"Calling": A Christian Argument for a Basic Income+

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+As this paper is but a glimpse of an ongoing work-in-progress, I have chosen the form of theses rather than a continuing text. In all those cases the English text was available to me I have given at least the English title, otherwise I have to ask for the English reader's indulgence for my use of the German literature.

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This paper outlines the preliminaries of a theological (Protestant Christian) argument for a basic income at the level of a decent minimum. It argues, that the idea of 'vocation' or 'calling' (German: Beruf) developed by Luther and accepted by Calvin and the Protestant tradition can and should be reformulated under the conditions of current modernity as a critical term aiming at clarifying what Christians understand as a good life. To decide whether an activity is rightly understood as part of a vocation, Luther sketches two main criteria: the activity has to imply a service to one's neighbour and it has to be done in a spirit of love. A vocation in that sense and under modern conditions, however, can not simply be identified with paid labour, evidently transcends the range of gainful employment in a capitalist environment and thus can be understood to imply a basic income that makes it possible to follow that calling.

1. Introduction

This paper outlines the preliminaries of a theological (Protestant Christian) argument for a basic income at the level of a decent minimum. It argues that the idea of "vocation" or "calling" (German: Beruf), developed by Luther and accepted by Calvin[1] and the Protestant tradition, can and should be reformulated under the conditions of current modernity as a critical term aiming at clarifying what Christians understand as a good life.

To decide whether an activity is rightly understood as part of a vocation, Luther sketches two main criteria: the activity has to imply a service to one's neighbour and it has to be done in a spirit of love. A vocation in that sense and under modern conditions, however, cannot simply be identified with paid labour, evidently transcends the range of gainful employment in a capitalist environment and thus can be understood to imply a basic income that makes it possible to follow that calling.

As Protestantism seems to be - at least according to Max Weber[2] - partly responsible for the development that led to modern capitalism and the phenomenon of the "labour-society", the dramatical changes of which form one of the more important backdrops for the debates focusing on basic income, it might be of interest to take a glimpse at the line of thought and the debates going on in that particular community - even for non-Christians. Since Martin Luther's ideas on work, expressed in the ideas of "calling" and "station", stand at the beginning of that process, have had a tremendous impact not only in Lutheran tradition and are of systematic relevancy for Christianity still, they are worth a closer look.

To this end, four steps shall be taken. First of all, Luther's ethical thought in its social and historical context has to be briefly sketched. Second, I would like to reflect on the history of the reception of those ideas - it will show, that Luther's concept have been perceived out of their social and historical context, resulting in

[1] Cf. Calvin, 1559, 467ff, see also Biéler, 1959, 397ff.

[2] Cf. Weber, 1905.

serious misrepresentations. As a third step, a heuristic concept of "work" shall be expounded: This is necessary to avoid such misrepresentation and to bridge the gap between theological insights won in a stratified, feudal society largely based on agriculture and subsistence in a rural setting and their application to a modern industrialized, urbanized labour-society in a process of change. Finally, then, I will try to outline in which form the insights derived from Luther's doctrines may be of use in today's debates on the future of labour-society and welfare.

2. Calling, office and status - Luther's ethical thought in context

Luther's basic theological insight is given in his doctrine of justification. In an interpretation of Paul's Letter to the Romans he argues that no man can justify himself successfully before God through words or deeds, but that God himself in Christ justifies all who believe him and in him. Faith, in the sense of trust in God's grace, is thus God's gift as well as the only proper attitude towards God.

Two ethical consequences from this doctrine can be named: First of all, our good deeds and works can not be seen as causes for God's attention, meriting God's love, but have to be understood, quite to the contrary, as results of God's love. The idea of doing good to bring oneself to the attention of God and the pious pride behind it is thus utterly rejected by Luther.

This theological degradation of good works before God leads - secondly - to a promotion of the work done in the course of daily life, because everything done in service of one's fellow man or neighbour motivated by love is seen by Luther as vocation or calling,[3] an activity sanctioned by God.[4] The believer who feels to be justified and reconciled with God freely and happily obeys Gods commandments,

[3] This goes back to the Greek derived from 1 Cor 7,20. For a comprehensive analysis of Luther's thinking on those topics see Wingren, 1952; Holl, 1928; Elert, 1958, Bayer 1995.

[4] Cf. Luther, 1520, 206f but also 1531a, 377.

which are directed towards the neighbour's service, thus expressing his joy and disciplining himself.[5]

God's calling is understood to have two dimensions. As *vocatio spiritualis sive interna* it is directed at every man and woman through the gospel, it leads to baptism and faith, through which Christians are incorporated into the body of Christ. This calling is directed to everybody and equally, differences can only appear as the calling is accepted in varying intensity.[6] As *vocatio externa*, bodily or worldly calling, it constitutes differences, it, "*macht ein unterscheid, Est yrdisch, quanquam etiam divina. Ibi furst non rusticus, scholasticus non Magister, servus non dominus, pater non filius, vir non mulier*."[7]

As the idea of calling is disintegrated from certain works and their ecclesiastical sanction - e.g. becoming a priest, a monk or a nun, leading a life of contemplation, sponsoring mass, praying, going on pilgrimages - it becomes, in a way, more democratic. In its worldly dimension Luther binds it to the criteria of station (status, Stand)[8] and office (*officium, Amt*), which are in turn determined by the love of and the service toward one's neighbour given mutually. That, however, means that the idea of calling is not bound to some special experience, but to the everyday chores of Christians. In that respect, it is counter-intuitive. Luther thus

[5] Luther, 1520a, 33: *"Aber der glaub gleych wie er frum macht, ßo macht er auch [27] gutte werck. So dann die werck niemant frum machen, und der mensch zuvor [28] muß frum sein, ehe er wirckt, so ists offenbar, das allein der glaub auß [29] lauttern gnaden, durch Christum und seyn wort, die person gnugsam frum [30] und selig machet. Und das keyn werck, keyn gepott eynem Christen nott sey [31] zur seligkeit, sondern er frey ist von allen gepotten, und auß lauterer freyheit [32] umb sonst thut alls, was er thut, nichts damit gesucht seyneß nutzs oder [33] selickeyt, Denn er schon satt und selig ist durch seynenn glaubenn und gottis [34] gnaden, sondernn nur gott darynnen gefallen"*. The necessity of discipline is rooted in Luther's anthropological dualism: The 'inner' man is justified by Christ and lives in Christ, but the 'outer' man - for whom also the term 'flesh' is used - is embedded not in divine, but in worldly relations and has to be disciplined.

[6] Cf. Luther, 1531.

[7] Cf. Luther, 1531, 307a.

[8] His use of the term "station" is - as is often the case - not wholly consistent. He uses "'Stand" for the three basic hierarchies in society, but also for certain jobs or offices, cf. Luther, 1522a, 305-323 and also Elert, 1958, 62ff.

tries to abolish the idea of a spiritual élite, which he thinks supercilious before God and thereby dangerous for the individual.

Luther distinguishes three main stations: *politia*, *oeconomia*, ecclesia. He understands those as institutions of God's spiritual and worldly regime. Those stations do not constitute exclusive groups, they do not signify strata of society, but everybody is thought to belong to every station - although not in the same position.[9] The positions - at least in *politia* and *oeconomia* - are understood to be hierarchically structured and stable, although a change of position is possible. As ecclesia is thought to belong to the spiritual regime operating solely through the word, not by force and implying equality of all, its offices do not constitute a special spiritual status, but are merely set up to guarantee a certain functional order, and are in that respect part of the worldly regime. Luther's concept of stations, however, which goes back to Aristotle's social philosophy, should of course not be understood as an empirical description of society's structure, but rather as a sketch of certain anthropological basics, that allow for historical variability. For Luther and most of his contemporaries, a difference between theology, anthropology and theory of society implying human influence on the basic structures of society is simply unthinkable. Thus, Luther never states or insists normatively that noblemen should be on top of society and peasants at the bottom: On the contrary, Luther understands and even advocates upward mobility,[10] but this is not understood to change structures. For this pre-modern attitude, a number of background presuppositions Luther simply presumes are characteristic.

The first is a theological background presupposition: Luther credits all earthly reality with a dignity stemming from the fact of God's providence. All misfortunes are understood to be a punishment for sin enacted by the devil, whose workings are tolerated by God for a time. After all, to Luther the world is just a place of individual probation, and what really counts is God's kingdom to come,

[9] Cf. Elert,1958, 56ff.

[10] Cf. Luther, 1530, 578a ff.

put individually: life after resurrection. For that reason, an improvement of the world is only possible in the sense of a more effective control of evil with the aim of conserving the world and humanity, so people can prepare for judgment day. In that vein, however, Luther was not simply what we would call conservative: Thus, he strongly supported the aims of the peasant's movement before the beginning of violent turmoil[11]. Second, Luther was, even for his times, a political pessimist. Social and political change implying militant action, that does not proceed along the operating mode condoned by traditional order, to him, is intolerable, since it can only be interpreted as anomie, violent anarchy and thus as disobedience against God's worldly regime. This does - third - extend to economical change and early capitalist developments: Luther criticizes the system of interest and the rising power of trading firms, in as much it transcends the comprehensible political order of feudal hierarchy.

The historical context of Luther's discovery is his struggle against monasticism and the roman church, which implies and enacts a spiritual hierarchy.[12] Since Luther argues against the idea that ordinary every-day activity is of less value than spiritual works, that make extraordinary settings like monasteries and pilgrimages necessary, he stresses the duty to remain faithful to one's calling,[13] which - to him - is bound to one's status.[14] For that reason, the individual questioning of one's calling is always problematic - Luther sees this as resistance against God's providence. Thus, he reprimands all self-induced efforts to change one's social and political position in life as 'escape into alien works', works assigned to others, as motivated by a sinful spirit. This, of course, has to do

[11] Cf. Luther, 1525, 294bff. For his turn against this revolt, Luther gives two arguments: First of all, he objects against war waged for religion's sake, because God's spiritual regiment must not use the sword. Second, he believes that a violent revolt against political order will necessarily end in anomie, cf. Luther, 1522, 681 and 1528, 251b.

[12] Cf. Luther, 1521. While he understands Roman catholicism to be disobedient against God's spiritual regime, the representatives of the 'left wing' of reformation, the spiritualists, to him act against God's worldly regime.

[13] Luther, 1522a, 305ff.

[14] Ibid.

with Luther's Augustine anthropology, to which "autonomy" is an alien concept. Man is either "'theonomous" or "satanonomous", human reason that believes itself self-sufficient must necessarily fail and end in blindness and sin.[15] Thus, his promotion of every-day activity extending to and including even those activities and vocations which seem unimportant and bring little prestige (for instance those of servant or maid), bears consequences that seem - in modern eyes - problematic. The implication of promoting the status of servant to equal spiritual rank than that of lord consists in the obligation to accept this status as God's gift and assignment which is not to be shunned. Luther generally assumes, that all, even the most different, vocations bring an equal amount of hardship and joy. Also he presumes, that the mind-set accompanying work has noticeable effects, because every activity implies a certain freedom - this is of course based on the design of activities and work in that time.

This way, the individual set of activities can be seen in two ways: To Christians, their station in life is an orientation provided by God to help them practice their happy and joyful obedience in service to the neighbour.[16] Others[17] find their station in life obligatory, as it is ordained by some worldly authority.[18] For the political and economical hierarchy of stations is - to Luther - a function of God's worldly regime extending to everybody and including the means of force, ultimately designed to preserve the world against the devil's efforts. Consequently, this helps to explain why in Luther's eyes the choice or change of trade can only be acceptable as ordered by the respective authorities. It also explains, why Luther

[15] Cf. Wingren, 1952, 61f.

[16] Cf. Wingren, 1952, 43.

[17] The idea runs something like this: For true Christians, the worldly regime would not be necessary, but they gladly bear it for the sake of their brethren, so the world may be preserved and they have time to be reached by God's word. However, as each Christian in Luther's view is always *'simul iustus et peccator'*, justified by God, but un-Christian sinner at the same time, both perspectives usually apply, cf. Luther, 1520a, 20ff.

[18] In that perspective Luther interprets his own biography, expressing relief that he was ordered to be a scholar and theological teacher - thus, he could be sure that his teaching was not his own or the devil's doing, cf. Luther, 1532, 522f.

can exhort parents to follow the duty of their parental office and further he social promotion of their children by granting them the best education possible.[19]

Therefore, the Christian will not question, but obediently accept his station in life and the corresponding assignments as his calling, acting accordingly from a motivation of neighbourly love an in adherence to the ten commandments. Does that imply that any station will do? In Luther's view, the problem can - for reasons above given - not be solved on an individual basis. Luther analyzes the problem not in respect to 'calling' but concerning the concept of 'station' and subsequently develops criteria for godly and ungodly stations.[20] The main criterion for the discernment of godly and sinful stations is the accordance or resistance to God's will as visible in the regimes of God. Sinful stations are those that either resist the spiritual regime by somehow obstructing the spreading of the gospel or the worldly regime by resisting God's will to preserve the world. Any attempt to deduce from an isolated activity its relation to God's will meets with Luther's objection, only in the context of the function of a certain station its significance shows.[21]

[19] Cf. Luther, 1530, 578a. Evidently, the parent's motive cannot include upward mobility as such - rather, parents should wish for their children to become useful instruments of God's love.

[20] Cf. Luther, 1522, 318f: "*Auch wenn [17] ich vom stand rede, der nit sundlich an yhm selb ist, meyne ich nit damit, [18] das yemand mug hie auff erden on sund leben, alle stende unnd weßen [19] sundigen teglich, ßondern ich meyne die stend, die gott gesetzt hatt odder yhr [20] eynsatzung nit widder gott ist, als da sind: ehlich seyn, knecht, magd, herr, [21] fraw, ubirherrn, regirer, richter, ampleutt, bawr, burger &c.. Sundlichen stand [22] heyß ich reuberey, wucherhandell, offenttlicher frawen weßen unnd als itzt sind [23] Bapst, Cardinal, Bischoff, Priester, Munch, Nonnen stend, die nitt predigen [24] odder predigen horen. Denn diße stendt sind gewißlich wider gott, wo sie [25] nur mit messen und singen und mit gottis wort nit umbgehen, das eyn [1] gemeyn weyb viel ehr mag gen hymell kommen, denn dißer eynß. "*

[21] Thus, Luther sanctions the bloody trade of the soldier (fighting in a just war) by comparing it to the surgeon - the amputation of a limb, however cruel, is done to preserve the body, see Luther, 1526, 626f: „*Obs nu wol nicht scheinet, das wuergen und rauben ein werck der liebe [27] ist, derhalben ein einfeltiger denckt, Es sey nicht ein Christlich werck, zyme [28] auch eym Christen nicht zu thun: So ists doch ynn der warheit auch ein werck [29] der liebe. Denn gleich wie ein guter artzt, wenn die seuche so boese und gros [30] ist, das er mus hand, fues, ohr odder augen lassen abhawen odder verderben, [31] auff das er den leib errette, so man an sihet das gelied, das er abhewet, [1] scheinet es, er sey ein grewlicher, unbarmhertziger mensch. So man aber den [2] leib ansihet, den er wil damit erretten, so findet sichs ynn der warheit, das [3] er ein trefflicher, trewer mensch ist und ein gut, Christlich (so viel es an yhm [4] selber ist) werck thut. Also auch wenn ich dem krige ampt zu sehe,*

3. Reception as interpretation

It is a simple truth that Luther's categories of perception differ from those used today. For Luther, '*erbeit*' (*labour*) means primarily strenuous physical labour. The issues we associate with the term 'work' or 'labour' are in his perspective expressed by the concepts of 'calling' (*vocation*) and 'station' (*status*). But that change of perspective goes farther and extends to core issues of theology as well. While in his times, Luther's theology was controversial because of his claim of spiritual equality and religious maturity of all Christians, nowadays the presumption of Christianity's universality is evident no more and at least argued, even among theologians.[22] Luther distinguished between godly and sinful stations, but it was clear to him, that even the unwilling and sinful are somehow instruments of God - theology after enlightenment and after the shoah finds the idea of God's toleration of evil hard to bear, which shows in theological attempts to do away with the idea of God's omnipotence.[23] While for Luther any autonomy is an illusion at best, modern theology and faith tend to accept the possibility of a harmony of theonomy, autonomy and self-realization.[24] The idea of an imperfectability of society's structures, based on the idea of a hiatus between creation and redemption has been replaced by the concept that a sensible political

wie es [5] die boesen strafft, die unrechten wuerget und solchen jamer anrichtet, scheinet es [6] gar ein unchristlich werck sein und aller dinge widder die Christliche liebe. [7] Sihe ich aber an, wie es die frumen schuetzt, weib und kind, haus und hoff, [8] gut und ehre und friede damit erhelt und bewaret, so find sichs, wie koestlich [9] und Goettlich das werck ist, und mercke, das es auch ein bein odder hand abhewet, [10] auff das der gantze leib nicht vergehe. Denn wo das schwerd nicht [11] werete und fride hielte, so mueste es alles durch unfride verderben, was ynn [12] der welt ist. Derhalben ist ein solcher krieg nicht anders denn ein kleiner, [13] kurtzer unfriede, der eym ewigen unmeslichem unfriede weret, Ein klein unglueck, [14] das eym grossen unglueck weret."

[22] In Protestant German theology, there is an ongoing debate on the question, to which extent theological motives should be introduced in pubic debates on justice - the influential statement of German churches on the questions of welfare and social issues in general, for instance, solved this problem by first summing up theological arguments and then trying to rephrase those ideas in a context of human rights, to argue their case for those who do not share a Christian background, cf. Rat der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, 1997, 39-67.

[23] Cf. Groarke, 2001, Link-Wieczorek, 1999.

[24] In the 19th century, liberal theological concepts - for instance A. Ritschl or W. Herrmann - went in that direction, in the 20th century, the theology of liberation provides examples.

formation aware of its limits may find its criteria in God's will to redemption[25]. Whereas Luther counts on the immediate coming of Christ, making earthly life a mere time of probation, in modern times the significance of life before death has been far more highly valued. The background presuppositions of Luther's times, which are presumptions on which Luther's doctrine of stations and calling rests, have been widely replaced, and this is true for Lutheran Christians, too. Luther's pessimism concerning politics and economy has lost plausibility - even contemporary critique concerning the ideology of growth or naive optimism concerning human progress usually doesn't aim at a situation short of the European level of moral autonomy, political democracy and economic wealth.

Transitions in theological thinking have to be understood in the context of social structure and structuration, as theology and Christian understanding is shaped by social structure and in turn affects that structure, too.[26] Luther lives and argues in the context of a stratified, feudally organized and widely agrarian and rural society. There is a process of change going on, urbanization and bourgeoisie are on the rise, but this process is still quite slow. The then predominant idea of social order - or better: order in the world - makes it out to be stable, linear, hierarchical and evident - it can be illustrated by "status-trees" where the peasants populate the earth, while the upper branches are occupied by noblemen, dukes, kings, bishops, the Pope and so on.[27] Thus, Luther and his contemporaries do not expect rapid change by any earthly powers, but through the second coming of Christ. Phenomena of crisis or social transformation are thus usually attributed to God's or Satan's doing and understood as foreshadowing the last judgment.[28] As social structures in the artisan and agrarian society he lives in are embedded in relations largely based on face-to-face-interactions and thus highly personalized,

[25] Cf. Barth, 1946, 22ff.

[26] Cf. Giddens, 1984. For an analysis in the perspective of sociology of religion cf. Bourdieu, 2000, 68f.

[27] Linearity was thought to be universal, as documents by revolting peasants at that time show - there, it's the peasants occupying the upper branches, while kings grovel in the dirt, cf. Laube e.a., 1974, 219.

[28] Cf. Wingren, 1952, 107f.

most activities and assignments usually imply some kind of freedom of judgment - at least through lack of control: Unlike last century's industrial worker, even most servants had some freedom of choice concerning the way they approached their chores, at least while the master was at some other task.[29] This may well be one core explanation for the fact that Luther could declare the given situation individuals found themselves in as a signpost and guideline for a life led in the spirit of Christian freedom, like a *tertius usus legis* turned social structure.

However simple the truth may be that reception means interpretation - and even more so in a different context: it still need not be observed. Prominently in the course of the 19th century, many representatives of Lutheran tradition for various reasons[30] tried to meet the challenges presented by social and economical change through a historically uncritical, highly selective and methodically problematic reception of Luther's insights. This led to arguments, which were ideological in the worst sense of the word, leaving Lutheran social ethics to be an instrument to preserve the power of the powerful.

- Thus Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms and the two regimes of God was then interpreted to signify a strict separation of "church" and "world". Luther's distinction of two regimes is applied to a modern, functionally differentiated society in a way that transforms functional distinction into normative division.[31] While Luther holds it to be evident that God's will is predominant in both regimes and the three stations of ecclesia, politia and oeconomia and therefore could criticize those who to his mind opposed it, theologians now declare the realm of politics and the economy autonomous in a way that forbids any questioning from religious and theological motives, which are held to concern the psyche of the individual exclusively.

[29] Cf. Wingren, 1952, 128f., 138f. Otherwise social regulation was evidently much more rigid.

[30] Cf. for an explanation of some of those reasons Tanner, 1995.

[31] For an example cf. Naumann, 1911, 71-534, to the problem in general cf. Meireis, 2001. Prien, 1992, 232f shows that Luther had different intentions.

- The Neo-Lutheran theology which developed at the beginning of the twentieth century interprets Luther's concept of stations as a doctrine of the orders of creation.[32] Luther sees stations as spheres of life instituted by God and concerning every individual and does so in the context of a world where social structures are usually comprehended as static. The idea of the orders of creation on the other hand, operating in an era of obvious social change and growing insight into historical contingency, is designed to canonize certain social structures, like matrimony, people or state, by declaring them to be timeless - and therefore normative - institutions of God. This way, a certain type of social change was to be counteracted.

- Luther's warning against "alien works", an individual choice of station or activity, has to be understood as part of his struggle against popular catholic belief in the redeeming power of certain "good works" on the one and against political spiritualism on the other hand. This thinking is situated in an agrarian society based on personal relationships, but many 19th century theologians understood it out of that context. In a situation of economic dislocation and expropriation caused by developing industrial capitalism, they stressed Luthers warning against any self-induced pursuit of change and thus turned the idea into a weapon aimed at the victims of those processes. The industrial proletarians were then supposed to accept their miserable station in life as God's calling to them. Moreover, the idea of calling lost plausibility as the somewhat "holistic" and often at least to some extent self-regulated jobs of artisans and farmers constituting Luther's world were increasingly replaced by tightly regulated industrial work, where personal judgment or freedom was neither necessary nor encouraged.[33]

[32] Cf. Althaus, 1935, or Althaus,1953, 110f.

[33] The Wingren, acknowledges this contextual difference 1980, 657ff.

Luther may - in a modern perspective - be described as ambivalent in terms of what we understand by autonomy and freedom of the individual. However, strong currents of the Lutheran tradition have given his ideas a blatantly ideological turn by taking them out of their social and historical context and thus effectively impeding a reception of those aspects in Luther's thinking that may be an inspiration even in our times. If that is to be achieved, a misrepresentation due to a lack of contextual perception must be avoided. To that end, we need to look for the term that in modern times focuses those questions Luther treats under the labels of "calling" and "station" - evidently this is the concept of "work" or "labour". Therefore, a closer look at the concept of "work" should be helpful.

4. A heuristic concept of 'work'

Rather than attempting a philosophical inquiry in the term 'work' I would - at this point - like to treat the concept heuristically, as a socio-cultural paradigm of interpretation,[34] rooted in everyday life and ordinary language, involving at least five areas of conflict in current northwestern societies that are in one way or other associated when we use the concept.

1. A philosophically sound definition is problematic, exactly because the concept of 'work' is compounded so tightly with the development of modernity[35] - not only in social philosophy (Hegel, Marx, Weber, Marxism) but also in the emergence of modern industrialism, the design of welfare systems and of course the overall conception of the processes vital for the reproduction of any modern society.

    - Existing definitions commonly used in theology are either to a broad or too narrow - usually, they are based on anthropology,

[34] For this concept cf. Meuser, Sackmann 1992, cf. also Volz, 1982.

[35] Cf. Pankoke, 1990.

signifying almost anything or specify gainful employment only.[36]

- The concept of "work" is deeply immersed in social contexts and thus in social change: there are ongoing debates in Germany as to what should be called "work", the implication being that "work" being that sort of activity that merits an income or at least some kind of social recognition or appreciation, respectively.[37]

2. In current social crises and through the protesting activity of social movements, the question of "work" is implied in a number of debated issues:

   - The unemployment crisis - or, in more liberal welfare states, the phenomenon of working poor or rising imprisonment rates - has triggered debates on the character and the future of work,[38] sometimes extending to a debate on the aims of work in general in relation to the meaning in society and life.[39]

   - The feminist movement has brought attention to the sexist (or gendered) bias of the working place, of familiarist systems in

[36] Sometimes, both is the case. The term is introduced in anthropological width, but subsequently only used in the sense of gainful employment, paid labour. For an example, see Brakelmann 1980.

[37] Thus, Angelika Krebs' attempt (cf. Krebs, 2002, 35ff.) to specify an 'institutional concept of work' aiming at an improved material and immaterial recognition of hitherto neglected forms of work she - to my mind, adequately - understands to be of significance for society as a whole has to go to great lengths to defend that concept. Its range, however, is supposed to be limited to existing labour societies.

[38] As one of the more popular examples see Rifkin, 1995, for an discussion of the problems concerning the changing 'labour-society' cf. Offe, 1984.

[39] Cf. Gorz, 1994, 108ff.

general and to the lack of recognition granted to activities of reproduction and human care.[40]

- The ecological movement criticized the idea of "work" implying the processing, consumption and exploitation of natural resources thought of as plentiful and free of charge.[41]

Thus, "work" may be seen as a key word in at least five areas of conflict in (labour-) society intermingling in the questioning mentioned above:

1. Conflicts of **recognition:** The inflation of the use of the concept of "work" - at least in German and Germany - may be seen as a strategy of acquiring recognition and implies, that only those activities entitle to recognition, that are seen as legitimate "work"' in society. Recognition may take different forms - prestigious social appreciation[42] as an able citizen, but also recognition as entitlement to material resources.

2. Conflicts of allocation or **allocation** or **distribution:** As the direct or indirect participation in some kind of "work"' - in forms of gainful employment - for the majority of citizens in the capitalist societies constitutes the main source of income and livelihood, the idea of work is central to the distribution of wealth.[43]

3. Conflicts of **participation:** Since political participation is - not *de iure*, but *de facto* - tightly knit into the fabric of social participation through educational and every-day involvement in the regular

[40] See for instance Hausen, 1993 or Krebs, 1996.

[41] An attempt to model the consumption of resources in economic terms may be found in Immler, 1989.

[42] The term "social appreciation" is supposed to be a translation of A. Honneths term "*soziale Wertschätzung*", cf. Honneth, 1992, 148ff.

[43] This thesis describes the everyday reality of the majority of citizens; it can and shall not replace in-depth sociological, economical or political analysis or claim to be a normative proposition. It only contends that questions of distribution cannot be avoided whenever we talk about work.

productive and distributive mechanisms of society, e.g. participation in gainful employment, rising unemployment and/or increasing mobility implied in the development described as change from fordism to post-fordism[44] binds questions of the political organization of society to the organization of work.

4. Conflicts of **relations to the natural environment:** As economic growth implying an idea and practice of work as processing and thereby consuming natural resources is still seen as the highway to universal well-being, skeptics protest and demand new forms of management and work.

5. Conflicts in respect to the aims of work, culminating in conflicts concerning the **meaning of life:** In fordism, many people were motivated by an ethos of hard work for the betterment of affairs of one's offspring - this, however, has changed[45]. People are not only interested in what they earn, but in what they do most of the day. Thus, the questions of what "work" means in individual life and what the aims of work are in general are vibrant.

In our societies, the discussion, understanding and organization of what we usually call "work" is currently central to those areas of conflict. This holds true, no matter how we otherwise analyze the structure of society. Thus, my thesis runs something like this: When looking for alternatives to the labour-society as we know it, or if we are interested in ideas on the subject generated in societies set up differently from ours, it makes sense to check those five areas, for the organization of which the concept of "work"' is central in our society.

[44] For those terms see Hirsch, Roth, 1986.

[45] As an example of this see Senett, 1998, for a critical stance or, more as an appraisal cf. Klages, 2001.

5. "Calling" as motivating a Christian argument for a basic income

As it is my objective to study what, if anything, may be learned from Luther's ideas under the changed economic, social and cultural conditions of today, it is necessary to scrutinize them closely to beware of misrepresentations like those depicted above. Since Luther did not develop ethical criteria for the structure of society - which he thought remote from the influence of man - answers of that kind should not be expected from him. What Luther, in his time, thought about the problems of recognition, distribution, participation and the relationship to the natural environment may be sketched quite briefly.

- Social recognition, to Luther, has nothing to do with the person, but belongs to office and station. Christians have to refrain from any worldly recognition, since they live in Christ. What modern age understands by the term of "personal identity"[46] is materially presumed by Luther. Modern insights understanding self-assurance, self-respect and a loving self-regard as necessary, if not sufficient conditions for the ability to freely act as a human person are clearly beyond Luther's interests and, evidently, his cultural means.

- Questions of allocation are - similarly - of less importance. Participation in worldly goods is thought to be dependent on office and station. Up to certain limits it may be legitimately acquired through work, but this aim must remain secondary - the objective of worldly goods can only be seen in the temporary preservation of earthly life to prepare for life eternal. In that vein, Luther can commend the institution of communal funds for the needy.[47]

- Concerning the question of political participation Luther follows Paul's ideas from Rom 13, categorizing the political agents in

[46] Cf. for a brief sum Giddens, 1991, 35ff.54f.

[47] Cf. Meireis, 2001.

authorities and subjects, and simply accepts the given order as prescription originating in divine providence. The idea of equality or democracy in the stations of *politia* or *oeconomia* is alien to him.

- The relationship towards the natural environment is regarded in respect to Genesis 1.22, the so-called *dominium terrae*, man is supposed to act as cooperator dei and is in that function and dimension seen to have a free will.[48]

If Luther's ideas are, however, conceptualized under the heading of individual and collective concepts on the meaning in life, that aims at the semantics of particular communities, the picture presenting itself looks different. The insights connected to the concept of "calling" can then be reframed under modern conditions. For if the Christian's activity is motivated by love and aimed at the service of one's neighbour, then "calling" can surely not be restricted to activities made possible by the current social order of labour-society, i.e. gainful employment. Since the questions of social structures and social order are - in modernity - understood to be questions of democratic choice, civic activity, and generally, human doing, ideas gained from Luther's thinking can not grant us with ready-to-use solutions but, rather, may help to open up the horizon of possibilities.

- In a Lutheran perspective, man's activity, his earthly calling, will not grant salvation, but is restricted to the achievement of his neighbour's well being. The central idea of the doctrine of justification consists in the proposition, that a person is not basically constituted or sufficiently described by what she does or by works,[49] but that there is always more than can meet anybody's eye. What Luther aims at has to be understood at a different level than the formation of identity and personality by socialization and routines described by the humanities. It may be rephrased, however, in terms of those transcendental conditions that make the idea of inalienable human dignity feasible.

[48] Cf. Wingren, 1952, 23ff.

[49] As it is done by Giarini and Liedtke 1998, 233.

- Luther's idea of "calling"', interpreting the social conditions in an existing society as guidelines for the Christian's life, helps to understand that in a Christian perspective others are not only understood as limiting, but also as enabling individual and collective freedom.[50] Modern theological ethics are therefore challenged to integrate an adequate, theoretically consistent and empirically sound model of today's social formation into their reflections.

- The criteria developed by Luther in the context of his doctrine of stations and relevant for his understanding of "calling" have to be reframed under modern conditions. A limitation of the criteria to the individual's intentions is bound to become ideological. Instead, they have to be applied to the activities in question. Thus, assignments, jobs, professions and all kinds of work should be designed so that they can be evidently done or fulfilled in a spirit of love and with the intention of serving one's neighbour.

- Luther's "worldly" concept of vocation, aimed against the idea of an élite distinguished by a special experience of calling, may be interpreted as pertaining to a divine promise which implies, that every Christian - and potentially, everybody - may trust that there is a place in active life where he or she may find (in the limits set by the human condition) fulfilment through the service to his or her neighbour done in a spirit of love.

- The idea of "calling" does not restrict the multitude of activities possible to individuals and determined only by individuality. Thus, a limitation to gainful employment is not plausible in this perspective. On the other hand, activities are not valued by efficiency or prestige, implying an antielitist stance.

[50] Cf. concerning this insight Huber, 1983and also Marx, 1844, 365.

Evidently, those ideas derived from Luther's concepts do not sum up to a conclusive solution concerning the question of labour-society or basic income. Rather, they suggest a number of further questions.[51] Still, a provisional sketch of what those ideas might imply in a changing labour-society may be helpful.

- It seems not too far-fetched to suggest, that in Western Europe's societies distribution and political participation will increasingly result in some form of welfare pluralism,[52] effecting income pluralism[53] and activity pluralism. The probability of holding a life-long steady job will decrease, especially at the bottom of the income distribution range.

- As Christians live in those societies, they will partake in those pluralisms. The political question will be whether the emerging forms will allow for a certain freedom of the individual - presuming, that freedom in that sense rests on income security, the possibility to earn a certain recognition, the ability to participate politically (implying an enabling education) and to lead one's life in accordance to values and goals pursued individually or by communities of choice. To Christians, this implies, whether the social setting will allow to pursue

[51] Those include - to the more theological side - the problem of human dignity in relation to the conflict areas of recognition, distribution, environmental relations and political participation, the problem of how Christian ethics are to consider sociological theory and empirical evidence and in which way the concept of fulfilment has to be understood if it is to imply individual variety, human limitation and the relation to god. Closer to the problem of 'work' it has to be considered if and how the criterion of an activity evidently providing a service to one's neighbour that may be delivered motivated by love can be implemented and operationalized in today's capitalist economies, since a certain efficiency is a prerequisite for that kind of freedom. Furthermore, the wide range of the idea of 'calling', which can be expressed by the use of the term activity rather than 'work', has to be preserved, avoiding either to lose touch with concrete social reality or to positively sanction any activity regardless. Last not least the question of 'unity' of action has to be considered: Is it possible to determine the unity of actions implied in the term 'calling' under the conditions of modern capitalist society? Those questions - among others - are the subject of an ongoing research project at WWU, Münster (see www.uni-muenster.de/ICGesWiss), cf. also Meireis 2001a.

[52] Cf. Evers, Olk, 1996.

[53] See Vobruba, 1999, 110, and Vobruba, 2000.

what they understand to be their calling: either in gainful employment or besides or instead.

- As the division of labour is usually organized by the instrument of the market, this instrument appears to be necessary, but not sufficient: for one, the market is blind to moral demands of minorities without buying power, and second, many activities necessary in society can not sensibly be left to the organization of the marketplace.[54]

- Since Christian active life is to be characterized by serving one's neighbour in a spirit of love, a social order of distribution that condones only integration into gainful employment organized by the market (unless a person is independently wealthy or renounces all welfare) - denouncing other ways of life or stigmatizing those who are unable to forage for themselves - is not acceptable, not least because it effectively reduces the freedom to follow one's calling to a small elite.

- A means tested basic income, covering the decent minimum[55] in a given society may - in a Christian perspective - well be a sensible instrument to grant that amount of freedom to develop one's abilities, that is necessary to follow one's calling individually, either in a job or out of a job. Of course, this cannot be the only instrument necessary - others imply at least a decent system of basic education and an improved system of political participation.

[54] For those reasons Krebs, 2001,80ff pleads for a sufficient income distributed to persons caring for children, the aged or the sick within the family by the state.

[55] See Sen, 1999, 92ff.

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