

Editorial: Work and Cooperation

Both in social theories with the aim of looking into the creative core of society as well as in everyday politics, two intuitions often supplement each other. The first intuition, empirico-analytical, views common organization of work and production as being the very aim of society, and other parts of society being explicable from this. A second intuition, ethical or moral, holds the sphere of work to be the central site for diagnoses of a society's inherent justice. Both intuitions not only contribute to but also strengthen each other. Certainly, endeavours of justice have to presuppose something like what Rawls called a 'basic structure' of society, including certainly common production. And, vice versa, work and production seem impossible without incorporating a form of distribution somehow legitimized among the parties involved. Production and distribution, work and exchange, seem to be, according to these intuitions, the fundamental frame from which both empirical explanations and normative judgements—as from one common source—have to be developed.

So much for theory. In practice, the gap between the empirical and the normative, or between the different disciplines involved, has hardly ever been crossed. Even if accepted as a major domain of social and political relevance, the importance of work and labour for society is, under the impact of globalization, highly contested. Whether there is a future at all for a contributory role of all or most citizens is an issue over which scientists and politicians repeatedly agonize. Unfortunately normative social theories, whether they come from the rational choice or the ethical tradition, are not of immediate help either. The rational choice methodology has only recently been applied to situations in the labour-sphere, proceeding still at a highly abstract level. On the ethical side the 'contractualist' tradition in political philosophy has always been more narrowly fixed on the legitimization of private property than being open to study the relevance of work for justice. Now that positions towards shortened work-opportunities and extreme wage-differentials are inescapable, a convincing general framework for such answers is missing. The philosophers' offerings, be they from Nozick, Rawls, Dworkin, Miller or others, do not reach down precisely enough to the level where these topics are debated in actual politics.

With these lacunae in the background, the present issue is organized into three thematic sections, assembling philosophers, economists and sociologists, including conceptual, normative and empirical analysis, and not least in the last section interpreting experimental studies of relevance for the work-sphere. Even if not explicitly taken up in all contributions, 'cooperation' is the conceptual focus, suggesting itself as something that opens up the systematic mechanisms, both empirical and normative, in work, production and exchange, the more concrete sphere of common labour and the more abstract of commodity exchange.

Trying to stake out a terrain for an intensified and terminologically coordinated debate *Anton Leist* presents an overview on the different roles that economists and philosophers would like the concept of cooperation to play. According to his diagnosis it seems imperative for these two groups to take note of each other's achievements in the analysis of cooperation, even if methodological obstacles have to be overcome for this. The strikingly strong social motivation documented in anonymous exchange between players in experimental games might be theorized more fruitfully if there is an awareness of the intentional structure of cooperation. Some of the philosophical contributions in this issue provide just such analyses.

Hans Bernhard Schmid argues for an often evoked contrast between individually 'strategic' and socially 'consensual' or 'cooperative' action, and defends the latter's irreducibility to the former. Schmid tries to prove that strategic agents are unable to achieve the coordination of even most simple actions (thus being, in this sense, 'idiotic') and so forego the basic advantages of cooperative behaviour. Alternatively and elaborating on Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas, he suggests that the normative content in and from we-attitudes is typical for human sociality and presumably distinctive against the non-human primates. In his commentary *Fabian Schuppert* discusses critically Schmid's use of an example for coordination and points to the wide difference between coordination and cooperation.

In full accord with Schmid *Raimo Tuomela* distinguishes sharply between 'I-mode cooperation' and 'we-mode cooperation', and points out that a middle position, called by him the 'individualistic pro-group I-mode account', is under-describing what is typical in human cooperative exchanges. Tuomela's article draws heavily on two recent books and includes a collection of different arguments—conceptual, choice-theoretical and empirical—buttressing the irreducible role of we-intentions for cooperation. In a commentary, the individualist pro-group account finds a defender in *Cedric Paternotte*, who critically illuminates Tuomela's 'we-mode account' under three aspects: its rationality, its efficiency in depicting cooperation compared to the individualistic pro-group account, and its irreducibility claim. According to Paternotte the jury is still out as to how to find the right judgement on joint action.

The articles by *Andrew Lister* and *Robert Myers*, responded to by *Ivo Wallimann-Helmer* and *Anton Leist*, discuss ethical claims included in or connected with social cooperation. Lister takes up the problem, coming from Rawls, of how to do justice to the disabled and to foreigners, who are not contributing to society on equal terms with other citizens, but who reclaim the same equal moral status. To which extent can the normative view of cooperation, perhaps idealized or further specified, nevertheless ground an equal status? Myers is disturbed by the problem, seen as crucial in parts of moral philosophy, of how to make such conflicting moral principles as beneficence and individual rights cohere with each other. He suggests that cooperating 'to promote the good' is the best way to resolve this problem, thereby trying to find a middle ground between otherwise incompatible moral theories. The exchange reveals these ethicists to be of different opinion as to which extent moral principles can or should be

reconstructed from real life cooperation, rather than taken as abstract entities valid on their own.

That a successful synthesis of efficient cooperation and moral equality among cooperating workers exists in real life is little known, unfortunately, among social scientists outside Spain: the synthesis manifesting itself in the Mondragon Corporation cooperatives in Basque Country. According to *Ramon Flecha* and *Ignacio Santa Cruz* the synthesis results from what they call five ‘successful cooperativist actions’ relating to both economic and social security, but also including democratic rights in the managing productive programmes, and participation in a self-owned university. *David Ellerman*, in his complementary remarks, points to the ethical background of Catholic social thought and to the internal capital account as being the two crucial conditions, which according to him make the difference between Mondragon and many other less successful workers’ cooperatives.

The contributions by *Sonja Dänzer*, *Mark Starmanns* and *Winfried Ruigrok* cover different aspects of the ethical and economic mechanisms involved in large-scale commodity-chains. Dänzer takes up the task of making clear why multinational companies are morally responsible for the adequate working conditions in companies within their supply chains. On the basis of a five-category distinction between different supply relations, she provides an analysis of different types of responsibility multinationals have for the ancillary business partners they work with. As becomes obvious from her ethical argument, the special ways in which multinationals and suppliers are related to each other is of crucial relevance for the extent of such a responsibility. Mark Starmanns develops Dänzer’s analysis further but also suggests the politicised public as the more suitable normative sphere for addressing normative critique to multinationals. Ruigrok aims at an empirical analysis of commodity chains, illustrated with the product of organic cotton. In his view, perhaps contrary to the ethicists’ hopes, it is the morally motivated, NGO-based networks that least provide the chance to create a mass market for organic products, compared to ones organized by international companies.

A further conceptual way of reconstructing the mechanisms of work-relationships with an eye on an underlying morale comes from the social philosophy of ‘recognition’. *Hermann Kocyba* engages with the claims introduced by Axel Honneth and critically discusses the extent to which the latter’s idea of ‘visibility’ is suitable as an ethical criterion for diminishing attitudes of recognition in the burgeoning sphere of service work. Kocyba and *Christoph Henning* vary significantly, however, as to the general promise involved in the recognition approach. In his sharp criticism Henning points to the conservative self-restriction that this method opens itself up to, and suggests that an anthropologically founded view of cooperatively working together offers a richer, less historically contingent basis for reciprocal esteem.

Laying bare anthropologically general dispositions towards cooperating instead of seeking conflict in social exchanges has been on the agenda of experimental economists for some time already, as is evident in the third section of this issue. *Lorenzo Sacconi*, *Marco Faillo* and *Steffania Ottone* are inspired by Rawls’

answer to the ‘compliance problem’, as known in rational choice theory. Rawls accepted the idea of a ‘natural’ development of a ‘sense of justice’, as reconstructed earlier by developmental psychologists like Piaget and Kohlberg, and, in the least often read third part of his *A Theory of Justice* he sketched a three-stage development of justice dispositions built on the mechanism of reciprocity. Sacconi, Faillo and Ottone place both their experiments and their empirical findings in this context. Their experiments with the so-called ‘exclusion game’ show that whether or not people behave self-interestedly or fairly depends on the possibility of making explicit agreements ahead of crucial decisions. This result is all the more surprising as the experiments explicitly include the awareness of ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ players, contingently put into their roles. As complex as they are, any definite findings from the experiments are open to further interpretation. In his comment *David Copp* queries the authors’ claims concerning a solution to the compliance problem. Regular moral attitudes do not depend on explicit agreements, and the ‘fair’ behaviour of (only) part of the games’ subjects would also match with a utility maximizing attitude.

The effect of fairness dispositions once again strikingly shows up in the series of experiments on employer-employee-relationship constellations, reported by *Johannes Abeler et al.* Contractual relations in this context are proved to resemble more of a reciprocal ‘gift-relationship’ than a narrow pay-performance relation: something clairvoyantly suggested some time ago by George Akerlof. By a selection of experiments, arising from an earlier experiment on equity and equality concerns (‘unequal pay for unequal work’) conducted by Abeler et al., the authors demonstrate the quite robust role of fairness attitudes under diverse social conditions: among others, those of differential efforts, different transparency of effort to the employer, difference of social closeness, productivity differences and other, still more detailed differences. In one of the experiments, interestingly, communication is revealed as quite an ambiguous, and overall more disturbing than promoting, influence on the disposition to reciprocate fairly in employment relationships.

Julian Culp and *Heiner Schumacher* acclaim the extension of economic theory into domains of pro-social behaviour, but they suggest conceptual improvements in further experiments of two sorts. They think that present experiments suffer from not taking into account the motivating power of reasons, which are not themselves tied down to given preferences but rather create new preferences. Also, and complementarily, they suggest that agents’ opinions about the degree of ‘background justice’ in the larger society might influence heavily local decisions with fairness aspects. Decisions that appear to be self-interested could then be deciphered as reciprocal after all, even if only in a larger context. Looking back on this and the other contributions in this issue, the gap between theory and practice bemoaned at the beginning of this editorial seems to have been at least somewhat narrowed down in the end.

Most of the contributions in this volume result from a conference *Work and Cooperation*, organized by Anton Leist, held at the Ethics-Centre/Zurich in November 2010. The organizer is grateful to the University of Zurich for financial support, both for the conference and the publication of this issue.