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Pablo Aguayo Westwood

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Self-Respect and the Justification of Rawlsian Principles of Justice

Pablo Aguayo Westwood

Faculty of Law, Universidad de Chile, Santiago de Chile, Chile

ABSTRACT

In this article I examine the importance of self-respect in the justification of Rawls's theory of justice. First, I present two elements that are part of the contemporary debate on self-respect as a form of self-worth—namely, moral status and merit. Second, I specify the bases that support self-respect within *A Theory of Justice*. Finally, I discuss at length the function of self-respect in justifying the principles of justice. This inquiry implies an analysis of the relationship between self-respect and the component parts of the two principles of justice: basic liberties, fair equality of opportunity, and the difference principle. I also explore the connection between self-respect and the sense of justice in light of the stability argument, and how the relationship between the two is important for achieving social stability.

Ann: Please listen to me, Dan. It's a huge decision to come off JSA (Jobseeker's Allowance) without any other income coming in. Look, it … It could be weeks before your appeal comes through. You see, there's no time limit for a mandatory reconsideration. I've got a time limit. And you might not win. Please, just keep signing on. Get somebody to help you with the online job searches. Otherwise, you could lose everything. Please don't do this. I've seen it before. Good people, honest people, on the street.

Daniel: Thank you, Ann. But when you lose your self-respect, you're done for.

Ken Loach: I, Daniel Blake

Introduction

Self-respect is one of the most significant moral dimensions of our lives. The capacity to value and respect oneself is a crucial factor in achieving a significant and flourishing life (Dillon 1995). It is plausible to think that a person who has self-respect possesses a set of beliefs through which they live and organise their life. They see themselves as having moral value, which causes them to feel shame for their failures and legitimate pride for their successes.[1] On the other hand, those who lack self-respect—or have damaged self-respect— are prone to experience difficult lives with fewer possibilities for self-realis-ation and happiness. Rawls gave such importance to self-respect he believed that 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 become empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism' (1971, 440). Rawls even held that self-respect, understood as the sense that a person has of their own value, is 'perhaps the most important primary good' (1971, 440).[2]

Given this context, in this paper I will discuss to what extent the satisfaction of the social bases of self-respect should orient the objective and justification of Rawls's principles of social justice. Following Middleton who notes that 'it seems that social justice and self-respect are inextricably linked' (2006, 60), I will also explore how this link is produced and discuss its importance in the justification of the Rawlsian theory.

In the first part of this paper, I will examine two elements that are part of the contemporary debate on self-respect as a way to self-value. In the second, I will specify the grounds to sustain self-respect in *A Theory of Justice* (TJ). Finally, I will discuss the role that self-respect has in the justification of the two principles of justice.

Ways of valuation: moral status and merit

It is difficult to deny that the idea of self-respect is strongly connected to the notion of self-valuation. In Western philosophical tradition, there are at least two types of value we can bestow on persons, and which also determines their level of self-respect. The first type of value is related to moral status and is derived from one's nature as a moral person who has dignity.[3] In general terms, it is possible to affirm that our conception of dignity is based on three elements: equality, agency and individuality. First, and taking into account that all persons have equal value and an equal position in the moral community, our recognition respect as moral persons implies to live a life as a person who is equal to others. Accordingly, and as Mackinnon suggests, persons who respect themselves in moral terms understand themselves as having and deserving a certain kind of status among their fellow citizens (Mackinnon 2003). In this way, self-respect rests on the moral recognition of our dignity, which implies an appropriate assessment of ourselves as agents.

The acknowledgement of this situation leads us to take the responsibility that we have as persons seriously, especially the responsibility to preserve and assert our dignity. Following this line of argument, Stark asserts that because self-respect is a condition of justice and the expression of our agency it must be recognised as having important moral meaning (Stark 2012). Moreover, having self-respect implies we take the moral meaning of our individuality seriously, which entails striving to live according to a way of life that is an expression of our ideals. Thus, the first form of self-respect —which anchors on the value and the recognition of our dignity—could satisfy the idea of moral status.

The second type of value, which is very common in the contemporary discussion on social justice, is tied to the idea of merit.[4] In this context, merit can be understood as a way of measuring the quality of a behaviour or a way of being, the value of which can increase or decrease by our actions. In its reflexive mode, this value would produce evaluative self-respect. The core of this way of developing self-respect depends on confidence in our own merits, as well as in the public recognition of our actions and achievements.

To summarise, the literature on the ways of self-valuation rests on a twofold conception. Commonly, philosophers refer to self-respect and self-esteem as two distinct kinds of self-valuation that depend on how a person can be valuated: either due to an intrinsic value associated with our dignity as moral persons or because of the value of our actions. As we will see, Rawls was not clear about this distinction and sometimes even used self-esteem and self-respect interchangeably; however, this does not detract from his philosophical attempt to put into discussion the relevance of self-respect within TJ.

Social bases of self-respect in *A Theory of Justice*

Rawls claims in TJ that a just society is one that can not only offer a fair distribution of primary goods but also an adequate public justification of the social structure from which these goods are distributed.[5] He links the principles of justice to the protection, obtainment, and development of these goods, and he names self-respect as 'perhaps the most important primary goods' (1971, 440). In this sense, one aim of Rawls's theory is to guarantee the social bases of self-respect through the defense of his principles of justice.[6]

For Rawls, the principles of justice are responsible for the arrangement of society and, thus, for providing each citizen with the social bases to develop and pursue a preferred plan of life and to achieve a proper sense of self-respect. In this way, the justification of the principles of justice implies a defense of a particular way to organise social institutions in order to bring about the social bases of self-respect. The latter will be explored in more depth in the last section of this paper. In the next section I will show that the social bases of self-respect depend on the available means, mutual recognition among community members, and on a principle of individual motivation that Rawls called the Aristotelian principle (1971, § 65).

Self-respect and its relation with our available means

In the context of TJ, the conditions for the development of self-respect rest not only on the possession of certain means but also on our awareness of the fairness of the institutions under which we live. Rawls argues that income and wealth are not enough to satisfy the bases of self-respect: we also need public justification of the criteria through which the main social institutions distribute the burdens and benefits of social cooperation. Thus, in Rawls's view, the state should be able to offer a publicly justified institutional structure that produces a fair distribution of primary goods to allow citizens to achieve self-respect.

We must not forget that basic social goods should be understood as the fruit of our collaborative work as members of society; therefore, both our material and cultural wealth, as well as our practices and institutions, should be understood as social goods. Consider the social value that Rawls attributes to education. For him, education 'should not be assessed solely in terms of economic efficiency and social welfare. Equally if not more important is the role of education in enabling a person to enjoy the culture of his society and to take part in its affairs, and in this way to provide for each individual a secure sense of his own worth' (1971, 101). Thus, self-respect should rest not only on

the possession of means to carry out our lives but also on two other elements—namely, (i) the understanding that these means are sufficient in achieving such a purpose, and (ii) the confidence that having these means will permit one to be a cooperative member of society.[7]

Self-respect and reciprocal recognition

Rawls asserts that the two elements outlined above do not, in fact, completely satisfy the requirements to achieve self-respect in a democratic society. He also considers that the principles of justice should arrange the social structure in a way that allows every person to recognise their capacity to revise and follow their plan of life. This implies the mutual recognition of our agency, as well as the moral authority that others have to their own legitimate claims. For Rawls, justice as fairness responds not only to the basic moral demand to treat people as moral persons but also to foster mutual recognition of different life plans. The latter objective can be achieved through the recognition of the capacities that citizens have to present legitimate claims in areas such as education, health, and social welfare in general. Because reciprocal recognition is constituted as one of the main conditions to support self-respect, it is unsurprising that Rawls affirms that persons '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' (1971, 440).[8]

Accordingly, and because Rawls's theory offers one of the best ways to support mutual recognition as compared to other principles of justice, there is good reason to accept Rawlsian principles. The idea of mutual recognition reinforces that confidence in self-respect depends on the status that citizens have within society, as well as how they think persons value each other. Because of this, the sense of our own value depends on the approval of others. If we do not feel that our actions are appreciated and respected, it would be extremely difficult to maintain the conviction that our ends are valuable as well.

Self-respect and the Aristotelian Principle

In his treatment of self-respect Rawls proposes a link with the Aristotelian Principle. The principle affirms that human beings enjoy the exercise of realising their capacities, and that enjoyment increases to the extent that the use of these capacities is greater and more complex. To illustrate, Rawls gives the example that if we had the opportunity to play checkers and chess, we would choose to play chess. The main argument of the Aristotelian Principle is that more complex activities are more pleasant 'because they satisfy the desire for variety and novelty of experience, and leave room for feats of ingenuity and invention' (1971, 427).

The Aristotelian principle is a principle of individual motivation. It can be defined as something that gives value to our activities and that simultaneously provides a continuous source of inspirations and the incentive to attain them In relation to this principle, Rawls suggests that a person is likely to have more confidence in their value when their abilities are more effective at achieving their aims: 'When activities fail to satisfy the Aristotelian Principle, they are likely to seem dull and flat, and to give us no feeling

of competence or a sense that they are worth doing. A person tends to be more confident of his value when his abilities are both fully realized and organized in ways of suitable complexity and refinement' (1971, 440). The Aristotelian Principle, then, implies a kind of virtuism. The above supposes that there is at least one aspect of self-respect that requires every person to work towards excellence in order to develop their natural capacities. Without this self-compromise, persons could lose interest in their life plans — resulting in a setback comparable to one stemming from the lack of recognition by others. Only those who follow the Aristotelian Principle, therefore, develop and perfect the virtues and capacities that support the aims that form their rational plan of life. To affirm that the Aristotelian Principle is important for our self-respect supposes that the satisfaction obtained by the exercise of our virtue generates respect and value *from* others as well as respect and value *for* others. On this point, Rawls says that 'since this principle ties in with the primary good of self-respect, it turns out to have a central position in the moral psychology underlying justice as fairness' (1971, 443).

To summarise, for Rawls, self-respect comes from three sources: (i) our available means and our consciousness of their sufficiency, (ii) the recognition given by significant others and (iii) the virtuous realisation of our capacities. In other words, to achieve self-respect we need material and cultural resources to elaborate a plan of life that actualises our idea of good, and likewise we need the recognition that this plan of life is worthy and deserves to be pursued. At the same time, we need to be confident that our means are sufficient to carry out our plan of life, and if we have these means there should be public justification that explains why. All of the above unites the personal compromise and the development of our capacities.

What has been hitherto affirmed shows that the relationship between self-respect and the aim of the Rawlsian theory of justice is unquestionable. In the following sections, I will analyse the main role that self-respect has in his theory—namely, its place in the justification of the two principles of justice.

The role of self-respect in the justification of principles of justice

One main objective for Rawls in TJ is to defend his two principles of justice as the best alternative against different kinds of utilitarianism. In defense of the two principles, the *maximin* rule plays a key role in his argument.[9] With this rule Rawls intends to protect the citizens' liberty and autonomy, which are both threatened by the classical justification offered by utilitarianism for the distribution of social goods. For Rawls, to accept the principle of utility as the criteria for the distribution of the burdens and benefits of social cooperation implies the possibility to consider the efficiency principle above our basic liberties. This situation would be intolerable under the liberal framework in which his theory is grounded, mainly because the defense of the basic liberties—as the basis for the development of life plans–is a key element of the theory.

Because self-respect is perhaps the most important primary good to carry out our plans of life, we have to evaluate the effects of applying different principles of justice to achieve the social bases—that is, we must ask ourselves how appropriate these principles are for organising a society that supports the social bases of self-respect.[10] In light of this, Rawls asserts that we must give importance to 'how well principles of justice support self-respect, otherwise these principles cannot effectively advance the determinate

conceptions of the good of those the parties represent' (1993, 318–319). But what kind of arguments should be considered in choosing the principles that ensure the achievement of self-respect? What I want to defend is the guiding role that self-respect plays in the process of selecting the principles of justice. In TJ, Rawls invokes self-respect on at least two different occasions: first, to justify the two principles of justice under the framework of the contractual original position and, second, to support the stability argument.

In what follows, I will examine the specific role that self-respect plays on each of these occasions. In terms of the contractual argument, I will analyse the relationship between self-respect and component parts of the two principles of justice—namely, basic liberties, fair equality of opportunity, and the difference principle. Regarding the stability argument, I will explore the connection between self-respect and the sense of justice, as well as how this sense of justice serves as a base for social stability. Finally, I will outline some ideas about what I call the argument of the reader of *A Theory of Justice*.

Arguments under the framework of the original contract

Because citizens need social bases of self-respect as a condition to successfully carry out their life plans, one argument in favour of the two principles of justice is that the social structure ordered from those principles would better support the development of self-respect as compared to other principles. The parties in the original position make their choice of the principles of justice by asking themselves to what extent the social structure ordered by principles of justice ensures the best combination of primary goods.[11] Thus, and because they offer better guarantees for self-respect in comparison to utilitarian principles, it is a good reason for the parties to choose Rawlsian principles of justice. I will now analyse how self-respect is related to the fundamental value that the two principles of justice must ensure.

In TJ, paragraph 82 provides a good point of departure to understand why Rawls appeals to self-respect as a key element for the justification of the priority of liberty. For him, the first rule of priority asserts that the principles of justice have to be ranked in lexical order. This means that liberty can be restricted only for the sake of liberty. The first rule emphasises that basic liberties, such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, liberty of conscience, and freedom of thought, cannot be sacrificed, neither for the benefit of more social efficiency nor as a means to achieve utilitarian ideals.[12] Notably, Rawls, unlike Tomasi (2012), thinks that liberty is not restricted only to its economic dimension. And, moreover, he is clear that the first principle of justice associated with liberty must be enforced in favour of satisfying the social demands linked to the second principle of justice, such as the fair equality of opportunity to participate in public affairs.[13] In this regard, Penny has pointed out that 'contra Tomasi, a Rawlsian could quite easily say that the kinds of economic rights which are necessary for the adequate or sufficient development of one's self-respect or self-authorship may well be very different to those which support the development of these senses in general' (2015, 400).

In the first edition of TJ, Rawls claims that a society organised under his conception of justice would ensure a person's self-respect by establishing the fundamental bases of equality. Rawls's reflections on self-respect pay special attention to how others value us and led to his realisation that the recognition others give to our personhood—particularly in relation to our status as a person—is a key aspect in the consolidation of our self-

respect. In this context, Rawls affirms that 'the account of self-respect as perhaps the main primary good has stressed the great significance of how we think others value us' (1971, 544). That said, in contemporary constitutional democracies there are different indicators of social status, which makes it practically impossible to support self-respect by trying to ensure equality among persons in every aspect of their status. Philosophers, such as Taylor (2003), have therefore argued that for Rawls the essential concern is to offer and guarantee equality of status in some fundamental dimension. In this regard, Rawls considers that the equal distribution of basic rights and liberties provides equality of status and satisfies the main conditions to achieve self-respect in a more meaningful way. Importantly, for Rawls basic rights and liberties are enough to achieve self-respect. He also asserts that the primary goods should be regulated for the second principle of justice, but for reasons explained in TJ (Rawls 1971, § 39), these goods cannot be equally distributed. For example, we can compare the right to vote (that might be equally distributed) with access to higher education (that is not equally distributed).

Rawls is emphatic when he affirms that the bases of self-respect should not only rest on our income and wealth but also on the publicly affirmed distribution of rights and liberties. He considers that if this distribution is equal—and all persons know that it is equal—then all persons would enjoy a similar status when advancing the common affairs of the wider society. Here, Rawls is trying to defend the thesis that equal status cannot rest on the equality of material goods, mainly because of the inefficiency of the resulting distribution and the fact that this equalisation goes against the maximin principle.[14] He insists that the unequal distribution guided by the difference principle would benefit the least advantaged.

On the other hand, the argument that shows the relevance of the primacy of the first principle of justice as the best guarantee of self-respect is associated with the Aristotelian Principle. According to Rawls, the primacy of liberty allows persons to organise a variety of associations in which they can develop their natural capacities, and thus satisfy the conditions of the Aristotelian Principle. In a well-organised society—in which the first principle of justice guarantees the liberty of association—persons can participate in equal conditions in the creation and enjoyment of various associations that allow them to advance their plans of life.[15] In this line of argument, Rawls states that 'the best solution is to support the primary good of self-respect as far as possible by the assignment of the basic liberties that can indeed be made equal, defining the same status for all' (1971, 546).

Self-respect and fair equality of opportunity

The basic idea behind the principle of fair equality of opportunity (FEO) is that persons with the same abilities and ambitions should have the same opportunities. To achieve this, social institutions should be organised in a way that minimises the arbitrary benefits of being part of a social class or having certain natural skills. There is no doubt that for Rawls arbitrary (and unfair) benefits systematically restrict the options of the worst off, such as when members of this group apply for jobs that are open to all members of society. Although Rawls did not deeply develop the FEO principle in TJ, some authors such as Pogge (1989) point out that through FEO Rawls is trying to guarantee to all citizens fair access to education, as well as fair labour opportunities. If so, FEO would provides excellent support to the development of self-respect in a two ways:

First, because FEO reinforces equal status and doing so ensures that economic inequalities do not unduly affect the expectations of citizens. And, second, because FEO offers the necessary elements for persons to develop their abilities and pursue their excellence.

This implies that the social institutions should support the first stage of development through educational policies such as subsidies and other initiatives designed to eliminate barriers preventing the least advantaged from developing their capacities. Perhaps even more essential is the role of education as a condition of the possibility to enjoy the culture of society, by participating in its affairs, for example. In this way, it is possible to provide each person with a secure sense of their own value and to try to empower them to avoid certain forms of social exclusion that rest on considering people as inferior.

Self-respect and the difference principle

The difference principle (DP) allows for the unequal distribution of goods only when it benefits the worst off. An important part of the argument Rawls makes to confirm that the DP supports self-respect draws from his reflections on envy. Rawls understands envy 'as the propensity to view with hostility the greater good of others even though their being more fortunate than we are does not detract from our advantages' (1971, 532). Those who feel envy do so towards people whose position is superior but unjustified. The psychological power of envy is such that those who suffer from it are willing to deprive themselves of greater benefits even if it is necessary for them to renounce something of value. In reaction to this point, Voorhoeve states that 'envy in the sense in which it involves ill-will towards the person envied is what Rawls calls a 'disruptive attitude' because it is collectively disadvantageous' (2005, 5).

Rawls's interest in envy stems from his position that an unequal distribution of material goods could damage the self-respect of persons and destabilise the institutions that regulate them as a consequence. In fact, he affirms that the lack of self-respect is the first cause of envy.[16] For Rawls, the main psychological root of the propensity for envy between persons is the lack of confidence in their own value accompanied by a feeling of impotence. Moreover, when self-respect is damaged because a person unfairly has less material and economic resources than others, the envy that the person has towards those who are better off is not only understandable but even forgivable.[17]

Given unjustified unequal conditions, feelings of envy detected among those worse off can be instructive. In such a case, the political and institutional framework should be modified because it is directly detrimental to the self-respect of these persons. Even though the DP allows some differences in income and wealth, Rawls argues that this does not negatively affect the self-respect of individuals, mainly because the differences created by the DP should benefit the worst off. For him, persons would not feel envy if, 'the greater advantages of some are in return for compensating benefits for the less favored; and no one supposes that those who have a larger share are more deserving from a moral point of view' (1971, 536).

In summary, the DP is useful to minimise feelings of resentment and envy that are the result of economic inequalities, and to demonstrate that the current circumstances in which persons find themselves is the best among the alternatives. As a consequence, although Rawls accepts certain kinds of inequalities, these would not significantly affect the self-respect of the worst off.

Thus far I have presented arguments related to the original contract; I will now consider the stability argument.

The stability argument

In the third part of TJ, Rawls states that a society ordered by the principles of justice is more stable in comparison to societies ordered by other principles, such as utilitarian ones. For Rawls, the major political and social institutions in a well-ordered society would promote the self-respect of persons because they are publicly justified among citizens and because 'those who are at the bottom of the pile will know that the rules are working to ensure that they are as well off as they could be' (Swift 2019, 27). As a result, persons will develop sufficient willingness to respect the principles that organise the major political and social institutions and create a stable overlapping consensus. Rawls argues that parties in the original position will see that his two principles are congruent with the good of each citizen. Under the two principles, society's basic institutions affirm the freedom and equality of all citizens and provide a public basis for each citizens' sense of self-respect.

The public basis of self-respect is vital because it enables persons to follow their life plans and pursue their idea of good with confidence. Thus, persons in a society organised by the principles of justice are psychologically willing and motivated to maintain and defend their social and political institutions because they effectively ensure their sense of their own value. Consequently, and to the extent that the sense of justice is a key aspect for both the stability of society and for a person's capacity to self-support, we have another reason to argue in favour of the two principles of justice. This second argument is necessary because the contractual argument is only effective under the assumption that the parties in the original position represent the interests of those who are already members of a stable society.

As previously mentioned, Rawls holds that a conception of justice must be justified both from the point of view of the parties in the original position and from the citizens who pursue the stability of society. A society is stable when the meaning of justice fostered by citizens takes precedence over the inclinations that would lead them to act unfairly. This kind of stability can be achieved by reinforcing the most benevolent inclinations of human beings or restricting the negative trends of human psychology, such as envy. Indeed, Zink argues that the principles of justice must encourage 'the kind of attitudes necessary to sustain the institutions organised by them' and that 'political and social arrangements can be designed to induce individuals to comply with the institutional scheme' (2011, 338–339).

We, the readers of A Theory of Justice

The importance of the social bases of self-respect that enable citizens to carry out their life plans allows the development of a third kind of argument in favour of the principles of justice. Rawls offers moral and prudential reasons to accept his conception of justice as fairness—reasons that are partially independent of both the stability argument and arguments related to the original position. Suppose that we, the readers of TJ, leave aside the

arguments put forward by the parties in the original position under the veil of ignorance and deliberate as real persons who seek to value the merits of certain principles of justice.

As citizens, we are concerned that our plan of life is considered valuable and expect to have the necessary means to be able to carry it out. We also wish to have the confidence that our means are sufficient to achieve our aims, and that this confidence motivates us to not give up the search for our idea of good. Likewise, we hope that these expectations are recognised by those we appreciate and, to a greater or lesser extent, by our fellow citizens and the rest of humanity. Following this line, when comparing Rawls's principles of justice with others principles, we realise that his principles of justice are more supportive to the development of the social bases of self-respect, which would provide us with a good reason to accept them. Yet, notwithstanding some doubts regarding the definition and characterisation of the original position and the veil of ignorance, we could still have good reasons to accept Rawls's principles of justice because they better support the social bases of self-respect when compared to other principles, such as utilitarianism or perfectionism.[18] In fact, we might think that average citizens have reasons to prefer a social system that helps preserve their self-respect and, moreover, that these persons would not be indifferent to whether the social system governing their lives provides sufficient conditions that allows and promotes self-respect.

Conclusion: social bases of self-respect and the *realistic utopia*

In this paper I have shown the relevance of self-respect for Rawls's theory of justice, particularly in terms of the justification of the principles of justice and to achieve social stability. To do so, I specified the formal and material conditions that are necessary for achieving self-respect, understanding it as a condition for citizens to carry out their plan of life with confidence and willingness. I also showed that the satisfaction of the social bases of self-respect not only depends on the distribution of primary goods but also on our awareness of the fairness of the principles and social institutions that regulate the distribution of it. Additionally, I highlighted the relevance that Rawls assigns to the way we respect and treat each other. Thus, awareness regarding the fairness of the principles and the moral feelings associated with our understanding that we are members of a moral and political community are fundamental pillars for the construction of a just society. For Rawls, all the these scenarios are impossible if the main social institutions do not generate public policies to guarantee the social bases of self-respect. Accordingly, affirmative action policies to ensure quotas for women in political and legislative systems, as well as robust minimum wage laws, workplace regulation and unemployment insurance for the worst off would allow citizens to have the social guarantees to realise self-respect.

To achieve this *realistic utopia*, Rawls designs a procedure for choosing the principles of justice in which the obtaining of primary goods is presented to the parties in the original position as a criterion for selection.[19] On the list of primary goods, the social bases of self-respect must be considered fundamental. As such, it is possible to affirm that what the parties want—not for themselves, but for the citizens they represent—is to reach the social bases of self-respect; that is, those elements that are essential for people to have 'a lively sense of their worth as persons and to be able to advance their ends with self-confidence' (Rawls 2001, 59).

Because citizens are interested in preserving their self-respect they try to avoid the social conditions that undermine it at almost any cost. Living in a society that promotes and preserves the self-respect of each citizen is rational to desire regardless of our specific life plan. The reason for this is that without self-respect 'nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them. All desire and activity becomes empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism' (Rawls 1971, 440). Both in the deliberation process conducted by the parties to determine the principles that allow those they represent to lead a satisfactory life and in the decision *we* make to adopt those principles chosen by the parties, it is crucial to take into account that the principles chosen are those that best underpin self-respect. The foregoing would lead us to accept the principles of justice as fairness over any other principles.

For all the reasosns above, self-respect appears to be a guiding idea in the process of choosing the principles of justice. This assertion has been justified by showing the role self-respect plays in the different arguments that Rawls designs to support the component parts of his principles of justice—namely, equal access to basic liberties, fair equality of opportunity, and the difference principle. Finally, I have shown how public recognition of these two principles of justice supports a person's self-respect, which increases both the effectiveness of social cooperation and its stability.

Notes

1. In 'Real self-respect and its social bases' Schemmel draws a distinction between *standing* and *standards self-respect* and affirms: 'Individuals with standards self-respect react with shame when they realise that they have failed to live up to them. Insofar as failure is not simply a matter of lacking abilities, but involves having compromised essential commitments, shame is accompanied by guilt' (2019, 5).
2. Examples of primary goods are the basic rights and liberties, powers of offices and positions of responsibility, income and wealth, and the social bases of self-respect. For Rawls, political institutions are to evaluate how well citizens are doing according to what primary goods they have. The relation between primary goods and social welfare is pointed out by Dean in 'A Radical Humanist Approach to Social Welfare' (2020, 354–355). Some examples of the relationship between self-respect and wellbeing can be found in 'Feminist perspectives on well-being' (Knowles 2018), particularly in the section 'Valuing oneself: self-respect as a necessary precondition for achieving well-being'. More generally, the relation between self-respect and wellbeing can be found in Nussbaum's book *Nature Function and Capability: Aristotle on Political Distribution* (1988).
3. See Feinberg 'Some Conjectures about the Concept of Respect' (1973); Darwall 'Two Kinds of Respect' (1977), and Dillon 'Self-respect: Moral, emotional, political' (1997). Darwall, for example, called this form of respect 'recognition respect' (1977, 38) and Dillon 'recognition self-respect' (1997, 229). On the other hand, Mackinnon introduced the notion of 'egalitarian respect' to characterise this kind of respect in contrast with 'meritocratic respect' (2003, 491–496). The relation between dignity and self-respect was emphasised by Dworkin in *Justice for Hedgehogs* where he affirms that 'dignity and self-respect—whatever these turn out to mean — are indispensable conditions of living well. We find evidence for that claim in how most people want to live: to hold their heads high as they struggle for all the other things they want' (2011, 13).
4. See Feinberg: 'The Nature and Value of Rights' (1970); Anderson: 'What is the Point of Equality' (1999) and Olsaretti: *Desert and Justice* (2003).

5. Examples of this social structure are the political constitution, property, and the economic system. See Freeman: *Liberalism and Distributive Justice,* Part III Liberal Institutions and Distributive Justice (2018).

6. Here it is pertinent to clarify the aim of the principles of justice. The objective of those principles is not to guarantee the achievement of self-respect *in psychological terms* but to ensure *the social bases of self-respect.* If the former objective was Rawls's intention, his theory would be subject to the same criticism Fraser made of the psychologism in Axel Honneth's theory—namely, that the focus of social justice is not to ensure some particular psychological state of mind of the person but the social and institutional bases to produce these feelings. Here, Rawls and Fraser share the same idea: the focus of social justice are the major social institutions responsible for the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation. See the Fraser & Honneth: *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (2003) and Aguayo: 'John Rawls on redistribution and recognition' (2020).

7. The consciousness that our means are sufficient to carry out our lives is a constitutive feature of the definition of Rawlsian self-respect. In *Political Liberalism* Rawls develops the connection between self-respect and feeling like a cooperative member of society (1993: 318–319). For Penny, 'Rawls's account of self-respect emphasizes its importance in ensuring that each citizen feels suitably motivated to enter into cooperation with others and pursue their chosen plan of life with confidence and a lively sense of its worth' (2015, 401).

8. The relationship between self-respect and reciprocity has been stressed by Zaino: 'self-respect contains a notion of reciprocity—it is reciprocally self-supporting in that one's sense of worth needs to be confirmed by others (…) In order for citizens to respect themselves and others, their common plans must be both rational and complimentary' (1998, 745).

9. The maximin criterion is a rule for choice under uncertainty that affirms that we classify alternatives by their worst possible outcomes. We have to adopt the alternative whose worst outcome leaves us better off than the worst outcome of all other alternatives. This rule 'directs our attention to the worst that can happen under any proposed course of action, and to decide in the light of that' (1971, 154). For Rawls, 'in order to see how this might be done, it is useful as a heuristic device to think of the two principles as the maximin solution to the problem of social justice' (1971, 152).

10. It is very common in discussions on contemporary political philosophy to affirm that Rawls defends a conception of social justice characterised by blindness to differences. The belief that this blindness prevents liberals from recognising and giving just treatment to the claims of minority groups is the basis for the grammar of social conflict, which has been developed by major authors like Young (1990), and Fraser and Honneth (2003) over recent decades. Founded on what I consider to be a false dilemma, these authors confront a conception of justice centred on recognition with one focused on distribution. Even though Young, Honneth and Fraser defend different paradigms, they all share the idea that conceptions centred on distributive justice are insufficient. I consider this approach to reveal a misunderstanding of distributive justice, especially of the conception developed by John Rawls in TJ. The core of this misunderstanding is the failure to distinguish between allocative justice and distributive justice (see Aguayo 2020). I am very grateful for the comments of one of the reviewers of this paper that brought this issue to my attention.

11. For Rawls, the main feature of the original position is the veil of ignorance. To ensure impartiality of judgment, the parties in the original position are deprived of all knowledge of their characteristics and social and historical circumstances.

12. By 'utilitarian ideals' I understand the greatest amount of good for the greatest number, even at the cost of a detriment of wellbeing to one person.

13. See Penny, 'Self-Respect or Self-Delusion? Tomasi and Rawls on the Basic Liberties' (2015, 399–400).

14. See footnote 9.

15. Examples of these associations range from a political party to clubs and sports associations.

16. The relation between envy, poverty and distributive justice was developed by Frye in 'The Relation of Envy to Distributive Justice' (2016).

17. See, for example, Zaino: 'a society with potentially large disparities in socioeconomic conditions may in fact undermine self-respect' (1998, 740). For the relationship between anger about inequality based in envy, inferiority or injustice, see Leach's (2008) chapter, 'Envy, Inferiority, and Injustice: Three Bases of Anger About Inequality' in Smith, Envy: Theory and Research (2008).
18. See Nussbaum: 'Perfectionist Liberalism and Political Liberalism' (2011).
19. The expression 'realistic utopia' is used by Rawls to contrast his view with conceptions which are utopian in the pejorative sense or unrealistic. The phrase applies to the possibility of reaching an overlapping consensus on a public conception of justice and the possibility to achieve a reasonably just society.

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Pablo Aguayo Westwood is a PhD in Ethics and Democracy and he is also an Associate Professor of Moral Philosophy and Theory of Justice.

ORCID

Pablo Aguayo Westwood http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3239-5441

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