Introduction

This paper starts from John Rawls's (1972) well-known thesis that the social basis of self-respect is one of the primary social goods that are to be distributed fairly in a just society.[1] Self-respect, self-esteem or sense of one's worth is, alongside rights and liberties, money and other material goods, one of the necessary preconditions of a citizen's pursuit of a good life. Such positive relations to self are dependent on one's social environment in many readily understandable ways, researched in more detail by social psychology. A just state, importantly, does not or cannot provide self-esteem directly, but only the adequate social conditions for forming it (see also Walzer 1983, 273).

The paper will first of all point out that while the central element of such social conditions consists in the attitudes of others (respect or esteem) which are readily linked to self-respect or self-esteem, the social basis may include also possession of various goods, such as a clean linen shirt which enabled the creditable day-labourers of Adam Smith's time to appear in public without shame (Smith, 1776, Vol. 2, p. 466).

Secondly, Rawls's point can be made more specific by distinguishing, following Axel Honneth (1995), universalistic *basic respect* from *differential esteem* based on individual differences in achievements, capacities and other valuable features, and further from *loving care* which is neither universalistic nor conditional on achievements or performance. This paper will focus on social bases of *esteem*.

Thirdly, the paper will further identify three challenges to any politics of esteem, and distinguish *three important varieties* of esteem (anti-stigmatization; contributions to societal goods, projects of self-realization) and notes that issues of recognition of cultures and cultural identity would be an equally interesting fourth variety.

In the final three sections the paper will then examine these three varieties of esteem, and study the normative implications of the social bases of different kinds of esteem. Do others or the state have duties to provide such social bases of self-esteem, and indeed under what

conditions do they have a permission to "stick their nose" in the individual's life in this way? Instead of asking *which* of these varieties of esteem are normatively relevant for justice, the idea is to argue that *all* of them are of social if not societal relevance in one way or another.[2]

1. Social esteem and other social bases of self-esteem

Let us start with Rawls's characterization of the kind of positive relations-to-self in question:

"We may define self–respect (or self–esteem) as having two aspects. First of all … it includes a person's sense of his own value, his secure conviction that his conception of the good, his plan of life, is worth carrying out. And second, self–respect implies a confidence in one's ability, so far as it is in one's power, to fulfil one's intentions. When we feel that our plans are of little value, we cannot pursue them with pleasure or take delight in their execution. Nor plagued by failure and self–doubt can we continue in our endeavors. It is clear then why self–respect is a primary good. Without it nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them. All desire and activity becomes empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism. Therefore the parties in the original position would wish to avoid at almost any cost the social conditions that undermine self–respect. The fact that justice as fairness gives more support to self–esteem than other principles is a strong reason for them to adopt it."(Rawls 1972, 440).

Rawls points out that self-respect depends on respect from others:

"Now our self–respect normally depends upon the respect of others. Unless we feel that our endeavors are honored by them, it is difficult if not impossible for us to maintain the conviction that our ends are worth advancing …. Moreover, one may assume that those who respect themselves are more likely to respect each other and conversely. Self–contempt leads to contempt of others and threatens their good as much as envy does. Self–respect is reciprocally self–supporting."(Rawls 1972, 178–9).

The paper connects the notion of social basis of self-esteem or self-respect (inspired by

Rawls) to the discussion of social esteem or respect proper (Honneth). The former notion is broader. To analyze this, the notion of the social basis of *social* esteem/respect is needed. A commodity, like a clean shirt (which has use-value and exchange value), can be part of the social basis of (social or self-) esteem (and have what can be called symbolic status-value), if it gives directly or indirectly reasons for esteem (or similarly for disesteem). (Interpersonal) status consists of attitudes of others, whereas the social base gives reasons for it.

The qualification ”directly or indirectly” points towards the following: Esteem always relies on some criterial grounds (A holds B in esteem on the grounds that B has the feature C), and so the actual attitude of esteem presupposes a couple of other implicit judgements (an empirical one: A thinks that B has the feature C; and a normative one: A thinks that C gives grounds for esteem), which again have some epistemic bases (e.g. A thinks that B is C, because of B’s further feature D, for example his clothes and other appearances conventionally or non-conventionally manifest C-ness; and perhaps C just seems to be a valuable feature). Often, the opinion that being D manifests C-ness can be contested (colour of skin does not manifest trustworthiness) as well as the opinion that C-ness is a proper ground for esteem (say, being tall or not should not matter).

Social esteem is a matter of others having the relevant attitudes, whereas the social basis of esteem consists in having (publicly, openly for A) the features (C, D) which serve as the grounds of esteem directly (C), or provide evidence for it (D). Others may of course lack the attitudes even when the social bases are present (or have the attitudes when social bases are not present). In many cases it is the actual attitudes of esteem or disesteem that affect one’s self-esteem; but in some cases anticipation is enough: having publicly the social bases of esteem/disesteem affects one’s self-esteem already because one’s appearance gives manifest reasons for esteem/disesteem by others (whether or not others actually respond in that way); and of course one’s self-esteem may directly depend on one’s private judgements concerning C and D, even when these are not publicly manifested to others. These three cases on how the social bases stand to self-esteem can be called *dialogical, anticipational, and private*. In the dialogical case, the actual attitudes of others make a difference, in the second, the reasonably anticipated attitudes of others are at stake, whereas in the third, one’s own mind is made up directly based on the evidence, unmediated by the views of

others. Note that only in the first case is recognition from others at stake. Calling the second case “merely” imagined recognition may mislead in suggesting that something merely imagined is the case – by contrast, it is a very real condition in which one’s appearances give others reasons to respond in one way or another. Noticing or acknowledging that this is so is not merely a matter of imagination.

Struggles for recognition can concern general stereotypes (e.g. an unfounded assumption that D-ness manifests C-ness) or normative opinions concerning esteemworthiness (whether C-ness matters), or contingent lack of relevant responses from relevant others (e.g. if B is manifestly C, why does not A hold B in esteem?), but also distribution of the relevant goods with symbolic status value (D-ness conventionally or non-conventionally manifests C, so D-ness ought to be distributed fairly).

A good society, then, will both provide social bases of (self-)esteem (goods with status value), and – within appropriate limits – social esteem (attitudes of others towards the individual, constituting social status). By contrast, the society cannot and should not try to provide actual self-esteem, as it depends on the individual’s reaction to the social environment.[3]

2. Kinds of recognition and three challenges to any politics of esteem

Axel Honneth (1995) distinguishes between three main forms of mutual recognition. One is universal respect which is unconditional on merits, desert or other particularities, and another is that of love or care which is also unconditional on merits, desert or other particularities, but is not universal either, but concerns individuals as irreplaceable. The third one then is esteem which is conditional on merits, desert or other particularities. These three forms of social relations (respect, love, esteem) correspond to three kinds of relations to self (self-respect, self-confidence, self-esteem). These self-relations again concern oneself as an autonomous agent who is equal amongst others, or as a singular

being with a need to be loved, and as a bearer of abilities or traits that others can value.[4]

Things can however be further complicated by distinguishing different kinds of esteem. In this section I start by mentioning three (or four) different kinds of cases related to esteem and in the next sections I ask how a good society would respond to these kinds of cases, and how duties and permissions of others fall in these different cases. Implicitly this is an argument also for the broader definition of esteem of two candidates discussed elsewhere (cf. Ikäheimo & Laitinen 2010), but these issues matter whether or not they are called "esteem". (The narrower definition will face the further challenge of what it says in these different contexts and why.)

The next section concerns the ethical and political consequences of the claim that full human agency is dependent on positive relations to self, including self-esteem, and that these relations are deeply dependent on the recognition from other individuals and institutions such as the state. Say, stigmatizing practices may lead to an internalized sense of inferiority and low self-esteem. The basic idea is that a good society is sensitive to the dynamics of self-relations and recognition (Honneth, Hegel, Margalit). For example, the invisible housework by women should get due recognition, and welfare services should not be delivered in a stigmatising or demeaning fashion (Honneth & Fraser 2003, Margalit 1996).

There is something in the spirit of esteem that is egalitarian: no-one should be treated as an inferior, treated in a demeaning fashion, as a second class citizen, as *a priori* incompetent in this or that manner. Everyone's contributions to the societal good should be registered. But there's a twist. Unlike basic respect or unlike concern for one's basic needs, the grammar or logic of esteem seems to be conditional on one's merits, achievements, or doing one's share or other positive particular features. Esteem has to be deserved, or grounded in one's valuable particular features, one must be worthy of esteem. Granting esteem, according to Charles Taylor (1992) at least, is genuine and differs from mere lip-service only if it is based on genuine judgements or evaluation or grading if you like. Especially when cultural differences are involved, such judgements may be difficult to form and take a lot of time and

effort – coming to understand other cultures may take years. (That is, if the problem of rival standards of evaluation does not pre-empt the very idea of intercultural comparison even in principle. I believe that in principle there is a solution to this, but the epistemic and practical difficulties are often rather great.)

This gives rise to *three challenges* to any politics of esteem: *First*, perhaps politics of esteem tends to lead to a wrong kind of meritocracy, to a Nietzschean vision of the power of the noble, or what Fukuyama (1992) calls megalothymia, and serves to undermine modern egalitarianism? The defenders of basic equality and basic respect who also defend the importance of social esteem will have to tell us what kinds of social and political arrangements would both respond to the need for differential esteem *and* be compatible with an egalitarian ethos of mutual respect and basic care. It must not lead to the formation of second-class and first class citizens. (For example Honneth and Taylor are trying to do this, Nancy Fraser stresses egalitarian participatory parity in a sense as the *only* metaprinciple.) So the first issue is *compatibility of esteem with the egalitarian ethos of mutual respect*[5]. All of the kinds of esteem discussed below are to be compatible with equal moral standing of everyone, as well as the right for self-determination and personal autonomy. But the need for esteem is not merely about the right to engage in certain kinds of activities and projects, or about the right to define oneself in certain ways as opposed to others, it is also about differential feedback concerning the concrete choices one has made. Further, one can ask about the compatibility of esteem and respect with universal forms of loving care such as impartial concern for human well-being.[6]

Second, compatibility with egalitarianism might point towards a universalistic norm of absence of certain kind of disesteem. But mere lack of disesteem does not meet the need for differential esteem. Presumably there is a need for genuine esteem. If genuine esteem is difficult, and takes time and energy, there is a question of *whose, if anyone's, positive duty* is it to engage in the "esteem-services" (as Pettit and Brennan, in *The Economy of Esteem* call it) of forming and expressing a well-founded judgement at all? I may be pretty confident that a book by a colleague is brilliant, but I will need to read it properly before I can publish a review, and this will take time and energy *etc.* So perhaps there's no duty to do it?

Perhaps there is only a negative duty not to disesteem, not to stigmatise *a priori* (”this author is of such and such ethnicity, gender, age so I need not read the book – it must be rubbish”) plus an *a posteriori* duty that *if* one takes part in esteem-services one does it in an unbiased manner (basically, writes a review based on the qualities of the book) plus perhaps a general positive professional duty to do one’s share, in this case write a sufficient number of reviews and serve as referee for journals sufficiently often. There are a number of intricate issues involved, from down to earth question such as whose talk to go to in conferences to pressing issues of deeply sedimented invisibility of the contributions of some groups (Honneth’s prime example is the invisible work of women). On a more positive note, engaging in mutual and honest esteem-services can enhance solidarity between the parties. That’s the second issue – the burdens of positive efforts. Whose tasks are these?[7]

As a flipside of the same question, we can ask about permissions – who is entitled to stick their nose in my business and form an opinion on my esteemworthiness? Is it a proper business of the state, for example? And while it’s ok for people to judge that my conference talk is half-baked, and quite ok to say it aloud as well, what about, say, my general orientation in life or my sexuality or my personal pet projects?

Third, a different kind of problem is to identify the phenomena where the logic of esteem is appropriately at work. Conceptually, one can also always ask: is such and such really a case of esteem at all; or is something *first and foremost* a case of esteem (for example cultural differences may not be first and foremost a matter of esteem, but nonetheless secondarily so)?

3. Contexts of esteem: stigmas, contributions, self-realization (and culture)

In pursuing these questions concerning esteem I will now differentiate and discuss three kinds of phenomena, all of which are arguably related to esteem, but which may call for different socio-political solutions and different distribution of duties and permissions – there

may be different answers to the three questions posed in the three contexts (and in passing I point out a fourth context which is yet different, but will not be discussed here).

The *first* context is really a negative case against stereotypical stigmatising, or for freedom from unfounded and unjustifiable disesteem. This is arguably a Maslowian "deficiency need". There is a strictly egalitarian or universalist normative norm against allowing second order citizenship to emerge (see section 4).

The *second* case is positive esteem based on *contributions to the societal good* (or to the aims of a system of cooperation), perhaps related to division of labour, and what Durkheim called organic solidarity. In an ideal society no-one is excluded from making useful contributions to the common good. (Full employment is one version of this ideal; but a decent or an ideal society may well have structures such as basic income which make full employment an irrelevant arrangement for the goal of letting everyone contribute). In an arrangement of horizontal (non-hierarchical) complementarity everyone has a positive status or rank with role-expectations to contribute to the common good.[8] I would go so far as to reverse the Kantian dictum to read also: "never treat anyone as a mere ends, but give them a chance to be useful means to the good of others". For example disabled people should get a chance to participate. This is still quite egalitarian in requiring at least equal opportunity (and anticipating limited inequality in the actual contributions) and being sternly against fixed hierarchies of overall ranks or statuses, and against what Taylor has called hierarchical complementarity of the premodern kind (see below, section 5).[9]

The *third* context concerns personalized, differential feedback concerning merits and achievements, in the context of individual self–realization via projects that may or may not be related to the societal good. (This *may* and often will concern the same socially useful activity as above, but now considered as a project of self-realization). Arguably self-realization is a deeply dialogical business, and esteem plays a role in it. This may or may not be beneficial to the common good, but the normative basis seems to be different – what matters may be either that the individual realizes his or her potentials, or does something intrinsically worthwhile, where these criteria do not reduce to contributions to the societal

good. Here one can draw from the Hegelian idea that self–realization requires deeds, and that one cannot be a privileged authority in the unbiased evaluation of such deeds: evaluation is public, and there is always at least an implicit relevant audience involved. (Here, Hegel's argument resembles Wittgenstein's argument against private language). Without any friction provided by the feedback from others, we all could be victims of an illusory sense of self–grandeur: we could be great poets in our own self–image whether or not we bother to realize our great ideas, and bother to actually write the poems and subject them to evaluation by others. In Maslow's terminology, this is a "growth need" at the highest end of need hierarchy. The political implication is to support competitive pockets of esteem, such practices or associational activities as arts, sciences and hobbies, but prevent general rank-formation in wider society outside such pockets. Here's Rawls's idea of the role of state as a social union of social unions is of relevance. (see section 6).[10]

4. **The case against stereotypical stigma**

The first case is a negative case of esteem, against stereotypical stigmatising, which would lead to lowered self-esteem. Everyone has a "deficiency need" not to be classified as a second–class citizen, and to be able to appear in public without shame.[11] At this lower level, the main struggle is to remove unfounded stereotypical, stigmatising images of inherent inferiority of some groups or individuals, and it aims at equality, or "participatory parity" (Fraser). *No trait is an excuse for second–order citizenship.*

This is related to such cases of "recognition of difference" (cultural differences, 'race', ethnicity, group memberships, sexual orientation, disabilities) which are not directly cases of achievements or merits. Perhaps it is not a case of positive "esteem" strictly speaking – but arguably a claim against undeserved disesteem. It would be a case of disesteem to stigmatise some group of people as such that "they will not contribute anything in any case" or "they will not excel in any case". Here the relevant principle is universalistic, perhaps Fraser's (2003) principle of participatory parity does the work – note however that it is not egalitarian in the comparative sense (that each should get their fair share, and the fair

share depends on what others get), but demands that everyone is equally entitled to full freedom from oppression of this kind; and indeed it is everyone's business in the moral community to prevent anyone from being stigmatized. So note that here too, positive measures are needed over and above refraining from stigmatising oneself – the state should not only avoid discrimination, it should prevent intersubjective discrimination by people; and individuals should not only avoid discrimination, but should favour and support a political society or state which also refrains from discrimination. Arguably everyone has a positive moral duty to do one's share in taking a public stand against racism, sexism, etc. What one's share is depends on the circumstances.

The ideal is to have guaranteed freedom from unfounded disesteem. In these cases, the tension with universal respect or with care for the needy and the vulnerable does not arise, as elements of both are included in the idea. One term commonly used for the "inferiority" in question is "second-order citizenship". This term may be misleading for what we have in mind here. Some aspects of "second–order citizenship" betray a lack of *respect* because the members of this group are denied certain rights or claims to respect that they are entitled to. Indeed this may be the core of what we typically have in mind when we talk about second–order citizenship. But especially the ability to appear in public without shame seems to connect to esteem rather than to respect.

This claim has two kinds of repercussions: i) a rightful claim not to be looked down upon on the basis of such *irrelevant* things as colour of skin (corresponding to the demand on others to refrain from looking down in this way), and ii) a rightful claim to the possession of goods (such as clean clothes, or access to personal hygiene) which are in the historical situation perceived necessary, and whose lack can make one's appearance an "affront to senses" and will connote an inferior status (cf. Feinberg 1984). In the latter case, (case ii), the fault need not lie so much with the person whose senses are affronted, and who responds, or with the person who is the bearer of the "offending" features, but on whatever factor (say, the unjust basic structure of society) that is responsible for the lack of goods in question.[12] This will, of course, affect what sort of responses are appropriate on behalf of those who "suffer" from the presence of someone.

Some features are irrelevant and it would be arbitrary to denigrate people on their basis; some other features are meaningfully related to how to appear in public, but one's lack of means of decent appearances may be unjust.

The reason to think that we have here a separate subclass of esteem, is that we can think of cases where one is discriminated on the basis of irrelevant features (in Nancy Fraser's example, an African American Wall Street banker can't get a taxi in NYC) while at the same time correctly esteemed for his contributions or achievements, in the contexts where they matter. They do not make one more deserving of a cab of course; people worthy of esteem are not entitled to jumping the queue. The very cabdriver who bypasses the person may celebrate the same person under some other description ("wow, finally a Wall Street banker who defends the idea that financial transactions should be globally taxed").

Or we can think of cases where someone is correctly esteemed for their individual contributions or achievements (and rewarded in the relevant contexts), but nonetheless suffers from lack of goods necessary for decent appearance in public. The main reason to classify this as a matter of "esteem" and not something else is that such disesteem may harmfully affect one's self–esteem.

Thus, the claim is that arbitrary irrelevant traits should not be a basis of disesteem. And as some features (say ones which are understandable affronts to senses even when people politely try to conceal their reactions, such as lack of clean clothing or personal hygiene in some contexts) have in a historical context a meaningful relation to a perceived "inferiority of condition" or "lack of decent human minimum", everyone has a rightful claim to goods, which would remove the undignifying appearances.[13]

As a sidenote, it seems that distinguishing this universalistic norm from more positive appraisal would dissolve the tension in Charles Taylor's (1992) initial discussion of recognition of cultures: no cultural membership is a reason for denigration, for being less than a full member. Pace Taylor, this is not however a mere *presumption* of equality which

would have to be cashed out in more detailed assessments of the contributions of a culture. It is a standing requirement to realize that no-one is normatively speaking a second-class citizen, whether a member of a cultural minority or not.

5. On contributions to the common good

The second case is positive esteem, prestige or standing based on contributions to the societal good, perhaps related to the division of labour, and what Durkheim called organic solidarity. In Honneth's (1995, 126) words:

> "'prestige' or 'standing' signifies the degree of social recognition the individual earns for his or her form of self-realisation by contributing, to a certain extent, to the practical realisation of society's abstractly defined goals"

In a good society no-one is unwillingly unemployed or excluded from making useful contributions to the common good.[14] Here one can reverse the Kantian dictum and say never treat anyone as a mere ends, but give them a chance to be useful means to the good of others. For example disabled people should get a chance to participate. (Ikäheimo and Laitinen 2010).

One intuition pump is the experience of the unemployed of no longer being needed, being necessary for anyone. The ideal is that in addition to having a basic equal standing as a citizen, everyone has a particular positively valued standing and each role is necessary. And unlike in a premodern complementary hierarchy, where priests, warriors and workers each complement each other but nonetheless priests are superior, and have higher status, this would be *horizontal* complementarity – each role is equally necessary and valuable.

And insofar as there are social positions with advantages, there should be a equal opportunity to them (Rawls). Equal opportunity is crucial for solidarity. An appealing perspective concerning solidarity is solidarity from the worse off to the better off (Wildt 2007). Genuine solidarity requires that the worse off do not have a reason to be embittered, but accept that the differences are justified. That would be a tall order if they would not even have had a reasonable opportunity to the same positions.[15]

Whereas the duty against disesteem is universalist in concerning everyone (at the zero level of lack of disesteem), the second layer of contributions covers only all members of one society – and all members of a good society enjoy greater esteem than zero – they all are participants in producing the common good. The relevant norms are to be public, to help avoid biases in esteem. (We have discussed the nature of esteem for contributions to shared goods in more detail in Ikäheimo & Laitinen 2010).

6. **Projects of self-realization**

One should not underestimate the degree to which self-realization takes place via such socially useful roles. The Hegelian picture (Hardimon 1994, Honneth 1995, Hegel 1991) stresses that one's subjectivity be fully immersed in societal goals. Similarly, Marxian criticism of alienation has the aspect that assumes that genuine self-realization is in genuine communal relations to one another.[16] Nonetheless, one should not overestimate these points either: not everything about self-realization is about promoting shared ends. And even in cases where it is, we can examine it *qua* a contribution to a shared good, or *qua* an achievement in a self-realization project.[17]

Thus, the third point is at the other end of hierarchy of needs, concerns individual self-realization, and the intersubjective dynamics involved there. Honest positive feedback concerning excellence or merits or achievements is a meaningful basis of self–esteem.

The people engaging in projects of self–realization have a need for esteem from others if they aim at self–realization *through worthwhile goals*. The feedback from others concerning the worthwhileness of the goals, and concerning one's success is pursuing them well is in principle possible, and in practice necessary for the agents, if they are to have a non–illusory sense of the worth of the goals and their success in pursuing them. This feedback is a form of esteem.

It is possible that no–one is around, or has time or energy to evaluate one's activities. But when someone does give positive feedback, and esteems the activities, it is a sign that the agent has done something which is of value in accordance to the evaluator. That is, in some broad sense it contributes to something which is valued by the evaluator, and this may create some sense of belonging, solidarity or even gratitude towards the agent, even though the act need not have directly benefited or contributed much to the good of the other, or to the common good, but realized something that the other highly values.

We can build on the Hegelian idea that self–realization requires deeds, and one cannot be a privileged authority in the unbiased evaluation of such deeds: there is always at least an implicit relevant audience involved. Persons have a "growth need" to get unbiased personalized feedback concerning one's projects of self–realization. And feedback concerning success in such projects, or excellence in such practices (whether artistic, scientific, political, career–related, hobby–related etc) is a meaningful basis of self–esteem.

Consider the following quote from Hegel (*Encyclopaedia Logic*, §140)

> "We are thus justified in saying that a man is what he does; and the lying vanity which consoles itself with the feeling of inward excellence may be confronted with the words of the Gospel: "By their fruits ye shall know them." That grand saying applies primarily in a moral and religious aspect, but it also holds good in reference to performances in art and science. The keen eye of a teacher who perceives in his pupil decided evidences of talent, may lead him to state his opinion that a Raphael or a Mozart lies hidden in the boy: and the result will show how far such an opinion was well-founded. But if a daub of a painter, or a poetaster, soothe themselves by the conceit that their head is full of high ideas, their consolation is a poor one; and if they insist on being judged not

> by their actual works but by their projects, we may safely reject their pretensions as unfounded and unmeaning."

So we at least have a need to actualise our high ideas in deeds, and a need for feedback from others, for the purposes of non–illusory self–evaluation of our projects of self–realization. Honest positive feedback concerning excellence is a meaningful basis of self–esteem, whether or not it meets the criteria of contributory esteem. The fact that such pursuit is good for the agent herself is not the basis of *esteem*, (although we naturally hope the people we care for to succeed in their lives); the basis of esteem is simply "doing something worthwhile well". And the context for the *need for feedback* is the legitimate aim of non–illusory self–realization through worthwhile goals.

The feedback in question can evaluate either the *worthwhileness* of the aims, or one's *success* in pursuing them. The sense in which we can evaluate success is pretty straightforward, but there are rival theories concerning worthwhileness. I will here mention two.

a. Rawls's Aristotelian Principle: one's aims in life are such that when successful, they maximally actualize one's talents and potentials, one does not waste one's talents.

b. Perfectionism: the aims are good, full stop. The person's aims are appreciable, when they are worthwhile, or choiceworthy, or are a case of "life in accordance with virtue" (Raz, Aristotle). It is the valuable nature of goals is what matters, whatever the degree to which they realize one's talents. It is not a wasted life to leave some of one's special talents as unrealized, as long as one's goals are worthwhile.

The feedback that one's goals are taken to be worthwhile (either absolutely or relative to one's talents), is relevant to a person's self-esteem, and thus seems to constitute a case of recognition-esteem. This is central for Rawls's idea of self-esteem, or more precisely, to his undifferentiated idea of self-respect or self-esteem or sense of self-worth (he uses the notions interchangeably)

> "When we feel that our plans are of little value, we cannot pursue them with pleasure or take delight in their execution. Nor plagued by failure and self–doubt can we continue in our endeavors. It is clear then why self–respect is a primary good. Without it nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them. All desire and activity becomes empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism."(Rawls 1972, 440)

The Rawlsian claims on how the takes of others concerning the worth of our aims is necessary for our *motivation* (related to a threat of cynicism or apathy) complements the anti-private Hegelian view that lack of feedback threatens to lead to a frictionless spinning in the void, and illusions of grandeur. A person needs actual feedback and intersubjective "reality checks". The positive feedback from others has thus a multifaceted importance.

Finally, the political implications are worth examining: it is arguably *not* the state's business to govern how individuals esteem one another – rather there is a variety of "pockets of esteem" (such as the art-communities for artistic achievements, scientific community for scientific achievements, sports-audiences for achievements in sports etc.) which good societies contain. These are mainly voluntary associations and subcultures that individuals may freely enter or inhabit.

Again we may quote Rawls:

> "It normally suffices that for each person there is some association (one or more) to which he belongs and within which the activities that are rational for him are publicly affirmed by others. In this way we acquire a sense that what we do in everyday life is worthwhile."(Rawls 1972, 441)
>
> "Moreover, associative ties strengthen the second aspect of self–esteem, since they tend to reduce the likelihood of failure and to provide support against the sense of self–doubt when mishaps occur."(Rawls 1972, 441).
>
> "[W]hat is necessary is that there should be for each person at least one community of shared interests to which he belongs and where he finds his endeavors confirmed by his associates."(Rawls 1972, 442)

This is central to Rawls's idea of "social union of social unions". One may say that the

horizontal recognition is to be provided by the associates, and the state or basic structure merely publicly acknowledges the principles.[18] The way to avoid wrong kind of meritocracy is to see to it that merits ought not to translate to general "status" or "rank", but be limited to what I would call *pockets of esteem*.

If someone does not want to achieve, or compete, or prove ourselves, or show to the world, or "leave a trace" or "make a difference", one need not. We can best think of various practices, and standards internal to them, or the various "cities" (Boltanski & Thevenot 2006), as such voluntarily entered spheres. We can quite safely assume that any feasible society will have some such outlets for the desires to excel and get public affirmation for one's achievements. (In a sense, such outlets tame the Fukuyama–type megalothymic pressures; see Laitinen 2006, Fukuyama 1992, O'Neill 1997).

Consider a somewhat Stoic attitude that we should rid ourselves of esteem, evaluation *etc*. altogether. A good society is difference–blind, say. This may be based on a false understanding concerning "inner authenticity" totally divorced from expressions (forcefully criticized by Hegel), but certainly has modern resonance. Any such attempt to rid us of the dependence on the positive opinions of others would be insensitive to the dialogical nature of projects of self–realization.

A liberal view holds that self-realization is a private or communal or associational matter, and the main task of the state or public institutions is to provide the necessary means for the autonomous life of individuals. So, broadly speaking, issues of *respect* concern only the negative rights not to be interfered with or possibly the positive rights to have the resources and capabilities of individuals to pursue projects of self-realization. And at first look, it may seem that private pursuits of self-realization are not a matter of *esteem* either: if people do something that is good for themselves, but not for others, at least there is no obvious ground for gratitude. But a closer look at the nature of self-realization reveals something important that we want to classify as esteem, even though it is of a different kind than the contributory esteem so far.

The modern idea of pluralistic liberalism is in a one sense friendly and in another sense hostile towards the idea of self-realizational esteem, especially in its perfectionistic variant. It is friendly in encouraging people to have experiments in life (Mill), to find the aims and goals that they feel at home with. There is a vast plurality of aims and goals through which such processes of self–realization can take place. But in another sense, pluralistic liberalism sees the "perfectionism" of assessing and evaluating people's achievements as downright dangerous. Why not rather affirm everyone's worth as unique individuals independently of their achievements? And should not the state remain neutral as to what is admirable self–realization and what is not?

Both intuitions have a valid core: indeed, everyone's worth ought to be affirmed independently, so that esteem is not meant to replace universal respect or unconditional love. And indeed, perhaps it is not the state's business to govern how individuals esteem one another – rather there is a variety of "pockets of esteem" (such as the art-communities for artistic achievements, scientific community for scientific achievements, sports-audiences for achievements in sports etc.)

There are "pockets of esteem" many of which we enter into voluntarily. If we do not want to achieve, or compete, or prove ourselves, or show to the world, or "leave a trace" or "make a difference", we need not. We can best think of various practices, and standards internal to them, or the various "cities" (Boltanski & Thevenot), as such voluntarily entered spheres. We can quite safely assume that any feasible society will have some such outlets for the desires to excel and get public affirmation for one's achievements.

But what about outside such "pockets of esteem"? Perhaps the idea is that in the context of early education, as pupils or students, we are given tasks, and our progress is measured, and often given grades, and the tasks are over when we've become responsible adults. From then onwards, it is up to us. Educators are in the special position to instruct, criticize, grade and evaluate. But there is something paternalistic in evaluations on how individuals live their daily lives (even in adequate evaluations), at least by strangers. It seems that for adults, the idea of sharing one's life with someone brings with it a position to criticize it,

personally: it is the friend's business to evaluate, but it would be impermissible for a stranger to do so. Of course, artists and social critics are at the liberty to criticize a way of life, but that is not to be taken personally.

However, some pockets are inescapable: moral and legal obligations, responsibilities and violations are one thing, with specific patterns for retribution and restoration. Those are not *optional,* whether we like it or not. Implicit in the Hegelian idea of *Sittlichkeit* is the idea of moral and legal culture which shapes emotional responses to wrongdoing. Contributions to the common good, via paying our taxes, and contributing to our daily jobs, perhaps doing a civil service, leave room for choices, but there may be obligation to contribute (according to one's skills) in some ways, and when the overall situation is bad, in some specific ways (say, joining the army during war). Democratic citizenship may well entail obligations to participate collective self–rule and try to do our shares.[19]

7. Conclusion

Much more would of course have to be said about the nature of self-esteem, self-respect and self-love, as well as about different varieties of esteem and self-esteem, but I hope the reflections above have made a couple of theses plausible: first, that the concept of social bases of self-respect (and self-esteem and self-concern) is wider than social respect (and social esteem and concern), in ways which may affect issues of just distribution. Second, that the three concepts of esteem and self-esteem are normatively very different, related for example to the norms of universality (the norm against stigmatization), publicity (contributions to the social good) and standards of excellence intrinsic to individual practices, associations and the unity of one's life (the goal of self-realization). But further, I hope the paper has gone at least some distance towards showing how in these contexts of esteem the three challenges mentioned above can be met.

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Endnotes

[1] For critical discussions, see e.g. Doppelt 2009; Middleton 2006, van Leeuwn 2007, Laegaard 2006, Ferkany 2009.

2 See Ferkany 2009 for a defence of the liberal idea that societal recognition is not needed for sense of self-worth, as long as social recognition is available; and Doppelt 2009 for an argument on how to best understand the relevant kind of self-respect and its bases.

[3] Note that the relevant commodities typically have direct use and exchange value as well as ”status-value”, so a good society will in fact distribute three things (useful goods; social bases of self-esteem, and actual esteem constituting status) – and the principles of distribution of one and the same thing may point to different directions when considered as use-value or status-value.

4 I have discussed these elsewhere, see e.g. Laitinen 2002.

5 In a sense the relation is more complex – also politics of difference is egalitarian in some sense, as Honneth and Taylor point out. The principles of due esteem are universalistic unlike patterns of love (which do contain references to singled out individuals), but these universalistic principles leave room for the relevance of particular features from which the universalistic mutual respect abstracts from. I thank Marek Hrubec for posing the question about this point.

6 Rawls starts from the idea of society as a scheme of cooperation between free and equal citizens; and not a value-community. One could in light of Sen's and Nussbaum's and MacIntyre's criticisms start from the idea of dependent capable rational animals, whose society has inbuilt elements of universal care and not only universal respect built in. Disabled, young and old are *full* members of society from the get go, and justice concerns not only fruits of cooperation but concern for basic needs. See e.g. Nussbaum: *Frontiers of Justice*.

7 Here the distinction between issues covered by the cooperative scheme where the distribution of tasks, rights, burdens, benefits, ought to be fair, and the issues not so covered, is central.

[8] See Honneth, Mead, Durkheim, Ikäheimo, Rawls.

9 see Johnston's new book (2011) on the history of justice, the chapter on "social justice" on Spencer, for further discussion on contributions. See also Feinberg's classic *Social Philosophy*.

10 A *fourth* case would concern positive esteem for cultural groups, understood as ways of life (Taylor 1992). I agree with those who have pointed out that recognition of cultural differences is first and foremost a matter of respecting individuals' right to have the cultural conditions for satisfactory life met (Kymlicka; Jones 2006; Laitinen 2006). Possibly no esteem, no positive judgement concerning the merits of cultures is needed for that – all that is needed is that the cultures are morally tolerable and perhaps tolerant towards others. The kind of positive esteem may be optional, and it may be a source of social discord. Nonetheless, I think that it is conceptually possible to compare cultures, but it is not clear what the point is – related to Durkheim's mechanical solidarity perhaps. Conceptually, the feedback is "esteem" when it is of the right kind to contribute to self–esteem.

[11] The terms growth need and deficiency need come from Maslow.

12 A further question is what exactly is wrong with, say, being dirty and smelly in public. It is easy to say what's wrong with a society which forces people to live without adequate housing or hygiene opportunities, but it is harder to analyse what exactly is bad about being perceived to be dirty. For various lines of analysis, see Smith, Feinberg 1984 and Nagel 1998.

13 See Feinberg 1984 on offences as affronts to senses and sensibility.

14 In late modern conditions, basic income may well best be the best arrangement in this respect.

15 See e.g. Mason 2006 on choices versus circumstances, and mitigation versus neutralization.

16 To draw an analogue in the shift in post-industrial work, from factory to studio, one's work demands that one put one's personality at stake. (With the difference of course that putting one's personality at stake for the state or a private company has a very different feel of alienation). But one should not overestimate that either: Charles Taylor's (1975) depiction of nine-to-five Enlightenment and freetime romanticism has something to it. We do have projects of self-realization that are not related to how we make a living, or to benefits to others.

17 See also the connection between self-realization and self-determination, e.g. Deranty 2009.

18 Another fruitful source for the idea of such social unions comes from Boltanski and Thevenot (2006), whose work Ricoeur (2005) insightfully connected to the topic of recognition esteem.

19 I wish to thank the participants at the NSU winter meeting in Turku February 2012, and participants in the Philosophy and Social Science meeting in Prague May 2009.