

*Christoph Henning*

## Liberalism, Perfectionism and Workfare

*Abstract:* Recent welfare reform has resulted in new work requirements for welfare recipients. These measures need to be justified, as they impair recipients' freedom. This paper first repudiates economic justifications for these developments and argues that the dominant justification is perfectionist. But unlike workfare, perfectionism is not necessarily paternalistic. The second part of the paper outlines a liberal perfectionism which allows only for autonomy-enhancing politics. Though even such autonomy-enhancing politics cannot be made obligatory. The last section concludes that workfare's paternalism cannot be attributed to perfectionist justifications, but rather stems from the narrow philosophy of work that is applied. The idea that enforced wage labour is a reliable tool for inducing autonomy is refuted. In the end, workfare needs to be rejected, as it is based on assumptions that are mistaken both normatively and empirically.

### 0. Introduction

When discussing 'work and justice' one of the most obvious topics in political philosophy is workfare. There are at least two reasons for this: First, arguing in relation to the concept of *justice*, claims of justice have usually been addressed to the welfare state. In recent years this institution was 'transformed', and some scholars now refer to the 'workfare state' instead (Peck 2001). While this change is often considered a topic for empirical disciplines such as political theory (Grell 2008), philosophy cannot ignore this significant change either, since it has changed the whole 'philosophy of welfare'.<sup>1</sup> Second, arguing in relation to the concept of *work*, theoretically the transformation is also based on specific assumptions about work. Why has one notion of work been privileged over others? The 'real world' of the working population is considerably affected by transformations such as these (competition in the labour market has increased, wages are falling, hours becoming longer). These work-related changes call for philosophical reflection, too.

However, in spite of the urgency of such reflection, only five years ago Elizabeth Anderson rightly observed that philosophy is ignoring the changes workfare brings with it.<sup>2</sup> It is this lack I want to address. After I shortly explain

---

<sup>1</sup> See the state of Alaska's statement, e.g.: <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dpa/features/org/mission.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> It "is high time that philosophers considered it. Yet it is nearly invisible in standard

what *workfare* means, I will analyse the most important legitimation narrative for the transformation ‘from welfare to work’ (1). This narrative is not economic. As it turns out, it is, in philosophical terms, perfectionist. But the political philosophy of perfectionism is contested, especially concerning its compatibility with liberalism. Therefore, after I briefly explain what *perfectionism* means, I will reconsider this question (2). While scholars are still divided on the issue, I argue that though perfectionism is reconcilable with liberalism, this does not allow for a legitimation of workfare. In order to explain why it is not resisted more strongly I finally outline the *social philosophy* that underlies the (mistaken) perfectionist justification of workfare (3). Proponents of workfare argue under narrow premises about the meaning of work. These assumptions are, so I argue, untenable. A proper understanding of liberal perfectionism and work in our societies can only lead to a rejection of workfare. It is incompatible with both liberalism *and* perfectionism.

### 1. Reasons for Workfare

Due to its formative powers, work is usually considered one of the constitutive components of modern society. I see at least three reasons for this prominence: First, it produces the goods and services everybody needs to survive; second, the division of labour in society is structuring our societies to a large extent; third, a working person may also be enriched by work with ‘immaterial resources’ such as self-esteem, recognition-respect or even a reason for being (Elster 1986). Nonetheless not everybody is working. This again has various reasons, some anthropological, some social. A prime anthropological reason is the life-cycle. There are stages in life where human beings cannot work (and in civilized societies usually do not): childhood and youth, child-bearing, and old age. Another anthropological reason is that work, perceived as productive activity in the economic sphere (in our societies this is in most cases wage labour), is not the only valuable activity. Bodies need rest for their physical regeneration, people need leisure time for their psychic balance, societies need festivities and other cultural activities in order to recreate and develop their cultural identity. All of this cannot be produced by work in the economic sphere, but rather is *consumed* by it. In short, both individuals and society need some time off (Russell 1932; Pieper 1948).

Alongside these basic limits to work there are social reasons why some people do not work. People might either be unwilling to work, because they are independently wealthy or due to a preference for other activities (travelling, reading or writing, composing, socialising or heavy drinking, for example). Or people might be unable to work, due to an illness, for want of skills, or—and this is the prime reason in our societies—for lack of jobs. Industries might decline, crises may occur or qualifications may change. These factors are beyond the control of individuals. Whatever the reasons in a particular case, there is always a part of

---

philosophical typologies of theories of justice.” (Anderson 2004, 244) It is not invisible, however, in social theory (see the bibliography).

the population which is (temporarily or permanently) not working. Given that the common funds that were available in traditional societies (Polanyi 1944) are scarcely available any longer, this calls for the sharing of privately appropriated economic goods. Children growing up with their parents or grandparents living with their children are usually cared for by these relatives. But what about the considerable remainder, the middle-aged adults who live alone or far away from home; the elderly who have no contact with their families or no longer have family; or the sick? In the 19<sup>th</sup> century this ‘social question’ was becoming peremptory.

The very purpose of the welfare state was to take care of them. Historically the welfare state is a recent phenomenon. Many western countries developed some variant of the welfare state in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> In political terms, ‘welfare’ means that industrial societies, blessed with ever-increasing wealth, redistribute some of their privately appropriated resources to the nonworking population. If the state arranges this redistribution we speak of ‘welfare states’. The term ‘welfare’ does not only refer to the wellbeing of individuals who receive these ‘benefits’. It also means the flourishing of the social body itself (‘general welfare’). If it protects its members from starvation and grants them a decent life, even if they (for whatever reason) do not work, the social body can be said to ‘fare well’: Nobody needs to be afraid of suffering economic destitution and social cohesion is operative. Scholars from T. H. Marshall (1950) onwards have seen this as an achievement in ‘social rights’.

Whatever the motive behind the welfare state, its function is best described by Goodin (1985) as ‘protecting the vulnerable’. However it has often worried philosophers that there was no single normative foundation for the welfare states—it was justified by various moral ideals like compassion, solidarity, economic justice or a moral right to freedom from want (Moehle 2001; Kaufmann 2003). This also varied from country to country (Esping-Andersen 1990).

Now it is this social formation that has been ‘transformed’ (Seeleib-Kaiser 2008). One central component of the welfare reform is the idea that recipients of benefits should be obliged to work. As Giddens and others have pointed out, this changes the whole idea of welfare: Instead of compensating those who (for whatever reason) do not work, now the benefits are used to stimulate the recipients to work. The new welfare aims to bring recipients back to the labour market (‘welfare to work’). If they are *obliged* to work and sanctioned with a reduction or even withdrawal of payments if they do not, this is called ‘workfare’.<sup>4</sup> It has implications for both individuals and society: The notions of rest, leisure and cultural recreation (both personal and social) are on the defensive, and personal liberty is curbed by obligations. Can this be justified? Obviously, the former ‘reasons for welfare’ (Goodin 1988) do not apply any longer: The traditional idea to protect the vulnerable who were unable (temporarily or permanently) to make a living from work is turned on its head. The very *source* of

<sup>3</sup> For its history see Katz 1994 for the US; Lees 1998 for the UK; Ewald 1993 for France; Sachsse/Tennstedt 1980 and Stolleis 2003 for Germany.

<sup>4</sup> As overview see Loedemel/Trickey 2000 (they call it ‘throtter’: offer and threat combined); Peck 2003; Koch 2005.

the potential ‘wounds’ from which they were meant to be protected (the labour market) is now interpreted as a *cure* to what ails them. In order to be legitimate this ‘new’ philosophy of welfare has to supply some convincing arguments, since at first glance it seems absurd. *Prima facie* it may look cruel, illegal or even impossible to oblige very young, very old, child-bearing or sick people to work in return for the benefits they receive. In such cases a legitimation may simply be lacking, hence such persons might still be ‘subsidized’ by public funds without work requirements.

But there is yet another class of people. In former poor laws,<sup>5</sup> persons not willing to work but lacking the means to support themselves were called ‘undeserving poor’ (Katz 1990)—the ‘able-bodied’ presumably *could* work if they wanted to and were therefore denied the right to assistance. Given that enough jobs are available (for many periods an odd assumption), such persons might have their subtle reasons for not wanting to work. So let us call them the ‘sensitive’ (Arneson 1997, 19), as opposed to Goodins ‘vulnerable’. What about them? If persons enjoying the abovementioned social rights who decided (for whatever reason) not to work are forced to do so, this may not be against their nature, but it certainly is against their will. Forcing them to act against their will requires well-founded reasons. Note that the issue is not whether anybody has a *right* to welfare at all—even for workfare these rights are presupposed. The question is whether the state has a right to extract labour *in return* for the benefits. Is it ‘right’, from a liberal political perspective, to demand labour from recipients?

The transformation of welfare into workfare might be driven by economics or by moral reasoning. Economic reasons could be as follows: ‘Though our societies are becoming richer, they can no longer afford to provide for the nonworking population.’<sup>6</sup> But this begs the question. It *could* afford to do so for large parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What has caused this sudden change? Some might argue that the costs of the welfare state have increased (for whatever reason: demographics, through ‘abuses’ of the system, etc.). But so has social wealth in general.<sup>7</sup> In rich societies redistribution is always possible in principle (military expenditures, for example, also spend tax money). It depends on the willingness of political actors. The current financial crises illustrates the point well: If needed, billions of dollars can be spent almost immediately. So financial crunches do not justify the welfare reform. We still need an argument as to *why* public money should be spent in one place, while it is saved in another. If we want to avoid circular reasoning the answer cannot be monetary.

We might ask if the argument gains anything when rephrased abstractly in terms of general welfare. This utilitarian approach would look slightly different: The point is no longer that there are ‘not enough’ resources, but rather that

---

<sup>5</sup> They are partly re-packaged in the welfare reform. For the 1834 poor laws see Katz 1994; Lees 1998; Bohlender 2007.

<sup>6</sup> “It hence becomes apparent that despite an excess of wealth civil society is not rich enough, i.e. its own resources are insufficient to check excessive poverty and the creation of a penurious rabble.” (Hegel 1821, §245)

<sup>7</sup> Just to illuminate, consider that the GDP of the USA has almost *doubled* from 6.742,7 Billion \$ (chained to the year 2000) in 1988 to 11,652.7 Billion \$ in 2008 (taken from <http://www.bea.gov>, 20.03.2009).

they can be spend more efficiently. ‘Symbolic politics’ (Handler/Hasenfeld 1997, 17) would not be enough. Following this logic, there would have to be a reliable gain somewhere. But to whose benefit could it possibly be? It cannot be to the benefit of the individuals in question, as they do not work for money, but for the welfare checks they already received. Neither can it be to the benefit of one group only. For example, if the average wage falls due to an increased supply of labour, the group of society who hires labour clearly benefits. They save money by hiring the ‘new labour’ provided by the welfare reform for free or hiring other workers at lower wages. But this cannot possibly justify workfare, because the gain of one group (employers) is offset by losses of another group (employees). In psychological terms the loss even prevails, as losses have a stronger negative effect, proportionately, than the positive effects of what gains might yield.<sup>8</sup>

And what is more, if gains of one group are realized at the expense of another group, how should we charm away the suspicion of legalised exploitation?<sup>9</sup> Only within a Paretian dream-world might it be feasible to engender the advancement of some people without losses to another. Therefore, benefits for a single group only cannot justify workfare either.

The only possibility left is the majority (individual gains of everybody except the persons on workfare). *Prima facie*, general welfare does indeed seem to increase if, at some expense, society obtains unsalaried labour in return for its welfare payments. In addition, welfare rolls might decline over time if potential recipients are discouraged to go on welfare. However the general welfare argument is not very convincing on a closer inspection. First, the reform leads to additional costs (new bureaucracy, infrastructure, supervisory personal etc.; see Wilke 2004). Furthermore, the enforced ‘new labour’ is, presumably, not very productive—we are dealing mainly with low skilled workers who have difficulties finding jobs. Yet even if there were some economic gains, they might be countered either by resulting job displacement elsewhere, or by higher costs resulting from those leaving welfare.<sup>10</sup> The debate about fiscal results is still ongoing, and philosophers are not in a position to make long-term judgements in this regard. But the point remains: ‘General welfare’ arguments remain contested even in monetary terms.

It does not help, as economists like Gary Becker would have it, to allow for non-monetary aspects of welfare such as individual wellbeing. Is a person’s wellbeing necessarily increased by forcing him to work? One might note the difference between ‘working’ and ‘working compulsory’ in this regard. Working surely can be fun, but being forced to work much less so. If the person does not necessarily gain pleasure of whatever kind through being forced to work, it is hard to see how his family, associates or even the employers should. This can be taken to the macro-level: Does a society ‘fare well’ if it uses force and lowers

<sup>8</sup> This is a main point in the literature on ‘happiness and economics’, see Layard 2005.

<sup>9</sup> In spite of his many changes of Marx’s concept of exploitation, John Roemer still defines: “S is exploited and S’ is exploiting if and only if [...] S’ gains by virtue of the labor of S.” (Roemer 1989)

<sup>10</sup> After a while the so-called ‘leavers’ may, as van Oorschot 2002 demonstrated, appear as sick or invalid, producing even more costs than the unemployed do. See the review of former studies in Acs/Loprest 2004.

wages? This is at least contestable. And a mere hope that it might have the desired effect is not enough to justify severe political reforms.

Nevertheless, classic authors like John Locke or Jeremy Bentham made efforts to justify workfare (or its predecessor, the workhouse) on economic grounds, and this approach is still taken.<sup>11</sup> So, to simplify matters let us assume that there *is* an overall economic benefit. Would this justify workfare? Not yet, I would argue. There need to be other reasons, because there is a high price to pay. We noted that there are differences within the nonworking population. Some cannot work, others do not want to work. If we force somebody to work against his will,<sup>12</sup> this does not only mean to penalize him or her economically. We also infringe upon his or her freedom. And that is not a small problem: Within liberal societies this goes against a basic rule. Freedom is not a commodity that can be overruled by financial considerations. J.S. Mill has famously expressed this as follows:

“The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant.”<sup>13</sup>

Even less so, we may add, is the good of others. Since freedom is a necessary condition for the market society, liberalism would contradict itself if it would constrain anybody’s freedom for economic reasons only. If some have concluded that workfare is illiberal, this is certainly true for its economic justification.<sup>14</sup> To justify force with the good of others would go against another liberal creed, according to Kant:

“Whatever has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; on the other hand, whatever is above all price, and therefore admits of no equivalent, has a dignity.”<sup>15</sup>

If the freedom of some citizens would be infringed for economic reasons, this would violate their dignity. So there must be other reasons.

Among non-economic cases made, moral arguments rank prominently. Some of them can again be excluded: Stuart White (2003; 2005), for one, has argued that workfare is founded upon the notion of ‘reciprocity’, which he interprets as an explication of the term ‘justice’. I think he is mistaken on two levels: First, social rights—which are still presupposed for workfare—do not have to be ‘earned’. Even if conservative authors may wish to do away with ‘entitlements’

---

<sup>11</sup> We “shall be able to work cheaper than any of our neighbors, all the poor’s labor being clear profit” (Kent 1694, see Locke 1697; Castel 1998, 65f.). “The gain in the gross domestic product can be estimated at 1,9% or € 38,4 billion.” (Sinn 2003, ix)

<sup>12</sup> Following Nozick 1969, I talk about ‘force’ when person A deters Person B from action x, by threatening him with consequence y in case of x, where B rejects y and for this reason does not do x.

<sup>13</sup> Mill 1859, §29, see <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/347/5973/629426>.

<sup>14</sup> See King 1999; 2005. His argument is based on the unequal treatment of citizens. Others have argued that a “punitive strategy” (Rushefsky 2002, 174ff.) lies at the heart of liberalism (Koehler 1977; Bohlender 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Kant 1785, 62 (434 in the German edition).

completely (Murray 1984), they have not yet succeeded. And rightly so: A crucial point is missed if we treat workfare in terms of a private contract or society as a large company. Welfare (and by implication its metamorphosis, too, however defective in other respects) deals with social spheres *beyond* the market. Not only is it of limited practical use to re-enter market categories where the market has failed already, it is also a categorical mistake. If I cannot ‘buy’ a social right in the first place (see Kant above), I cannot be made to pay for it afterwards. Nothing in the rights talk justifies a ‘payback’ (Arneson 1997, 15).

Secondly I disagree with White’s use of the term ‘reciprocity’. Again he misses the point: The reason many scholars adopted this term from ethnology is due to the challenge it poses to western economic thinking. It does designate some sort of exchange, but compared to standard market exchange—buying a good and paying for it right away—it is much more flexible concerning time, actors and goods. Not necessarily the receiver of the initial gift is supposed to pay back, but *somebody else* from his community may make remunerations, may return the gift *later* and even in *another currency* (Goodin 2002; Bruni 2008). For White’s point to work, the same person has to pay back in the same currency at once. What happened to the community, what to flexibility and solidarity? This, one might claim, is a ‘non sequitur’. Nothing in the term reciprocity privileges workfare. We could, for example, call the old welfare a reciprocal compensation for a social disadvantage or a ‘price paid’ for social peace; others—better equipped members of the community—could carry the load, or the ‘pay back’ could come later and in another currency (culturally, or by educating worthy new members of the community). Why shouldn’t we call all of this reciprocal, too? The only visible reason is a narrow labour theory of value that reduces everything directly into work hours. With Marxist economics buried long ago, its most contested element is reborn strangely.

Another idea I want to repudiate is the argument from retribution. If taxes are interpreted as ‘forced labour’ (Nozick 1974, 169f.), it might make workfare seem just: Recipients of welfare appear to be punished in the same currency as taxpayers are (enforced labour). But this interpretation is based on confused notions of both taxes and welfare (see Töns 2003, 110). Taxes are not theft. If anything is, *they* are ‘reciprocal’: Citizens enjoy public goods and pay their due to reproduce them according to their abilities.<sup>16</sup> If you do not earn enough, you do not pay. There is no trace of forced labour. And to consider ‘welfare’ a crime is to neglect the democratic state: Redistribution is a legitimate process of sharing between stronger and weaker members of a community. It is no specific argument for workfare to deny the very notion of distribution outright. The point is too broad and too utopic to show anything in detail. So we are thrown back to the original question: Which argument could possibly justify workfare?

---

<sup>16</sup> “It should be kept in mind that people do not normally object to government taxation when the money is used to promote the common good.” (Wall 1998, 201; cf. Goodin 1988, 312f.; Gewirth 1978, 254, 315f.)

## 2. Perfectionism and Liberalism

In the literature that pushed for welfare reform, one particular argument figures prominently. Its perspective focused not on the morality of political actions, but on the morality of the recipients. The main idea is that ‘welfare as we knew it’ (Bill Clinton) *degenerated* and demoralised the recipients (see Wilson 1995). The story goes like this: Because they do not work, they remain poor and lose their self-respect. But, thanks to welfare, they can survive, but also have no incentive to take up work any longer. They get used to a life of idleness, maybe even of delinquency (McWhorter 2006). Therefore the reform is praised as an effort in reactive character formation. Recipients are expected to regain their ‘self-reliance’ if forced to work (Solow 1998). Self-reliance serves both as an end (an intrinsic value) and a means to develop further valuable character traits. This reasoning was rightly called ‘perfectionist’ (Wolff 2004): The state is called on to promote a particular ‘conception of the good’, the moral quality of persons. These persons are in turn obliged to develop into more valuable citizens.

All of these are perfectionist assumptions. Obviously, this is an effort to legislate morality, and for that, it is dubious.<sup>17</sup> At a first glance, this policy seems illiberal and paternalistic: The state is no longer ‘neutral’, as liberalism demands, and it directly infringes upon citizens’ freedom. But this judgement might be too hasty. Workfarists may escape this criticism by denying welfare recipients’ ‘free will’.<sup>18</sup> The whole point of paternalist measures is that autonomy needs to be *initiated* first. The language of ‘activation’, which is common in welfare reform, clearly expresses this view.<sup>19</sup> What is not yet there cannot be hurt; it can only be developed. And there seems to be nothing wrong with developing autonomy. In fact this is a perfectionist goal, at least for western societies (Raz 1986). So we have to ask: Is workfare an appropriate translation of perfectionism into politics? And if it is, and we reject workfare because of its illiberalism, does this necessarily lead to a rejection of perfectionism? I want to argue against both assumptions. For this, we will first have a closer look at perfectionism, before we look for the underlying social philosophies that seem to permit workfare in the last chapter.

The literature on political perfectionism has proliferated in recent years, but the idea is much older. Perfectionism from Aristotle onwards maintained that the ‘human good’ consists neither of moral behaviour nor pleasure *per se*, but is rather a happy or ‘flourishing’ life considered as a whole. It may contain both pleasure and morality, yet more important characteristics are the fulfilment of activities over a lasting period and deep personal relations. If the enabling of such a good life is used as a criterion for ‘good institutions,’ we speak of political

<sup>17</sup> Any “attempt to regulate the moral character of welfare recipients was an unjust case of ‘legislating morality’” (Sandel 1996, 286; cf. Standing 1999).

<sup>18</sup> “Those who cannot manage their affairs well enough to remain independent are necessarily unfree. They will inevitably be governed, however permissively, by the programs on which they rely.” (Mead 1986, 42)

<sup>19</sup> Lessenich 2008. Morals trump economic considerations: “even if workfare initiatives were expensive for the welfare state, they should be chosen politically due to their ethical productivity.” (Kersting 2002, 49, transl. CH)



perfectionism. John Rawls rejected it as both unjust (following the maximax-principle, resources would go to the talented only, leaving the ‘worst off’ behind, 1971, 285ff.) and illiberal (it would breach the liberal principle of state neutrality, 1993, 295). If it really was unjust and illiberal, few people would be attracted to it. But quite some people, in fact, endorse perfectionism. Are they mistaken, or does this mean that Rawls defined perfectionism too narrowly?

I want to argue for the latter. Indeed, recent literature has debated both of Rawls assumptions: Neither, it has been said, is state neutrality necessarily central to liberalism (Sher 1997), nor is perfectionism necessarily anti-egalitarian (Haksar 1979; Hurka 1993; Yuracko 2003). It is a political ethic that aims to realize human potentials, including particular activities like art or minority cultures (Wall 1998), but also valuable meta-capabilities such as autonomy (Raz 1986). What could be wrong with this? Once redefined this way, we see that many authors have maintained this view. The question, rather, becomes *in which way* authors like Rousseau, John Stuart Mill or Friedrich Nietzsche were perfectionists.<sup>20</sup> The debates are still ongoing.

There are, for example, differences in the way the ‘objective list’ of goods necessary for a good life is shaped.<sup>21</sup> But if the theory cannot offer a coherent list, liberal sceptics may claim that perfectionism must choose one conception of the good. Why should one be preferred against other, potentially conflicting, ones? Answers to this question cannot use the moral argument (‘x is good’) again to claim the *primacy* of that very argument. This would be circular (‘x is better because x is good’). So instead of arguing for a primacy of one good over others, as conservative perfectionists might do (‘my religion is better than yours’), liberal perfectionists deny the assumption that perfection goods are necessarily exclusive. Whereas in the communitarian debate liberal values were questioned and replaced by virtues of social life, perfectionist values are in many cases *liberal*. So we have to distinguish different variants within perfectionism with respect to politics.

First, we can distinguish positive and negative approaches. We may either ban activities considered harmful to the development of individuals (like smoking or consuming porn), as Sher suggests:

“For when we are barraged by images of casual sex and routine violence and when our manners are unrestrained, our streets filthy, and our language imprecise and indiscriminating, the cumulative effect is to degrade our capacity to discern, and *a fortiori* to respond to, many of the subtle reasons that our situations provide. As a result, our efforts to achieve our fundamental goals are systematically thwarted and our lives correspondingly worsened.” (Sher 1997, 213)<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See Marks 2005; Donatelli 2006; or Lemm 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Nussbaum 1990; Sher 1997, 207; Wall 1998, 218; etc.: “Perfectionism [...] remains very much a work in progress.” (Wall 2007, 1)

<sup>22</sup> Whereas smoking harms others and the smoker physically, bad options harm good moral development. In case of “mistaken desires” the state should use force to exclude harmful options (Raz 1986, 142; Moeller 2006, 122, 195).

On the other hand, there are positive facilitations of certain values. The argument here is that the capacities of an individual should be developed, and measures need to be taken to achieve this. For example, we have to allow for pluralism and tolerance, as individuals need various *possibilities* to engage their talents. Consider Humboldt's quote:

“The true end of Man [...] is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole. Freedom is the grand and indispensable condition which the possibility of such a development presupposes; but there is besides another essential—intimately connected with freedom, it is true,—a variety of situations.” (Humboldt 1792, ch. II)

In addition, *education* needs to be provided to develop individual excellences. To quote Mill:

If “those who are virtuous are so from causes which though they now act only upon a few, can be made to act upon all mankind, or the greater part, it is within the power of human exertion to make all or most men as virtuous as those are [...] It is distinctly proved that these two forces, education and public opinion, [...] are capable of producing high moral excellence.” (Mill 1828)

The positive approach contains a risk: We may favour *particular* ways of living over others; say soccer over baseball or classical over popular music.<sup>23</sup> In its extreme this can become illiberal, say if one religion was privileged or made mandatory, or if a whole society subscribed to particular values, such as heroic ones (think of Sparta). Alternatively the state may try to help build the *general* capacity to lead a self-determined and meaningful life, whatever it contains. This would result in promoting personal ‘autonomy’ (Pauer-Studer 2000). Such an autonomy-bolstering perfectionism would not per se be illiberal. So Rawls’ point (that the state should be ‘neutral’) can be accepted for every particular conception of the good, yet the conditions to lead a meaningful and self-determined life may still be promoted, because it does not prescribe any *particular* conception of the good.<sup>24</sup> The decisive question for the degree of ‘liberalism’ is the way autonomy is spelled out in detail.

It is useful to interpret personal autonomy as the condition for all kinds of meaningful life: “(Significantly) autonomous persons are those who can shape their life and determine its course”, and are thus “part creators of their own moral world” (Raz 1986, 154; cf. Christman 2005). Nevertheless, though autonomy is a very general concept, it is only valid for certain forms of life (Raz calls them ‘western industrial’) as distinguished from others; say, life in small religious

<sup>23</sup> Governments should “favor some ways of life over others” (Wall 1998, 207). Raz allows for the “cultivation of certain tastes” (Raz 1986, 422; cf. Sher 1997, 246), others want to provide certain art institutions (Hurka 1993, 174).

<sup>24</sup> In his later theory Rawls included autonomy (1993, 77f.) and a moderate perfectionism (362). For perfectionists, “personal autonomy” is more than a moral category: it includes the ability to lead a meaningful life (Wall 1998, 127f.).

communities where obedience and contemplation is the rule. May the state use force to develop self-determination *against* these minority cultures? If autonomy is defined as self-determination over the whole life span, can one claim that the whole life of a person is ‘worthier’ than single decisions a person might make at any given moment? The example of drug addicts (Regan 1983) may lead us to think so. If autonomy trumps liberty, just like the whole trumps any part of it, restraints to liberty may be justified by efforts to ‘develop’ autonomy. But this is playing with fire, as this argument constitutes one important justification for paternalism (Kleinig 1983, 67ff.). Restraints on liberty justified by arguments of autonomy are a classic example of what Berlin called ‘positive freedom’:

“Once I take this view, I am in a position to ignore the actual wishes of men or societies, to bully, oppress, torture in the name, and on behalf, of their ‘real’ selves, in the secure knowledge that whatever is the true goal of man [...] must be identical with his freedom.” (Berlin 1969, 132f.)<sup>25</sup>

One way to escape allegations of paternalism is to claim that individuals may give their ‘informed consent’ *later*, after they have received the autonomy-enhancing treatment. A classic example is learning a language or a musical instrument at a younger age, as most learners value their abilities later. But this example shows little. How could a political ‘character formation’ possibly match the future preferences of this individual? Having become autonomous, a person may still regret that the state forced him into autonomy (because he does not wish to be autonomous, or because he abhors force). Even if he does not, what if these preferences were the very ones the state intended to induce in the first place? When do we slip into plain manipulation?

This is an additional epistemic problem: Can adapted preferences still be called ‘autonomous’? How are we to know if and when choices a person makes under pressure are autonomous? Paternalism is surely not what we want, so perfectionism needs to ensure that real autonomy is enhanced, not a particular conception of the good that is clad in autonomy-talk. Given the consequential uncertainty about future consent and the epistemic uncertainty of how to distinguish autonomy-inducing from manipulation, it might be wiser to abstain from character formation in adults altogether, even if it is dressed as ‘autonomy’-enhancing. Here liberalism seems to have a point even against liberal perfectionism. Many writers assume that perfectionism has to give in to this liberal criticism.<sup>26</sup>

Is that it? No it is not. Even though the positions of both Mill and Berlin are well known, not everybody is convinced. Some liberal authors remain perfectionists. Which additional reasons might they offer? Perfectionists may argue that we already *have* autonomy-enhancing politics. The risk seems to be controllable.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Raz 1986, 406f.. T.H. Green 1881 first used the term in this sense (using Hegel’s terminology).

<sup>26</sup> Amongst the ones who argue in this way are Rasmussen/Den Uyl 2005 or Lecce 2008. Note that liberal values are presupposed for the argument to work. For conservatives this does not mean much.

A standard example for political promotion of character is mandatory schooling (not necessarily by state schools). If it is a prerequisite for every citizen to be able to read, write, calculate, speak the language, and know the law and history of the country, then it is justified to spend public money to achieve this end, and to enforce that everybody goes to school (Wall 1998, 207). Public education and sanctions to enforce it are justified because learning the necessary tools and the ‘values’ of a particular society are considered to be a common good. And who would consider schooling an illiberal force? The reason for this is the value of autonomy: Without schooling people would not be able to lead a self-directed life in our societies. Now, if autonomy can be shown to have other conditions, perhaps we can extend the argument to other fields.

This argument would probably not convince a liberal. The learning argument cannot be extended to adults, as educating adults presupposes their consent. Obviously, not developing one’s own objective good cannot be interpreted as a ‘harm to others’ (see Mill above). If I do not speak Chinese, although I had the chance and ability to learn it, somebody might regret it for various reasons, but there is no moral justification to force me to learn it. The fact that somebody could develop further abilities (say by regular sports activities) still does not justify an obligation (Hurka 1993, 155f.). Even if the intentions were good, the consequences of such efforts probably would not be: It is unlikely that forcing people to act against their will would ‘better’ them in a significant way. It is much more likely that the means taken would counteract the end (Dworkin 2000, 268).

In addition, whereas individual autonomy is established progressively, by measure (think of someone developing the ability to refuse the demands of others), such a process of development is not visible to the state. The state can only discriminate between autonomous and non-autonomous adults. There is no room in politics for arguments to *enhance* autonomy. If a state decided to force its citizens to engage in sporting activities, this would only suggest that it considers them irrational and immature.<sup>27</sup> But not every lazy (or sensitive) citizen has lost control over him/herself, as drug addicts or psychotics may have. The plain fact that citizens might reasonably object to this obligation indicates that they already *act* autonomously.<sup>28</sup> So it is hard for a liberal state to justify force which risks missing the intended consequences and abuses its citizens.

A better way out for the liberal perfectionist is to claim that a society should offer its citizens *opportunities* to flourish—say: to engage in regular sporting activities, to learn another language or to play an instrument, or to retrain for a job—without forcing them to do so. Such a method avoids the dangers of imposing paternalistic obligation. On the other hand, it is a valid claim, as it adds something to liberalism plain and simple: It follows that society should provide the necessary resources for those who under normal conditions would not be able to afford them. To quote Sher again:

---

<sup>27</sup> “[P]aternalistic intervention must be justified by the evident failure or absence of reason and will and must be guided [...] by what is known about the subject’s more permanent aims.” (Rawls 1971, 220f.)

<sup>28</sup> At least if we use Sher’s account of autonomy as “self-direction on the basis of good reasons” (1997, 148).

“If autonomy is a central component of a fully good life, and if we ought to accept the general thesis of perfectionism, then it would follow that political authorities should take an active role in creating and maintaining social conditions that help their subjects realize this ideal.” (1997, 131)

Liberal perfectionism may engage in bolstering autonomy by positively promoting autonomy-related goods if opportunities to develop these skills are provided, but the state abstains from making them obligatory for adults.<sup>29</sup> As always in politics, there is a price to pay: What if some adults really *were* immature? For them, such opportunities (say, a public library to the pathological couch potato) would be meaningless as long as they lack the necessary capacities to live a self-determined life. But given that for epistemic reasons we never know for sure whether the average person is behaving autonomously, in a Millian framework this is a price worth paying. An ‘underperformer’ surely does not hurt anybody by not living up to his abilities. Watching television is not a vice *per se*. A couch potato can even become an expert in film history and IT-technology by downloading movies online. This is an excellence of its own. So why should we force him to read Tolstoy?

Liberal perfectionism does not provide justifications for paternalism. Following Rawls and others, there are illiberal ‘traps’ perfectionism needs to avoid, such as politically promoting a particular conception of the good that excludes or disadvantages others, or forcing adults to engage in certain activities, for even if these activities are considered autonomy-enhancing this still compromises the freedom of those forced and may even be harmful to them. But this does not mean that perfectionism and liberalism are incompatible. Liberal scepticism can be met if perfectionist politics provide opportunities and resources to develop autonomy without making them obligatory for adults. Since liberalism has to rely on autonomy, such politics should be in the interest of liberalism.

### 3. The Social Philosophy of Welfare

If we were interested in principles only, we could close here. But we are dealing with the real world, and there is one more paradox to solve. We started by looking for possible justifications for workfare, amongst which perfectionism loomed prominent. Then we showed that liberalism only allows for certain forms of autonomy-enhancing politics and that it would be illiberal to use force on adults in the promotion of their own good. Applied to workfare, such practices must be considered illiberal. As long as we endorse liberalism they are not justified. But the facts are as follows: Workfare has been in place in North America for decades now, and in Europe for some years. Even though early proponents

---

<sup>29</sup> Yet the link to justice is weak: For Sher it is “considerably less clear” what perfectionism implies for social justice (1997, 243); for Hurka it is “distributively neutral” (1993, 79, 189); Yuracko (2003, 27ff.) objects to this vagueness.

like Lawrence Mead or Charles Murray were paternalist conservatives,<sup>30</sup> neither liberal politicians nor liberal philosophers have found reason enough to reject workfare. On the contrary, if they deal with it at all, many philosophers seem to be quite happy with it.<sup>31</sup> As I am arguing against it, I would like to explain my position more concretely.

If workfare is so openly illiberal, why have so many philosophers accepted it? I see three possible answers to this: a normative, an empirical and a historical one. The normative question is whether arguments of autonomy may trump liberty when applied to forcing adults. My answer to this was negative: Even if the intention is good, obligations add nothing to it. They only risk sacrificing the noble end to a crude means. But as the example of the drug addicts indicated, this might be debatable. Since we've discussed this point already, let us agree to disagree here. Though I doubt that efforts to enhance autonomy justify restraints on adults' liberty, for argument's sake let us assume that under certain conditions it *may* be the case. Then the empirical question becomes: Under which conditions *is* it the case? For workfare the answer lays in the philosophy of work and welfare in our societies. Let us have a closer look at what the effects on character are supposed to be in the workfare narrative. There is a negative and a positive argument. The negative argument that welfare has a 'degrading' effect upon its recipients (see above) is based on a notion of 'dependency':

Dependency, "as used in the welfare context, is not simply being poor. It is not simply being out of work. Rather, welfare dependency is a problem of attitude, a moral failure to have the proper work ethic." (Handler/Hasenfeld 1997, 9; see Mead 1986, 48)

If people rely on benefits as a means of survival, so the story goes, over time they will lose their work ethics (because there is no need to work any longer), and as a consequence their self-respect:

"The welfare society creates dependent people lacking in self-respect, who are willing to sell their birthright of personal autonomy of pride for a bowl of lentils from the public kitchen." (Margalit 1996, 224)

If mothers pass on these traits to their children this supposedly leads to a 'culture of poverty'.<sup>32</sup> If people are no longer autonomous they cannot be blamed, so part of the blame must be attributed to politicians and administrators who were too 'permissive' (Mead 1986). Following this logic, before citizens can be reformed, welfare needs to be.

---

<sup>30</sup> Mead 1986; 1997; 2005; Murray 1984; cf. the criticism in Shragge 1997; Candeias 2004; King 2005 and Wyss 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Gewirth 1996, 128ff., 231ff.; Gutmann/Thompson 1996, 291ff.; Dworkin 2000, 320ff.; White 2004; in German Kersting 2000, 374f.; Hoeffe 2004, 28f.. Sceptical, but not principally opposed is Arneson 1997; 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Ronald Reagans prejudice was that 'welfare queens' (single black mothers collecting welfare) drive Cadillacs to collect their welfare checks (Hancocks 2004). For the 'culture of poverty' see Himmelfarb 1984, 307ff..

The positive argument then is that work, and only work, can undo these moral deprivations. It is for this reason that, in the new workfare philosophy, force is justified:

“The obligation of welfare recipients to work [...] works against the downgrading and demotivation of long-term unemployed connected with the old forms of unemployment and social assistance. The skills necessary for a regular job can be acquired or reacquired through community employment, among them being punctuality, reliability, social behaviour and the ability to work over an extended period.” (Sinn 2003, 46)

In order for this argument to work there can be *no other means* to that end. Otherwise it would not be possible to enforce work. Two arguments are linked here: Autonomy trumps liberty, and work engenders autonomy; thus work requirements trump liberty. So in theory, forcing people to work takes on the appearance of a golden path ‘from dependency to autonomy’ (Keheler 1990). But this is sufficient justification only if we accept the assumption that work and only work engenders autonomy.

There are two ways to apply the autonomy-enhancing argument to the philosophy of work, neither of which is adequate. Autonomy can be understood as an absolute threshold or as a property that is attained gradually. In the ‘either or’-scenario the argument would appear as follows:

1. In a liberal society everybody should be autonomous.
2. Political institutions have to ‘make’ non-autonomous persons autonomous.
3. Work is a necessary condition for being autonomous.
4. Persons on welfare do not work and are therefore not autonomous.
5. Forcing them to work is the best means to achieve (2).

What is wrong with this scenario? Once we accept perfectionism and allow autonomy to trump liberty, there is no problem with sentences 1 and 2: If autonomy is an objective (and actor-neutral) good, than everybody should be able to enjoy it and the state should provide the means necessary for attainment.<sup>33</sup> The debatable empirical assumptions a defender of workfare makes are 3 and 4. Both of them, I argue, are false. It might be true in a fictitious Robinson scenario that without work *nothing* is possible, not even an autonomous life. But if he is alone, Robinson cannot depend upon anybody either and ‘autonomy’ is a meaningless term. Equally, somebody working properly might lead a heteronomous life in every other respect. Even if we read 3 strictly as an economic condition to an independent life (‘self reliance’), it is obviously not the *only* alternative: There are many handicapped persons or people on welfare who lead meaningful and self-directed lives. Neither people unable to work nor people unwilling to work necessarily lack autonomy. Some of them may, but there is no reason to assume

---

<sup>33</sup> “Governments are subject to autonomy-based duties to provide the conditions of autonomy for people who lack them.” (Raz 1986, 415)

that all of them do: Imagine, for example, an underground artist who is on welfare, but organises festivals and writes poetry. Providing somebody with economic means does not strip him of his autonomy. Otherwise every nonworking spouse would have to be considered non-autonomous; a claim that is obviously absurd. Thus empirically 3 and 4 are false.

This notion rests on a misunderstanding of autonomy. An important ‘reason for welfare’ was to *allow for* autonomy.<sup>34</sup> To be able to resist family or market pressures is a necessary element for leading a self-determined life: “State action to relieve indigence enhances liberty as autonomy” (Barry 1999, 25). The term autonomy cannot be reduced to economic dimensions only. By contrast, work can be an obstacle to personal development—and even more so being *forced* to work. Nothing guarantees that work always produces autonomy: First, if autonomous people work, this does not mean that work *causes* the autonomy. Second, as we saw, people can work and be non-autonomous, for example if they have no choice but to work in a job they do not like or which even harms them (think of sweat shops). So for empirical reasons conclusion 5 must be rejected, considering the persons (who may be autonomous or not, whatever their work status), the effects of welfare (which can make one *more* autonomous) and of work (which can make one dependent). Because work is not the only and not necessarily a reliable autonomy provider, 5 is not justified. This is straightforward.

The gradual scenario is a bit more complicated. The argument runs as follows:

1. In liberal societies everybody should be as autonomous as possible.
2. Political institutions have to ‘make’ citizens more autonomous.
3. Work is the only way to become more autonomous.
4. Persons on welfare do not work and are therefore not autonomous enough.
5. Forcing them to work is the best means to achieve (2).

If we allow for degrees of autonomy, we have to allow for degrees of autonomy in work, too (see Wolf 1999; Sichler 2006). Then we have to specify what kind of work we are dealing with. Which activities count as work depends on the definition of work applied. We do not have to discuss abstract definitions of ‘work’ here since the model for workfare is quite clear: work is wage labour.<sup>35</sup> Wage labor is any activity that is sold on the labor market (may it be ‘productive’ or not, ‘exhausting’ or not, etc.). Two arguments have to be made:

First, we have to ask whether wage labour has the positive effects on character it needs to have for the perfectionist argument to function. Wage labour is by definition a ‘commodified’ activity—it is necessarily sold on the market like any marketable good. The effects of this commodification on character have been debated for centuries. Thinkers like David Hume, Adam Smith or Hegel ascribed rather negative effects to wage labor.<sup>36</sup> The arguments range from

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Plant 1980; Goodin 1988, 306ff; 1999, 125ff., 211ff.; Vobruba 1997.

<sup>35</sup> The welfare reform is at the same time meant to be a reform of the labor market, see Grell et al. 2002. Ideally people should get back into the labor market as soon as possible, so wage labor clearly is the model for workfare.

<sup>36</sup> Take Hume: “poverty and hard labour debase the minds of the common people, and render them unfit for any science and ingenious profession.” (1742, I.XXI.3) Frederic Taylor asked for workers “with the intelligence of an ox” (see Castel 1998; Frambach 1999; Muirwood 2004).



deskilling—a loss of control over and transparency of activities—to complete alienation.<sup>37</sup> For perfectionists not much in wage labour privileges it over other activities. Painting, raising children or organising local events do not become more valuable by linking them to the labour market; rather, the detachment from self-determination risks their positive effect. I do not want to denigrate wage labour altogether. Yet its ambivalence already refutes the argument that it is a reliable tool in order to improve character.<sup>38</sup>

Second, the work in workfare is *not even* wage labour. If there were enough decent jobs for everybody, the problem would not exist in the first place. But there are not (Lessenich 2005). Workfare is a *substitute* to wage labor that lacks many of the positive characteristics wage labour has: Neither is it adequately paid (therefore it does not produce adequate self-esteem, Arneson 1997, 18), nor is it based on a ‘free’ contract (therefore it does not earn the respect or social relations often associated with work). The activities involved are in many cases low skilled activities that do not even technically improve workers’ skills. So whereas it is already debatable as to why only wage labour should improve character (while other activities do it *as well*, wage labor does *not necessarily* do so), in case of workfare the argument fails altogether. The effect on character may as well be futile or even negative. If people want to work, and many of them do, they will freely agree to work, if it is a meaningful activity. The question then is what activities are offered: “if the agencies have something of value to offer, there will be no shortage of volunteers.” (Handler/Hasenfeld 1997, 16) Force adds no value to it.

Moreover, it is questionable whether *more* work makes you *more* autonomous. Overworking can lead to serious health problems and familial difficulties (Hochschild 1997). So even if wage labor had a positive effect on character, too much work can still have negative consequences. It might thus be questioned how long work requirements should last. Work has by no means to be full time. Since many welfare recipients did work for quite some time, what need is there from a perfectionist perspective to work even more? If people want to work on the labour market and cannot find a job, it is reasonable to help them find one, to let them retrain or to create a second labor market that pays decently for useful activities not offered on the first (as community welfare work, such as visiting people in hospitals, etc., Gorz 2000).

If the state wants to keep recipients busy or even wants to develop their characters (which for moral reasons is objectionable), empirically there are many other valuable things to do: Organize local meetings, engage in cultural events, or being a responsible parent (Anderson 2004). From a liberal perfectionist perspective it makes no sense to force people to ‘work’ (where work means a second-class substitute to wage labor) in return for their welfare.

---

<sup>37</sup> Alienation means, in a nutshell, that workers cannot identify with what they do (Henning 2008). It is said to have grave effects on personal identity. For a modern variant see Hochschild 1997, or the recent movie *The Wrestler*, where the hero works in a supermarket and suffers.

<sup>38</sup> “Here, you see, two kinds of work—one good, the other bad; one not far removed from a blessing, a lightning of life; the other a mere curse, a burden to life.” (Morris 1884)

A final reason I can identify as to why many liberal philosophers have neglected this debate until now is historical: Throughout its history liberalism has focused on property as a condition of liberty, but often ignored problems of labor in modern societies (Dux 2008). Rarely did workers enjoy the rights and liberties reserved for owners of capital, and rarely have their problems entered liberal philosophy (as an exception see Hobhouse 1911). If a whole segment of social reality is not on the screen, so to speak, one might easily err in his or her ascriptions. We encounter just such an error when workfarists ascribe deficiencies of the modern society (poverty, unemployment, crime) solely to the moral character of its weaker members. This simply “ignores what we know about poverty” (Attas/De-Shalit 2004, 311). Lawrence Mead, for example, is quick to blame the victims, but he does not provide a reason for his Victorian moralisations. He simply rejects any reason other than a moral one from the outset: Any social explanations given, he seems to think, only prove a moral defect on behalf of the speaker—these “sociologisms” are false excuses trying to cover up the moral mess caused by poor people who lack the proper “coping abilities” (1986, 20). If, within the scope of the problem, you do not allow for any entities other than bad characters and increasing poverty, it is easy to conclude that paternalism is the only way out. But there is no reason for dismissing every other logic and explanation from the start.

Social theory has a lot to say about systematic problems of work in capitalist societies (such as theories of involuntary unemployment, to mention but one). Once they are taken into account, as I have tried to do, the whole picture changes. If the liberal credo of ‘equal liberty’ is taken seriously, the boundaries to political interferences set by the harm principle have to be extended to the sphere of work, too. Once scrutinised, the perfectionist justification for workfare no longer holds.

## Bibliography

- Acs, G./P. Loprest (2004), *Leaving Welfare: Employment and Well-being of Families That Left Welfare in the Post-Entitlement Era*, Kalamazoo
- Anderson, E. (2004), Welfare, Work Requirements, and Dependant-Care, in: *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 21(3), 243–256
- Arneson, R. (1997), Egalitarianism and the Undeserving Poor, in: *Journal of Political Philosophy* 5(3), 327–350
- (2000), Perfectionism and Politics, in: *Ethics* 111(1), 37–63, both on <http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/faculty/rarneson>
- Attas, D./A. De-Shalit (2004), Workfare: The Subjection of Labour, *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 21(3), 309–320
- Barry, N. (1999), *Welfare. Concepts in the Social Sciences*, Buckingham
- Ben-Ishai, E. (2008), *The Autonomy-fostering State, Citizenship and Social Service Delivery*, Diss. Michigan
- Berlin, I. (1969), *Four Essays on Liberty*, London
- Bohlender, M. (2007), *Metamorphosen des liberalen Regierungsdenkens*, Weilerswist
- Bruni, L. (2008), *Reciprocity, Altruism and the Civil Society. In Praise of Heterogeneity*, London

- Candeias, M. (2004), Erziehung der Arbeitskräfte. Rekommodifizierung der Arbeit im neoliberalen Workfare-Staat, in: *Utopie Kreativ* 165/166, 589–601
- Castel, R. (1998), *Die Metamorphosen der sozialen Frage. Eine Chronik der Lohnarbeit*, Konstanz
- Christman, J. (2005) (ed.), *Autonomy and the Challenges of Liberalism*, Cambridge
- Donatelli, P. (2006), Mill's Perfectionism, in: *Prolegomena* 5(2), 149–164
- Dux, G. (2008), *Warum denn Gerechtigkeit. Die Logik des Kapitals. Die Politik im Widerstreit mit der Ökonomie*, Weilerswist
- Dworkin, R. (2000), *Sovereign Virtue. The Theory and Practice of Equality*, Harvard
- Elster, J. (1986), Self-realization in Work and Politics, in: *Social Philosophy and Policy* 3, 97–126
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990), *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Oxford
- Ewald, F. (1993), *Der Vorsorgestaat*, Frankfurt
- Frambach, H. (1999), *Arbeit im ökonomischen Denken*, Marburg
- Gewirth, A. (1978), *Reason and Morality*, Chicago
- (1996), *The Community of Rights*, Chicago
- Goodin, R. E. (1985), *Protecting the Vulnerable. A Reanalysis of Our Social Responsibilities*, Chicago
- (1988), *Reasons for Welfare. The Political Theory of the Welfare State*, Princeton
- (2002), Structures of Mutual Obligation, in: *Journal of Social Policy* 31(4), 579–596
- Gorz, A. (2000), *Arbeit zwischen Misere und Utopie*, Frankfurt
- Green, T. H. ([1881]1969), Lecture on Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract, in: *Works III*, New York, 365–386
- Grell, B. (2008), *Workfare in den USA. Das Elend der US-amerikanischen Sozialhilfepolitik*, Bielefeld
- et al. (2002), *Workfare zwischen Arbeitsmarkt- und Lebensregulierung*, <http://www.linksnet.de/de/artikel/18293>
- Gutmann, A./D. Thompson (1996), *Democracy and Disagreement*, Harvard
- Haksar, V. (1979), *Equality, Liberty and Perfectionism*, Oxford
- Hancocks, A. (2004), *The Politics of Disgust: The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen*, New York
- Handler, J. F./Y. Hasenfeld (1997), *We the Poor People. Work, Poverty, and Welfare*, New Haven–London
- Henning, C. (2008), Verdinglichung als Schlüsselbegriff Kritischer Theorie. Zur Antikritik an Axel Honneths Rekonstruktion, in: *Berliner Debatte Initial* 6/2007: *Märkte Denken*, 98–114
- Himmelfarb, G. (1984), *The Idea of Poverty. England in the Early Industrial Age*, New York
- Hobhouse, L. T. (1911), *Liberalism*, Oxford
- Hochschild, A. (1997), *The Time Bind. When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*, Holt
- Höffe, O. (2004), *Wirtschaftsbürger, Staatsbürger, Weltbürger. Politische Ethik im Zeitalter der Globalisierung*, München
- Humboldt, W. v. (1792), *The Limits of State Action*, <http://classicaliberal.tripod.com/humboldt> (30.3.2009)
- Hume, D. ([1742]1987), Of National Characters, in: *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, Indianapolis
- Hurka, T. (1993), *Perfectionism*, Oxford
- Kant, I. ([1785]1969), *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Indianapolis

- Katz, M. B. (1990), *The Undeserving Poor. From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare*, New York
- (1994), *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse. A Social History of Welfare in America*, New York
- Kaufmann, F. X. (2003), *Varianten des Wohlfahrtsstaats. Der deutsche Sozialstaat im internationalen Vergleich*, Frankfurt
- Keheler, P. J. (1990), Workfare: Servitude or Success Formula?, in: *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 3(2), 91–110
- Kent, D. (1694), *Employing Our Poor and Preventing the Exportation of Our Coin*, London
- Kersting, W. (2000), *Theorien der sozialen Gerechtigkeit*, Weilerswist
- (2002), *Kritik der Gleichheit. Über die Grenzen der Gerechtigkeit und Moral*, Weilerswist
- King, D. (1999), *In the Name of Liberalism. Illiberal Social Policy in Britain and the United States*, Oxford
- (2005), Making People Work. Democratic Consequences of Workfare, in: Mead/Beam (2005), 65–81
- Kleinig, J. (1983), *Paternalism*, Totowa
- Köhler, E. (1977), *Arme und Irre. Die liberale Fürsorgepolitik des Bürgertums*, Berlin
- Layard, R. (2005), *Happiness. Lessons from a New Science*, London
- Lecce, S. (2008), *Against Perfectionism. Defending Liberal Neutrality*, Toronto
- Lees, L. H. (1998), *The Solidarity of Strangers. The English Poor Laws and The People, 1700-1948*, Cambridge
- Lemm, V. (2007), Is Nietzsche a Perfectionist? Rawls, Cavell, and the Politics of Culture in Nietzsche's 'Schopenhauer as Educator', in: *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 34, 5–27
- Lessenich, S. (2005), 'Activation without Work'. Das neue Dilemma des 'konservativen' Wohlfahrtsstaats, in: H. J. Dahme/N. Wohlfahrt (eds.), *Aktivierende Soziale Arbeit. Theorie, Handlungsfelder, Praxis*, Baltmannsweiler, 21–29
- Levine, D. P./S. A. Rizwi (2005), *Poverty, Work, and Freedom. Political Economy and the Moral Order*, Cambridge
- Locke, J. ([1697]1993), Report Respecting the Relief and Employment of the Poor, in: *Political Writings*, New York, 446–461
- Loedemel, I./H. Trickey (2000) (eds.), 'An Offer You Can't Refuse'. *Workfare in International Perspective*, Bristol
- Margalit, A. (1996), *The Decent Society*, Harvard
- Marks, J. (2005), *Perfection and Disharmony in the Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Cambridge
- Marshall, T. H. (1950), *Citizenship and Social Class and other Essays*, Cambridge
- McWhorter, J. (2006), *Winning the Race. Beyond the Crisis in Black America*, New York
- Mead, L. (1996), *Beyond Entitlement. The Social Obligations of Citizenship*, New York
- /C. Beam (2005) (eds.), *Welfare Reform and Political Theory*, New York
- Mill, J. S. (1828), *Perfectibility*, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/260/52536/831303> (31.3.2009)
- ([1859]1991), *On Liberty*, London
- Möhle, M. (2001), *Vom Wert der Wohlfahrt. Normative Grundlagen des deutschen Sozialstaats*, Wiesbaden
- Möller, K. (2006), *Paternalismus und Persönlichkeitsrecht*, Berlin

- Morris, W. (1884), *Useful Work versus Useless Toil*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1884/useful.htm> (31.3.2009)
- Muirwood, R. (2004), *Just Work*, Harvard
- Murray, C. (1984), *Loosing Ground. American Social Policy 1950-1980*, New York
- Nozick, R. (1969), Coercion, in: P. Laslett et al. (eds.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, Oxford, 101–135
- (1974), *Anarchie, State, and Utopia*, New York
- Nussbaum, M. (1990), Aristotelian Social Democracy, in: R. B. Douglas (ed.), *Liberalism and the Good*, New York, 203–252
- Oorschot, W. v. (2002), Miracle or Nightmare? A Critical Review of Dutch Activation Policies and Their Outcome, in: *Journal of Social Policy* 31, 399–420
- Pauer-Studer, H. (2000), *Autonom leben. Reflexionen über Freiheit und Gleichheit*, Frankfurt
- Peck, J. (2001), *Workfare States*, New York–London
- Pieper, J. (1948), *Musse und Kult*, München
- Plant, R. (1980), Welfare and the Value of Liberty, in: *Government and Opposition* 20(3), 297–314
- Polanyi, K. (1944), *The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origin of Our Time*, New York
- Rasmussen, D. B./D. Den Uyl (2005), *Norms of Liberty. A Perfectionist Basis for Non-Perfectionist Politics*, University Part
- Raz, J. (1986), *The Morality of Freedom*, Oxford
- Regan, D. H. (1983), Paternalism, Freedom, Identity, and Commitment, in: R. Sartorius (ed.), *Paternalism*, Minneapolis, 113–138
- Roemer, J. (1989), Second Thoughts on Property Relations and Exploitation, in: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Supplementary Volume 15*, 257–66
- Rushesky, M. E. (2002), *Public Policy in the United States at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century*, Armonk
- Russell, B. (1932), *In Praise of Idleness*, <http://www.panarchy.org/russell/idleness.1932.html> (31.3.2009)
- Sachsse, Ch./F. Tennstedt (1998) (eds.), *Geschichte der Armenfürsorge in Deutschland*, Bd. 1, Stuttgart
- Sandel, M. (1996), *Democracy's Discontent. America in Search of a Public Philosophy*, Harvard
- Seeleib-Kaiser, M. (2008) (ed.), *Welfare State Transformations. Comparative Perspectives*, Basingstoke
- Sher, G. (1997), *Beyond Neutrality. Perfectionism and Politics*, Cambridge
- Shragge, E. (1997) (ed.), *Workfare. Ideology for a New Underclass*, Toronto
- Sichler, R. (2006), *Autonomie in der Arbeitswelt*, Göttingen
- Sinn, H. W. et al. (2003), *Welfare to Work in Germany. A Proposal on How to Promote Employment and Growth*, CESifo Research Report No. 1, München
- Solow, R. M. (1998), *Work and Welfare*, Princeton
- Standing, G. (1999), *Global Labour Flexibility: Seeking Distributive Justice*, Basingstoke
- Töns, K. (2003), *Recht, Leistung, Bedarf. Die Verteilungsprinzipien der sozialen Gerechtigkeit am Beispiel der erwerbszentrierten Sozialhilfereform*, Münster
- Vellay, I. (2007), *Der 'workfare state'—Hausarbeit im öffentlichen Raum? Bericht über eine empirische Studie 2005/2006*, Dortmund
- Vobruba, G. (1997), *Autonomiegewinne. Sozialstaatsdynamik, Moralfreiheit, Internationalisierung*, Wien

- Wall, S. (1998), *Liberalism, Perfectionism and Restraint*, Cambridge
- (2007), *Perfectionism in Moral and Political Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/perfectionism-moral>
- White, S. (2003), *The Civic Minimum. An Essay on the Rights and Obligations of Economic Citizenship*, Oxford
- (2005), Is Conditionality Illiberal?, in: Mead/Beam (2005), 82–109
- Wilke, R. (2004): *Eine empirische Analyse von Sanktionen für Arbeitslose in Westdeutschland während der 1980er und 1990er Jahre*, ZEW-discussion paper, <ftp://ftp.zew.de/pub/zew-docs/dp/dp0371.pdf> (31.1.2009)
- Wilson, J. Q. (1995), *On Character. Essays*, Washington
- Wolf, H. (1999), *Arbeit und Autonomie. Ein Versuch über Widersprüche und Metamorphosen kapitalistischer Produktion*, Münster
- Wolff, J. (2004), Training, Perfectionism and Fairness, in: *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 21(3), 285–295
- Wyss, K. (2007), *Workfare. Sozialstaatliche Repression im Dienst des globalisierten Kapitalismus*, Zürich
- Yuracko, K. A. (2003), *Perfectionism and Contemporary Feminist Values*, Bloomington