

Claus Offe, 1940-

Kort biografi

Tysk sociolog. Tilhører anden generation af Frankfurter-skolen. Arbejdede fra 1965-69 sammen med Jürgen Habermas. Offe har været professor i politisk videnskab og sociologi i Bielefeld (1975-88), i Bremen (1988-95 og sidst på Humboldt universitet i Berlin (1995-2005). Offe har argumenteret for at man med den strukturelle arbejdsløshed og de økologiske problemers stigende betydning må anlægge en ny politisk strategi i velfærdsstaten, hvor en borgerløns-/basisindkomst ordning ses som en frigørende mulighed.



Dokumentation

Offe, Claus (1992) A Non-Productivist Design for Social Policies. IN Philippe Van Parijs (ed.) Arguing for Basic Income, Ethical Foundations for a Radical Reform. Verso. London p. 61-78.

p. 69-70.

“There are basically four strategic options that would adopt in response to the uncertainties and insecurities concerning the premises of the welfare state. I want to specify them briefly and then explore the case for one of them, the basic income proposal.

First, economic liberals propose that since the empirical premises of the welfare state as itemized above are partly and progressively fading away, what remains to be done is to bid farewell to overly generous standards and promises of security, and let market decide. This strategic option involves in part the outright abolition of transfers and services, in part a narrower targeting and means-testing of the clientele of the welfare state...

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.. Second, the conservative strategy recommends the selective punishing and rewarding of people's attitudes towards work, education, health, the legal order and the family...

.. Third, the social democratic version of strategic responses, even to extent that it is prepared reluctantly to recognize the fragility of the assumptions underlying the welfare state, still denies the need for a basic orientation and insist instead upon the need and feasibility of defending and even further expanding the welfare state and its productivist premises...

.. Finally, there is a poorly defined and clearly undertheorized bundle of strategic proposals that come from what I would like to term the "post-industrial Left" and can be described as left-libertarian in their ideological orientation. These proposals emphasize the values of security and autonomy, and envisage the possibility for reconciling the alleged antagonism prevailing between the two in relying upon the idea of citizenship and the positive rights and entitlements, such as the entitlement to a basic income, associated with it

The case for citizenship-based entitlements to a basic income differs from some or all of the preceding options in that:

(a) not class, occupational status, earnings or employment record but citizenship is the basis for entitlement to transfers and services;

(b) not paid labour but "useful activities" including activities performed outside employment and labour market and hence escaping formal measurement and accounting constitute the moral justification of the claim to benefits to the receipt of which no behavioural preconditions are to be attached;

(c) not the protection of (relative) status or the rewarding of desert but coverage of basic needs is the criterion of justice; and

(d) not (absolute) security but a sustainable level of risk and maintenance of autonomous options concerning the citizen's responsible conduct of his or her is the key value.

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..Instead, I believe that a universal and adequate basic income could be designed to become a synthesis of the more desirable features of universalism and selectivity. Such a synthesis would have to consist of several components:

(i) the most important component is an unconditional, subsistence level, tax-financed right to income based upon citizenship rather than labour-market participation.

(ii) The extreme universalism embodied in such a basic income would have to be complemented by a tax structure that ensured that all those who participate in gainful employment and thus do really depend upon the basic income will contribute – through direct and indirect taxation and I distributive progressive ways – to its financing.

(iii) As it would not be surprising to find a massive middle-class opposition mobilizing against such a scheme – which does, in fact, involve – the arrangement would have to be based upon legislation that provides for something like the following procedural rule: revisions of the scheme that would restrict access to the basic income and/or to say, 90 per cent of the net contributors.

iv) Extensive co-operative and other institutional forms of non-wage labour outside formal employment must be experimentally developed in order to expose the near-monopoly that the institutional arrangement of formal employment holds over the universe of useful human activities in competition with alternative modes of “getting things done”.

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..The basic income cannot and should not be presented as a panacea to open the road to a “good society”. First because, the proposal eventually turn out to be a strategy that end (which I believe it is), it will be only one element in a policy package within which other elements are equally important. Second, because we cannot claim to know enough about the short-term and long-term effects of the proposal once it is implemented, unpleasant surprises cannot be excluded – or rather,

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they must be excluded in practice through thoughtful experimentation and cautious exploration of the many questions, problems and potential side-effects about which we simply do not yet know enough. Third rather than being a formula for the foundation of a new social order, it might be more realistic and honest to argue for basic income in terms of a defensive measure to preserve and expand notions of social justice against a welfare backlash that has already started and must be expected to continue in view of the above structural changes.

Claus Offe (1995) Full Employment: Asking the wrong question? Dissent. Winter, p. 77-81

p. 81.

As long as almost all wage earners are involved in producing wealth, the problem of sharing wealth is solved by way of each individual's job. Once this cease to be the case and this supposedly normal condition has disappeared for good, the problem of distribution can be solved only by establishing specific economic rights that all citizens grant to each other.

A system of this sort can be articulated in terms of three principles. First no one has the right to exclude entire categories of the population (according to sex, age nationality, qualifications, and so on) from participation in the labor market.

Second: since adult citizens do not have a "right to work" but instead a right to compete for employment, then all those who voluntarily withdraw from the competition are doing a favour to all those who remain, whose chances are correspondingly improved. Those who withdraw deserve compensation for duration of their non-participation in the labor market. It should come in the form of a right to a base income, without any further conditions (such as need, willingness to work, family circumstances), and should be financed from taxes, at a level commensurate with of modes way of life.

Third: compensation for withdrawing from the labor market, about which individuals can change their mind at any time, should not simply reward people for taking their labor out of the economy. It should encourage them to put their labor to uses other than selling it in return for wages.

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True, outside the intimate circle of family, such possibilities are not so easy to find. For as the industrial societies have developed, they tended to force workers into a “modernization trap”: for a long time, the labor market appeared so much more rewarding than any informal and self-sufficient forms of activities that these largely died out, and now, when the market can no longer absorb the volume of available labor, they are not there in reserve for a subsistence economy. Accordingly, there is no reason to expect that alternative forms of useful activity will crop up spontaneously or on command; they must be reinvented, sponsored, and encouraged.

Systematic reordering of work according to such principles would not eliminate unemployment. But since it is unlikely that there will ever again be enough work to go around, we should embrace an arrangement that will create tolerable conditions and thereby lessen the likelihood of social conflict.