"Crawford is eminently well placed to discuss the intellectual and practical aspects of work and indeed . . . there are serious nuggets of truth here. It is worth at least thinking about going on to acquire a manual skill instead of disappearing into some amorphous office job. It could lead to a richer, more financially secure, and more fulfilling way of life." —George Whisstock, *The Christian Science Monitor*

"*Shop Class as Soulcraft* is a unique combination of memoir and philosophical inquiry that examines how we understand and give value to work. . . . [Crawford] levels the playing field, in a sense, by turning the stratification of the working world upside-down and provoking readers to reflect upon the value of the lives they live eight hours a day, five days a week." —*Zocolo*

"A clever book called *Shop Class as Soulcraft*, by philosopher (and motorcycle repairman) Matthew Crawford . . . makes some compelling arguments about the link between independent thinking, self-reliance, and working with one's hands. . . . Perhaps it's time to start relearning independent craft skills that integrate both the head and the hands." —Newsweek.com

"A fascinating, important analysis of the value of hard work and manufacturing . . . Inspired social criticism and deep personal exploration . . . Crawford's appreciation for various trades may intrigue readers with white-collar jobs who wonder at the end of each day what they really accomplished." —*Library Journal*

"Philosopher and motorcycle repair shop owner Crawford extols the value of making and fixing things in this masterful paean to what he calls 'manual competence,' the ability to work with one's hands. . . . With wit and humor, the author deftly mixes the details of his own experience as a tradesman and then proprietor of a motorcycle repair shop with more philosophical considerations."

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

Shop Class as Soulcraft

An Inquiry into the Value of Work

Matthew B. Crawford

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For my girls,
the whole happy troupe
B, G & J

And in loving memory of my father,
Frank S. Crawford, Jr.

8

Work, Leisure, and Full Engagement

At the 1976 Olympics, the world was electrified by Nadia Comaneci's perfect 10.0 score in her gymnastics routine, which was unprecedented. In fact, the scoreboard was unable to register it—the possibility had not been anticipated, and read only to 9.99. The keeper of the scoreboard put up 1.00, and all understood. Reflecting on the event years later, Comaneci said, "During my routine and even after it, I did not think it was all that perfect. I thought it was pretty good, but athletes don't think about history when making history. They think about what they're doing, and that's how it gets done." Further, "I did not even look at the scoreboard when my routine was done in 1976. My teammates started pointing because there was this uproar."[1]

These remarks highlight an important feature of those practices that entail skilled and active engagement: one's attention is focused on standards intrinsic to the practice, rather than external goods that may be won through the practice, typically

money or recognition. Can this distinction between internal and external goods inform our understanding of work?

It may be telling that it is leisure activities that come first to mind when we think about intrinsic satisfactions—athletics, for example, or hobbies that we enjoy. Such activities are ends in themselves, and we pursue them without anyone having to pay us to do so. Conversely, with work, getting paid is really the main point, and there would be something utopian in trying to understand work without reference to its external rewards. It may be that a partition of work and leisure, harsh necessity and sweet pursuits, is just a fact of life. But I want to consider what a more integral sort of life might look like, even if doing so requires venturing into the discreditable territory of "idealism."

It is common today to locate one's "true self" in one's leisure choices. Accordingly, good work is taken to be work that maximizes one's means for pursuing these other activities, where life becomes meaningful. The mortgage broker works hard all year, then he goes and climbs Mount Everest. The exaggerated psychic content of his summer vacation sustains him through the fall, winter, and spring. The Sherpas seem to understand their role in this drama as they discreetly facilitate his need for an unencumbered, solo confrontation with unyielding Reality. There is a disconnect between his work life and his leisure life; in the one he accumulates money and in the other he accumulates psychic nourishment. Each part depends on and enables the other, but does so in the manner of a transaction between sub-selves, rather than as the intelligibly linked parts of a coherent life.

On the other hand, there are vocations that seem to offer a tighter connection between life and livelihood. Can such coherence be traced to the nature of the work itself? A doctor deals with bodies, a fireman with fires, a teacher with children. Like Everest, these things are real enough, and the practices that serve them demand the kind of focused attention around which a life might take shape (as mountaineering does for the Sherpas). In these learned professions, the practitioner develops a highly discriminating appreciation of his objects, not unlike an aesthetic sense. His judgments of bodies, fires, children, or mountains become truer with experience, and therefore his ability to respond appropriately to them progresses.

The teacher who is really a teacher loves children, and wants to figure out how to make them smarter. Most people who get into working on cars do so because they love cars. Usually they want to figure out how to make them go faster. The work of a mechanic, then, may have the character of a vocation.

The Groove of the Speed Shop

The speed shop, such as Donsco, has been a fixture of American life for many decades. For those who work in such shops, like Chas, it seems hard to draw a line between job and leisure; it is a way of life. A speed shop usually consists of a storefront selling high-performance parts (domestic or import, never both) with a machine shop and a service bay in the back. There is a constant parade of blown-up or otherwise broken hoopties

limping in, their drivers hoping to get things sorted by talking to the staff and other customers, buying parts and machining services, and (with utmost delicacy, if one wants not to be banished) borrowing tools. Many speed shops take on the character of a clubhouse, and will campaign a race car or two in whatever motor sport they are into.

Often someone working at a speed shop spent his younger days lingering around the counter, then, as he penetrated the social hierarchy, in the back, allowed now to pull his car around and perhaps use a floor jack to install some shock absorbers purchased at the counter. Such an exposure to injury liability would give a lawyer fits; implicit in the invitation to the back is a judgment of the young man's character and a large measure of trust. He will get some light supervision that is likely to be disguised as a stream of sexual insults, delivered from ten feet away by someone he cannot see (only his shoes) as he lies under his car. Such insults are another index of trust. If he is able to return these outrageous comments with wit, the conversation will cascade toward real depravity; the trust is pushed further and made reciprocal. If the young man shows promise, that is, if he is judged to have some potential to plumb new depths of moral turpitude, he may get hired: here is someone around whom everyone can relax.

The fringe benefit of a discount on parts, and the use of a lift after hours for his own car, is a big part of the compensation. Having the next crop of kids coming in and seeking his advice is no doubt another part; he rises in stature. Showing up at, say, the local dirt track oval on a Saturday night, with his

shop's posse in matching T-shirts, is another pleasure. Or maybe the whole crew caravans down to Baja for one of the big desert races, with a train of hangers-on. Guys will glom on to the scene by dignifying their rides as "chase vehicles" or "pre-runners," the idea being to run the course ahead of time to check it out. It's a day and night festival reeking of high-test race gas and warm beer, punctuated by the breaking of metal.

The social hierarchy is tied to a speed ethic that can be a little challenging for a younger man to decode. He may need to be schooled. When I was eighteen, about a year after being inducted into the Volkswagen speed scene by Chas, I was parked in front of another shop, the Buggy House in Hayward, messing with the carburetor that protruded through a hole I'd cut in the deck lid of my car—a crudely ostentatious approach. A guy in a bone stock-looking Bug pulls up, parks, and goes into the shop. He was older. After a few minutes he comes out and gets back in his car, without saying a word. I was hoping he'd seen my fancy Italian carb. He starts the car, which emanates a quiet, mild-mannered sound. Then he puts it in first gear and proceeds to light up the tires.

Now he jams it into second. The car is still not moving forward, but the cloud of white smoke billowing out from the fenders is getting denser, and the rear end is starting to drift to one side. He speed shifts into third and finally the car starts to move forward, slowly and in a direction that is still vague, as I stand there agog. The tires melt and get sticky, the rear end squats, the car launches and, after traveling about thirty yards, he hits fourth and gets a good chirp, a sort of parting comment. The smoke hung in the dead summer air, a compact cloud that

drifted toward me in eerie silence. As the stench of burning rubber reached my nostrils, I began to understand what people mean when they call a car a "sleeper." That would be the opposite of "all show and no go." It's not just how fast you go, it's how you go fast. I felt a bit like a puppy who'd gotten a rolled-up newspaper across the nose.

Community

Can the speed shop teach us anything about the tension between work and leisure, and how it might be eased in the direction of a coherent life? It is a community of consumption that overlaps with a community of work. The overlap takes place within the life of each participant, and the shop is the site where the overlap becomes social: no one working there isn't also an enthusiast, and no customer isn't deeply involved with the nuts and bolts of his own car. They know the particulars of each other's engines. A machinist working at a speed shop is likely to see the same crankshaft several times over the years. He will recognize his own writing on the counterweights, in grease pen or Sharpie, noting the bearing tolerances with each rebuild as its journals get ground and polished. He may have witnessed the same motor blow up over the weekend, and decide to experiment with a different length of connecting rod. Everyone is progressing in knowledge, through a shared dialectic. The dialectic is between people, but also between iterations—you break things, and learn something new by taking them apart and talking it through. Here work and leisure both take their

bearings from something basically human: rational activity, in association with others. This activity is directed toward something that appears as good within the horizon of a certain way of life: *speed*. To place oneself in the service of this master is to enter into a community and, as I learned outside the Buggy House, to open oneself to being schooled by one's elders. This is solidarity.

I believe the question of whether work is "alienated" or not may be understood in terms of the kind of perception it affords. Marx held that it is through work that we realize our "species character," and this consists in our being both rational and social beings. For him it follows that we get alienated from ourselves when the product of our work is appropriated, since that product is a concrete manifestation of one's own most human possibilities. The worker's product is "torn away" from him, and Marx suggests that it becomes an alien thing, hateful to him, because it is *used* by another. But why should this be? I find Marx unconvincing on this point. If I am a furniture builder, for example, what am I going to do with a hundred chairs? After all, I want to *see them in use*; this completes my activity of making them, and gives it social reality. It makes me feel I have contributed to the common good. But as the philosopher Talbot Brewer suggests, this raises the question of how direct the perception of use must be, if it is to play this role.

> *It is one thing for the Chinese factory worker to know that somewhere in the U.S. hinterlands, the vernacular rural American quilt that she has stitched together is being used, and that it has some culturally specific significance to the*

> *person using it, which she can barely comprehend. It is another thing for a carpenter to walk around a town and see the new entryway he designed and built for* that *store, to learn from a direct experience and from chatting with others of its functional and aesthetic achievements and shortcomings, and to modify future work in accordance with this running feedback that is picked up in the course of daily activities. There are, of course, a world of possibilities between these two extremes. One might read Marx as having gestured, at least, towards the plausible thought that the nearer one is to the carpenter's end of this continuum, the less alienated one is from one's own work.*[2]

When the maker's (or fixer's) activity is immediately situated within a community of use, it can be enlivened by this kind of direct perception. Then the social character of his work isn't separate from its internal or "engineering" standards; the work is improved *through* relationships with others. It may even be the case that what those standards *are*, what perfection consists of, is something that comes to light only through these iterated exchanges with others who use the product, as well as other craftsmen in the same trade. Through work that has this social character, some shared conception of the good is lit up, and becomes concrete.

The geographical and cultural estrangement of the Chinese quilt maker precludes this kind of experience. There is another form estrangement may take: use may be utterly separate from production under conditions of radical inequality, even within the same city. This is especially so in the case of luxury goods,

and it is plausible that someone in Beijing stitching together designer handbags for the plutocrats of that same city would find them hateful.

Consider how a similar set of facts may carry a different meaning when the inequality is overlaid with some sense of a *res publica*, or common wealth. Consider a panel beater who shapes sheet metal for Rolls-Royce, circa 1970. He could never afford to own one of the cars he makes, but he participates in the greatness of Rolls-Royce, and feels himself enlarged by it. The company has a national character: Britain's best. Likewise consider the Mercedes worker, who feels the pride of "German engineering" as his own. The product is still "torn away" by a different class, as Marx says, yet there is a political community, distinct from the market, where we locate a common good. Ideas of national greatness, often tied to material culture, once sustained common identities that mitigated class antagonism to some degree—being an Englishman. The Marxist would fully agree, but put a negative cast on such identity as an obstacle to revolution. For him nationalism is an ideology that keeps the working classes down by preventing the development of class consciousness. But the pride of the Rolls-Royce panel beater gives his work human dignity, and the Marxist is presumptuous to call it "false consciousness."

Ironically, it is now the managerial elite of international capital that is likely to complain of the false consciousness of those workers on whom the idea of the nation retains some grip (for example, those who oppose easy immigration). It is now the capitalist who says, "Workers of the world, unite!," the better to dis-

solve those "inefficiencies" in the labor market (that is, high wages) that arise from political boundaries. The slogan once expressed a hope to organize a body of workers who were dispersed and hence exploitable, whereas now it captures the desire for a mass of "human resources," exploitable because undifferentiated. This latter intention is accompanied by all the easy moral prestige of multiculturalism, so it finds its champions on the erstwhile Left. Those at the top of the food chain get a new identity in which to take pride, that of the sushi-eating, Brazilian-girlfriend-having cosmopolitan. But what does the autoworker get as industries lose their national character? It is harder to take pride in one's work as "a Rolls-Royce man," for example, if the car is assembled from parts made who knows where.

One remedy is to find work in the cracks; work the market rationale of which is fully contained within a human scale of face-to-face interactions. This is what the speed shop offers; it is a community of making and fixing that is embedded within a community of use. Such enterprises are not "scalable" in the way that whets the appetite of remote investors, much as they might like to explode the happy scene and "take it global."

These reflections on the role of community in meaningful work needn't be confined to the manual trades. Consider once again our hypothetical Everest-climbing mortgage broker. First, imagine an older version of the banker. In the nineteenth century, there was a prohibition in the United States on banks opening branches in communities other than the ones in which they

originally operated. People had to trust the bank if they were to deposit their money in it, and bankers had to assess the character of borrowers before writing loans; it was generally believed that "the bankers' interests and the interests of the larger community are one and the same," as a historical sociologist of banking writes.[3] We might imagine a banker sits down with a young couple and begins to form a judgment of their creditworthiness, that is, their character. This character is knowable because there is a community. Maybe the banker asks around at the grocery and the hardware store, and notes subtle cues in the tone of voice or body language of their proprietors as he mentions the names of the applicants, and inquires after their record of credit. Satisfied, he vouchsafes their creditworthiness to his colleague bankers, who live in the same community, and a mortgage is secured. A thirty-year relationship is established between the bank and the couple. The banker feels he has done a good turn, helping virtue to its reward by the diligent application of his own powers of discerning observation, and his knowledge of the ways of men. He exercises prudence; his work calls on some of his best capacities. As Thomas Lamont, the head of J. P. Morgan & Co., put it to his colleagues in 1923, customers' faith in a bank isn't simply based on a presumption of honesty. Rather, "the community as a whole demands of the banker that he shall be an honest observer of conditions about him, that he shall make constant and careful study of those conditions, financial, economic, social and political, and that he shall have a wide vision over them all."[4]

Now consider the reality of the mortgage broker circa 2005, whose work takes on a very different character under absentee

capitalism. Knowing the mortgage he secures will be sold by the originating bank (a branch of a nationwide bank) to some other entity, he needn't concern himself with the creditworthiness of the applicant. The bank has no interest in the ongoing viability of the loan; its interest is limited to the fees it gets from originating the loan. The mortgages will be bundled on Wall Street, then these bundles will themselves be transformed through securitization into quantized particles of something more general, "housing debt," and sold to the Chinese government and other investors. The original encounter between mortgage broker and borrower as they sit across from one another is fraught with moral content—questions of trust—and both of the original parties no doubt experience it this way, in 2005 as ever. The mortgage broker gets a feeling in his gut. But this information is discarded through a process of depersonalization. The discarding is purposeful.[5] Indeed, the originating banks get frequent phone calls from Wall Street investment houses, urging them to invent new kinds of loans in which the borrower doesn't even need to *claim* income or assets, much less prove their existence.[6] This makes a certain kind of psychic demand on the mortgage broker who actually writes the loans: he must silence the voice of prudence, and suspend the action of his own *judgment* and *perception*.

Why would a system demand the stupidification of the mortgage professional? Again, imagine it is 2005. Unprecedented concentrations of capital have arisen, and these pools of money are competing with one another to find a home, and get a return. As a result there is an insatiable worldwide appetite for mortgage-backed securities among investors. Further, the fees

to be made from all the transactions between originator and investor are fueling a Wall Street boom. Therefore *more loans must be written.* So our mortgage broker writes loans that he knows to be bad, and makes a lot of money. Stripped of the kind of judgments that are at the very heart of the idea of "credit," shot through with bad faith, his work is now predicated on irresponsibility, rooted in the absence of community. Whatever lingering fiduciary consciousness he may have has become a liability, given the general rush to irresponsibility by his competitors. The work cannot sustain him as a human being. Rather, it damages the best part of him, and it becomes imperative to partition work off from the rest of life. So during his vacation he goes and climbs Mount Everest, and feels renewed. The next summer, he becomes an ecotourist in the Amazon rain forest. It is in this gated ghetto of his second life that he inhabits once again an intelligible moral order where feeling and action are linked, if only for a couple of weeks.

Wholehearted Activity

Aristotle's understanding of happiness can shed light on those activities that truly engage us; maybe it can teach us something about work and leisure as well. His account is grounded in a more comprehensive understanding of creatures: to understand any particular sort of being, the best way to proceed is by *looking* at it, and taking note of its characteristic activity. That activity represents the "end" of the creature, its purpose. In Greek, its *telos.* In English, this teleological understanding of happiness

gets condensed in the proverbial saying "Happy as a pig in shit." Rolling around in shit is what pigs do, and they dig it. Frolicking is what dolphins do. It is worth noting in passing how Aristotle's biology reverses the contemporary Darwinian view. For the neo-Darwinian, the frolicking of the dolphin is assumed to have some survival value, either for the preservation of the individual or for the passing on of its genes. I suspect that if you were to ask a dolphin about this, he would say it is backward: he lives in order to frolic, he doesn't frolic in order to live. This is the Aristotelian view, precisely. Such activities are experienced as intrinsically good. They contain their end within themselves; they *enact* that end, in "real time," as we now say.

The mucking of the pig and the frolicking of the dolphin would seem to be leisure activities. Yet many animals do things that look a lot like work, changing nature's forms to make them useful. The bird builds its nest, the spider its web. Some even use rudimentary tools—for example, an otter may use a rock to smash open abalone, or a chimpanzee a stick to retrieve termites. Thomas Hobbes suggested the human difference lies in the fact that animals begin with a desired effect and discover a sufficing instrument, whereas we are capable of viewing everything as a potential instrument and imagining all the effects to which it could potentially give rise, corresponding to wildly different ends. For humans, tools point to the necessity of moral inquiry. Because nature makes only ambiguous prescriptions for us, we are compelled to ask, what is good? If you give a young boy a hammer for the first time and watch his face, you will see an awareness of this burden dawning on him (as he turns to the cat, for example).

So there is an aspect of inquiry that hovers about our practical activities, which may or may not be brought to full awareness and issue in careful reflection. Following Aristotle, Brewer connects this aspect of inquiry to our experience of pleasure, the kind we get when we become absorbed in what we are doing (like Comaneci on the balance beam). He writes that there is an "appreciative discernment of value that accompanies and carries forward intrinsically valuable activities," and that it is this evaluative attention that renders the activity pleasurable. "[T]o take pleasure in an activity is to engage in that activity while being absorbed in it, where this absorption consists in single-minded and lively attention to whatever it is that seems to make the activity good or worth pursuing. . . . If one were struck only by the instrumental value of the activity . . . one's evaluative attention would be directed not at the activity but at its expected results—that is, at something other than what one is doing. This sort of attention . . . absents us from our activity and renders it burdensome."[7]

There is a classic psychology experiment that seems to confirm Brewer's point. Children who enjoy drawing were given marker pens and allowed to go at it. Some were rewarded for drawing (they were given a certificate with a gold seal and a ribbon, and told ahead of time about this arrangement), whereas for others the issue of rewards was never raised. Weeks later, those who had been rewarded took less interest in drawing, and their drawings were judged to be lower in quality, whereas those who had not been rewarded continued to enjoy the activity and produced higher-quality drawings. The hypothesis is that the child begins to attribute his interest, which previously needed

no justification, to the external reward, and this has the effect of reducing his intrinsic interest in it.[8] That is, an external reward can affect one's interpretation of one's own motivation, an interpretation that comes to be self-fulfilling. A similar effect may account for the familiar fact that when someone turns his hobby into a business, he often loses pleasure in it. Likewise, the intellectual who pursues an academic career gets professionalized, and this may lead him to stop thinking.

This line of reasoning suggests that the kind of appreciative attention where one remains focused on what one is doing can arise only in leisure activities. Such a conclusion would put pleasurable absorption beyond the ken of any activity that is undertaken for the sake of making money, because although money is undoubtedly good, it is not intrinsically so. It represents a generic potency; the goodness of money floats free of any *particular* evaluations that could engage our attention and energize our activity. Keeping in mind some specific good to be acquired (such as an opportunity to climb Mount Everest) doesn't solve this problem; such imaginings cannot imbue the work itself with mindfulness, and are likely to have the opposite effect of making us stand apart from the job. Sadly, this may be just what is wanted.

But all this is perhaps too categorical. For in fact, there are people who enjoy their work. You can earn money at something without the money, or what it buys, being the focus of your day. To be capable of sustaining our interest, a job has to have room for progress in excellence. In the best cases, I believe the excel-

lence in question ramifies outward. What I mean is that it points to, or serves, some more comprehensive understanding of the good life.

I like to fix motorcycles more than I like to wire houses (even though I could make about twice as much money wiring houses).[9] Both practices have internal goods that engage my attention, but fixing bikes is more meaningful because not only the fixing but also the *riding* of motorcycles answers to certain intuitions I have about human excellence. People who ride motorcycles have gotten something *right*, and I want to put myself in the service of it, this thing that we do, this kingly sport that is like war made beautiful.

My job of making motorcycles run right is subservient to the higher good that is achieved when one of my customers leans hard through a corner on the Blue Ridge Parkway, to the point of deliberately dragging his well-armored knee on the inside. This moment of faith, daring, and skill casts a sanctifying light over my work. I try to get his steering head bearings as light and silky as they can be without free play, and his swing arm bushings good and tight, because I want him to feel his tires truly. Only then can he make the road fully his own. If I am riding twenty yards behind him, I want to *hear* the confidence he has in the chassis I have tuned, expressed by the way he rolls on the throttle, brashly, through the exit of a turn. He is likely to pull away from me; I may find him waiting for me at Cumberland Gap with a verdict that lighter fork oil is called for, to get less damping in the front end.

I try to be a good motorcycle mechanic. This effort connects me to others, in particular to those who exemplify good mo-

torcycling, because it is they who can best judge how well I have realized the functional goods I am aiming at.[10] I wouldn't even know what those goods *are* if I didn't spend time with people who ride at a much higher level than I, and are therefore more discerning of what is good in a motorcycle.[11] So my work situates me in a particular community. The narrow mechanical things I concern myself with are inscribed within a larger circle of meaning; they are in the service of an activity that *we* recognize as part of a life well lived. This common recognition, which needn't be spoken, is the basis for a friendship that orients by concrete images of excellence.

My point, finally, isn't to recommend motorcycling in particular, nor to idealize the life of a mechanic. It is rather to suggest that if we follow the traces of our own actions to their source, they intimate some understanding of the good life. This understanding may be hard to articulate; bringing it more fully into view is the task of moral inquiry. Such inquiry may be helped along by practical activities in company with others, a sort of conversation in deed. In this conversation lies the potential of work to bring some measure of coherence to our lives.

tester probe to prevent the terminal damage or terminal bend." I take this to mean: Be gentle with the ECM coupler; its pins are easily bent. If you should get trouble code C42, the problem is "Ignition switch signal is not input to the ECM. *When the I.D. agreement is not verified." Scanning the bottom of the page for the asterisk, we find "Immobilizer system is equipped model only," which I take to mean, only on models equipped with an immobilizer system. The first example is from page 4–34, GSX-R 600 Suzuki Service Manual, the second from page 4–31.

19. John R. Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3, no. 3 (September 1980).
20. In modern motorcycle manuals, you often come across a little emblem next to the description of some repair procedure, accompanied by the words "use special tool number xx–xxx." Often as not these tools can be improvised, once you know what the tool *is*. So if you work at an independent shop you try to figure out what the tool might actually be by considering the task before you, and what needs to happen. It's a matter of reverse-engineering the tool, from function to form. This is another instance where you have to peer through the obscurities in the manual and refer them to the facts before you. At a dealership you would just go to the service manager and ask for tool number xx–xxx.

8: Work, Leisure, and Full Engagement

1. In Bill Penington, "Perfection Is Afterthought, Some Perfect Examples Say," *New York Times*, Sunday, February 3, 2008, front page and p. 20.
2. Talbot Brewer, personal communication.
3. Simone Polillo, *Structuring Financial Elites: Conservative Banking and the Local Sources of Reputation in Italy and the United States, 1850–1914* (Ph.D. dissertation, Sociology Department, University of Pennsylvania, 2008), p. 157. As J. P. Morgan put it in the congressional hearings known as the "Money Trust" investigation of 1913, "The first thing is character. . . . [A] man I do not trust could not get the money from me on all the bonds in Christendom" (quoted by Polillo, p. 158).
4. Lamont as quoted by Polillo, *Structuring Financial Elites*, p. 159.
5. If you have ever had a friend sell your car for you, you know how this works. It's best not to burden your friend with all the details of what's wrong with the car. That way, when the buyer asks what problems the car might have, your friend can honestly say he doesn't know. This is how the used-car industry works; when you trade your car in, it is never sold to its next owner by the same dealer. Instead it passes through one or more auctions. The ownership history is purposefully obscured, the service history purposefully discarded. This keeps everyone involved morally pure. Economists speak of "asymmetric information," in which one party to a transaction has an advantage over the other, but I have seen no discussion of this phenomenon, where an entire market is predicated on the *discarding* of information. The securitizing of sketchy mortgages, and the invention of complex derivatives based on them, seems to accomplish a similar purpose (granting that it serves other purposes as well), though in this case the process is overlaid with an apparatus of mathematical complexity that spares its participants the kind of self-awareness used-car salesmen suffer. Only the person who originally writes the mortgage has to deal with that.
6. See the account of the sub-prime mortgage crisis that aired on the NPR show *This American Life:* Episode 355, "The Giant Pool of Money," available at www.thislife.org/radio_episode.aspx?episode=355.
7. I quote from pp. 11–13 of a draft manuscript of Talbot Brewer, *The*

Retrieval of Ethics, forthcoming from Oxford University Press in 2009.

8. M. P. Lepper, D. Greene, and R. E. Nisbett, "Undermining Children's Intrinsic Interest with Extrinsic Reward: A Test of the 'Overjustification' Hypothesis," *JPSP* 28 (1973), pp. 129–37.
9. The old Protestant value of devotion to work for the sake of work may instill virtues like diligence, but is mute when it comes to assessing particular kinds of work against one another. The liberal ideal of work that is *freely chosen* (as exemplified by the later writings of Betty Friedan) is similarly indiscriminate, demurring from judgments of better and worse (this resemblance was noticed by Russel Muirhead in his excellent book *Just Work*). Both of these attempts to give work transcendent meaning are in deep harmony with the market logic of fungibility, which posits an essential equivalence between all commodities. They collapse the distinctions that matter to us, and on that count would seem to misrepresent the human dimension of our productive labor. For how could the *character* of what is produced, and its meaning within the larger web of human practices in which the product is used, not cast its light of a particular hue over the activity of making, or fixing? This is especially so when the maker's or fixer's activity is enlivened by a direct perception of the thing made or fixed, being used in its full context.
10. I am also connected to other mechanics, who may judge my work in ways a rider wouldn't. Through the winter and spring of my last year in Chicago, Fred Cousins had seen only disconnected parts (the starter motor; the engine case halves) of the café racer I was building. When one day in late May I came by the shop on the finished bike, he looked it over for a few minutes without saying a word. Finally, crouching down, he pointed out that the clip holding on the master link of the drive chain was positioned 180 degrees from the traditional convention. Only later did I come to see why the conventional way is better.

11. This was brought home to me at the vintage races at Virginia International Raceway. In amateur motorcycle racing, most of the riders are their own mechanics, and they are constantly experimenting to find a competitive edge. Some are tight-lipped about their discoveries, others open. As Tommy and I wandered through the paddocks, we came across Eric Cooke, who at that time had recently held the number-one ranking in a certain class on his Honda CB350, and happened to live in Richmond. He was very generous with his track-won wisdom. The word among Richmond mechanics was that Eric, working with the Jedi knight of CB350 cylinder head gurus (whose name nobody seemed to know), had built a motor that dynoed at fifty horsepower, which is about twice the stock figure. As we talked, his race was called. Going to bump-start the bike, he found that the breather canister (actually, an empty plastic water bottle) had come loose from the frame. He was all suited, helmeted, and gloved up, so more or less helpless in this moment of panic. In an impressive display of quick thinking and decisive action, Tommy grabbed a nearby can of safety wire and a pair of pliers, and quickly wired the breather to the frame; Eric made the start.

Concluding Remarks on Solidarity and Self-Reliance

1. Murray, *Real Education*, p. 132.
2. I owe this insight to Joseph E. Davis (personal communication).
3. I owe this formulation about the lonely character of autonomy to a lecture on Dante's *Inferno* given by Anthony Esolen at the University of Virginia on November 5, 2008.
4. This error is facilitated by the legal principle of corporate "personhood." The principle was established in the 1880s, in the case of *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company*, 118 U.S. 398 (1186), where corporations were proclaimed to be "legal per-