to avoid leisure. For instance, here is a quote from the work of Charles Baudelaire:

“One has to work, if not out of taste, at least out of despair, because, all well-considered, working is less boring than amusing oneself.” (Baudelaire 1958, 135)³

I shall side-step the more puzzling implications of his exact formulation (e.g. that one can be “amusing oneself” and bored to despair at the same time), and simply consider Baudelaire’s thesis to be that leisure is boring, and that people work in order to avoid boredom. I think this thesis is in one important sense wrong, but it hints nevertheless to what I consider to be a very significant explanation of the value contraction of leisure, and that explanation is that *diversity* may be valuable in itself.

Could we take Baudelaire’s thesis to mean that people, in order to avoid boredom, will engage in activities *with no intrinsic value*? So taken, it seems to me, the thesis would be a mistake. If activities have no intrinsic value then how could being “engaged” in them stop the boredom? Would such activities not be what we call “boring activities”? Indeed, is not boredom as characteristic of “doing nothing” as it is of routine activities that are done for purely instrumental reasons, e.g. if one works merely for the pay, or if one whitewashes a fence merely to escape the wrath of one’s aunt? People who are engaged in doing something they find worthwhile are not bored, so much is evidently true. However, the worth of the activity *explains* why it takes away boredom, but its worth does not *consist in* taking away boredom.⁴

² E.g. machines also introduced hitherto unknown routines in labour: the so-called “assembly line” did not add much to the fun of manufacture, and social mobility is probably itself one of the causes of the destruction of traditional social cohesion.

³ *Il faut travailler, sinon par goût, au moins par désespoir, puisque, tout bien vérifié, travailler est moins ennuyeux que s’amuser.* I thank Jaap Boerdam who drew my attention to this idea, and provided the reference.

⁴ If taken as such, then, Baudelaire’s thesis would be the common mistake to take an effect for a motive: we see it in Freudianism with regard to the feeling of guilt, we see it in hedonism with regard to happiness.

What I'm not denying here is that people can be consciously bored with doing nothing and therefore choose to do some activity. My claim is merely that such a move cannot be successful unless in that activity eventually something turns up that makes it worthwhile to do. People play football or music on Saturday afternoon. They join a club or orchestra because they want to do something with their time. However, if there were nothing inherently rewarding in playing football or music one would be as bored in playing as in staying home. There is no such activity as "killing time".⁵

So, if Baudelaire's thesis boils down to the observation that (much) work has in fact certain features that we tend to think of as characteristic only of play and art, he may be right. People are at least also motivated to do it for its own sake, not only because it is conducive to their physical maintenance. But that is just the thesis that I wish to defend. Modern economy is no longer merely perceived as a productive machine, to some it is also something like a football team or an orchestra.

5. But, as I said, boredom can belong as much to doing nothing as to doing a certain type of activity, and I think that it is a common experience that anything - well, almost anything - can lose its attraction and become boring if it is done often enough, or long enough without some form of diversity. And it is here that we must seek one of the principle answers to the question why certain categories of people may welcome part-time jobs even at the expense of income. We have tacitly assumed that those who are not involved in so-called formal productive work, enjoy leisure in the sense of doing nothing or, at best, in the sense of "amusing themselves". But that would be a completely inadequate picture of what is in fact done by the majority of persons who are not included in the formal economy of paid jobs, for obviously that group consists mainly of housewives who are full-time engaged in housekeeping and child care, and who depend on a household income that is earned by their husbands.

Now, without suggesting that housekeeping itself is devoid of intrinsic merit, it is very clear why to many persons a life in which tending the children and doing the dishes and laundry is alternated with some out-of-doors professional activity must be endlessly more attractive, rewarding and

⁵ Also, I am not denying that the urgency of one's engagement in an activity can differ from case to case: Eduard Douwes Dekker, better known as Multatuli, once heard himself referred to as "a writer". He responded: "A writer? A writer? Would you call a mother who screams as her child is drowning "a screamer?"

valuable. And it is not *just* that a full-time, life-long dedication to the family's convenience may be boring; something more essential may be involved in the idea of a diversity of commitments.

In Aristotelian terms, many people's so-called conception of the good life is "eudaimonistic" which means that in their perception a worthwhile, valuable life consists, in some well balanced way, of several constitutive elements in such a way that the value of the whole cannot be fully reduced to the value of the parts. Each element is perceived as intrinsically valuable and one cannot hope to replace one element by more of another. Each element is an indispensable contribution for a wholly successful life. Secondly, as we already noted (and this is also rather Aristotelian), for many people the exercise of (educated) capacities, skills or virtues, is one such intrinsically valuable element of the eudaimonia. Another it would be to enjoy the company of *filoi*: friends, loved-ones, family.⁶

Those whose conception of a valuable life tends in this direction may feel that something is lacking from their lives when they are forced into a singular commitment to only one type of activity. They may feel incomplete when not all they have within themselves is given an opportunity to "flourish". And this may be the situation of the housewife. The value contraction of leisure relative to income reveals the eudaimonistic nature of her conception of the good life. Adam's curse may well be Eve's blessing.⁷

⁶ Life may be like cappuccino, but not quite. A word of caution is in place here: the phenomenon of value contraction explains how mixes of goods can be ideal, such that a reduction of the one good cannot be compensated by any increase in the other. In that sense we might say that goods can be "irreplaceable". But the Aristotelian idea of "irreplaceability" may have a feature that is not accounted for by value contraction as I described it. Value contraction such as in cappuccino (see Figure 2) implies that if you take away a certain amount of pure coffee from a given amount (1) of ideal cappuccino, the result will be a worse mix (2). If you now start adding pure milk the result will be a mix (3) that is even worse than (2). The Aristotelian idea of irreplaceability may imply something else: if from a given bundle (1) of two goods A and B, you take away certain amount of A, the resulting bundle (2) will be worse than (1). If however you now start adding B, the resulting bundle (3) will be better than (2) but it will never be *as* good as (1). To wit: if you take away a person's filoi (say: children) no amount of money is going to compensate him. Children are *priceless*. Nevertheless, having been robbed of a child you will still be "better off" with more money than with less.

⁷ Feminists who have strived for women's equal opportunity to work out-of-doors, have sometimes met with the raised eyebrows of their grandmothers, who remember the struggle it took to throw off the family's economic dependence of double income. That women were enabled to withdraw from paid labour on the fields or in the factories was once welcomed as one of the first achievements of a victorious working class. And it was. But I believe there is no real contradiction here. In the old days three jobs had to be done: two out-of-doors to ward off poverty, and one inside to keep the house. Simple arithmetic informs us that the house keeping had to be done in time that is now reserved for recreative activities, and given the prevailing

6. It is now time to point out how social policies may fail to appreciate, and do justice to, those among us who for the reasons I indicated would very much like to have a part-time job, and a part-time job only. I shall concentrate on the Basic Income policy although I believe my argument has a more general application to all social policies that are inspired by the idea that we should try to maximize the monetary compensation for the non-employed. More in particular I will be concerned with the kind of principled rights-based defense of Basic Income that is given by Philippe Van Parijs, although, again, I think those who support Basic Income on other grounds, e.g. Robert Goodin (see below), should feel equally addressed by my argument.

Let us assume that jobs, like land and other natural resources, are so-called “external assets”, and that they are scarce. Let us assume further that society should be considered as unjust if only a limited number of persons occupy, or appropriate, all these assets and exclude the others.⁸ Then, clearly, societies such as ours in which not all persons have access to work, would be unjust unless those who are not employed share substantially in the benefit. How, and to what extent, should those benefits be shared? The answer we often get to these questions is that we should tax people who hold jobs and redistribute the proceeds to those who are not employed. But we should do so in a fashion that is sustainable: we should not tax incomes so severely that people will start quitting the jobs they are most productive at, or that entrepreneurs are discouraged, to the effect that the tax base will go down so that in the end less taxes can be collected and distributed as a benefit to the non-workers. It is in *their* interest that the level of taxation should not undermine its own viability: we should aim at a so-called equilibrium at which the level of compensatory benefit will be compatible with a “healthy economy”. Thus Philippe Van Parijs (1995) argues for a Basic Income at the highest level that can be durably sustained.⁹

In the context of the present discussion there is an important distinction between Basic Income and traditional social policies. Because of its so-called

gender ideology at the time, more often than not it meant that women had to do two jobs.

⁸ These are some of the strong (and contested) assumptions that I do not attempt to justify here. For instructive accounts of the relation between job scarcity and the existence of so-called employment rents, see for instance Van Parijs 1995, Lindbeck and Snower 1988, Bowles and Gintis 1992.

⁹ It is not difficult to recognize the working of Rawls' so-called “difference principle” in the background of Van Parijs' and similar arguments.

“means test” traditional policies tend to concentrate on households rather than individuals. Non-working (adult) members of a household that has an income from the work of other members, are regarded as “compensated” since it is tacitly assumed that they share in a more or less equal fashion in the benefit of the household income. Thus non-working wives of working husbands (or vice versa) are not regarded as a proper concern for redistributive policies: they satisfy the means test. The income of the other is regarded as their means. Instead traditional policies redistribute to (one-or-more-person) households that are without income altogether, from work or other sources.

Basic Income is a grant that is not means-tested, and, hence, it is given to individuals regardless of their household situation. To finance it, job holders will be taxed, so that, to put it somewhat crudely Basic Income will tax husbands in order to benefit their own wives. And many regard this as a definite advantage because, first: it dismisses of the wishful assumption of justice and democracy within the family, and hence Basic Income supports women’s autonomy, and secondly: Basic Income as a personally identifiable income can be taken to reflect that housekeeping is in fact, though not formally, work.

I do not wish to deny these advantages of Basic Income, but there is a reverse side to the coin. Even if we redistribute the monetary proceeds of paid labour in such a way that those who have been excluded from jobs benefit maximally, we may not have achieved what justice requires. In fact we may have achieved nothing substantial. Just consider for a moment the following (admittedly completely incredible) situation: all full-time workers are husbands, all non-employed persons are wives. Without Basic Income policies the husbands bring home roughly equal unencumbered incomes which they share with their wives. Now we want to tax the husbands in order to benefit the wives. Since all income that will be taxed will flow back into the same household in the form of twice Basic Income, the tax rate does not influence household income; we could tax at 30%, at 50% or even at 100%, and under these conditions we should expect productivity to remain unaffected by the tax rate. However, if we tax at 100% both husband and wife will receive a Basic Income at the level of 50% of the husband’s pre-tax income and hence a 100% tax rate renders the highest sustainable Basic Income. Admittedly, the wife’s autonomy is now enhanced and she is quasi-paid, on a strictly even footing with her husband, for keeping the house. But the husband keeps all of the job and all the non-transferable rewards associated with it. The wife is still

convicted to her life at home, perhaps boring, perhaps in solitude, and she has no access to the life of variety, companionship and excitement a part-time job might give her.¹⁰ So, should not husband and wife share the work itself, instead of the income, so that both have an equal opportunity for *all* the advantages associated with having a job? Should we not have so-called compulsory working time reduction or job sharing? Now follows the objectionable move in the argument for a highest sustainable Basic Income. That move is to say that if the work is shared instead of the financial proceeds of the work then pro-capita income will go down. I give an example:

“(..) the very fact that firms choose not to spread employment more evenly among those wanting to work strongly suggests that doing so would run against their concern with maximizing profits. Compulsory working-time reduction can, therefore, be expected to have a negative impact on profits, and hence on the value of assets and on the maximum level of Basic Income that can be financed (..).” (Van Parijs 1995, 110)

We need not go into a detailed explanation as to why a more even spreading of work would have a negative impact on profits, but the general idea is that it is usually inefficient if a job that can be done by a single person has to be done by two different persons. However, such a negative impact on efficiency and profits can of course always be balanced if workers choose to forgo or constrain their demands for income raises, or even accept reductions, in return for a more even spreading of work.

The situation I described demonstrates that the fact that Basic Income (and pro-capita income generally) may go down as a result is not an argument against job sharing. If some persons, e.g. house wives, are willing to accept reductions of household income in return for part-time work, then they can not be regarded as compensated for their lack of access to employment. But as I said, the situation I described was incredible. Outrageously so. Not only husbands work. Not only husbands and wives form households. Not all household incomes are roughly equal. There are those, like Tom Sawyer, whose preferences do not demonstrate a value contraction of leisure, and who would, therefore, always prefer more leisure and higher income to less leisure and

¹⁰ Of course the husband also keeps the non-tranferrable *burdens* of being full-time employed. He might be bored by it, or he might resent that his access to the intrinsic good of caring for his children is seriously constrained.

lower income. There may be households in which nobody prefers to share work at the cost of income. How should the various interests of these groups of people be balanced against one another? Which interest should weigh heavier, that of the housewife who wants a part-time job and is willing to accept a reduction of household income (even if her chauvinistic and workaholic husband would not), or that of the full-time leisure-addicted bohemian who wants his Basic Income to be as high as possible so that he may go surfing off Malibu (this is an interest that Philippe Van Parijs seems anxious to protect)? How, in short, should social policies maintain the celebrated liberal neutrality among the conceptions of the good life of these various groups?

7. These questions may seem complicated but in fact there is a quite straightforward answer to them. Justice is strongly on the side of those who want part-time work. Those who stand to gain, either way: as workaholics or Bohemians, from an unequal division of jobs have no claim.

We just have to return to the initial problem, which is that it is unjust if some appropriate the scarce opportunities for paid labour excluding the others. The natural response, at least in the spirit of Dworkin's (1981) "equality of opportunity", is to redistribute these opportunities equally so that each will have access to a part-time job including to its associated rewards - income and otherwise. So let us think of such a situation. Each has an exclusionary right to an equal share of the available work. What could be wrong with it? Well, what could be wrong with it is that some might want to work for longer hours, e.g. in order to be able to earn more, while others might be willing to work for shorter hours, or not at all, and live on lower income. In short, an equalized distribution of "job space", though initially fair, may not be Pareto efficient: we could improve some people's position by changing it without worsening the position of others. The natural response to *that* problem is to make people's equal initial job shares tradable. What emerges is the idea of a market of job shares at which those who are eager for full-time work will have to buy additional shares from those with a relatively strong taste for leisure - the Bohemians.

Consider, for instance, Bert Hamminga's proposal (Hamminga 1995) to give every person an X number of so-called "Labour Rights", on a yearly basis, but to ask every applicant for, or holder of, a full-time job for a number of Y Labour Rights in return for having that job, where Y will be exceeding X in the same ratio as the number of "able-bodied" adult citizens is exceeding the

number of available full-time jobs. Thus, in his example of “Eu”, the country where “the Eunians have truly liberalized the labour market” all individuals will be allowed to hold four Labour Rights (issued by a Labour Bank) but they will have to turn in five Labour Rights for taking a full-time job, because there are five million able-bodied adult citizens and only four million full-time jobs. So persons who eagerly want those jobs will have to buy one Labour Right from others who are less eager and who will thus be supplied with an income for which they do not have to work. That labour-free income now, can be considered as a Basic Income at the level of the market value of one’s original entitlement to part-time labour.

So far so good. But what if there be some persons who are neither moved by the market price to sell (all of) their original stock of Labour Rights nor moved by that same market price to buy Labour Rights in addition to their original stock, so as to acquire the right to a full-time job? What if some persons simply insist on “consuming” (part of) their share of Labour Rights, in-kind so to speak, by actually fulfilling a part-time job? Can there now be a good reason, inherent in the idea of justice, to disown the would-be part-timers of their rightful share of labour and “compensate” them by its market value: Basic Income? I do not think so. If others desire to pool their original shares of labour and distribute the transferable proceeds in a fashion that they all find advantageous: by all means, let them go ahead. But they have no business forcing others into this pooling and transfer system, not even if their own pooling will thereby be somewhat less profitable (as is to be expected on the assumption that the lower the working persons/worked hours ratio, the higher are the transferable proceeds of the worked hours).

So, the injustice of concentrating on compensatory income transfers instead of actual job sharing finds its root in the way we might be tempted to go from the basic insights of distributive justice and Pareto efficiency to an actual tax and transfer policy. Consider the following parallel: Suppose 90 individuals own a small garden each. The gardens are all bordering on each other and together they cover an area that is quite large. Now 30 garden owners get the idea of combining all 90 gardens to turn the whole area into a complex of football grounds. However, there are two special circumstances: first, they know that given the limited capacity of the grounds not every person will be able to play, and, secondly, they know that not every person who owns a garden is a football enthusiast. The 30 football fanatics conclude that they will have to buy the 60 gardens of the others. They consider the case and find that,

provided they buy every single garden that is not yet in their possession, they are willing to pay X Euro per garden. Now, of the other owners 30 consider X Euro for a not very interesting garden quite a profitable deal. But the remaining 30 garden owners are not willing to sell at all for X Euro; they value their garden much higher than that. Unless the price goes up significantly they will not sell. But the price will not go up significantly because the football fans are not willing to pay more than X Euro. Typically the people who like their gardens so much and who refuse to sell will face resentment from *both* other groups. The fanatics are frustrated because they won't have a football field and those who are willing to sell have to forgo a profitable deal. Both groups will complain that the value of their initial equal share of the grounds goes down because there are some who do not wish to pool their property with that of the others, and refuse to sell. In this parallel playing football is equal to full employment, 90 times X Euro to the maximal yield from taxing full employment, a garden to part-time employment, and the profitable sale of a garden to a labour free income. Justice requires that those who want to keep their gardens shall have their way. But the highest sustainable Basic Income policy is like disowning all garden owners in return for X Euro, including those who prefer their garden to the money. They are less than fully compensated.

8. Robert Goodin has argued that

“(..) at root the reason we should cherish the target efficiency of Basic Income strategies is simply that that guarantees that we will, through them, be able to relieve human suffering as best as we can” (Goodin 1995, 243).

I argue that this claim needs at least one qualification. It depends on what one regards as the prevailing source of human suffering in one's society. Schopenhauer held that humans must always suffer since they either have a want of something or they don't. If they do, the want itself makes them suffer, and the relief of the want is their purpose in life. If they don't, they have no purpose in life and stare into an abyss of boredom and existential agony. Either they suffer from deprivation or they suffer from the horror of satisfaction. One need not share in Schopenhauer's radical pessimism, or agree to his identification of “having wants” and “having purposes” in order to see that the sources of human suffering are multiple, and different in kind. In affluent societies such as ours, naked wants and lack of income may not be such a very

great problem compared to the suffering of those who are not allowed to enjoy the value of purposeful action. If that would be so, then Basic Income may well *not* be the most efficient way to fight suffering. Job sharing might do a much better job.

Marx hoped (and predicted) that the affluence that would be created by communism would do away with the economic necessity of full-time and life-long specialization in one activity. That it would do away, so to speak, with 'one-dimensional' men and women, and that it would provide opportunities for self-realization through an engagement in a wide variety of interesting activities. As he puts it in a well-known passage,

"[communist society] makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have in mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic." (Marx/Engels 1970, 53)

We have not quite reached that point (hardly, by the way, because we have failed as a communist society), but in some respects we are near the state predicted nevertheless. We can *afford* not to be full-time employed as either a specialized child raiser and dishwasher or as a specialized out-of-doors money maker. We can afford to earn money half a day, raise children during the other half, criticize (each other's performance) over dinner, and watch the Jerry Springer Show in the evening (to see how well others are doing).¹¹ The proposal for Basic Income has attracted, in recent years, quite some attention and lots of intellectual and political energy are invested in its advocacy. Basic Income seems to be a very radical break with traditional social thought but here I have tried to point to one of its rather classical preoccupations, and to its potential conservatism from a gender political perspective. As we live in relatively affluent societies we have novel opportunities to reconstruct all kinds of

¹¹ David Gauthier (1986, 333-334) complains that Marx' view is utopian, of course, but more seriously he objects that the life that Marx depicts as an ideal is in fact impoverished. To really get the sense of self-realization or accomplishment from a given activity we need the full commitment to that activity that is excluded by the dilettantish way in which we can do (and be) all things at once. There may be something to this objection but surely it must be a gross exaggeration if Gauthier means to say that one cannot be a self-realizing technician or teacher or even neurosurgeon (Gauthier's example) or, for that matter, *parent* for a few days in the week. After all, there *must* be some middle way between the "unbearable lightness" of Marx' ideal and the ideology of the guild system according to which you were born as a specialist, lived as a specialist and died as a specialist, without ever allowing you the luxury of changing or spreading your commitments.

relations that used be more or less determined by the needs of the productive (or reproductive) process. The relation between the sexes is one of them. Yet, the luxury of that possibility would have to be forgone if we accept the standard argument against job sharing, and in favour of equi-maximizing pro-capita income.

Only recently, surveys in Holland indicated that the Dutch Male, despite his verbal recognition of household responsibilities, had in fact hardly increased his involvement in domestic affairs. But this is not at all difficult to explain (even without reference to the truism that hypocrisy may cover chauvinism). Husbands may be truly, madly, deeply ready to share responsibilities and opportunities, but the guy who cautiously informs after the possibility of working only four or three days a week knows that he will be the likely candidate to be replaced at the next "reorganization." This is true for the work floor as well as at management level. Business culture is conservative. Part-timers are considered to be cumbersome - which probably they are, but deliberate part-timers are suspected of lack of ambition or loyalty. After all, how can one be a part-time runner in a rat race?

So, the struggle promises to be long and tough. I hope to have given at least some plausibility to the idea that a large chunk of the intellectual and political energy that is now given to more or less parochial pleas for Basic Income deserves to be invested in overcoming the resistance to job sharing. Perhaps it can be shown that the two ideals are not fully incompatible in practice, and I *am* aware that some of its advocates actually expect that Basic Income will be a stimulus for part-time employment, especially at the low pay end of the labour market, and especially if that policy goes together with a relaxation of minimum wage legislation. However, hoping for increased labour participation as a happy side-effect of Basic Income and insisting on it as a *conditio sine qua non* are two distinct things.

9. I should perhaps anticipate the objection that my view of the wealth of our nations, and of the appreciation of modern labour is too rosy (and indeed just a sign of my own affiliation with a class of people who have access to all kinds of fancy jobs, the economic necessity of which is contestable - I'm referring to Academia). The masses, the objection would go on, are still very much preoccupied with raising their household incomes from jobs that are as drudgery and denigrating as ever, and they are more than willing to take a full-time labour division for granted if that helps, and full-time labour division

between the sexes if that is what it seems to take. Let me answer. First, bourgeois women are persons too. Even if it were true that my remarks only apply to certain groups of people who can afford to appreciate work for other reasons than economic gain, then it would still be appropriate to press for job sharing in those areas of professional activity to which they would wish to dedicate themselves. Secondly, in speaking on behalf of the masses one should always be acutely aware of the so-called “contented-slavery” trap. How can we know people’s true appreciation for a more even sharing of the various opportunities and responsibilities when in fact they have never been in a position to seriously consider, explore or evaluate its merit (let alone when they have never had so-called role models for the kind of life that would be possible under such conditions). What we seem to owe to everybody, then, whatever the outcome of their choices, is the very freedom to make a choice to begin with. Where a further development of that freedom is arrested by the political ideal of raising pro-capita income, I say: part-timers of the world, friends of Tom Sawyer, unite! Against Basic Income, if you must.

*August 2000
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