Unconditional Basic Income and the Epistemic Problem of Happiness

M.A. Thesis

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May 2017, Tartu

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Introduction

In this thesis, it will be argued that the introduction of an unconditional basic income will have positive consequences in terms of people's happiness. This is the conclusion following the central question: does an unconditional basic income have positive consequences in terms of people's happiness? The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter introduces the concept of basic income, provides an overview of the current basic income debate and positions this thesis within the debate. The second chapter considers life-satisfaction theories and a hedonistic approach before adopting Haybron's (2008) emotional state theory of happiness. The third chapter shows, through the work of Haybron (2008) and Kasser (2002), that many people are unhappy because of two factors: the epistemic problem of happiness (we are unreliable at knowing what makes us happy) and a strong focus on materialistic goals. Chapter four explains how introducing a basic income would help to overcome some of the factors that contribute to the epistemic problem of happiness as well as provide an environment that makes us less likely to be focused on materialistic goals. Chapter five addresses two difficulties that might undermine the positive consequences for happiness: basic income might make people lonely and/or lazy. I argue that these two difficulties are not likely to undermine the positive consequences for happiness resulting from implementing basic income. The sixth chapter consists of a discussion of the implications for the basic income debate and implications for the happiness debate.

Chapter I The basic income debate

A basic income is a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all on an individual basis, without a means test (the need to meet certain requirements for a benefit) or work requirement (BIEN, 2016). This includes pensioners (dependent on the country's pensioners scheme), children (increasing with age until the full amount at the age of 18), inmates (costs of imprisonment deduced) and covers all residents that are also considered as residents for tax purposes. The general idea of a basic income that will be adopted in this thesis has five central characteristics (BIEN, 2016). A basic income is universal: it is paid to everybody. It is a cash payment and thus not in the form of services or vouchers. It is paid on an individual basis and not on household level. A basic income is periodic and is paid with regular intervals (e.g. weekly or monthly). The last and probably most controversial characteristic (Wallulis, 1997, p.187), is that the basic income would be unconditional: there is no requirement to become eligible, apart from being a member of the society (having a legal status for residing in the country, including temporary residents) (van Parijs, 1995, p. 35).

The idea of providing an unconditional payment to all citizens is not entirely new. The following historical accounts are derived from the historical overview on the BIEN website (Birnbaum & Widerquist, 2016). One example of a previous similar idea came from Charles Fourier in earlier 19th century. Fourier (1836) argued that a minimum should be guaranteed for everybody. He reasoned this to be a requirement because he found it unjust that the poor could not benefit from natural resources because they were owned by the wealthy. Bertrand Russell proposed a guaranteed income in his work *Proposed Roads to Freedom* (1918), the idea was considered in the politics of the UK but got eventually rejected. More recently, during the 60's and 70's of the last century, basic income became a more widely discussed subject among European countries and the United States of America. There are several examples of experiments that provided a basic income to a village or community (e.g. in Alaska, Canada and Namibia). Currently, there is an ongoing experiment in Finland (McFarland, 2017a) and several soon to start experiments in the Netherlands (McFarland, 2017b).

Universal basic income is usually advocated for several reasons. A basic income is said to readily reduce poverty, increase equality and reduce the likelihood of people becoming stuck in an unemployment trap. An unemployment trap means that a person is not motivated to find work because the received benefit from unemployment will be reduced or removed when a new job is found. This leaves the person with the same or similar income compared to the previous situation of not working and receiving full benefits. In other words, when being in an unemployment trap, there is no or hardly a monetary incentive to look for work. Also, it is argued that basic income encourages entrepreneurship (van Parijs, 1995, p. 223), stimulate volunteer work (Birnbaum & Wolfe, 2012, p. 195, 220), reduces stigma from receiving state benefits (Ibid, p. 95) and makes people less dependent on the market for meeting their basic needs (Widerquist, 2011). Findings that are directly supported by empirical findings (from Alaska, Canada and Namibia) include: greatly increased entrepreneurship (Haarmann, 2009, p. 92), increase of available jobs (Goldsmith, 2010, p. 11), slight decrease in total work hours (though explained by an increase in maternity leaves and taking care of the family), increase in spending time on education, improved elementary school test scores, decreased diagnoses of mental health problems (Forget, 2011, p. 286, 299), increased creation of local markets (Frankman, 2010, p. 528), increase of productivity (through an increase in entrepreneurship), increased independence of women from men and an increase of income (excluding basic income) (Haarmann et al. 2009, p. 86, 93, 72).

One of the main arguments against the introduction of a basic income is that it would be too expensive. Paying all citizens an amount that covers basic needs would not be financially feasible (Henderson, 2015, p. 499). However, depending on the exact amount of a basic income and the countries' specifics, a basic income is predicted as being financially feasible when abolishing the existing benefits and the controlling entity of these dividing these benefits while using progressive tax schemes (Torry, 2016, p. 96).

Introducing a basic income could also cause people to become lazy (van der Veen, 2000, p. 137) or lonely (Harris, 2016). I will turn to the specific arguments of laziness and loneliness in chapter V. Others argue that basic income would be unfair, as people who do not do anything receive resources while other people work hard to accumulate them (Torisky, 1993 p. 296). Van Parijs replies to this claim by claiming that somebody who spends all its days surfing might not deserve a basic income, but that the good luck the surfer enjoys is not any different from the good fortune of people who currently benefit from the distribution of resources (van Parijs, 2001, p. 137), regardless of the taxes these people pay. The point here is that van Parijs argues for a liberal form of justice that *does not* discriminate between the different conceptions of the good life (van Parijs, 1991, p. 107). In this sense, the surfer enjoys good luck because her lifestyle is funded by basic income while she happens to not generate taxes. Van Parijs sees this as the same luck that rich people enjoy under the current scheme for the distribution of resources, even if these current rules *do* discriminate between different conceptions of the good life.

This thesis will specifically narrow its scope on the arguments that are concerned with happiness. Relevant positive aspects from basic income that could contribute to people's happiness are considered, while also the most relevant counterarguments are considered. This thesis will not aim to formulate an argument concerning the fairness of basic income, neither the financial feasibility nor the feasibility of basic income in general. In other words, only some aspects of the basic income debate will be considered. Nonetheless, the findings might have consequences for the financial (feasibility) aspect of the basic income debate (chapter V). It will be argued that basic income alleviates the epistemic problem of happiness and decreases people's focus on materialistic goals, two dynamics that undermine people's happiness (chapter IV). So this thesis could be used as an additional argument for the proponents of basic income, as well as a potential contribution to the happiness literature and policy approaches concerning happiness (chapter VI). Specifically, there is good reason to believe that basic income will favour an environment where people are more likely to make more reliable decisions about their happiness. Thus, there is good reason to believe that basic income has positive consequences in terms of people's happiness. Therefore, the thesis is of specific relevance in the discussion on whether basic income would make people happier. An additional contribution to this debate is the argument made in chapter V, which illustrates that the counterargument of laziness and loneliness from opponents of the basic income is not as strong as it is presented. In short, this thesis argues that basic income has positive consequences in terms of people's happiness, an aspect of basic income that should be taken into account when considering implementing basic income.

Chapter II Adopting a framework for happiness

Before explaining how basic income might entail positive consequences for people's happiness, it will be necessary to adopt a plausible definition of happiness. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* describes two philosophical directions on the study of happiness (Haybron, 2011). One direction takes happiness as an evaluative concept roughly equivalent to the concept of well-being, that is, a state that is by definition good for the person. The other direction takes happiness as a descriptive concept that describes a psychological state or condition, similar to describing "boredom" or "depression", while leaving it open when and why happiness is good or contributes to the person's well-being. This thesis concentrates on the latter psychological, descriptive notion of happiness. The reason for a focus on the psychological notion of happiness is that the identified problem underlying this thesis (next chapter) is concerned with the psychological constituents of happiness. An overview of the different happiness concepts is provided in the Annex.

Understanding happiness as a psychological condition is relatively new in the happiness literature. Current happiness research points to a gap in knowledge between the philosophy of happiness and more recent findings from positive psychology (Bishop, 2015, p. 2-5). This chapter will illustrate why two popular accounts of happiness are not sufficient in understanding happiness as well as present the account of happiness that is adopted in this thesis. This part of the argument draws on work by Haybron (2005, 2007, 2008), Bishop (2015), Hall (2014) as well as the Stanford Encyclopedia (Haybron, 2011). The latter is used because it provides an overview of the large amount of happiness literature. Haybron's work is emphasised because it captures both historical accounts of happiness and more recent psychological findings in the study of happiness. Concluding this chapter, several criticisms of Haybron's work are addressed.

2.1 Life satisfaction

A life satisfaction account is often used interchangeably with the notion of happiness (Hall, 2014). The central aspect of life satisfaction theories is that they are concerned with the subject's own overall assessment of their life. From the subject's perspective, a long passed feeling of happiness is less important than the currently perceived state of happiness (Haybron, 2011). Life satisfaction accounts focus on the subject's perceived satisfaction, not on the objective quality or quantity of happiness. Another central element of life satisfaction accounts is the focus on priorities. Life satisfaction theories draw on what people put as their priorities rather than focusing on the aggregate of the different short-lived states of affect people express. By taking into account priorities of people, life satisfaction theories include longer periods of life, compared to only short-lived affective states. The reason is that these affective states might not reflect the priorities people have set in their life (Haybron, 2008, p. 66).

Life satisfaction theories have several disadvantages, some of which provide reasons to not adopt a life satisfaction framework for this thesis. One common criticism made against life satisfaction theories is that a subjective overall assessment of life might be very positive, even though the current affective state of that person resembles deep sadness. In other words, the person may not consider his sadness when assessing how satisfied he is with his life. But it seems counter-intuitive to assess a person that is in a state of deep sadness as happy.

The problem lies partly in the fact that our personal assessment of our lives often depends on ethical norms that dictate what an appropriate attitude to life must be in a given situation (for example, a norm that tells us to discount sadness if we are wealthy, physically healthy, and socially successful) (ibid, p. 93). But these norms have arguably little to do with the descriptive question of whether one is, in fact, happy. Because of this personal reflection being subject to external, ethical norms, personal judgments of life satisfaction can hardly define a person's happiness (ibid, p. 101).

Life satisfaction theories could overcome this problem by framing the attitude someone has over her life as not only an attitude but as an emotional state as well. This would frame life satisfaction theories as describing "happiness as a broad, ongoing sense of well-being" (ibid, p. 87). The problem with this adaptation is that people usually do not have broader feelings of (dis)satisfaction with their lives (ibid, p. 87) and therefore, a life satisfaction theory would not capture the concept of happiness sufficiently. This bears specific importance for this thesis, because it will be illustrated that we are unreliable at knowing what make us happy. If we are unreliable at knowing what makes us happy, then that would complement this criticism of life satisfaction theory that points out the discrepancy between assessing one's overall quality of life and common intuitions about someone being happy. Another limitation of life-satisfaction theories is that assessments of a person's life are subject to the current situation a person is in. For example, someone might evaluate her life worse in a situation with what she thinks is terrible weather than in a weather situation that she particularly likes (ibid, p. 87). Because of these criticisms and the specific importance for this thesis to adopt a theory that allows an objective assessment of one's knowledge of happiness, a life satisfaction theory of happiness is not adopted in this thesis.

2.2 Hedonism

Another account of happiness that is considered for adoption in this thesis is an affect-based theory of the hedonist kind. A hedonist account of happiness assesses happiness as a function of positive and negative affects, i.e. of pleasures and displeasures (Haybron, 2008, p. 45). The focus on our motivation to maximise pleasures is strength of the theory, because how pleasant our experiences are seems to usually reflect well how happy we are. Additionally, a hedonistic account seems to bear practical advantages, because assessing happiness could be reliably done by merely assessing the balance of pleasures over displeasures.

Criticism of a hedonistic account of happiness targets the simplistic aspect of focusing on pleasures and pains only. For example, some displeasures or pleasures might not affect happiness, because they do not affect the actual longer lasting state of the person, but rather remain limited to momentary psychological experiences only, or in other words: they simply do not reach "deeply" enough (Haybron, 2008, p. 63):

> To be sure, we would expect someone who underwent an unrelenting succession of minor irritations not to be very happy at the end of it all. But this does not show the irritations themselves to be constitutive of one's (un)happiness; it reflects rather our expectation that these experiences will impact some deeper aspect of one's psychology, such as one's mood.

Haybron explains that shallow pleasures or displeasures do not reach "deeply" enough (ibid, p. 63). A hedonist can argue that even a shallow pleasurable experience (e.g. eating a slice of bread) might influence happiness. However, it seems to be false to state that shallow pleasurable experiences are *always* accompanied by an increase in happiness. There are pleasurable experiences that are irrelevant in the assessment of happiness: they simply do not influence happiness. Even in the case that eating a slice of bread does make you happier, there are shallow (dis)pleasurable events that do not reach deep enough to alter your happiness. For example, it is not the displeasurable experiences resulting from a depression that eventually make a person unhappy, but the deeper state of depression itself. Solely taking into account the balance of pleasant experiences over unpleasant experiences is perceived as insufficient to describe happiness, because it fails to reach the possible deeper, longer lasting emotional state that a person might be in (ibid, p. 63-64).

This insufficiency is a reason to not adopt this theory for this thesis because of the two problems described in the upcoming chapter: a focus on materialistic goals negatively affecting happiness, and people being unreliable at knowing what makes us happy, are issues concerned with deeper, longer lasting emotional states (e.g. insecurity, stress) and will therefore not be captured by a hedonistic account of happiness. The reason for this is that states like insecurity, stress, and depression, arguably important contributors to unhappiness, cannot be reduced to just unpleasant experiences as required by hedonism. To understand happiness, it is required to acknowledge that unpleasant experiences are only a result of the deeper, longer lasting emotional states that contribute to unhappiness, as the next paragraph will address.

2.3 Emotional state theory

The emotional state theory is also an affect-based theory, similar to a hedonistic account, and is developed and defended by Haybron (2008). The emotional state theory of happiness differs from a hedonistic account because it is not limited to the type of affects that are identified with pleasures and displeasures, but includes other elements as well. The most important addition is that happiness is also concerned with deeper, longer-lasting psychological affective states that might not be directly expressed in shallower affective states (e.g. pleasures). These deeper states are what Haybron identifies as “central affective states” and refers to as: attunement, engagement and endorsement. Attunement is a state that can be described as “feeling at home in one’s life” (Haybron, 2008, p. 112) and can be opposed to a defensive orientated stance. Engagement is concerned with a person’s commitment with the situation he or she is in or experiences. Boredom is a state that would oppose with engagement. Engagement is the central affective state that is partly derived from Aristotle’s notion of virtuous activity in his theory of well-being. The central state endorsement refers to is not only a sense that life can be lived without threats, but that there is actually something positive in life itself. Life does not only contain things that are worth pursuing but is good in a general sense. It inherently includes elements that are to be pursued or sustained. The joy that one would get from the pursuit of the American dream is an example of life itself to be perceived as inherently positive (Haybron, 2008, p. 113). In other words, it is the belief that living is joyful as such. Sadness is therefore something that can be seen as being opposed to a state of endorsement. These three central affective states can last over a longer period, possibly without being noticed. Haybron summarises his elaboration on the central affective states in the following sub-division, from the most to least important:

1. Attunement
    a. Peace of mind vs. anxiety.
    b. Confidence vs. insecurity.
    c. Uncompression vs. compression.
2. Engagement
    a. Exuberance or vitality vs. listlessness.
    b. Flow vs. boredom or ennui.
3. Endorsement
    a. Joy vs. sadness.
    b. Cheerfulness vs. irritability.

(Haybron, 2008, p. 113)

(Interestingly, it is the reverse order of importance that is, according to Haybron, generally recognised in common perceptions of happiness.) These central states are described as “mood propensities”. They are conditions that *dispose* a person to experience certain affects more likely than others (ibid, p. 130). All three states have also their own negative counterparts, which can be referred to as “disendorsement,” “disengagement,” and “disattunement.” A general positive balance of all three states is important to be happy. While attunement and engagement are for Haybron more important, it does not mean that endorsement can be disregarded as a contribution. In general, to be happy means for Haybron the following: “To be happy, then, is for one’s emotional condition to be broadly positive—involving stances of attunement, engagement, and endorsement—with negative central affective states and mood propensities only to a minor extent” (ibid, p. 147). Hence, this is also the description of happiness that is adopted in this thesis. Notice that this is not an exact definition of the word “happiness”, nevertheless, the description just given is as close as Haybron gets to a definition of happiness. He is particularly careful with an exact definition of happiness because, as he explains, “what matters is the thing, not the word” (ibid, p. 4). What he means is that people commonly refer to happiness in their own words and mean to describe the same thing.

The central states that Haybron describes are distinct from peripheral affective states. Peripheral states are shallow and consist of short-lived experiences (e.g. physical pain, amusement, annoyance). The peripheral states as such do not change the central affective states, nor do they influence happiness. Haybron seems to dodge criticism that is directed to hedonism (only taking into account short-lived states of affect) and life-satisfaction theories (limited by subjective biases in assessing life as a whole), by both making this distinction between central and peripheral affective states and framing the central affective states as a disposition to experience certain affective states. This has the result that the criticism that affects life satisfaction theories does not apply to the emotional state theory. Life satisfaction theories are affected by criticism that points out a discrepancy between the assessment of one’s overall life quality and the common intuition people have about someone being happy. The emotional state theory is not affected by this criticism because it claims that there are longer lasting central affective states that are not so easily recognisable. In other words, it is explained that people can be mistaken about their assessment of life because they generally do not have broader feelings of satisfaction about life.

Criticism that affects hedonistic theories is irrelevant, because the emotional state theory goes beyond the simplistic aspects that make hedonistic theories subject to criticism. Before adopting Haybron's account of happiness, several points of criticism will be considered that might be troublesome for the line of reasoning in this thesis.

Haybron's work (2008) is recent and is therefore less thoroughly critically assessed compared to older works. This paragraph provides a short overview of criticism on Haybron's research. One of these critiques focuses on Haybron's sharp distinction between central and peripheral affective states (Naar, 2012). In particular, Haybron explains how the central affective states are essential in contributing to happiness, while the shorter-lived peripheral affective states are claimed to not affect happiness at all. It is specifically the characteristic of short-lived peripheral states not, in any degree, affecting happiness that is the concern of Naar's criticism. Why can short-lived shallow emotions such as being annoyed by dropping the house keys *not* affect how happy we are? What if we happen to be very clumsy and these small things make us annoyed all the time?

Haybron does not provide an answer to this question and therefore lacks an argument to justify this sharp distinction. However, this insufficiency does not affect the line of reasoning in this thesis. The reason is that the problem that will be identified in the next chapter relies on empirical observation of components of the deeper central affective states, e.g. prevalence of anxiety disorder or depression rates, which are indeed more structural problems unlikely to be affected by short-lived experiences such as being annoyed by dropping house keys. Even if we assume that short-lived experiences, such as being annoyed by dropping house keys, is the result of structural clumsiness and does contribute to the higher depression rates observed, then the increase in these depression rates would, at most, only account for a small fraction of these depression rates, and therefore be insufficient as a counterargument.

Another criticism that is specifically important for this thesis is that maximising freedom through, in this case, providing an unconditional basic income, does not have positive consequences in terms of people's happiness. This will first require an additional explanation of a part of Haybron's work: his critique of liberal optimism. In short, liberal optimism, according to Haybron, entails the "spirit of modernity" (Haybron, 2008, p. 12) as in its essence, liberal optimism assumes that people know what is good for them and that people should therefore be empowered to govern their own happiness. In other words, they should be provided with maximal freedom because they themselves know best what makes them happy. Haybron provides a critique to the liberal optimism approach to happiness as it assumes that we know what makes us happy and therefore focuses on maximizing freedom (hence, in the next chapter Haybron's work is used to illustrate that we are unreliable at knowing what makes us happy). Haybron attacks liberal optimism by explaining that we are actually not good at knowing what makes us happy and should not be trusted with extreme freedoms (ibid, p. 256-268). Haybron seems to be right with his claim that we are unreliable at knowing what makes us happy (chapter III), though he overlooks the possibility of how certain types of freedom (such as those granted by the introduction of a basic income) might make us better at knowing what makes us happy (chapter IV). The last chapter (VI) reconsiders Haybron's criticism of liberal optimism in the light of the conclusions drawn in this thesis.

Conclusively, the emotional state theory is adopted in this thesis because of two reasons. The first is that it is a theory that seems superior to the two alternatives just discussed (life satisfaction and hedonism). In general, the emotional state theory provides a more objective and explanatory account of happiness compared to other theories. Second, as we will see in the next chapter, the emotional state theory can explain *why* there is a discrepancy between high rates of anxiety and depression (which do not seem to be compatible with a happy state) and self-reports of happiness. A life satisfaction account does not explain this discrepancy because depressed people can still assess themselves as happy even if they are not. A hedonist account does not explain the discrepancy because it only explains that there are many unpleasant experiences over pleasant experiences, not *why* people would assess themselves as happy while experiencing a depression. Moreover, as we will see, it helps to explain why people would choose a long and stressful experience in order to enjoy only a brief moment of happiness from a materialistic purchase. Answering *why* people are unhappy could provide the ground to explore if and how basic income might result in positive consequences in terms of people's happiness.

Chapter III What makes us unhappy?

This chapter describes the problem that justifies the exploration of this thesis. The problem underlying this thesis is twofold: First, many people are unhappy because of a strong focus on materialistic goals. Hence, it will be illustrated that a strong focus on materialistic goals has negative consequences for the two most important components of the emotional state theory: attunement and engagement. Second, many people are unhappy because we are unreliable at knowing what makes us happy. The latter is what I will call the epistemic problem of happiness. Throughout the thesis, the reader might notice that the two problems are complementary to each other, though this is not something I will argue for. There might well be other factors that negatively affect our happiness. Nonetheless, I will illustrate that a strong focus on materialistic goals and the epistemic problem are crucial contributors to unhappiness. See figure below for an overview of the two problems and the central concepts. The figure does not intent to portray strict causal relations and is for illustrative purposes only.

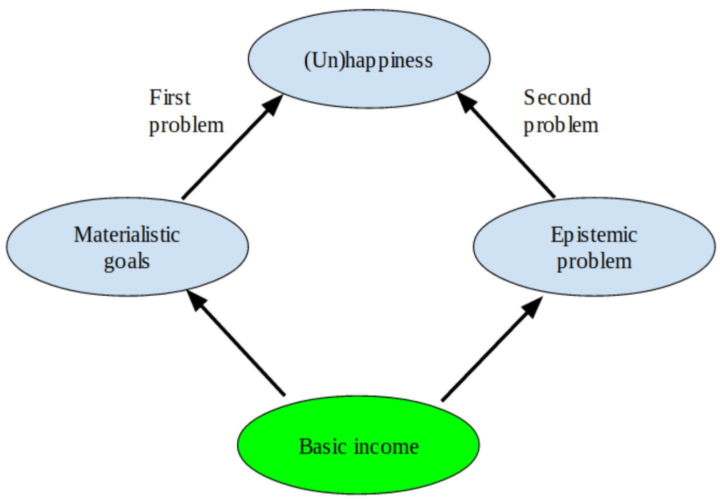

Figure 1. Overview of the two problems and the central concepts.

3.1 Materialistic goals

Tim Kasser argues in his book *The High Price of Materialism* (2002, p. 5) how a strong focus on materialistic goals negatively affects our happiness. He does this by providing an overview of empirical psychological research. The essence of the dynamics that create a distraction from attaining happiness can be found in the following:

> Although they [humanistic and existential psychologists] acknowledged the fact that some level of material comfort is necessary to provide for humans' basic physical needs, these psychologists proposed that a focus on materialistic goals detracts from well-being and happiness. (text in brackets added) (Kasser, 2002, p. 122)

Kasser operationalises "materialism" in his research through an assessment of to what extent people have a focus on different aspects of materialistic values. These materialistic values are measured through a set of questions that test one's identification with, for example: financial aspirations, social status, possessions as well as a lack of identification with affiliation, lack of self-acceptance and lack of feelings towards contributing towards the community. In the empirical studies that Kasser uses to support his claims, people are assessed along a scale of to what extent they identify with these values. The empirical studies show that those people who identify themselves more with materialistic goals also report higher levels of depression and anxiety, as well as are undermined in meeting essential psychological needs such as safety and security, connectedness with others, and autonomous and authentically engaged behaviour. It is suggested that materialistic values are identified with as a result of a coping strategy, aimed to deal with an underlying insecurity. Attaining materialistic values works in this sense by momentarily increasing one's self-esteem. Moreover, work and overtime needed to attain these values are encouraged as well, thus enhancing levels of stress and contributing to the previous mentioned negative effects. Additionally, materialistic values distract people from investing in relationships in communities, "weakening the fibres that bind couples, friends, families and communities" (ibid, p. 72). A compilation of the different research Kasser uses shows how materialistic values suppress or distract from attaining psychological needs central to happiness, as summarised in the following quote:

> Humanistic and existential psychologists tend to place qualities such as authentic self expression, intimate relationships, and contribution to the community at the core of their notions of psychological health. From their viewpoint, a strong focus on materialistic pursuits not only *distracts* people from experiences conducive to psychological growth and health, but signals a fundamental alienation from what is truly meaningful. (Italics added) (Kasser, 2002, p. 3)

This quote does not frame a materialistic pursuit as a distraction directly from happiness, but does indicate how a materialistic pursuit distracts from seeking and valuing psychological experiences that contribute to the affective states central to happiness. More specifically, the high rates of depression and anxiety of people with a strong focus on materialistic goals closely relate to the two most important components of the emotional state theory described in the previous chapter. First, engagement seems to be negatively altered. In Haybron's view, engagement covers an area close to "flow" in an emotional spectrum that goes from "flow" to "boredom" or "ennui". Kasser explains that there are three ways how a strong focus on materialistic goals undermine intrinsic motivation and flow (Kasser, 2002, p. 77). First, people are led to pursue external rewards that are gained through experiences that are less likely to be chosen for the interest or challenge in the experience itself, and so such that draw one towards boredom rather than flow. Second, a materialistic focus makes people more aware of how others see them, and therefore more aware of themselves. But, as Haybron explains, a feature of the state of engagement is a kind of forgetting oneself in one's activities. Third, the pleasant experiences gained from obtaining materialistic goals are less likely to contain the possibility to experience flow. Because of these three reasons, it seems plausible to say that a strong focus on materialistic goals undermines the experience of flow, and therefore an essential component of the engagement state.

Moreover, also attunement seems to be negatively affected. Attunement consists of three spectrums which are all negatively affected by a strong focus on materialistic goals. We will focus on the negative side of these spectrums. The negative counterpart of attunement is a state of disattunement or alienation: "your circumstances are in some sense alien to you—unfamiliar, imposing, threatening. Defenses go up: anxiety, stress, insecurity" (Haybron, 2008, p. 116). The latter three defenses are simplifications of the three negative counterparts that define the state of disattunement. A strong focus on materialistic goals contributes to all three. First, as shown earlier, a strong focus on materialistic goals was related with significant higher levels of anxiety. Second, the relation with stress or a feeling of compression is best described in the following quote:

> Desires to have more and more material goods drive us into an ever more frantic pace of life. Not only must we work harder, but, once possessing the goods, we have to maintain, upgrade, replace, insure, and constantly manage them. Thus, in the journey of life, materialists end up carrying an ever-heavier load, one that expends the energy necessary for living, loving, and learning—the really satisfying aspects of that journey. Thus materialism, although promising happiness, actually creates strain and stress. (Kasser, 2002, p. xi).

The empirical research used by Kasser seems to confirm the above: people with a strong focus on materialistic goals experience higher levels of stress. Third, Kasser suggests how materialistic values can cause insecurity. People with a strong focus on materialistic goals tend to overvalue the importance of acquiring materialistic goods and status which make them experience a gap between their current situation and what they want to have. This gap makes them feel insecure about their current situation, while achieving materialistic goals only leads to a temporary improvement of their self-esteem (Kasser, 2002, p. 59).

In short, a strong focus on materialistic goals seems to be directly related to the negative counterparts of engagement and attunement and, given the emotional state theory here adopted, we can conclude that it is a contributor to unhappiness.

A vast body of the research done in Kasser's book is conducted in the United States. However, references to studies of the link between materialism and mental illnesses in e.g., United Kingdom, Denmark, Russia, India and China, show similar findings (Kasser, 2002, p. 21). Kasser never explicitly refers to the actual amount of people who have a strong focus on materialistic values. However, there are two reasons to believe that a strong focus on materialistic values has strong ties with development of depression, anxiety and social disorders that contribute to unhappiness. The first reason is the large amount of empirical studies that suggest there is a strong correlation between mental illness and having a strong focus on materialistic values (summarised earlier in this section). This does not automatically mean that there is also a high prevalence of people who have a strong focus on materialistic values. However, it does indicate that materialism is an important contributor to the high prevalence of mental illnesses. The second reason is derived from the work of Oliver James (2007). In this work, it is illustrated that countries with a higher prevalence of materialistic values also show higher rates of mental illnesses. This is an important additional point because it not only supports the claim that materialism is an important contributor to the high prevalence of mental illnesses, but it also implies that there is a high prevalence of materialistic values in countries with high rates of mental illnesses in the first place. Showing that there is a high prevalence of materialistic values is important because a hypothetical low prevalence of materialistic values cannot be held (largely) responsible for high rates of mental illnesses.

Criticism of Kasser's work mainly concentrates on the credibility of his data. According to one of the criticisms (Easterlin, 2004), Kasser builds his argument on a couple of studies which mainly used psychology students as respondents, and therefore do not represent the diversity in a society. However, the large quantity of empirical research used in the work still contains many examples that do not use psychology students as a sample pool.

Also, according to another critic, Kasser seems to ignore the fact that work can also contribute to the fulfilling of psychological needs, rather than solely being a cause for stress (Domagalski, 2004, p. 136). The benefits of work indeed seem to be neglected in Kasser's book. However, work itself is not the target of Kasser's criticism; it is the strong focus on materialistic values that is criticised. Even though work might be beneficial for a person, it does not undermine his thesis that a strong focus on a materialistic pursuit contributes to unhappiness.

Finally, one could object that Kasser's focus is misplaced: post-materialistic values, such as autonomy and self-expression, are now more prevalent. Therefore, "materialism" and "materialistic values" might be outdated terms. This could partly be agreed upon. However, according to Tony Fitzpatrick, having a strong materialistic pursuit in the practice of daily life is still very relevant:

> Certainly, we spend much of our lives valuing intangibles such as love and friendship; at least, we tell ourselves often enough that this is what we do. But when asked to consider the nature of the public realm and of social interaction, most people seem to push such intangibles into the background so that the quality of life means little more than the standard of living. There are often very good reasons for this, e.g. a fear of poverty disciplines us into a narrow range of lifestyles and forces upon us myopic conceptions of the good. Undoubtedly, post-materialistic *values* are now more prevalent throughout the West, but these values do not necessarily translate into post-materialistic *practices*. (1999, p. 182, 183)

If a strong focus on materialistic goals distracts us from experiences conducive to positive central affective states, then why are so many people intent on pursuing goals that do not make them happy? The yearly occurrence rate of mental illness in the US was found to be 26.2 percent (Haybron, 2008, p. 219). Such a high rate of mental illness does not seem to fit with the 92 percent of people who report being happy (ibid, p. 216). The difference between high rates of happiness in subjective assessment of happiness and the high prevalence of mental illnesses (of which depression and anxiety have the largest share) seems to imply that many people are unreliable in knowing whether they are unhappy.

An alternative explanation could be that people respond to these surveys according to social expectations, and not according to how they actually feel. This could account for a partial explanation of the discrepancy between high rates of happiness in self-reports and a high prevalence of mental illnesses. However, it is not likely that this could explain the majority of this discrepancy. There are two reasons for this. First, self-reports of happiness tend to be only slightly higher in personal interviews compared to anonymous self-reports (Veenhoven, 2015). This means that the incentive to provide socially desirable answers would only explain a minor difference. Second, the discrepancy is supported by studies that compared the usage of self-reports with a mental health assessment by clinicians. These studies included also an assessment of physiological responses, such as blood pressure (Shedler, Mayman & Manis, 1993). The conclusion drawn was that a majority of the people that were rated mentally healthy by the self-reports turned out to be "deemed to be distressed" by the results of the clinical assessment that included physiological responses (Haybron 2008, p. 218). It is unlikely that the participants of this study provided socially desirable answers in the self-report while knowing that there was also a clinical assessment that could bring an inflated happiness self-report to light.

These two replies to an alternative explanation (people deliberately inflate their happiness reports to meet social expectations) provide additional support for the statement that people are actually unreliable at knowing whether they are happy.

> The corroboration from the physiological data, along with the highly negative appraisals for some of those classified as defensive deniers, strongly indicates that some, and possibly even most, of those rated as healthy by the self-report-based scales have serious deficiencies in their emotional conditions.. [...] We should take seriously the possibility that very many people are substantially mistaken about how happy they are. (Haybron, 2008, p. 218 & p. 221)

It is possible to put question marks behind the high rates of mental illnesses, because one can discuss about what exactly contributes to a mental illness or even if a mental illness exists as such. The point is that these studies do show that a great deal of the central affective states that contribute to happiness are altered despite many people not realising that they are unhappy.

If there is such difference between the high depression rates and subjective measures of happiness, it seems worthwhile to explore why we are unreliable at knowing both whether we are happy and what makes us happy.

3.2 Why we are unreliable at knowing what makes us happy

This section will show that there are good reasons to believe we are indeed unreliable at knowing what makes us happy. Daniel Haybron (2008) proposes several factors that make us unreliable at knowing what makes us happy. In this thesis I will refer to them as factors that contribute to the epistemic problem of happiness. The latter will sometimes be abbreviated as 'the epistemic problem'. Not all the factors indicated by Haybron are explained here. Six factors are highlighted. The first two are on a more general note, the other four are used because they are the factors that are likely altered by basic income (next chapter).

The first two factors contributing to the epistemic problem of happiness are central to the notion of "affective ignorance". Affective ignorance entails two epistemic failures: we are ignorant about our past states of affect and ignorant about present states of affect. Ignorance of our past states of affect is due to the fact that we process a large amount of experiences every day, making it impossible to bring all these experiences into account accurately when assessing the quality of one's experiences. Ignorance of present affects means that we are unreliable at judging our current state of affect. For example, when we are in a bad mood, we cannot relate the bad mood to a physical location as we do with physical pain when we hit our head. We cannot properly get hold of the bad mood because it is a highly diffuse state (Haybron, 2008, p. 203). As a consequence, we might ignore or neglect the different and potentially complex reasons for the bad mood.

A third factor that Haybron identifies is concerned with the assumption that people normally pursue what they need depending on the degree they actually need it. Haybron doubts this assumption (ibid, p. 240) by suggesting that our ancestors had needs such as relationships, connectedness with environment, and meaningful activities already automatically met, and therefore had no specific motivation to pursue them. These needs were automatically met because of the close communities people lived in that required (meaningful) contributions for the survival of everybody. We were disposed to be engaged in meaningful activities, relations and connection with the environment because they were part of our survival kit in this ancestral environment. Today, the environment changed and those needs are not met automatically anymore, but we still need to meet these essential needs. The motivation to meet these needs does not come automatically, because we have not evolved to know they are essential. We are not naturally motivated to pursue them. Therefore, our not knowing that these needs are essential for our happiness contributes to our not knowing *what* makes us happy. Hence, the previous two factors are about our own ignorance of whether we *are* happy. This factor, however, is concerned with *what* makes us happy. Haybron identifies this third factor, us not being disposed to be motivated to pursue essential psychological needs, as a crucial point because it provides the possibility that essential psychological needs can be neglected without people being aware of it.

A fourth factor contributing to the epistemic problem of happiness in Haybron's work is summarised in the term "lay rationalism". Lay rationalism describes a tendency where people make decisions based on rationalistic considerations, e.g., economic values.

As a result of this tendency, “soft values”, e.g. the value of an experience as such, or increased happiness, can be easily neglected or suppressed (ibid, p. 234-236). For example, decisions about employment are more readily and easily based on monetary value and the potential possessions that can be acquired, because these “hard values” seem easier to measure and to communicate. Soft values are usually much harder to communicate because they tend to be subjective and intangible. Hard values are therefore easier to justify to oneself and others, creating a bias in decisions and assessments regarding one’s happiness. Because of a bias towards choosing experiences on the basis of hard values, we are less likely to know which experiences would contribute the most to our happiness. For example, consider the following scenarios. One experience involves teaching a class of mathematics. It pays 50 euros but you actually do not like teaching mathematics. The other experience involves teaching a class voluntarily about a topic that you feel passionate about, that feels fulfilling to teach, in other words: an activity that puts you in a state of “flow”. In the light of the emotional state theory, the second teaching experience is likely to bring us more happiness than the first. However, given our “lay rationalism”, we will never know it if we are biased to choose the first based on the hard value here represented by the 50 euros.

A fifth factor is the adaptation to persistent affect (ibid, p. 205). This entails that even if we find some things irritating or actually pleasant, they may tend to become adapted in our daily lives, eventually not being noticed anymore. In other words, our awareness of certain pleasant or unpleasant things seems to fade, while the pleasant or unpleasant things persist and are only recognised when they cease to exist. An example of this can be found in the difference between someone who recently experienced a great amount of stress and someone who has experienced the same amount of stress but already for a decade. It seems safe to say that the first person assesses the stress as a greater negative influence on one’s happiness than the latter person would, thus indicating that the latter person shows a diminished awareness of her state of happiness. It is important to emphasise that a decreased awareness of a great deal of stress through adaptation has negative consequences in terms of one’s happiness. As previously shown, experiencing stress directly affects the attunement state in Haybron’s theory. Becoming adapted to stress hides from our view the negative influence that stress has on our emotional condition, thus making it harder to take notice of it and do something about it.

The sixth and last factor is concerned with the so-called peak-end effect and the neglect of duration in assessing our happiness. Haybron draws here on studies (ibid, p. 211) that show how the assessment of our experiences is biased by the peak of our experience. For example, a multiple day hike that turns out to be utterly boring can be assessed in his wholeness as exciting and fun if there were two minutes spent watching a bear catching salmon in the river. This implies that the duration of unpleasant events is neglected and the peak effect of an experience is prioritised in the assessment of the experience.

These six factors explain why we are unreliable at knowing what makes us happy, explaining why many people are unhappy, despite positive reports in subjective measurements of happiness. In the upcoming chapter, it will be argued that there are good reasons to assume that basic income will decrease the epistemic problem of happiness. This will be done by showing that the introduction of a basic income provides an incentive to overcome some (specifically, the latter four) of the factors that contribute to the epistemic problem of happiness.

Chapter IV How basic income alleviates the epistemic problem of happiness

It will be argued that a basic income provides an incentive to inhibit four of the identified factors that contribute to the epistemic problem of happiness. This will partly be done by showing how a basic income helps to focus less on materialistic values.

Introducing a basic income will not affect every contributing factor of the epistemic problem of happiness. People may well remain unreliable at knowing what makes them happy after the introduction of a basic income. However, a basic income will decrease the influence of four of the described factors, therefore contributing at least in some degree to the reliability of knowing what makes us happy. This decreased influence is a result of favouring a social environment that encourages a shift from materialistic values. The arguments made in this chapter are based on the assumption that a basic income will work similar to the findings from the empirical studies mentioned in the first chapter. Or more precisely, the assumption that a basic income works favourably by greatly increasing entrepreneurship, fulfilling hobbies, volunteer work, and by decreasing mental health problems, while the possible reduction in total work hours remains limited and is compensated by e.g. education. This assumption would stand in contrast with a different possibility: a basic income will make people lazy (e.g. van der Veen, 2000, p. 137) and lonely (Harris, 2016). These possibilities are addressed in the next chapter (chapter V).

The first factor that will be altered by a basic income is concerned with the assumption that people pursue what they need. This assumption was argued to be false, because we are not motivated to pursue needs that were formerly automatically met in our ancestral environment (meaningful relationships, meaningful activities and engagement with the environment) (Haybron, 2008, p. 240). A basic income would not by any means bring us back to an ancestral environment where these essential psychological needs are automatically met, but it will facilitate an environment where these essential needs can be met with greater ease. Luigino Bruni (2012) reports a decrease in happiness as an unintentional consequence from not having enough relational goods (Bruni 2012, p. 399). Relational goods are “goods which can be produced, exchanged and enjoyed by individuals only if they are shared with others in non-anonymous social interactions” (Paganetto, 2014,

p. 108). Implementation of a basic income would boost the consumption and production of relational goods, because it provides the security for people to spend time doing unpaid work. Basic income could therefore stimulate volunteer work (Birnbaum & Wolfe, 2012, p. 195, 220). Volunteer work strengthens social connections, builds strong cohesive communities and enhances civic engagement while delivering goods and services (Wu, 2011, p. 6-11), therefore increasing consumption of relational goods and thus contributing to the essential need of meaningful relationships. Regarding the need to engage in meaningful activities, a basic income is also seen as a system that would “create a platform for meaningful work” (Healy et al, 2013 p. 119). The reason is that a basic income compensates for work that is not paid. Therefore, people have the possibility to do the work that they find meaningful (ibidem). A basic income would also provide an incentive for meeting the third psychological need: engagement with the environment. For example, one of the contributions to finance a basic income comes from the proposal of an environmental tax. Burdening the consumption of less-environmentally friendly products will help consumers to signify the link between certain products and their effect on the environment (European Environment Agency, 1996). Moreover, a basic income is considered a possible measure to “move away from the present economic system of maximum economic growth with no consideration of finite resources, towards a sustainable model of development [...]”. (Healy et al, 2013 p. 120). These three arguments imply that a basic income favours an environment where essential basic needs, such as, meaningful relationships, engagement with the environment and meaningful activities, become more salient, and thus more likely to be pursued. In other words, a basic income would facilitate the engagement in activities that are not solely concerned with materialistic values, thus, encouraging people to focus less on materialistic values.

The second factor positively affected by the introduction of basic income is concerned with the previously described term “lay rationalism”. Lay rationalism describes a tendency to make decisions based on rationalistic considerations (e.g. monetary values, material assets) rather than on “soft” values (e.g. emotions or the value of an experience). Since soft values are more difficult to describe and practically impossible to quantify, we tend to disregard them when we assess our happiness. This factor is changed by the introduction of basic income, because it will decrease the importance of basing decisions on hard values. The reason for this is that the monetary requirements for satisfying basic needs would be already met, therefore decreasing the pressure to base decisions on monetary values. Basic income is likely to encourage people to base decisions on soft values. The reason for this is that, for example, workplaces and the actual work itself have the potential to become more attractive and meaningful for workers, because employees will have more bargaining power over their workplace (van Parijs 1995, p. 95). People will have the possibility to choose jobs in accordance to preferences, therefore providing a more supportive environment to base decisions regarding one's happiness more on soft values. It might be objected that bargaining power is a relative concept, and employers who will have to adapt their workplaces accordingly might be negatively affected because of the effort they will have to invest in the restructuring of the workplace. Nonetheless, basic income promotes "soft values" for employers as well. They will make their investment choices in the light of soft values just as employees will make their career choices based on soft values. Moreover, the efforts made by employers to change the workplace are unlikely to outweigh the long term benefits of becoming more reliable at knowing what makes one happy. Additionally, being encouraged to base decisions more readily on soft values need not be constrained to work related considerations. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, basic income also provides more financial space and time to engage oneself in hobbies or other non-work related activities, where "soft values" are likely to be even more salient.

The third factor with the potential to be changed by a basic income is the adaptation to persistent affect. This concerned the tendency to get used to, and thus to fail to notice, certain persisting pleasant or unpleasant features in one's life. A basic income will not directly reduce affective adaptation. However, it will provide an environment that makes people more likely to become aware of persisting unpleasant features. The main reason for this effect is that the environment of people with a basic income is more likely to be diverse. For example, labour markets become more flexible (van Parijs 1995, p. 256). If people are in a better position to switch jobs or start their own business, it is safe to say that they will be exposed to more diverse work environments, increasing the likelihood that persisting unpleasant features in one's working life are noticed due to these changes. Apart from the work environment, a basic income would also affect life outside work. For example, having one's basic needs met through a basic income allows people the time and financial security to engage in activities that they otherwise did not have enough time for. This would mean that there is more time for activities such as hobbies or taking care of the children. Providing the possibility to spend more time outside work would also contribute to the diversity of activities outside the (paid) work environment, therefore increasing the likelihood that persisting unpleasant features outside the work environment are easier noticed as well. Or, again in other words to explain the relation with materialistic values: If a basic income provides a more flexible work environment as well as more flexibility outside work, it will be plausible to say that, due to this more diverse environment, long persisting unpleasant features such as long stressful work hours needed in order to attain materialistic goals, will be more easily noticed as negatively affecting one's happiness. Through this factor of the epistemic problem of happiness it can be seen how a basic income helps to reduce the focus on materialistic values. Discouraging materialistic values is, again, part of the process in showing why a basic income alleviates the epistemic problem of happiness.

The fourth and last factor altered by basic income is the bias of peak-end effects of experiences. This factor showed how we are unreliable at knowing what makes us happy because we tend to prioritise peak-end effects of experiences rather than the whole duration. Basic income does not reduce the actual tendency to prioritise peak-end effects, but rather the environment that will make us more likely to prioritise peak effects. To illustrate this change in environment, it will be shown how peak-end effects were previously prioritised in assessing happiness outside the work environment. Consider the observation that attaining materialistic goals tend to bring about a short and sharp increase of happiness, before quickly declining to the level prior to consumption (Kasser, 2002, p. 27, 49). Experiencing short-lived peak-end effects of happiness through buying products outside the work contrasts with the lack of peak-end effects in the considerably longer work process. There is a sharp distinction between the lack of peak effects in a longer of process of work compared to the short-lived 'high' experienced by attaining some materialistic goal. A basic income would provide an incentive to level experienced peak-end effects inside and outside work environment more equally. Behavioural economist Wesel Pech explains how a basic income would increase the amount of jobs in which people have intrinsic motivation to perform well (Pech, 2011, p. 9). This observation, together with the earlier prediction of jobs becoming more attractive, implies that people will be more likely to experience positive peak-end effects in a work environment. If people are in any case biased to base decisions on peak-end experiences, then the creation of a work environment in which people experience more peak-end effects suggests the possibility for a more equalised assessment of the considerations relevant to one’s happiness. If we follow this argument further into the work environment, then experiencing peak effects from an accomplishment after a long work struggle (for example, a performance-related bonus) might still make us unreliable at assessing whether or not this long struggle was worth it. This might indeed be the case, but a basic income might also alter this effect. The reason for this is that the greater flexibility a basic income provides regarding choosing one’s job, might provoke an assessment that relies more on the “long struggle” aspect of that job, rather than the peak-end effect of the accomplishment. This is because a basic income provides financial security and a better bargaining position when choosing a job, thus providing the possibility for a more thorough assessment of the different aspects of the considered work and the processes it consists of. This will make people more likely to be aware of a potential “long struggle” aspect of a job, therefore also more likely to not overvalue the peak-end effect of work-related accomplishments. Again in other words, a more even distribution of peak-end effects in and outside work make people less likely to overvalue the short lived increase of happiness through focusing on materialistic goals (be those consumeristic or a work-related bonus), showing that basic income reduces both the epistemic problem as well as the focus on materialistic goals.

This chapter showed how the introduction of a basic income can reduce the impact of four factors that contribute to the epistemic problem of happiness. Materialistic values are an important aspect of these four factors, illustrating both how a basic income decreases a strong focus on materialistic value, as well as alleviates the epistemic problem of happiness.

Chapter V Laziness and loneliness

The positive effects on the epistemic problem as described in the previous chapter are only likely to work if the empirical findings from the basic income experiments that have been conducted can actually work on a larger scale. Apart from the potential positive effects such as: increased entrepreneurship, more flexibility in choosing one's job, increased volunteer work, there is also the possibility that people become lazy or lonely. It seems safe to say that, if basic income contributes to people becoming lazy (i.e. inactive) and/or lonely, in general we cannot expect it to have positive consequences in terms of people's happiness, or in terms of alleviating the epistemic problem of happiness. So this chapter discusses why people might become lonely or lazy. The loneliness and laziness objection will be separately examined. It will not be argued that nobody will become lazy or lonely after implementing a basic income; basic income might result in some people becoming lazy or lonely. The main aim of this chapter is to illustrate that laziness and loneliness will not undermine the alleviation of the epistemic problem.

4.1 Laziness

The problem with becoming lazy is well captured in the following quote from Widerquist (2013, p. 80):

> Basic income is an unconditional payment, usually proposed at a level high enough to live on. This creates the possibility for people to stop working and live off the basic income only, and spend all their time on leisure activities.

If many people decide to stop working completely and become lazy, basic income might not be financially feasible because there are not enough people working to generate enough tax revenue to fund basic income. More relevantly for this thesis, if indeed many people become lazy, the argued positive implications for the epistemic problem might not take place because they are based on the assumption that people do make proper use of the possibilities that a basic income provides, instead of becoming lazy. In this thesis, "becoming lazy" does not only entail that a person stops working, but also means that the person will be inactive in pursuing and exploring his or her interests outside the work environment. In other words, a form of inactivity that entails not making use of the possibilities that a basic income provides. Laziness does certainly not equate with being unemployed, the term is solely used in this thesis because the term is used by opponents of basic income as an objection. To understand if laziness would be a difficulty for basic income to alter the epistemic problem, first, the reasons behind the possibility of people becoming lazy will need to be identified. There are three interrelated dynamics that contribute to the possibility of becoming lazy. These contributing dynamics can be described as (1) social stigma that results from a sharp distinction in discourse between employment and unemployment, (2) a dissolved link between work and income, and (3) a developed incentive-based structure of the workplace. These three dynamics require an explanation.

The first dynamic is the stigma resulting from a sharp distinction between employment and unemployment. This is explained to follow from governmental policies and a dominant moral discourse, both promoting the sharp distinction between people who work and people who do not work:

> It [the dominant moral discourse regarding employment/unemployment] enables everyone in employment to understand themselves as virtuous, and as belonging to society in ways in which those not in employment do not belong; and it enables harsh sanctions to be imposed on people who are unemployed: a strategy that appears to be designed to perpetuate the stated social division in the public mind. (Torry, 2016, p. 89) (text in brackets added)

The social stigma resulting from this sharp distinction between employment and unemployment labels people as lazy or failures when applying for means-tested benefits (Standing 2009, p. 140). As a result of this stigma, people who are or become unemployed, are confirmed in their inability to conform to the standard of employment and therefore demotivated to look for work (or become demotivated to pursue other interests). This claim is supported by a study conducted on stigmatisation and unemployment data in Germany, and concludes that stigmatisation is one explanation for the persistent and high unemployment rates in Germany (Biewen & Steffes, 2010). Thus, the main aim of the sharp distinction between employment and unemployment—motivating people to get back to work—has actually a demotivating effect. People who are subject to the stigma, because they are or become unemployed, are confirmed in their inability and therefore might become lazy. Hence, the social stigma that demotivates people to work is only contributing to make (or maintain) unemployed people lazy. It does not affect people who are employed, as they will not be subject to the social stigma.

The second dynamic, the dissolved link between work and income, follows from the following historical background, best explained by Van der Veen (2000, p. 84):

> The spectre of individualism, released by the Reformation and the Enlightenment, activated the values of industriousness, hard work, thrift, entrepreneurship, and 'deferred gratification' in early-modern capitalism. Under the welfare state, ironically, individualism has encouraged the development of an alternative 'hedonist' ethos, which is fundamentally at odds with the original sober mentality of early-modern capitalism. Having dissolved the 'sacred' link between work and income, the welfare state contributed to the erosion of the traditional work ethic as a central point of moral reference.

Van der Veen explains that the means-tested benefits from the welfare state "dissolved the 'sacred' link between work and income, the welfare state has come to undermine the motivation to seek gainful employment" (van der Veen, 2000, p. 137). If van der Veen is right, and furthermore if basic income is seen as an expression of the same welfare state that provides means-tested benefits, then it might be argued that basic income also erodes that sacred link, with the result that people will not be motivated to seek work for income. In other words, more people might become lazy.

However, the first described dynamic, unemployed people becoming lazy from social stigma, could conflict with this second dynamic. The reason for this is that if we assume that there is social stigma and people feel demotivated by this, then it means that there is also a strong work ethic that makes unemployed people perceive this social stigma. They relate themselves to this strong work ethic because otherwise they would not experience the social stigma in the first place. The existence of the stigma might be troublesome for this second dynamic, because it implies that there is after all a strong work ethic still in place, despite the welfare state. However, if we look closer, the work ethic does not necessarily seem to result in a conflict between these two dynamics. It seems that the two dynamics are targeting two different groups of people: unemployed people who become lazy because they experience the social stigma as *they* relate themselves to the strong work ethic, and people who do not relate to the strong work ethic but become lazy because *they* perceive a dissolved link between work and income. Therefore, the two dynamics are not conflicting but rather have their emphasis on different groups.

The third dynamic requires a more extensive explanation. This dynamic entails the observation that our institutions are built around "hard" values or more specifically extrinsic rewards to incentivise people to work. Barry Schwartz recognises that the dominant structure in workplaces uses incentives to motivate people to work (2015, p. 60). This is partly explained by the piecemeal production model of the modern factory, which divides labour into small tasks easy to perform and practically meaningless as such. And it seems that the only reward for people to choose such jobs must be extrinsic, i.e. a monetary reward. It could be said that the idea to organise work around monetary incentives is shown to be mistaken, because of a large amount of studies that replicate the same finding: payment is not the only reason why people work (Schwarz, 2015, and for references to empirical studies: Pink, 2009). For example, a sense of fulfilment and autonomy in one's work is seen as an important reason for people to work. However, as capitalism further developed, incentives such as meaning and autonomy of one's own work were for the majority ignored in the creation of workplaces but also, more importantly, in the *expectations* people had from work. Schwartz explains that Adam Smith's view (2014) that people work only for pay actually became true:

> The lesson here is that just how important material incentives are to people will depend on how the human workplace is structured. And if we structure it in keeping with the false idea that people work only for pay, we'll create workplaces that make this false idea true. (Schwartz, 2015, p. 12)

It is true that workplaces seem to have changed; for a large amount of people, jobs have become more interesting, flexible and self-directed (Pink, 2009). Nonetheless, the prevailing structure of incentives remains, according to Schwartz, deeply rooted in our motivation and workplaces (2015, p. 59). This is strengthened by a worldwide poll conducted by Gallup

(2013[1]). According to this poll, conducted in 142 countries, 13 percent of people are feeling passionate about their activities on daily basis, 24 percent hates their job and 63 percent does not feel engaged at work.

> Unless there is a collective effort to combat this ideology, we will all become the lazy, selfish pursuers of self-interest, not just in work but in our lives as a whole, that at least some social scientists have assumed we always were. (Schwartz 2015, p. 60)

The bottom line is that, for a large part, we became conditioned to work because of an external reward. This also means that, if the reward normally associated with work becomes available to all without the need to work—as it is automatically provided by the basic income—people might no longer see any reason to work. In short, if people are conditioned to work for external incentives, and this incentive now gets provided independently of work, people might become lazy.

To sum up, the three dynamics identified are: a demotivating social stigma against the unemployed, a dissolved link between work and income, and a structure of incentives that dominate the workplace. If basic income pushes people to laziness in one or more of these three ways, and if laziness (in the sense of being inactive specified above) contributes negatively to both happiness and to people's knowledge of their happiness, then basic income will not alleviate the epistemic problem. In the next section, I will attack the first claim.

4.2 Basic income and laziness

Are the loneliness and laziness objections troublesome for the alleviation of the epistemic problem through basic income? It will be shown that the alleviation of the epistemic problem is largely unaffected by the loneliness and laziness objection. "Largely" unaffected because basic income would never fully undermine all the dynamics that are contributing to people becoming lazy or lonely.

[1] 2013 is the most recent worldwide poll conducted by Gallup at the time of writing.

Generally speaking, basic income is likely to result in alterations of the just described dynamics that contribute to people becoming lazy. This is mainly because basic income is different from means-tested benefits. More specifically, the first and second dynamic in the laziness objection are built on characteristics of means-tested benefits. However, basic income does not have these characteristics and therefore, does not contribute to these two dynamics. In fact, the introduction of basic income will undermine all the three dynamics mentioned above. The first two because they are built on characteristics of means-tested benefits and the third because basic income has the potential to encourage an environment that reduces the importance of external incentives. The next paragraphs will show exactly how these three dynamics are undermined by basic income.

Concerning the first dynamic, basic income "blurs" a sharp moral distinction between employed ("good") and unemployed living on benefits ("bad"). The very idea of a category of people living on benefits (and thus, "milking" public resources) will disappear, and with it the social stigma against these people. And if the stigma is removed, people otherwise not employed will not suffer the demotivating effects of the stigma. Even if still unemployed, they might find new motivation to be active in alternative ways. For example, unpaid work (e.g. volunteer work), as indirectly compensated for by basic income, will be recognised as at least comparable to paid work (Healy et al., 2013, p. 119). Moral discourse is likely to change because being "virtuous" will not strictly depend on being employed or not, but more according to your contribution to the community or society. This would mean that people would still be motivated to be active, just not necessarily in ways directly related to employment, but rather according to their individual contribution to the community or society.

As for the impact on the second dynamic, it must be remembered that basic income promises to remove the disincentive to work which formerly resulted from the means-tested driven unemployment trap, because finding work will not entail a direct reduction or deduction from the basic income (Fitzpatrick, 1999, p. 52). This qualitative difference from welfare state benefits means that basic income has the potential to be an invigorating factor in people's willingness to work, thus blocking the weakening effects of the welfare state that van der Veen pointed at.

In sum, when we look at the first two dynamics of laziness, it can be seen that the introduction of basic income would rather undermine them than favour them. If this is true, then, in turn, basic income still has the full potential to reduce the epistemic problem of happiness.

As for the third dynamic, recall the way that we incentivise people. Because of the unconditionality aspect of the basic income, a rigorous policy change is adopted that could break the dominant "carrot and stick" incentive structure. There is good reason to believe that basic income encourages people to think beyond external incentives, because the financial space is provided to do so. If people diverge from prioritising external incentives as the main reason to work, it becomes indeed more likely that people think differently about unpaid work that fosters meaningful relationships and meaningful activities. People would be less inclined to solely pursue external rewards; therefore it becomes more likely that people consider volunteer work or meaningful work regardless of the pay. If people become less dependent on external incentives, then people are also less likely to become lazy. This is because, when considering to engage in an activity that does not offer a significant external incentive, people are more likely to engage in this activity (if they are otherwise attracted to it), because their decision will depend less on the presence of such external incentives. In other words, basic income will provide the opportunity to choose certain careers or certain jobs for their own sake, rather than push people to inactivity because of the immediate availability of financial resources that earlier had to be earned through work. This way also the third dynamic will be undermined by basic income.

In sum, even if it cannot be ruled out that some people will choose a lazy life, and thus will miss out on the positive impact of basic income on the epistemic problem of happiness, there is good reason to believe that the dynamics that push people to laziness will in fact be obstacled by basic income.

4.3 Loneliness

The possibility that people may become lonely is formulated by Max Harris (2016). Harris starts from the remark that people in many relatively wealthy countries have a strong individualistic focus on their own interests and ambitions as opposed to the interests of others. There are several studies that argue for the same observation (James, 2007). Moreover, Harris observes that interpersonal contact is already limited in current society due to technological advancement, specifically in communication. Examples are given of limited face-to-face contact because we increasingly often communicate through mobile phones and the internet. An implementation of basic income in an already individualised and technologically advanced society could make people more lonely and individualistic than they already were. Harris provides two specific reasons that could contribute to more people becoming lonely. The first is best described in the following quote:

> First, though the Universal Basic Income claims to give people the 'freedom' to spend the income however they want, that freedom is conditioned by dominant thinking in contemporary society. In a society where individuals may be more reluctant than ever to initiate face-to-face contact [...], it is plausible that the payment of a basic income will lead to people curling up in individualistic cocoons rather than reaching out to initiate communal interaction (Harris, 2016, p. 2).

In other words, a basic income could result in a withdrawal of people from social contact that they previously gained from work. Thus, if basic income makes people decide to give up work, they will not enjoy the social interaction gained from work and therefore become lonely. Here we already see a connection with the previous laziness objection.

The second reason entails the lack of an environment that sparks social interaction. According to Harris, a basic income would not come with the "public infrastructure to underscore the value of the community" (ibid, p. 1). It lacks an element that other government initiatives do provide. For example, when a government provides free healthcare it also provides the physical public space where this free health care takes place. It is a public space where people have the opportunity to interact with each other. Harris explains that a basic income provides the individual benefit but does not come with the second element, the public space that provides a basis for community interaction.

Both, an individualistic mindset in combination with technological advancement and the lack of the provision of a public infrastructure, contribute to the risk of people becoming lonely. And if many people become lonely, the epistemic problem of happiness will not be alleviated, and possibly will be even made worse, since lonely people are probably not particularly good at knowing what makes them happy. In Haybron's view, it is often only thanks to the contact with others who know us well that we might learn whether we are happy or not. Moreover, some specific factors of the epistemic problem seem to be aggravated. For example, by becoming lonely we will be even further away from recognising and meeting essential needs such as the need for meaningful relationships. Or again, by becoming lonely our adaptation to persistent affect may well be exacerbated, since there will be fewer people around us to make us notice, for example, how stressed we are by our work routine.

4.4 Basic income and loneliness

The answer to these worries relies in large part on pointing out the connections between the dynamics of loneliness and those of laziness. The choice of a lonely life, of course, cannot be entirely prevented by basic income. Some people choose a life in solitude because it is a conscious decision and some people might still become unwillingly lonely with a basic income. But as seen above, basic income can operate on the dynamics of work and laziness, and this has implications for loneliness too.

If basic income makes people diverge from prioritising external incentives as the main reason to work, it becomes likely that people will think differently about how their work fosters meaningful relationships. In other words, people would be less inclined to solely pursue external rewards; therefore it becomes more likely that people will regard meaningful relationships as a more important element in their consideration of an activity. This would make them less likely to become lonely in two ways: people might find themselves less lonely in the workplace itself, and also they might choose unpaid work, for example volunteer work, which promotes interaction within the community.

Further, the removal of the social stigma linked to unemployment will also remove a feeling of isolation of the unemployed people from the rest of society.

Finally, if is true that basic income will free up time and energy previously spent on working, then it is plausible to assume that some of this time and energy will be spent on personal relationships.

Despite this, people could still become lonely. Harris explained that one of the reasons for becoming lonely is the technological advancement in an already individualised society. This would mean that we first need to assume that basic income will indeed make people favour working and communication through digital technology. If we follow this line of thought, people could remain active and engage in social interaction, but become isolated from the physical presence of others. People could become lonely and still be active because they solely communicate and work through digital communication and work platforms. Whether or not this observation is troublesome for my argument seems to depend on how loneliness is defined. It could be argued that people who are active and social solely through digital technology are actually not lonely because they are still interacting with others and are still able to build meaningful relations, especially if digital interactions (e.g. through video) become more similar to actual physical interaction. Moreover, it remains unclear whether basic income will actually make people favour work and communication through digital technology in the first place.

It also needs to be stressed that loneliness might be only a temporary consequence of the introduction of basic income. For example, basic income would allow people to quit their unpleasant jobs with more security. In this sense, these people may choose an inactive and thus lonely life for a while. Still, quitting such jobs would also put them in the position to be better aware of adaptation to persistent affect, as pointed out in chapter IV. These persons will now be in a better position to know what makes them happy. It might be that for people like this, being lonely or not engaging in many social interactions might be a conscious decision, but then in this case this would not necessarily make them unhappy.

If, on the other hand, loneliness does contribute to unhappiness, such people at least do not run the risk of becoming adapted to their lonely and sad state. Thanks to the break from their ordinary routine afforded by basic income, they are now in a position to defend themselves from negative affective adaptation. Hence, the affective adaptation described in chapter IV also implies that people who quit their jobs and become lonely are likely to become aware of this lonely state because the lonely state contrasts with the social interaction previously enjoyed in work. If loneliness is what bothers them, they will likely be aware of it and seek ways to engage more in relationships with others.

In conclusion, the laziness and loneliness objections do not seem to form a substantial obstacle against the alleviation of the epistemic problem through basic income.

Chapter VI Implications

The last chapter of this thesis will assess the implications from the conclusions drawn in this thesis. In short, these conclusions are threefold. First, basic income has positive consequences in terms of people's happiness because it alleviates the epistemic problem: people become more reliable at knowing what makes them happy. Second, the laziness objection does not form a substantial counter-argument that could prevent the epistemic problem to be alleviated. It was shown that it is unlikely that people become lazy on a large scale. Third, the loneliness objection does not form a substantial counter-argument that could prevent the epistemic to be alleviated. It was likewise shown that it is unlikely that people become lonely on a large scale.

In general, these conclusions have a particular relevance for the basic income debate, as well as for the happiness literature. More specifically concerning the basic income debate, the thesis provides an additional argument for how basic income has positive consequences in terms of people's happiness. Moreover, it provides some reason to believe that it is unlikely that people become lazy or lonely on a large scale with the implementation of basic income. The main implication for the happiness literature, specifically concerning Haybron, is that this thesis shows that several factors that contribute to us being unreliable at knowing what makes us happy, have the potential to be alleviated. This might also have consequences for policy approaches concerning happiness. This chapter will divide the implications in two sections, one concerning the basic income debate, the second concerning the debate on happiness. Still, some overlap between the two debates is possible.

6.1 Implications for the basic income debate

The aim of this section is to position the findings from this thesis in the current basic income debate. Although this thesis is not directly concerned with the feasibility aspect of the basic income debate, it is worthwhile, as will be shown, to point out its relevance. It is specifically relevant to compare my claims with those made in the book *Free Money for All* (Walker, 2016). The reason this book is chosen is because it devotes a chapter to the relation between basic income and happiness (p. 119-142). In this chapter, Mark Walker considers different approaches on the theory of happiness. A cognitive account of happiness in the form of a life satisfaction theory is considered together with affective theories of happiness, conforming to Haybron's account of happiness. Walker explains that he does not need to decide between one of these approaches because: "both accounts point in the same direction: a distribution pattern of income and wealth that is more egalitarian will promote aggregate happiness" (Walker, 2016, p. 124). The conclusions that Walker makes heavily draws on the examination of a relation between income and happiness: "the argument depends crucially on insights gained from social science about the relationship between happiness and income" (ibid, p. 131). His approach is utilitarian. On the one hand, he argues that basic income promotes an aggregate increase of happiness, mainly because increased equality granted by basic income creates a relative greater increase of happiness for the poor compared to rich, without a significant decrease in happiness for the rich. On the other hand, Walker raises several concerns that show that basic income could also result in unhappiness. For example, it is suggested that "dirty jobs" might not be done if people are already provided with a basic income, which might result in a decreased aggregate happiness (ibid, p. 138).

In short, the chapter considers the potential contributing or diminishing effects of happiness by basic income. Walker's analysis is thorough but does not take the epistemic problem of happiness into account. The focus in Walker's analysis is different from the focus in this thesis. Walker explains that there is good reason to believe that basic income maximises everybody's happiness. The focus of this thesis is to argue that basic income facilitates living conditions that enable people to overcome some of the epistemic obstacles to find happiness. Nonetheless, the thesis that basic income could alleviate the epistemic problem and thus result in positive consequences in terms of people's happiness, would provide an additional argument for Walker's analysis in favour of basic income. Therefore, it would contribute to a more balanced assessment of the effect of basic income on happiness.

6.2 Implications for the happiness debate

Haybron explains, as shown before, that there are good reasons to believe that many people are unreliable at knowing what makes them happy: "[...] there are good reasons for doubting that any of us have a firm grasp on the quality of our experience of life, in particular its affective character" (Haybron, p. 199). Haybron provides several arguments (of which some were highlighted in this thesis) and examples of why we are unreliable at knowing what makes us happy. However, he never touches on the possibility of alleviating the factors that contribute to this unreliability. With this thesis, it is illustrated that there is a possibility to alleviate at least some of the factors that contribute to this unreliability, therefore using Haybron's work as a way to construct a possibility to become more reliable at knowing what makes us happy.

However, part of Haybron's work and the conclusions drawn in this thesis are clashing. Recall the earlier mentioned notion of liberal optimism. Haybron defines liberal optimism as the assumption that people are reliable at knowing what makes them happy and should therefore be granted with authority and freedom to govern their own happiness. This would mean that policies should be aimed at granting people this freedom and choice in order to govern their happiness. Haybron does not agree with liberal optimism because he questions the central assumption: people are *reliable* at knowing what makes them happy.

> For our purposes it suffices to make the idea just plausible enough that it becomes an open question whether human nature is congenial to the speculations of liberal optimism. And the idea that we are prone systematically to make serious mistakes in the individualized pursuit of happiness should not be regarded as an esoteric possibility, much less an outright fiction. It should be the default view. (Haybron, 2008, p. 249)

Now, basic income could be perceived as an "unbridled expansion of an individual's freedom to shape their lives", because there are no restrictions or obligations tied to basic income. Basic income seems to provide people with a financial basis that makes them quite free to shape their lives as they wish. To understand how basic income and the conclusions made in the thesis relate to liberal optimism, let us review the three assumptions made by liberal optimism. The first, "personal authority" (ibid, p. 13), entails that we are well aware of the interests that we have. What is good for a person is what he or she wants. Haybron does not agree with this assumption because we base our interests on subjective psychological states and neglect the more important and longer lasting emotional states. The second assumption, "inherent benignity" (ibid, p. 258), claims that the benefits from greater freedom and choice outweigh the downsides compared with the benefits. Haybron explains that we should be careful with this assumption, as the downsides of greater freedom should not be underestimated. For example, it takes more effort to determine what a good choice is, because there is simply more choice. Also, there is the possibility to have more regret with greater choice. The third assumption, “benign composition” (ibid, p. 260), claims that an individual approach to well-being is, from a collective point of view, benign. The eventual benefits in terms of well-being will outweigh the costs in an environment that provides many options for individuals to pursue their goals. The underlying thought is that the “invisible hand of the market” (ibid, p. 260) will ensure that the benefits will outweigh the costs. Haybron does not agree, but he admits that the possibility to shape your life independently of others is attractive. However, social ties and ties with our direct environment become optional because people will be increasingly independent in managing their well-being under the ideology of liberal optimism.

> This is partly the attraction of option freedom: it allows as much as possible for people’s lives to be driven internally rather than by the customs of their communities or the whims of nature. The unbounded society frees us to attain self-fulfillment on our own terms by enabling us to decouple ourselves from the land and society, so that— to the extent possible— the only bonds between these things and ourselves are the bonds we willingly accept. (Haybron, 2008, p. 261)

The promotion of an individual pursuit of well-being is beneficial for the individual but, according to Haybron, undermines the benefits for the community. Haybron doubts the three assumptions of liberal optimism. The freedom and potential increase of choice provided by a basic income are in line with liberal optimism and therefore clashing with Haybron’s claims. The findings in this thesis provide a reply to Haybron’s doubts about liberal optimism. In other words, this thesis could be a contribution to liberal optimism, offering a different perspective compared to Haybron. The following three paragraphs will compare the findings of this thesis with the three replies of Haybron to the assumptions of liberal optimism.

Haybron’s objection to the personal authority assumption is that we base our interests and decisions too much on subjective psychological states, compared to the more important deeper and longer lasting emotional states. In the thesis, it is argued that a basic income favours an environment that makes us more reliable at recognising longer lasting negative emotional states through the alleviation of the epistemic problem. If this is the case and we assume that basic income is a policy in line with liberal optimism, then it follows that Haybron's reply to the personal authority assumption does not hold against basic income specifically.

Haybron's objection to the inherent benignity assumption is that an increase in choice may have negative consequences for happiness. The increase of choice offered by basic income might indeed require more work to make informed decisions. However, because the epistemic problem is alleviated by basic income, people become more reliable at making decisions concerning their happiness. Thus, the increase of choice might require more effort, but an eventual longer lasting benefit is likely as well. Therefore, this also illustrates that there is less regret after a decision is made, as the decision becomes more reliable. A more reliable decision, regardless of an increase in choice, seems to have positive and not negative consequences for one's happiness. Therefore, basic income seems immune to Haybron's criticism of the inherent benignity assumption of liberal optimism.

The third and last assumption of liberal optimism is benign composition. Haybron explained that the individual pursuit of well-being is not likely to have positive consequences, as social and environmental ties are likely to become lost in the focus on individual freedom to be able to shape life independent of the environment and others. Also this criticism does not seem to apply to basic income, as the thesis showed that basic income favours an environment which facilitates meaningful relationships and connection with the environment, even if basic income itself does not provide a concrete and public infrastructure for social relationships (this was one of Harris's worries).

By explaining how the conclusions drawn in this thesis relate to Haybron's criticisms of the different assumptions of liberal optimism, it is shown that the greater freedom provided by basic income is not necessarily subject to Haybron's criticism.

In addition, the potential of alleviating the epistemic problem also has consequences for happiness related policy advice. For example, in the *Oxford Handbook of Well-Being and Public Policy* (Adler & Fleurbaey, 2016), Haybron describes two approaches to gather data about people's well-being: hedonistic and emotional well-being measures. In short, the hedonistic methods to measure well-being focus on recently experienced emotions (e.g., enthusiasm, fear, hostility) as well as questionnaires that ask if a certain affect is experienced during the day (e.g. Gallup 2008). Emotional well-being measures are found in, for example, data about depression and anxiety disorders. These two measures are not perfect as Haybron explained in other literature used in this thesis as well: people can be mistaken about their current state of being (Haybron, 2016, p. 362). Despite this, such measures are needed for policy and therefore require attention for improvement (ibid, p. 363). It is here where the findings in this thesis (the potential to alleviate the epistemic problem) can provide a contribution as well as a recommendation for future research. Focusing on the improvement of measures for well-being and happiness on which new policies could be based upon seems to be a good development indeed. However, it might be better in the long term to focus on the question of how our reliability of knowing what makes up happy can be helped. When the focus is laid on improving the methods of measuring happiness, it implies that these improvements in turn could facilitate policy makers in order *for them* to design better policies that would improve the happiness of people. Instead, when we focus on alleviating the factors of the epistemic problem, this would provide a basis for the development of policies that empower people to shape their life according to *their own* (reliable) perception of happiness, instead of the perception of policy makers.

Conclusion

This thesis argued how the introduction of basic income will have positive consequences in terms of people's happiness. This is argued for by illustrating how the introduction of basic income would reduce the epistemic problem of happiness and provide an environment where we are less dominated by materialistic goals. First, two theories of happiness were considered and rejected, before adopting Haybron's account of happiness in terms of positive central affective states. Second, the two-fold problem was explained through the work of Kasser (2012) and Haybron (2008): a strong focus on materialistic goals and the epistemic problem of happiness both account for many people being unhappy. Third, it was argued that the introduction of basic income decreases the epistemic problem by inhibiting four identified factors that contribute to the epistemic problem of happiness, as well as showing how basic income provides a suitable environment for being less distracted by materialistic goals. The possibility that people become lazy and lonely when receiving basic income is considered, as well as arguments are provided why this potential difficulty is not likely to undermine the positive consequences for happiness. Finally, the potential implications for the basic income debate and the happiness debate are described. Namely, the alleviation of the epistemic problem by basic income provides an additional perspective on the relation between basic income and happiness, contributing to a more balanced assessment of this relation in favour of basic income. Also, if basic income greatly increases freedom, it was shown that through the alleviation of the epistemic problem, Haybron's critique of liberal optimism does not stand against basic income. Conclusively, recommendations are made for the development of measuring tools to identify what affects our knowledge of happiness.

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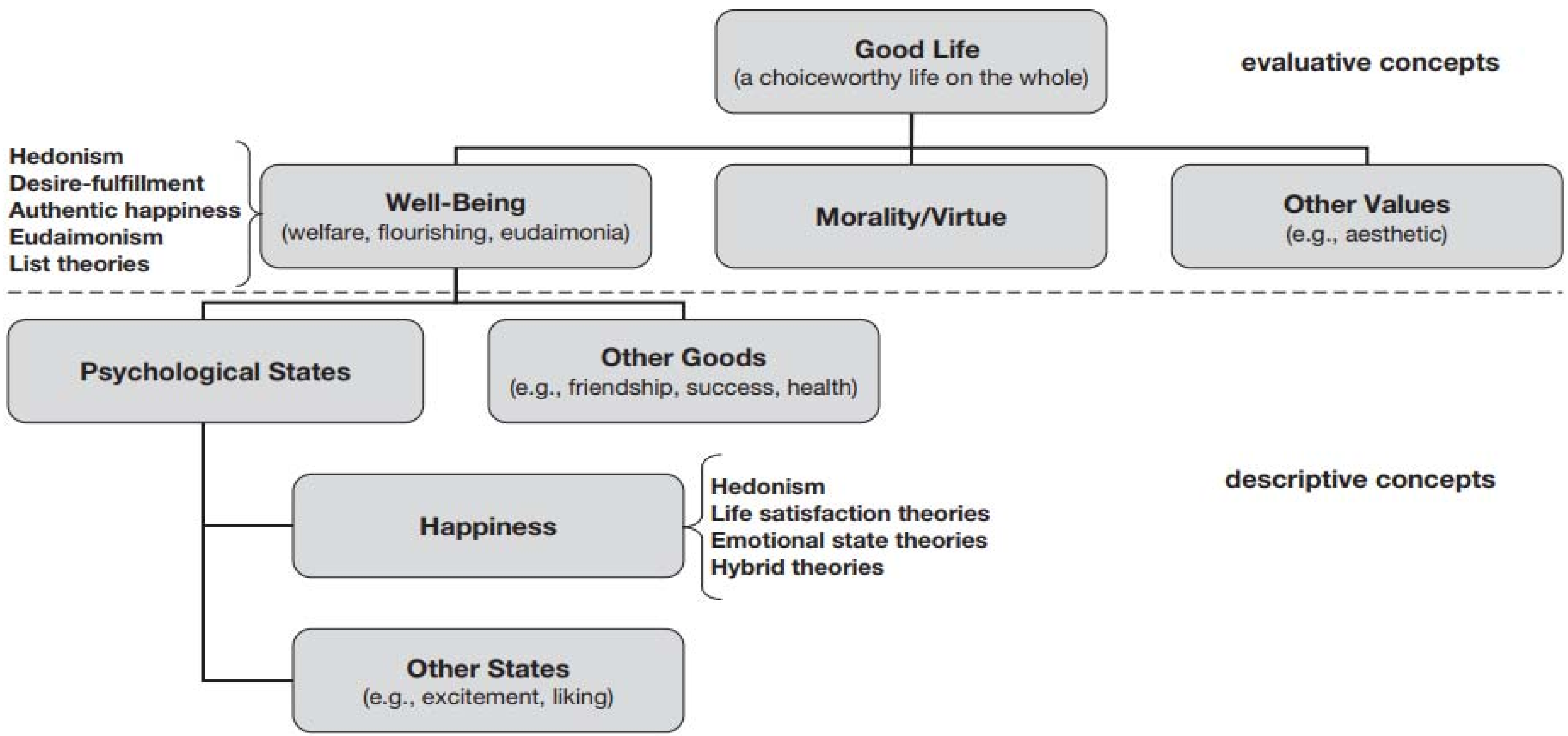
Abstract

Title: Unconditional Basic Income and the Epistemic Problem of Happiness.
Title in Estonian: Kodanikupalk ja õnnelikkuse episteemiline problem.

In this thesis, it will be argued that the introduction of an unconditional basic income will have positive consequences in terms of people's happiness. The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the current basic income debate and positions this thesis within the debate. The second chapter considers life-satisfaction theories and a hedonistic approach before adopting the emotional state theory of happiness. The third chapter shows, through the work of Haybron (2008) and Kasser (2002), that many people are unhappy because of two factors: the epistemic problem of happiness (we are unreliable at knowing what makes us happy) and a strong focus on materialistic goals. Chapter four explains how introducing a basic income would help to overcome some of the factors that contribute to the epistemic problem of happiness as well as provide an environment that makes us less likely to be focused on materialistic goals. In chapter five I argue that the possibility for people to become lazy and/or lonely is not likely to undermine the positive consequences for happiness resulting from implementing basic income. The sixth chapter consists of a discussion of the implications for the basic income debate and the happiness debate.

Annex

Overview of concepts related to happiness



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