

Philippe Van Parijs, 1951-

Kort biografi

Belgisk filosof. Van Parijs er blevet kendt som en af de mest fremtrædende borgerløns/basisindkomst-filosoffer i de sidste 20 år. I hovedværket "Real Freedom for All. What (if anything) can justify capitalism?" (1995) argumenter han for en borgerløn/basisindkomst ud fra en egalitær liberalistisk retfærdighedsbetragtning. Alle samfundsmedlemmer bør have en andel (indkomst af) det han kalder samfundets eksterne ressourcer.



Dokumentation

Philippe Van Parijs (2002) A Basic Income for All. IN "What's wrong with a free lunch?" (ed.) Philippe Van Parijs. Beacon Press: Boston

Entering the new millennium, I submit for discussion a proposal for the improvement of the human condition: namely, that everyone should be paid a *universal basic income* (UBI), at a level *sufficient for subsistence*.

.... it would promote real freedom for all by providing the material resources that people need to pursue their aims. At the same time, it would help to solve the policy dilemmas of poverty and unemployment, and serve ideals associated with both the feminist and green movements.

.... By *universal basic income* I mean an income paid by a government, at a uniform level and at regular intervals, to each adult member of society. The grant is paid, and its level is fixed, irrespective of whether the person is rich or poor, lives alone or with others, is willing to work or not. In most versions—certainly in mine—it is granted not only to citizens, but to all permanent residents.

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.... The main argument for UBI is founded on a view of justice. Social justice, I believe, requires that our institutions be designed to best secure *real freedom* to all. Such a real-libertarian conception of justice combines two ideas. First, the members of society should be formally free, with a well-enforced structure of property rights that includes the ownership of each by herself. What matters to a real libertarian, however, is not only the protection of individual rights, but assurances of the real value of those rights: we need to be concerned not only with liberty, but, in John Rawls's phrase, with the "worth of liberty." At first approximation, the worth or real value of a person's liberty depends on the resources the person has at her command to make use of her liberty. So it is therefore necessary that the distribution of opportunity—understood as access to the means that people need for doing what they might want to do—be designed to offer the greatest possible real opportunity to those with least opportunities, subject to everyone's formal freedom being respected.

... A general employment subsidy and a UBI are very similar in terms of the underlying economic analysis and, in part, in what they aim to achieve. For example, both address head-on the dilemma mentioned in connection with reductions in work time: they make it possible for the least skilled to be employed at a lower cost to their employer, without thereby impoverishing workers.

The two approaches are, however, fundamentally different in one respect. With employer subsidies, the pressure to take up employment is kept intact, possibly even increased; with a UBI, that pressure is reduced. This is not because permanent idleness becomes an attractive option: even a large UBI cannot be expected to secure a comfortable standard of living on its own. Instead, a UBI makes it easier to take a break between two jobs, reduce working time, make room for more training, take up self-employment, or to join a cooperative. And with a UBI, workers will only take a job if they find it suitably attractive, while employer subsidies make unattractive, low-productivity jobs more economically viable. If the motive in combating unemployment is not some sort of work fetishism—an obsession with keeping everyone busy—but rather a concern to give every person the possibility of taking up gainful employment in which she can find recognition and accomplishment, then the UBI is to be preferred.

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.... A third piece of the argument for a UBI takes particular note of its contribution to realizing the promise of the feminist and green movements. The contribution to the first should be obvious. Given the sexist division of labor in the household and the special "caring" functions that women disproportionately bear, their labor market participation, and range of choice in jobs, is far more constrained than those of men. Both in terms of direct impact on the inter-individual distribution of income and the longer-term impact on job options, a UBI is therefore bound to benefit women far more than men. Some of them, no doubt, will use the greater material freedom UBI provides to reduce their paid working time and thereby lighten the "double shift" at certain periods of their lives. But who can sincerely believe that working subject to the dictates of a boss for forty hours a week is a path to liberation? Moreover, it is not only against the tyranny of bosses that a UBI supplies some protection, but also against the tyranny of husbands and bureaucrats. It provides a modest but secure basis on which the more vulnerable can stand, as marriages collapse or administrative discretion is misused.

To discuss the connection between UBI and the green movement, it is useful to view the latter as an alliance of two components. Very schematically, the *environmental* component's central concern is with the *pollution* generated by industrial society. Its central objective is the establishment of a society that can be sustained by its physical environment. The *green-alternative* component's central concern, on the other hand, is with the *alienation* generated by industrial society. Its central objective is to establish a society in which people spend a great deal of their time on "autonomous" activities, ruled by neither the market nor the state. For both components, there is something very attractive in the idea of a UBI.

The environmentalists' chief foe is productivism, the obsessive pursuit of economic growth. And one of the most powerful justifications for fast growth, in particular among the working class and its organizations, is the fight against unemployment. The UBI, as argued above, is a coherent strategy for tackling unemployment without relying on faster growth. The availability of such a strategy undermines the broad productivist coalition and thereby improves the prospects for realizing environmentalist objectives in a world in which pollution (even in the widest sense) is not the only thing most people care about.

Green-alternatives should also be attracted to basic income proposals, for a UBI can be viewed as a general subsidy financed by the market and state spheres to the benefit of the autonomous sphere.

Filosoffer, med sympati for Basic Income tanken

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This is in part because the UBI gives everyone some real freedom—as opposed to a sheer right—to withdraw from paid employment in order to perform autonomous activities, such as grass-roots militancy or unpaid care work. But part of the impact also consists in giving the least well endowed greater power to turn down jobs that they do not find sufficiently fulfilling, and in thereby creating incentives to design and offer less alienated employment.