

Basic income – A transcultural perspective

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Introduction

The current world economic crisis comes to mind in all political arenas globally, nationally and locally. Politicians and economists disagree among themselves and with each other about how to best overcome the crisis and restore economic growth. The political debate is set between an 'austere', traditional neo-liberal and a more Keynesian inspired growth policy, with one of the key issues being how and to what extent the financial sector should be regulated.

But individual groups of economists have also questioned the foundations of the economic science itself, whether it is based on some incorrect basic assumptions. One example is the international 'Institute for New Economic Thinking'¹, with no fewer than 6 Nobel Prize winners in economics in the lead, which has established a Danish branch at the Department of Economics, University of Copenhagen called 'Center for Imperfect Knowledge Economics'.² Here the notions of the 'rational Economic Man' and perfect self-regulating markets are questioned. But the institute is still "groping in the dark without any theory" as described by the head of the Centre, Professor Katarina Juselius.³ A viable alternative remains to be found.

But still the economic problems continue as exposed in numerous global protests such as *Los Indignados* in Spain, the global *Occupy movement* and the looting and riots in the UK, developments that are all related to the economic crisis and perhaps more fundamentally to the way the world economic system is geared, not least the material inequality it generates. According to the Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung, the current layout of the world economy is even the main cause of suffering and global inequality, because it basically ignores human beings (Galtung 2010: 164).

This demonstrates that there is a need to rethink the relationship between economics and politics in general and the design of economic systems in particular, a true paradigm shift in economic science.

Participants in the global organization, basic income Earth Network (BIEN) working for the implementation of basic income all over the world, have also endeavoured to show how a basic income would mitigate and perhaps even help to overcome the many negative aspects of the current world economic crisis (Vuolo et al., 2009; Standing 2011: 171ff.).

¹ <http://ineteconomics.org/>

² <http://www.econ.ku.dk/inet/>

³ <http://www.information.dk/300796>

The British labour economist Guy Standing suggests "Economic Stabilization Grants," as a response to the crisis: "*My proposal is that every citizen should receive a monthly economic stabilisation grant... of say £ 30 a week in current circumstances.*" (Standing 2009: 9). He argues that it would stabilize the economy and that it would be a more effective crisis resolution compared to the old form of social securities including various subsidies and industrial and labour market policies.

Although Standing breaks with the traditional neo-liberal paradigm by saying that financial security must be promoted and secured outside the financial-market sphere, he represents only a partial paradigm shift, since it is more of an adjustment of the existing paradigm aimed at stabilizing the world economy. Standing, however, agrees with the need for a more comprehensive paradigm shift in economic science, and draws attention to what science historian Thomas Kuhn said in his famous book on paradigm shifts. It is not enough that a paradigm breaks down from lack of confidence. It will only be replaced when there is a new paradigm that is gaining momentum and can fill its shoes (Kuhn 1996).

But this raises the question whether the introduction of Basic Income can indeed be thought to be a globally viable and workable solution to addressing the effects of the global economic crisis with the further aim of a fundamental remaking of the relationship between economics and politics as well as of the general layout of the economic systems?

Apparently, the answer could be yes. Various schemes with Unconditional Basic Income are now implemented in Brazil, Iran, the U.S. state of Alaska and furthermore, Mongolia stands at the threshold of introducing an Unconditional Basic Income after the discovery of rich natural resources in the country. In Brazil, a basic income law was passed in 2004, but so far the initiative has only been implemented in two municipalities. However, the National *Bolsa Familia* program bears many similarities with a basic income, but here the payouts are conditioned on a number of requirements such as vaccination of the family's children and active schooling etc. In Iran, Basic Income has been introduced as part of wider economic reforms in autumn 2010. However, it is now feasible to target the basic income to society's poorer people.⁴ In 1976, the *Alaska Permanent Fund* was established. It has since formed the backbone of basic income payments in Alaska. Meanwhile, basic income has run as a pilot project in Namibia in 2008 and 2009. Despite the very positive experience, the government in Windhoek has been reluctant to implement basic income in national legislation.⁵ In contrast, two new pilot projects were started in India in 2011.⁶ Furthermore, the tireless Brazilian champion of basic income, senator and economics professor Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy, on several occasions has tried to promote the idea to the world's political leaders. These include the Bolivian President Evo Morales and former U.S. President George W. Bush and current U.S.

⁴ <http://binews.org/2012/01/iran-basic-income-might-become-means-tested/>

⁵ http://www.bignam.org/BIG_pilot.html

⁶ For a detailed outline and analysis of the current basic income schemes around the world, see Murray & Pateman 2012

President Barack Obama. Suplicy has specifically argued for basic income with reference to the implementations in Alaska and Brazil.⁷

Suplicy argues that basic income is an ancient idea which can be found in widely different religious and philosophical writings, and which can therefore be said to have a broad cross-cultural appeal (Suplicy 2007, pp. 4ff.).

The critical political philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri also see the introduction of basic income as a global action to liberate people from economic necessity and empower them to live their own lives (Hardt & Negri 2000).

But despite these practical examples, ideas and arguments for basic income as a globally viable and workable solution, a number of problems emerges when basic income is seen as part of a broader paradigm shift in economic science and as a trans-culturally viable phenomenon. Basic income is in fact rooted in certain culturally coloured perceptions of people, society and economy.

Basic income as a logocentric idea

Although BIEN has become a worldwide organization and thus comprises several national organizations outside Europe (Brazil, South Africa, Japan, South Korea), the organization's perception of basic income, why it is a good idea and how it achieved, is very much dominated by western European thought to suit the various European welfare nation states, and at the same time it is rooted in liberal political thought which is centred around the individual. An example is the special issue of the journal *Basic Income Studies* from October 2011 titled "*Should Libertarians endorse Basic Income?*" The special issue thoroughly examines different aspects of whether basic income in one form or another may be more or less compatible with basic principles of liberal political philosophy.

In Guy Standing's latest book, basic income is clearly defined as an income paid to an individual, not to a larger group as the family or household (Standing 2011: 172). And BIEN's mission statement says: "*Common to all is the belief that some sort of economic right based upon citizenship... is called for as part of the just solution to social problems in advanced societies.*"⁸ Thus, basic income is primarily intended as a solution to social problems in the Western welfare states.

BIEN's website also reveals that the practical arguments for a basic income, explaining what the basic income is about and how it works, are mainly based on a neoclassical or welfare economic thinking with an individualistic utilitarian or contractual perspective.

⁷ <http://www.usbig.net/papers/152-Suplicy-blowin.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.basicincome.org/bien/aboutbien.html>

What these examples seem to imply is a self-referential and closed basic income thinking. It is, in other words, logocentric, meaning that it is more than just a paradigm or a specific way of thinking. It is a thinking which is coherent, more or less logical and based on reason, rooted in the ancient Greek concept of *logos* and thus expresses a specific logic. Somewhat controversially, one could say that as far as the thinking about basic income relies too much on a particular conception of what thinking about basic income is, it becomes a self-enclosed system. Such logocentrism leads to a rejection of other forms of human expression and thereby it becomes a predatory thinking in relation to other creeds.

Instead, the intercultural philosopher Raimon Panikkar establishes a more open starting point for the discussion of basic income as a global solution. It is a starting point that goes beyond multicultural scenarios where there is not necessarily a dialogue between cultures. The starting point goes even beyond the intercultural, which is focused exclusively on dialogue between cultures. Panikkar starts from the concept of *terra nullius*, which he describes as: " (...) a virgin place that no one has yet occupied; (...) it is utopia, situated between two (or more) cultures." (Panikkar 2000). Thus, *terra nullius* is a place, which in principle cannot be a place controlled by specific myths and logos-forms. *Terra nullius* works with a fundamental openness to the paradoxical, the nothingness and incomprehensibility arising out of discussion, dialogue and reflection on basic income as a phenomenon. This means that everything is negotiable and open to re-constitution and re-configuration, but it also points to the need to find the conditions for such negotiations, re-constitutions and re-configurations to take place. Thus, basic income is constituted as a trans-cultural phenomenon, which means that it is a fundamentally open entity that moves across cultures and in this movement it is constituted, configured and sculptured. Transculturality is about learning and creating something that is not directly attributable to a particular culture, but is synergistically transcending both the incumbent basic income idea, as well as other notions of minimum income, income redistribution and other related schemes.

In order to make the first step towards a trans-cultural opening of the basic income idea, it is appropriate to look at parts of the debate that takes place on the outskirts of the established paradigm - or logos - on basic income. In other words, the focus is not directed against endogenous debates as was the case in the special issue of Basic Income Studies mentioned above, but rather on the exogenous openings that point beyond the established paradigm.

Basic income in the economic paradigm

The incumbent - and hegemonic - Western basic income paradigm is constituted by some fairly clearly identifiable components, which, in one way or another, are stressed or toned down; joint or cut off. These components consist of basic concepts such as welfare, individual, equality, justice, work, equilibrium, rationality, society and social contract. But

common to these concepts is that they are bound together by economic thinking, which admittedly can be expressed in different ways based on different priorities or economic or political philosophical disagreements, but which nevertheless is imbued with a specifically economic logic. Henceforth, we will use the term *economistic paradigm* when referring to this established Western basic income paradigm.

The British Professor of Social Policy Bill Jordan thus argues that it is possible to find clear evidence for such an economistic paradigm in the arguments for basic income as expressed by one of the prominent basic income theorists and founder of BIEN, Belgian philosopher Philippe Van Parijs. Jordan claims that Van Parijs' thinking about basic income is based on a narrow Western welfare economic conception of society that reflects the whole economic paradigm which has dominated Western society since the 1980s (Jordan 2008: 221).

Philippe Van Parijs's theory of basic income, as a component for creating justice, is a continuation of the theories of equality and justice of American liberal political philosophers John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin. Van Parijs constructs a liberal-egalitarian conception of justice by combining a libertarian concept of freedom (where security and private property is guaranteed) with an egalitarian liberal principle of allocating society's resources. In Van Parijs' just society, men are free with a functioning structure of ownership and personal freedom which guarantee that you can do what you want. Freedom can only be safeguarded if there is a necessary distribution of real opportunities for those with the fewest resources. Awarding a universal basic income, securing not only a formal but also a real freedom for all, does this. It is funded by a kind of luxury tax on wage labour which can be considered a limited resource (Van Parijs, 1995).

Parijs refuses to support his theory of justice on a conception of the good life "*a particular substantive conception of the good life*" (Van Parijs 1995: 27). Thus he writes himself into the tradition of non-perfectionist liberalism in which any thinking involved with or argument for how people should live is considered to be incompatible with individual freedom. According to Parijs, the challenge is to formulate a theory of justice which abstracts from other values in society.

Van Parijs distinguishes sharply between good and just: "*Individually, we need to strive for a good life, not for a happy life. Collectively, we need to strive for a just society, not for a happy society.*" (Van Parijs 2010). The perception of the good life is, in other words, confined to the individual and beyond collective definition.

Jordan's concern in this regard is that a justification of basic income, based on the economistic paradigm, may eventually break with the collective solidarity ethics which is a prerequisite for implementing a basic income (Jordan 2008). Van Parijs focuses solely on contractual relationships as the organizing principle of society which means that the social solidarity, which is a prerequisite for the introduction and maintenance of basic income, is a solidarity of uniformity. You can only make a contract with someone you trust and you can only

trust another human being which is like yourself. This is reflected in the background for a conference that Van Parijs organized in 2004 which was partly based on a thesis that: "*Other things being equal, the more cultural (and in particular linguistic) homogeneity within the population of a politically defined territory, the better the prospects in terms of economic solidarity.*" (Van Parijs 2004).

In this liberal thinking man is seen as detached from any social context. To Jordan the thesis about liberal neutrality is an idealized, if not romanticized, view on individual freedom, which promotes a version of the social championed by an individualized culture. It uncritically incorporates the sacred value of the self at the expense of all the contextual features of the social environment in which the self is embedded. No thought of duties beyond love and loyalty ties (Jordan 2008, p 229).

Instead, the German theologian Martin Niemöller has argued that solidarity begins with the other - that is, the one who is different from yourself (Ydesen 2006): "*When the Nazis took the communists, I remained silent, I was not a communist. When they took the socialists, I remained silent; I was not a socialist. When they took the trade unionists, I said nothing, I was not a union member. When they took me, no one was left to protest.*"

The German philosopher and sociologist Axel Honneth argues that solidarity is a relationship of interaction, where people mutually engage in each other's diverse life forms on the basis of a shared experience (generality). Solidarity is thus a value constellation in which subjects mutually recognize and appreciate each other's performance and ability, because they see a realization of the whole and the community's interests (Honneth 2006: 172f.).

It therefore shows that Parijs subscribes to a solidarity view which could very well be conceived differently with major implications for the space within which a basic income is conceivable. The perspective gains further relevance in a global transcultural setting in which the degree of difference and diversity factors increase significantly compared to the national perspectives of the economic paradigm. In this reconfigured appearance, the concept of solidarity constitutes a transcultural opening pointing beyond the economic paradigm since the concept holds the potential to negate the contradiction between cultures and religions through an immanent claim to understanding the complementarity between people.

Basic Income as part of a cultural clash with the dominant neoliberal development policy

Jordan's criticism of the whole economic paradigm, which has also affected basic income theorists, is rooted in the so-called *Easterlin paradox* (1974) which says that when a society's wealth reaches a certain level, its measured happiness does not increase correspondingly, i.e. there is a growing discrepancy between GDP growth and the feeling of happiness.

This paradox sparks Jordan to a more fundamental break with the economic model and the economic thinking behind it. An entirely different perspective and other criteria must replace the traditional economic approach to assessing and measuring welfare.

As opposed to a narrow concept of economic welfare, Jordan introduces a broader cultural and institutional welfare concept built on social relationships that are not determined by the market: "well-being and social value". It has components such as health, job satisfaction, personal relationships, civil society and faith. To Jordan "well-being" is determined by three key factors: Intimacy, respect and belonging. They are defined as follows:

(...) Intimacy is concerned with close physical and emotional relationships, and involves the generation of sharing of intense feelings (including love and hate). Respect comprises the recognition and regard that are produced and distributed in public life, including economic activity, the associational and political sphere, and involves the civil interactions of the street, the workplace and the official agency. Belonging refers to the stronger feelings and bonds that are generated in teams, groups, communities and membership organizations, and which contribute directly to identity and security. In this sense, belonging is more closely related to intimacy, as a warm and emotional form of social value, than to respect, as a cooler, more formal type of social exchange. (Jordan 2008: 136f.).

The prevailing neo-liberal economic thinking and policy since the 1980s, led, according to Jordan, to the systematic undermining and denigration of the non-market relations in society:

So the economic model, while encouraging the individualistic pursuit of self-realization through work and consumption, undermines the cultures and institutions through which individuals can win esteem, status, security and a set of reliable social interactions, conducive for well-being. (Jordan 2008: 165).

It is in this situation that Jordan poses the very obvious question: Will an isolated basic income reform rooted in an economic thinking not just be another step towards individualisation and atomisation of a culture of welfare solidarity?

Jordan finds it illusory to imagine that a more inclusive and democratic culture could be created by an isolated basic income reform, such as Erik Olin Wright and Carole Pateman imagine.

Jordan thinks the opposite. If a basic income reform is to succeed it must be considered in close connection with a broader cultural showdown with the whole of the dominant Western model of development. There must be a broad cultural showdown based on social movements, civil society and a broad, collective mobilization, in which the mobilization for a basic income reform can only be one element.

The shift from contractual approaches to ones that take account of social value cannot rely on any one reform or organization.... It involves the creation of many opportunities, at many levels, for issues about quality of life and relationships. (Jordan 2008: 241).

According to Jordan, it is a longer term project than a narrow technical basic income reform of the highly developed welfare states, but a necessary project, if a basic income reform is to get the desired effects that most basic income theorists want.

Thus, Jordan draws a picture of another trans-cultural opening in relation to the economic paradigm, namely the welfare concept which, like the concept of solidarity, may well be reconfigured and reconstituted in order to make basic income a genuinely trans-cultural phenomenon. The importance of communities in relation to a welfare where basic income plays a significant role is reflected empirically in the configuration of one of the Indian pilot projects mentioned above. Here the basic income is directed at the village community rather than the individual.⁹ In Iran, the basic income is targeting the head of the family.¹⁰ And in Argentina, the paper discusses whether a basic income should target children and their families.¹¹

The embedded atomism in the Western welfare economic conception of basic income is problematic from a trans-cultural perspective because it is just not possible to reduce personal relationships - families, communities, associations and civil society - to financially separate entities. Many cultures thus operate not with the individual as the basic unit, but with the family, the local, or civil society. Just think of the name "*Bolsa Familia*" which is directed towards the family as an organizational entity. Another example is the highly publicized microloans directed at poor women in developing countries. The point here is that the socio-economic and socio-cultural contexts play important roles since it is women who are the key persons based on the perception that women generally show more responsibility to their children's welfare than men (Vollmann, 2006).

Thus, one can argue that people interact and interpret their relations within the traditions that come from other collective representations of the value of human existence than what is reflected in the economic paradigm.

Terra Nullius: Towards a transcultural normative basis for basic income

We agree with Bill Jordan that Philippe van Parijs' justification of a basic income is based on a narrowly individualistic Western economic foundation. A normative foundation for the

⁹ <http://www.basicincome.org/bien/pdf/Flash65.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.basicincome.org/bien/pdf/Flash63.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.basicincome.org/bien/pdf/Flash60.pdf>

basic income idea with a balanced human view is missing, a foundation that is both universal and cultural-sensitive, i.e. can be used globally and regionally in all religions, cultures and development models. In other words, we call for the *terra nullius* from which a basic income idea may emanate in a transcultural and normative sense.

We have demonstrated how Van Parijs rejects normative elements in his argument for a basic income with reference to the fact that the individual should be sovereign of the values in his own life. But as Jordan's alternative welfare concepts suggest it is necessary to think about values at two levels. A level dealing with human values in everyday life, individual likes and dislikes and how the good life should be. Van Parijs is right that such values cannot be determined collectively as it would make basic income as a transcultural phenomenon almost impossible because it would lose any cultural sensitivity. But Van Parijs overlooks the fact that values may also be rooted at a deeper level which is rooted in human existence and in the very conditions that allow human beings to function. This is the level that Jordan so to speak links to with his broader welfare concept. The problem with Jordan's alternative welfare concept, which is portrayed as a cultural point of view as opposed to a utilitarian, contractual perspective, however, is that it is not very clear, and that it does not really take on board other non-Western cultures.

The Norwegian peace and conflict researcher Johan Galtung has developed a theory of basic human needs which in a much more clear and operationalized way manages to be rooted in human existence while also being broad enough to contain different cultural perceptions. For Galtung, any notion of peace and community development must be based on fundamental human needs: "*Rooting peace in humans means taking humans as the point of departure, and what happens to them as the measure of all things. In other words, the homo mensura thesis of Protagoras.*" (Galtung 2008: 22). Galtung's approach is a showdown with the perception of human beings in the economic paradigm, and he sets out specific proposals for how basic income can serve as an overall approach towards a better world, where more human needs are met than is the case today (Galtung 2010: 163 -180). This makes Galtung's theory interesting in this context as an intercultural analysis of a possible *terra nullius* that can make basic income a relevant global initiative.

Johan Galtung's theory of basic human needs

What are the differences between a concept of basic human needs and the economic paradigm? Looking at the general use of the concept of basic needs, Wikipedia says:

"A traditional list of immediate "basic needs" is food (including water), shelter, and clothing. Many modern lists emphasize the minimum level of consumption of 'basic needs' of not just food, water, and shelter, but also sanitation, education, and healthcare."

It shows the widely held view on basic human needs that it includes only the tangible, somatic welfare needs like food, shelter, clothing, health and education.

However, according to Johan Galtung basic human needs imply several dimensions and he operates with four basic needs: two material needs: *survival* and *welfare* and two spiritual needs: *freedom* and *identity* of which survival and freedom are actor-dependent, while welfare and identity are structure-dependent. Galtung puts it succinctly as follows: well-being = survival + wellness + freedom + identity (Galtung 2008: 18-27) and (Galtung 2010: 31-39):

Four Categories of Basic Human Needs and Their Negations

Needs	Actor-dependent	Structure-dependent
Material or Soma-generated	I. Survival vs. Death	I. Wellness vs. Misery or Illness
Non-material or Spirit-generated	II. Freedom vs. Repression	III. Identity vs. Alienation

(Galtung 2008: 25)

*“For **wellness** five inputs emerged, los cinco bienes fundamentales: food-clothing-housing-health, and education as broad communicative competence. And **survival**, the ultimate sine qua non for all needs. Nature endows organism with a curve from birth via maturation and aging to death; survival is to complete that gift, the curve, preferably painlessly, bidding farewell. To cut off this curve in a war, like with bullets, is also a crime against nature. Two basic spiritual needs came up: **freedom** as choice, options: for spouse, job, residence, life style, polity and economy; and **identity**, as meaning with life, something to live for, not only from something.”* (Galtung 2010: p. 31).

The suppression of basic needs leads in extreme cases to death (the opposite of survival), disease (the opposite of welfare), repression (the antithesis of freedom) and alienation (the opposite of identity).

Basic needs (which include some basic values) are called basic needs because they make human existence possible. They are not values you choose like you choose other values. As such, they are non-negotiable. Humans are, therefore, in a situation in which they are driven by their basic needs, guided by the culture from within and guided by the structure from the outside. This means that the basic needs have some objective foundation, but must be interpreted (individually and collectively) in a particular culture and into a specific political-institutional context.

But how is the relationship then between these basic needs? Are there some that are more important than others? Is there a hierarchy between them?

There are theories about the basic human needs which recognize psychological and social needs as basic needs within a hierarchy of basic needs. The psychologist Abraham Maslow imagined that one first had to satisfy the material needs, and then one could realize the more psychological needs (social needs and self-actualization).

Galtung rejects such a concept of a hierarchy between basic needs. He regards hierarchization as a Judeo-Christian notion. Maslow imagines both a temporal as well as an ontological hierarchy: "Neither the idea of temporal succession nor ontological development is convincing" (Galtung 2010: 241). According to Galtung, it depends entirely on the particular person and situation. There are many historical examples of people prioritizing freedom and identity needs over the material needs (survival and wellness).

Basic human needs, work and ecological balance

Galtung makes a distinction between the material and non-material, spiritual needs in such a way that the first is called *deficiency needs* or optimization needs, while the spiritual needs are called *growth or maximization needs*. The need for material well-being should not be maximized, but optimized, the need for freedom and identity must instead be maximized (Galtung 1983).

Not surprisingly, Galtung therefore also makes a distinction between various forms of misguided development in relation to basic human needs. In rich countries, we see both a material poverty, but also widespread material overconsumption with an overdeveloped satisfaction of material needs and an underdeveloped satisfaction of the non-material needs:

"The political right in the West focuses on the freedom needs, and the political left on wellness needs. Both avoid survival needs that may stand in the way of their favorite violence. And both take identity needs for granted as they have theirs." (Galtung 2010: 32).

The opposite situation can be observed in a number of economically less developed countries in which an underdevelopment of the satisfaction of the material needs is connected with a higher development of certain aspects of the non-material needs.

This means that Galtung agrees with Bill Jordan in his previously mentioned diagnosis of the increasingly pronounced individualistic culture of Western developed societies. Galtung speaks directly about the tendency to social disintegration and says that the egoistic cost-benefit thinking in Western economy leads to atomization and anomie and a society without a common and committed normative culture (ibid: 50-53).

Then, how is Galtung's view on the possibilities for an alternative development in the highly developed countries?

Galtung concurs with Jordan in that the rejection of the economic paradigm must come about through the restoration of the civil society. An alternative economic development must have the basic human needs as its starting point and human work as its focus but with a much broader conception than the usual neo-liberal economic theory of work as equivalent to wage work (Galtung, Nilsson, Svae and Wadeskog 1985). An alternative development must, according to Galtung, be based not only on basic human needs, but also take into account the ecological balance and the opportunities for the unfolding of different communities and cultural diversity:

"Short formula: Development = ecological balance + health + social unfolding + world diversity-symbiosis-equity = peace." (Ibid: 29).

This very general formula is Galtung's conceptual framework for an alternative development.

In Galtung's transcultural view, it becomes necessary to have a broader concept of work. Work can no longer be reduced to wage labor, but must reflect the full range of activities directed at promoting human needs, taking into account the ecological balance and the cultural diversity in the world.

On a more concrete level, he is very eclectic as he depicts a combination of different economic systems and development models supporting both state, market, communities and the civil society as well as the cooperation between these elements.

Galtung's reflections on basic human needs open up two additional transcultural doors, namely the concept of work and the ecological balance. The perception of these two concepts can then be reconstituted and reconfigured against the economic paradigm in order to provide a transcultural perspective on basic income.

Galtung and the current basic income debate

In the current debate, basic income is a purely monetary quantitative measure indicating the standard of living. This means that basic income becomes one of the elements in the material qualitative welfare dimension which also includes shelter, clothing, health and education.

A few basic income theorists, for example John Baker, have argued in favor of a link between basic income and basic needs:

"A basic income is essentially an income which (1) everyone receives unconditionally – that is, regardless of current work, past work, willingness to work, or a condition of need; sufficient to cover one's basic needs." (Baker 1992: 122f.)

But not all basic income theorists have made this connection. Philippe Van Parijs has expressed that there is not necessarily any correlation between basic income and basic human needs.

In his book "Real Freedom for All", he clearly states that there is no connection between the concept of basic income and basic human needs: "*Basic income is therefore not definitionally tied to some notion of "basic needs".*" (Parijs 1995: 30).

And later: "*There is nothing in the definition of basic income, as it is here understood, to connect it to some notion of basic needs. A basic income, as defined, can fall short of or exceed what is regarded as necessary to a decent existence.*" (Ibid.: 35)

However, the Swedish basic income theorist Simon Birnbaum, who otherwise on the whole is in agreement with Van Parijs's views, distances himself from this particular point in his thesis and defines a basic income as covering basic human needs.

"The level of a basic income could be high or low, and need not be sufficient on its own to cover basic needs (Van Paris 1992, 4). For the normative purposes of the present research project, however, I will generally have in mind a basic income that is at least high enough to provide each citizen with the basic means of subsistence and, hence leave a very marginal (if any) role for social assistance-like schemes." (Birnbaum 2008: 20).

What are the opinions on basic needs among the basic income theorists who are linking a basic income with basic human needs? They all share the widespread view of basic human needs as covering only the material needs.

Galtung breaks with this narrow economic conception of basic human needs. The advantage of his broad framework of understanding is precisely that he can provide the argument for a basic income with a deeper normative foundation. By describing survival, freedom and identity as fundamental human needs, these dimensions in themselves become normative arguments for basic income. The basic income, which covers the basic material needs, is also crucial to the satisfaction of other basic human needs. Satisfaction of the material needs improves security (survival), provides greater opportunity to choose one's lifestyle (freedom) and to choose and protect one's identity.

In this way, Galtung's approach provides a more solid and deeper normative foundation for basic income, making it also relevant in a transcultural context.

The relationship between basic human needs and basic income in developing countries

The fact that basic income can only be an element in the coverage of the material basic needs in the highly developed welfare states has meant that the basic income debate has been mostly focused on the relationship between various kinds of transfer income and a possible

replacement of these with a basic income.

In many developing countries without developed welfare systems, which in particular has been Galtung's focus, the satisfaction of the material needs have many channels:

"1. Money in return for work: Jobs depending on the employment level. 2. Money, not in return for work: Charity, benefits, minimum income. 3. Not monetary, in return for work: Non-formal economy. 4. Not monetary, not in return for work: Social net, family-friends. The ability to provide all four is a measure of social development." (Galtung 2010: 198).

"Whether well-being is satisfied with cash for work, a guaranteed living income, with labor or barter, is less important. Dignity is what matters, not whether the economy is fully monetized, market, capitalist, socialist." (Galtung 2009: 96).

It shows that a possible basic income is only one of several tools to ensure the material basic needs, which means that it might get a less central role than in highly developed societies. It is probably also the reason that the basic income idea has not occupied a central position in Galtung's development and peace theory.

Galtung's idea of some form of basic income on a global scale

One may ask if Galtung has ever really considered basic income as such? Nowhere does he use the term basic income, but in one article he talks about "A Living Income for Everyone on Earth". It's an income that covers the substantial basic needs: food, shelter, clothing, health and education. "A Living Income for Everyone on Earth" is the closest he comes to the idea of a global basic income.

"A living income is a minimum level of income by which all people can provide for themselves and their dependents the above-mentioned five basic material human needs." (Galtung 2010: 163-180)

In this article he shows how it can be financed, who will receive it and how to distribute it.

"Every member of society receives a monetary amount corresponding to the living income of that country. In addition to this amount every citizen will enjoy the same access to free public health care and free primary education" (p. 165).

The living income is defined in relation to purchasing power in each country and also requires free public health and education, not only funds for food, clothing and shelter. But Galtung also emphasizes that there is no reduction in the income if you get an additional income.

"In addition, the living income amount will not be cut off after a certain level of income is reached, otherwise there would be a disincentive to work and earn additional income." (p. 165)

The satisfaction of material needs is not sufficient for the satisfaction of other basic human needs, but there is a significant connection between the satisfaction of these needs:

"The three other major categories of these basic needs, survival, freedom and identity, which need to be satisfied by non-monetary means, cannot be guaranteed with a living income alone. They require appropriate social structures and cultures. But a living income will make people able to struggle for their satisfaction, and to benefit from them." (p. 164).

Galtung imagines that such a basic income scheme could be organized by a new UN organization: "United Nations Living Income Organization (UNLO)". It will be responsible for collecting data and determining the level of income level in each country.

Basic income is itself tax-free, but taxation is otherwise progressive. He, too, gives an estimate of what such a system will cost. It will only cost approx. 8.3% of the total world GDP in 2005.

Funding must, according to Galtung, be organized through a United Nations Living Income Bank (UNLIB), which has the authority to levy environmental taxes, taxes on consumption of global commons, a Tobin tax and taxes on transnational corporations.

Galtung's transformation of the economic human picture: A minimum anthropology

Because Galtung is interested in peace and development issues at the global level, where different civilizations, cultures and development models exist, he does not only challenge the dominant Western economic view on human nature, but also presents a broader minimum anthropology that is open to other cultures and religions than the Western. It means that Galtung extends the ordinary Western image of man which sees human beings as consisting of body and soul with a spiritual dimension.

"A human being is body (soma) – mind (psyche) – spirit, conditioned by nature, by internalized culture and by institutionalized structure. There is Nature in body and mind, and on the outside, the mind is a depository of cognitive and emotive memories, Culture is inside and Structure is outside... Then the Spirit, an indispensable category, not a part of mind explored by cognitive psychology. A tentative definition: The Spirit is the capacity to reflect on what conditions body and mind, and to change, even transcend the conditioning." (Galtung 2008, p. 22-23.).

In Galtung's view, man, in addition to being an aggregate of body, soul and spirit, is also capable of merging with other people (love) and with nature and the universe (God). It shows that he is open to a religious dimension of the non-Western kind. Human beings do not only wish for survival and wellness (for the body) and the opportunity for freedom and identity (for the soul), but also the possibility of an infinite reflection and growth (for the spirit). Herein lies the opportunity for development and peace building.

Galtung's theory of cultures, civilizations and development models

Compared to Bill Jordan, Galtung presents a more comprehensive cultural theory. We are not in a globalized world with just one culture but with several cultures (civilizations), although the Western culture is clearly dominant

Culture is, in general, regarded as the symbolic aspect of human existence:

"A culture is conceived of as the symbolic aspect of the human condition, telling us what is true and false, good and bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, sacred and profane, etc." (Galtung 2008: 95).

However, Galtung has not only a cultural theory, but also a concept about deep culture:

"Deep culture, or the collective subconscious, harbor ideas about what is normal and natural, so obvious and trivial that they are not even articulated...The focus of deep culture is how phenomena appear to a we, a collective. Deep culture is not deterministic unless it remains subconscious. Our spirit is capable both of consciousness and reprogramming." (Ibid).

An element in the depth of culture is religion, where the differences between the various world religions are essential. Galtung defines religion as follows:

"Religion contrasts the sacred and the secular, the awe-inspiring, that which cannot be touched, with the ordinary, the profane. In many religions there is also a third category: the evil, to be feared, to be avoided, and if possible, crushed. Obviously, people are not born with, but into a religion. There may be a basis in the physiology of the brain and elsewhere. But details have to be learnt, memorized, and recited." (Galtung 2010, p. 64).

Galtung distinguishes between 7-8 world religions, 3 coming from the Middle East, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In Asia the world religions are Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Japanese Shintoism. He analyzes the world's religions by looking at whether they have a more or less individualistic or collectivist view on human nature and society, whether there is a more or less horizontal or vertical view of society and how they relate to the prioritization of development issues like economic growth and/or economic distribution.

Christianity, especially Protestant, is very individualistic - the other world religions are more collectivist. Hinduism and Confucianism, together with parts of Christianity, are very vertical, whereas Buddhism and Islam are more horizontal. In Buddhism and Islam the emphasis is on distribution rather than growth. Christianity as well as China and Japan attach importance to growth and only partly to distribution. With regard to development - which includes ecological balance, health, social expression, diversity and justice - the Buddhist model is clearly the one to meet most goals for a healthy development.

Depth-culture or cosmology, as Galtung also calls it, is the code for a civilization which is defined as a macro-culture that has a significant temporal and geographic extent. As such,

Galtung believes that today it is possible to talk about five civilizations and six development models. (Galtung 2008: 97; Galtung 2010: 150-157).

The five civilizations Galtung is dealing with, besides the Western, are the Islamic, Buddhist, Indian (mainly influenced by Hinduism), Japanese (particularly influenced by Shintoism) and Chinese (particularly influenced by Confucianism). In relation to this, he works with six development models, two Western models of development, a Western liberal and a Western Marxist. The Western models are secular and based on the Western enlightenment. The next two are clearly based on religion and, finally, the Japanese and Chinese are primarily based on culture.

By looking at the fundamental assumptions and beliefs of those civilizations and development models with respect to nature, the individual, society, culture, time, and world-view, Galtung is able to outline a number of fundamental differences and similarities between them and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.

Somewhat simplified, Galtung makes a distinction between I-cultures and We cultures (all cultures have elements of both) and defines them as follows:

"Typical of an I-culture is the emphasis on the Western construction, the individual, free to make decisions, uncoerced by social ties. If s/he adheres to values of altruism and solidarity, or to egoism and self-assertiveness, and then it is by free choice... In the We-cultures, probably the "normal" human culture, individuals come densely packed in the web of social relations, a "we", a tribe, a clan, families extended or nuclear, friends, neighbors, colleagues, organizations and associations, nations. Rather than "I think, hence I am" it is "I relate, hence I am"... There are We-culture pockets in modern societies. But postmodern society is highly anomic, very dominated by I-culture." (Galtung and Scott 2008: 36-37).

The Buddhist and Japanese culture are clear We-cultures, while the Indian and Chinese are more mixed (Galtung 2008, p 98).

The strength of the Western model is its emphasis on democracy and human rights, but the model (at least the liberal model) seems weak in its lack of emphasis on the basic material human needs and its unreflective universalism. Islam is more distribution-oriented than the Western liberal model, but lacks a sense of the ecological problem. The Japanese model's strength is its creativity in overcoming contradictions, but, along with the Chinese culture, it is also considered to be too particularistic. By contrast, equity and justice are controversial ideas in both the Japanese and Chinese culture:

"Equity is problematic for them both, running against their verticality. Thus the Chinese were used to others "paying tribute", maybe an act of submission rather than taxation and the Japanese had similar ideas." (Galtung 2010: 154).

As part of the investigation into various civilizations, Galtung also analyzes the major world religions' views on growth, distribution and use of violence (direct and structural). (Galtung and McQueen, 2008: 54-58). His conclusion is that both Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam are putting less emphasis on growth than Christianity and the Chinese and Japanese religions. Conversely, both Islam and Buddhism put more emphasis on distribution than Hinduism.

"The Buddhist doctrine of the Middle Way favors ceiling and floor, ruling out both excessive riches and self-imposed misery through extreme asceticism." (Ibid.: 57).

The Buddhist model meets most goals for a good development in terms of ecological balance, health, social expression, diversity and justice:

"At the other end, pure Buddhism stands out as the faith most compatible with the political ideas and ideals contained in the word "development" and "peace". Buddhism becomes modest in combining low concern with growth and high concern with absence of direct violence, combining a relatively high level of equity (distribution) with a relatively high level of justice (absence of structural violence)." (Ibid.: 68)

Basic Income as part of a global cultural learning process

Galtung's intention is not only to record and explain the different cultures and civilizations, but also to show how these cultures can learn from each other in a future cultural meeting. This applies to all cultures.

"Buddhism could be inspired by Islam to a world view, by Western liberals to democracy-human rights fit for Mahayana we-cultures, with dialogues and consensus rather than debate and voting. By Western Marxists to invent new means of production fitting the Buddhist mode, by Japan for state-capital, and by China for state-community cooperation.

Islam could be inspired by Buddhism to more nature partnership, by Western liberals to more democracy, dialogue-consensus based, by Western Marxists to more social technologies and owner-ship, by Japan and China to state-capital and state-community cooperation.

The Western liberal model.....would benefit from borrowing some ideas. From buddhism collective ethical budgets as one way of combating atomie-anomie, from Islam a world view, from the Western Marxist model, The Japanese and the Chinese models, ever new ways of transcending state-capital and capital-labor contradictions.

The Japanese and Chinese models...might learn from Islam, Western liberals, Western marxists and their own experiences of the danger of imposing any model on others. A world view with and for peace is needed as a part of development and that world view has to be informed by diversity, symbiosis and equity. Equity is problematic for them both, running against their verticality." (Galtung 2010: 154).

The basic income debate can also be inspired by Galtung's conflict and mediation theory. According to Galtung, things are constantly changing and conflicts are normal. The goal is to resolve conflicts appropriately (minimize violent destruction and maximize creative design) and use the energy of conflict to create a new reality. It is usual in the West to think in dualistic either-or terms. Galtung is inspired by the Buddhist tetralemma in which a conflict between two objectives is not resolved using an either-or solution, but a both-and or a neither-nor solution. Similarly, basic income could be considered a solution to a conflict in relation to many of society's dilemmas with two conflicting objectives: basic income is not a question of either paid work (activity) or leisure - but of both-and. Basic income is not a question of either liberalism (more freedom) and socialism (equality and security), but of both-and. And, finally, basic income is not a question of either more freedom or more equality, but of both-and.

Conclusion

The conclusion is that Galtung's approach - rooted as it is in basic human needs - and his culture- and civilization theory can help to create a framework of understanding which helps to strengthen the basic income idea as a global transcultural project.

Compared to the dominant Western economic paradigm, Galtung's perception of basic human needs form a common frame of reference for basic income studies in both the developed societies and the developing countries. In relation to the material needs, it shows that basic income in all societies can only be one element in the coverage of the material basic needs. The general model may help to clarify the interaction and interplay between the various elements in the coverage of the material needs and thereby show in which countries a monetary basic income will be of significant importance .

In Galtung's conception of basic human needs, needs are not only of material nature, but survival, freedom and identity are also basic needs. A basic income is placed at the heart of those four basic needs and thereby given a broader normative justification. If welfare (wellness) is guaranteed through a basic income it is easier to satisfy the need for freedom and survival (security). Basic income creates a greater sense of security (survival), provides an opportunity to form one's own identity and choose one's own way of life (freedom). The basic material security is thus crucial for the satisfaction of other basic needs.

Over the past 25 years there have been many theoretical and practical arguments for the introduction of a basic income: the need for a new social contract, the creation of a sustainable society, equal rights to common resources, the establishing of social justice and full citizenship (with an economic dimension). Galtung's basic needs theory can establish a link between the various justifications by showing that basic income is capable of securing equality, freedom, fairness and a kind of brotherhood.

With the concept of basic needs, Galtung has created a wider and deeper normative foundation for the basic income idea than the Western liberal "non-perfectionistic" understanding of values which is the background for Van Parijs' perception of basic income. Van Parijs is justifying basic income from a fairness point of view, but refuses to justify it from any conception of the good life. For Galtung, there are values on two levels. There are some basic values originating from the basic needs which you can't choose. In addition, there are the values which individuals choose according to how they want to live their lives. These goals, values or preferences can be sovereign choices. We can't choose the values that are connected with the basic needs. They choose us.

Galtung's culture and civilization theory can help to create a framework for understanding basic income as a global transcultural project in a multicultural globalized world. And we have also identified four transcultural openings which can be objects for re-configuration and re-constitution in light of Galtung's theory of basic human needs. Those are prosperity, solidarity, work, and ecological balance. All of this must obviously take place in a dialog with the cultural contexts in which the basic income is implemented.

As previously mentioned, the vast majority of basic income literature deals with how one could argue for a basic income scheme within the various types of highly developed welfare states. Simon Birnbaum's dissertation is an example (Birnbaum 2008). He asks himself how it is possible to argue for a radicalized form of universalistic welfare model from the point of view of a liberal-egalitarian concept of justice (as inspired by John Rawls' theory of justice and further developed by Philippe van Parijs). Basic income is in this context viewed as a new interpretation and combination of the fundamental political values, equality, freedom, justice, security, solidarity and individualism. These values, however, have a different status in different cultures and civilizations. In this context, Galtung's culture and civilization theory provides a framework for understanding the status of these values, thus showing the potential opportunities for developing basic income in other cultures and civilizations.

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