

Zygmunt Bauman, 1925-

Kort biografi

Polsk-engelsk sociolog. I Polen blev Bauman i 1968 beskyldt for at være zionistisk agent, hvorfor han blev tvunget til at forlade landet. Han fungerede fra 1971 til 1990 som professor i sociologi Leeds i England. Bauman har skrevet en lang række bøger om modernitet og postmodernitet. Han mener, at nutidens fattige ikke længere skal forstås som arbejdskraftreserve, men som overflødige og mislykkede forbrugere. I hans vision om at bryde med den nuværende "usikkerhedens politiske økonomi" indgår en forestilling om at sikre alle samfundsmedlemmer en borgerløn/basisindkomst uafhængig af lønarbejdet.



Dokumentation

Bauman, Zygmunt (2002), Arbejde, forbrugersisme og de nye fattige. Hans Reitzels Forlag. København.

s. 135-136.

"Engang var det økonomisk og politisk fornuftigt at træne nutidens fattige til at blive morgendagens arbejdskraft. Det smurte den industribaserede økonomis hjul og tjente på fortrinlig vis "den sociale integrations" sag –dvs. opretholdelsen af ordenen og den normative regulering. Ingen af de to betydninger holder vand i vores "sen-moderne" eller "post-moderne", men frem for alt forbrugersistiske samfund. Den aktuelle økonomi har ikke brug for en stor arbejdsstyrke, eftersom den har lært, hvordan man kan øge ikke blot profitten, men også produktionsomfanget, mens man skærer ned på arbejdskraften og udgifterne til den. Samtidig sikres lydighed over for normen og "samfundsdisciplin" i almindelighed i det store og hele i kraft af varemarkedets fristelser og forførelse snarere end i kraft af den statsstyrede tvang og eksercits, der blev forvaltet af netværket af panoptiske institutioner. Økonomisk og politisk kan det sen-moderne eller postmoderne

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forbrugersamfund sagtens fungere uden at skulle tvinge størstedelen af sine medlemmer ind i industriarbejdet trædemølle. I enhver henseende er de fattige ikke mere en arbejdskraftens reservehær, og påkaldelser af arbejdetikken lyder stadig mere tågede og uden forbindelse med nutiden virkelighed.

s. 142.

..At forestille sig muligheden af en anden måde at leve sammen på er ikke en af de stærke sider ved vores verden af privatiserede utopier, en verden, der er kendt for sin tilbøjelighed til først at gøre tabene op, når skaden er sket, og til at sætte krisestyring i stedet for politiske visioner. Denne vores verden er endnu mindre i stand til at mobilisere den vilje og beslutsomhed, der skal til for at gøre et hvilket som helst alternativ til ”mere af det samme” realistisk. Den afvisende etiket ”urealistisk”, der bruges og misbruges så ofte i aktuelle, politiske debatter, vidner primært om et fravær af vilje og beslutsomhed...

s. 143.

Claus Offe har på stringent og overbevisende måde plæderet for en radikal løsning af den nuværende krise. Omdrejningspunktet i denne løsning er ”forestillingen om, at retten til en personlig indkomst kan adskilles fra en reel evne til at forskaffe sig en indkomst.” Det kan den – om end det ganske vist kun kan ske på betingelse af, at man udfører det mindst lige så store kunststykke, der består i at forskyde perspektivet fra den fokusering på lønarbejde, som dikteres af arbejdetikken, til den forestilling om en basal rettighed og en basal garanti, som dikteres af den status og værdighed, der knytter sig til det at være menneske:

s. 146.

..Frigørelsen af arbejdet fra markedscentreret kalkulationer og de bånd, de pålægger mennesker, vil kræve, at arbejdetikken, der er udformet til at tjene arbejdsmarkedet, erstattes med en håndværksmæssig etik. Som Thorstein Veblen påpegede for længe siden, er ”det håndværksmæssige instinkt” (i modsætning til arbejdetikken, der er en moderne opfindelse) den

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naturlige tilbøjelighed hos mennesket. Mennesker er kreative væsner, og det er fornedrende at antage, at det er en stregkode, der adskiller arbejde fra ikke-arbejde, anstrengelser fra dagdriveri; det en lemlæstelse af menneskets natur at hævde, at mennesker ville foretrække at forblive uvirksomme og lade deres færdigheder og forstand gå i frø, hvis ikke det var for den nævnte stregkode. Den håndværksmæssige etik ville gengive dette menneskelige instinkt den værdighed og socialt anerkendte betydning, som arbejdsetikken – således som den er udformet og rodfæstet i det moderne kapitalistiske samfund – nægtede det.

s. 147

..Det er fristende at affærdige forestillingen om en adskillelse af retten til en indtægt og evnen til at forske sig en indtægt og af arbejdet og arbejdsmarkedet som endnu en utopi i den historie, der ofte med foragt beskrives som ”utopiernes kirkegård”. Vores tidsalder er de ”individuelle utopiers” tid, de privatiserede utopiers tid, og derfor falder det naturligt (og betragtes som ”moderigtigt”) at håne og latterliggøre projekter, der indebærer en revision af de muligheder, der kollektivt stilles til rådighed for de enkelte individer.

s. 148

..Tanken om at adskille retten til en indkomst fra evnen til at forske sig en indkomst er faktisk alt andet end konservativ. Tværtimod fremgår det af vore ræsonnementer, at det vil kræve et endog særdeles skarpt sving at implementere den. Det vil indebære en opgivelse af ikke så få sakrosankte (også meget desto mere sakrosankte, fordi de er uovervejede) antagelser om vores nuværende livsstil. F.eks. den antagelse, at effektivitet er godt, uanset hvilket formål den måtte tjene, og hvilke bivirkninger den måtte have i form af menneskelige lidelser – eller at alt, hvad der går for at være ”økonomisk vækst” dvs. alt, hvad der statistisk set kan beskrives som ”mere i dag end i går, mere i morgen end i dag”, i sig selv er godt, uanset hvilke omkostninger det undervejs måtte indebære for menneskenes og naturens eksistensbetingelser – de betingelser, der deles af hele menneskeheden.”

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Bauman, Zygmunt (1998) Work, consumerism, and the new poor. Open University Press. Buckingham.

p. 90.

“Grooming the poor of today into labourers of tomorrow used to make sense economically and politically. It lubricated the wheels of the industry-based economy and served well the task of “social integration” -that is, of order-maintenance and normative regulation. Neither of the two senses holds any more in our “late-modern” or “post-modern”, yet above all consumer, society. The present-day economy does not need a massive labour force, having learned how to increase not just profits, but the volume of products while cutting down on labour and its costs. At the same time, obedience to the norm and “social discipline” in general are by and large secured through the allurements and seductions of the commodity market, rather than through the state-managed coercion and the drill administered by the network of panoptical institutions. Economically and politically, the late-modern or post-modern society of consumers can thrive without dragging the bulk of its members through the milestones of industrial labour. For all practical intents and purposes, the poor have ceased to be reserve army of labour, and invocations of the work ethic sound increasingly nebulous and out of touch with the realities of the day.

p. 94-95.

..Imagining the possibility of another way of living together is not a strong point of our world of privatized utopias, known for its inclination to count losses when already made and for substitution of crises management for political vision. Even less is this world of ours capable of gathering the will and resolve needed to make any alternative to “more of the same” realistic. The dismissive label “unrealistic”, used and abused so widely in current political skirmishes, denotes primarily the absence of will and resolve.

s. 95,

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..A cogent and powerful case for a radical solution to the present crises was presented by Claus Offe. The hub of that solution is “the idea that individual income entitlement can be decoupled from actual income-earning capacity”. It can, though admittedly on condition of no less a feat than change of perspective from one centred on wage labour, as dictated by the work ethic, to the assumption of basic entitlement and basic guarantee, dictated by the status and dignity of being human:

s. 97.

..The emancipation of work from market-centred calculations and the constraints they impose would require the replacement of the work ethic, shaped in the service of the labour market, with an ethic of workmanship. As Thorstein Veblen pointed out a long time ago, “instinct of workmanship” (unlike the work ethic, a modern invention) is the natural predisposition of the human species. Humans are creative beings, and it is demeaning to suppose that a price tag is what sets apart work from nonwork, exertion from loafing; it mutilates human nature to suggest that without that price tag humans would prefer to remain idle and let their skills and imagination rot and rust. The ethics of workmanship would restore to that human instinct the dignity and socially recognized significance which the work ethic, as formed and entrenched in modern capitalist society, denied.

p. 97-98.

..It is tempting to dismiss the idea of decoupling income entitlement from income-earning capacity, and work from the labour market, as another utopia in history, often described contemptuously as the “graveyard of utopias”. Our age is the time of “individual utopias”, of utopias privatized, and so it comes naturally (as well as being a fashionable thing to do) to deride and ridicule such projects which imply a revision of options which are collectively put at the disposal of individuals.

p. 98.

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..The idea of decoupling income entitlement from income-earning capacity is in fact anything but conservative. On the contrary, what follows from our reasoning is that it would take a very sharp turn indeed to implement it. It would involve resignation from quite a few sacrosanct (all the more sacrosanct for being unreflexive) assumptions about our present mode of life. That, for instance, efficiency is a good thing regardless of what it might serve and what might be its side effects in terms of human suffering. Or whatever passes for “economic growth”, i.e. what can be presented statistically as “more today than yesterday, more tomorrow than today”, is good by itself, once more regardless of the damage done on the way to the human condition and to nature – that condition shared by all humanity.”

Bauman, Zygmunt (1999) In Search of Politics. Polity Press. Oxford. p. 180-190.

s. 180-183.

The case for a basic income

It was Thomas Paine who first advanced the idea of a “basic income” independent of the work done and sold. His idea was, typically, born well before its time; the next century was to entrench labour in its form of a commodity sold and bought. Not only was employment to become the sole legitimate entitlement to income, but work was to be identified with sellable activity, conditional on the presence of buyers eager to pay for it; market demand was to be given the sole right to diminish “work” from “non-work”. Another century was needed to expose the limitation and dire insufficiency of that arrangement, and to reveal the threats to ethical standard, social solidarity and the tissue of human relations which it held in store.

Two centuries after Thomas Paine the idea of detaching essential livelihood from employment has been broached time and again all over Europe: in France by Jacques Duboin in the 1930s and later by followers; in Belgium by Charles-Fourier Circle in the 1980s; in recent years, by the Greens in

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Germany, in Holland and Spain, and in Ireland by no less an authority than the National Conference of Bishops. The idea crops up again and again under different names and in slightly different renditions. For instance, Yoland Bresson and René Passet write of “revenue d’existence”, Philippe Van Parijs of “universal allocation”, Jean-Marc Ferry of “citizenship income”, Jean-Paul Maréchal of “the second cheque” (see the articles by Euzéby Maréchal and Bresson in *Manière de voir*, 41/1998).

All sorts of arguments have been advanced in support of the idea. The argument from necessity (a “no alternative” type of argument: there is just not enough paid work around to secure the survival of all) loomed in the background, rather than moving to the forefront of the debate. Other arguments took pride of place. Some arguments invoked historical justice: The present-day wealth of the West is the joint legacy of generations and ought to benefit all descendants. Other arguments referred to the basic equity of human rights: it is true that everybody has the right to do with his or her life what he or she considers to be best, and the duty to earn the means a making the choice real – but the right to stay alive which precedes and conditions all choices is the inalienable property of all human beings, not something to be earned. Most common arguments, though, have been thus far pragmatic rather than philosophical – pointing to the benefits which societies are bound to derive from enabling people to secure a livelihood without submitting to the definition of work imposed by the labour market. There are many areas which are crucial for the life lived together, for the quality of life and human relations, which require a lot of time and effort but which stay unattended or are poorly attended because of the pressures arising from submitting human entitlements to the verdicts of labour market. Such areas are, for instance, care for the old, young, invalid and infirm; responsibilities arising from the need to keep the community alive and communal life decent; keeping the environment clean and the landscape pleasing; voluntary work for the sake of shared welfare; or just putting heads together to areas and many others (also such as are simply unimaginable under present circumstances, but which are bound to be discovered or invented under more propitious conditions) are laid fallow and quickly turn into wasteland as long as most attempts to cultivate them bump into the vexing question of money to be paid for the work to be done – and so are wound up before they get started. A basic income, such arguments suggests, would release time, labour, thought and will needed to take proper care of the presently neglected areas – to the evident benefit of the quality of life of all involved.

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The argument from the need to preserve or restore the basic conditions of republican life and citizenship, however, has not figured prominently in the debate about basic income – not at all as centrally as it deserves. I have no intention to question any of the arguments advanced thus far; they are all valid and all deserve to be considered seriously. And once they are seriously considered, they would certainly be found convincing and appealing. Yet the decisive argument in favour of the unconditional social guarantee of a basic livelihood can be found not in the moral duty towards the handicapped and destitute (however redeeming for the ethical health of society the fulfilment of that duty undoubtedly is), not in philosophical renditions of equity or justice (however important it is to arouse and keep awake human consciences on that point), and not in benefit for the quality of life in common (however crucial they are for the general wellbeing and for the survival of human bonds), but in its political significance, or its importance for the polity: its crucial role in the restoration of the lost private/public space, and in filling the now empty private/public space. In other words, in its being a *conditio sine qua non* of the rebirth of fully fledged citizenship and republic both being conceivable solely in the company of self-confident people, people free from existential fear – secure people.

s. 183-184.

....Such a presentation suggests that the reason to resort to the basic income for all is to resolve “the problem of the poor” – to lift the poor from their poverty. Thus, no doubt, is an important argument in favour of a basic income; but if nothing more is said, it casts the proposed measure as another “crisis management” expedient, another “one-issue” and “focused” policy, fully in keeping with the “problem-resolution” rather than vision-guided strategy of current politics. But basic income is more – much more – than a way to tackle the problem of one category of population while leaving the rest unaffected. On the one hand, its chance of implementation are considerably diminished if it is conceived as the matter of interest only of the poor themselves and aimed at their and no one else’s benefit. On the other hand, were basic income to be indeed introduced, it wouldn’t change the lot of the poor alone. It would reintroduce ethical standard to the life of society, substituting the principle of sharing for that of competitiveness. It would establish the principle of rights grounded in the enabling quality of being a citizen, rather than in claims grounded in the circumstances of

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“the needing it most”, and hence subject to a divisive and disqualifying “means test”. And it would change radically the nature of polity; it would transform it from an agency of law and order and crises-management fire brigade into a common weal and the area where individual and group interests are reforged into public issues of concern to all citizens alike. Instead of merely toning down divisions and preventing conflicts from inflammation, the polity might even become the seedbed of solidarity. Last but not least, having liberated its citizens from uncertainty surrounding their survival pursuits, the polity may set them free pursues their republican rights and duties.

s. 185-186.

...Third, all arguments in terms of “affordability” willy-nilly imply the acceptance of the “social state” as, essentially, the transfer money from those who earn it to those who don’t. That acceptance inevitably relies on a long chain of other tacit assumptions: the identification of work with paid work and social gain with market value and the most seminal among them. Instead of bringing those assumptions into the open in order to expose their arbitrariness (doing it is a necessary condition of “basic income” success), it obliquely reconfirms their validity while reframing from meeting them point-blank. By the same token arguing in terms of “affordability” makes the chances of the “basic income” weaker rather than stronger. Besides, once more the true significance of the proposed reform is played down. If despite such a handicap, basic income is indeed accepted, the fact of having been introduced under auspices of the accountant-style calculation will burden it with a potentially terminal blemish tremendously difficult erase and will thus store up trouble for the future. The policy of a basic income will be condemned to the life of haggling and log-rolling; far from becoming the foundations of a new security. It will be another factor of uncertainty. If judged from the republican perspective, the introduction of a basic income as, essentially, another form of redistribution, acceptable on the grounds of it’s financial feasibility and welcomed and advertised as a precautionary measure against the misspending of taxpayer’s money, is a wasted opportunity to renegotiate the meaning of polity and of citizenship.

s. 188-189.

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... “Basic income” is not intended to be a measure aimed against freedom of choice. Were its effectiveness to be paid for with collective (let alone legislated and coercive) constraint imposed on the individual choice, such a price would destroy its potential benefits – in as far as they consist, after all, in laying the foundation of a fully fledged autonomous society. The purpose of the republic (if the republic has any substantive purpose) is not an imposition of a preconceived model of the “good life”, but enabling its citizens to discuss freely the models of life they prefer and to practice them; the republic is about widening, not trimming the choices; about enhancing, not limiting individual liberties. The decoupling of income entitlements from paid work from labour market may serve the republic in only one way, but a crucial way: by removing the awesome fly of insecurity from the sweet ointment of freedom. If something is to be limited, it is the risks involved in practicing freedom. But this limitation of risks and damages is precisely the most crucial objective of a basic income. When (if) this objective is reached, men and women no longer afraid to use their freedom may find the time, will and courage to construct ever more humane meanings of their humanity, to consider and select forms of life which are both satisfying and rational.”