

Reading Interrogations. Sociology 621. Week 7

Unconditional Basic Income

1. Elsa Noterman

Unconditional basic income is an interesting and compelling utopian proposal – in its potential to move in the “direction of socialism” by reinforcing and decommodifying labor power, and building social power (Wright 5-6). However, given the instances of unconditional basic income in the world today – in Alaska and Iran – echoing a question that Wright (p.2) raises, in what ways have these efforts operated as “part of a broad socialist challenge to capitalism” or more generally been “corrosive of capitalism”? Or if they have not, is this due to their limited nature – i.e. the breadth (geographic reach), depth (amount of the basic income), and duration?

Another question that arose while reading the Van Parijs pieces was about motivation to take on different jobs. Van Parijs (177) recognizes that a universal basic income might reduce those workers who want to be in higher positions due to increased taxes.

However, I was wondering: if everyone receives a substantial basic income to live a good quality life, then will there still be people who volunteer to take on lower paid, unpleasant jobs that still are critical in helping society to operate?

[EOW: 1. The Alaska and Iran plans are certainly not motivated by any desire to challenge capitalism. I don't know much about the Iranian example, but in Alaska it is also a below-basic income – insufficient to leave the labor market. I don't think we have empirical examples that would enable us to really examine empirically the anti-capitalism challenge problem. But I would also note that UBI could be viewed as a real utopian institution prefiguring an alternative to capitalism even if it doesn't actively challenge capitalism; indeed, even if it strengthened capitalism it could still be a constituent element of an anti-capitalist alternative. This is part of the idea of “symbiotic transformations”: they simultaneously build elements of alternatives and solve problems within capitalism. Think of this as part of a context-interaction logic: Suppose there were three institutional conditions for a serious erosion of capitalist power X, Y and Z. And suppose (perhaps implausibly, but to illustrate the point) that any two of these by themselves stabilize capitalism and solve certain problems. So capitalism+X+Y is a more stable capitalism than just Capitalism alone. But, when you add Z to the configuration -- capitalism+X+Y+Z – suddenly capitalism is seriously challenged. This, of course, is not how things would ever work, but it illustrates the idea that some institutional elements that embody socialist principles only become anti-capitalist when other conditions are present.

2. Two comments: first, if a job is critical to society, and if no one wants it a low wage because of UBI, then it should be paid more. The fact that no one will do it without higher compensation for the “disutility of labor” is evidence that the low pay is unfair. Second, much hinges on exactly how high the UBI is. It is meant to be the no-frills decent standard of living – a level that does not give much discretionary income. This means that many people will want more income on top of this, and may even do uninteresting work for modest wages on a part time basis to boost their income.

2. Dmytro Khutkyy

The idea of UBI sounds compelling, as it resonates with the ultimate value of equality and generates a number of positive outcomes for individuals. Indeed, it sounds reasonable as long as economy can afford it. In fact, the known cases of already introduced UBI – in Alaska and Iran – rely on revenues from exported oil (Van Parijs, 2013, p. 175). This is fair, since the oil reserves are public good. Hypothetically, other rich countries with productive economy are able to introduce it as well.

So, it is plausible. But is it viable? Among all the disputes I would like to raise the question of motivation. Referring to the central ideal of communism, it should be guided by the distribution principle “from each according to his abilities to each according to needs” (Wright, 2006, p. 1). Well, the UBI ensures the second condition, but what about the first? *How to provide people’s contribution “according to their abilities” under UBI grant?*

E.O. Wright formulates the problem quite straight: some consider UBI as “just a device by which hardworking people are forced to support the lazy” (Wright, 2006, p. 8). P. van Parijs provides an elaborate explanation of the core problem: “there is necessarily an income effect: if your work behavior is governed mainly by a concern to achieve a certain level of total income, being entitled to a basic income will tend to reduce, other things being equal, your drive to train and work hard” (Van Parijs, 2013, p. 177). Really, UBI reduces part of the work motivation – to earn money for living. However, supposedly it should release other motives for productive activities: self-expression, help to others, and public activity. P. van Parijs adduces other driving forces for work: recognition, status, or prestige, as well as work ethic (2013, p. 177).

References: Van Parijs, P. (2013). The Universal Basic Income: Why Utopian Thought Matters, and How Sociologists Can Contribute to It. *Politics and Society*, 41, 2, 171-182; Wright, E.O. (2006). Basic Income as a Socialist Project. *Basic Income Studies*, 1, 1. Retrieved September 12, 2013 from <http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/bis.2006.1.1/bis.2006.1.1.1008/bis.2006.1.1.1008.xml?format=INT>.

[EOW: On the “from each according to ability” issue, some people argue that UBI should be paired with another institutional device in which people have to make useful contributions to society. This is a separate requirement not directly tied to UBI. You get the UBI unconditionally. You then also have an obligation to contribute time and effort to society. If you refuse, you are fined – but the fine need not be equal to the UBI. It is just a fine for refusing to contribute. The certification of contribution system could be strict or lax, broadly interpreted or narrowly designed. It certainly could include unpaid volunteer activity and things like childrearing. The main objection to this is that the monitoring regime would be too expensive, value laden and intrusive. The cure might be worse than the disease. 2. On the motivational issue, it is always possible that in the end UBI collapses precisely because most people are only interested in training and education because of simple monetary pay-offs. If the UBI was super-high this is likely to kick in. If the UBI is modest, there would still be plenty of scope for simple materialist motivations to get training. This is an empirical question and difficult to decide a priori. We can define a level MSUBI – maximally sustainable UBI – which is the level at which there is a sufficient labor supply of the right kind of labor to generate the income needed to fund the MSUBI indefinitely, and we can define a level NFUBI – the no-fills UBI – that provides just enough to have a real exit option from the labor force without discretionary income. If NFUBI > MSUBI, the many of the virtuous emancipatory effects of UBI would disappear.

3. Laura Hanson Schlachter

How might an unconditional basic income (UBI) that creates a meaningful exit option for workers change the labor market for undesirable jobs?

NPR's "[All Things Considered](#)" on Sunday featured a story about New Mexican chili pepper farmers who struggle to attract a sufficient workforce to harvest their crops – despite paying well above minimum wage. Harvesting chilis is one of the least desirable agricultural jobs because handpicking the fragile peppers exposes workers to high levels of capsaicin, the compound that makes chilis hot.

Wright argues that UBI would make labor markets more egalitarian because employers would have pay higher wages in order to entice people to accept “unenjoyable” work (2010, 218). In the case of chili peppers, a tight labor market has already ratcheted up wages for chili pickers relative to other agricultural workers, partially compensating them for accepting an unpleasant job. If all US citizens were entitled to an UBI, perhaps chili pepper pickers would command an even higher wage premium because of a meaningful exit option. Yet *how much more* would we really expect wages to increase before employers pursued other strategies?

Chili farmers are already seeking alternatives to raising wages, including mechanization and guest worker programs. Perhaps the prospect of machines displacing workers is less troubling if the unemployed are guaranteed a modest but decent standard of living. Indeed, some UBI advocates seem to embrace the possibility that some “lousy” jobs would disappear altogether (van Parijs 2006, 14). Yet there will always be certain unpleasant jobs that are a) necessary, b) impossible to mechanize, and c) subject to a wage ceiling. Who will do those critical but undesirable and low-paying jobs? This is where the “moral quandaries” of citizenship restrictions (Ackerman and Alstott 2006, 60) and concerns about creating “second-class citizens” (Pateman 2006, 60) come into play for me. I worry about unprecedented incentives for exploitive guest worker programs and coercive work circumstances for those unlucky citizens who are ineligible for UBI. It seems that many advocates are already grappling with these issues. What types of UBI institutional design principles best minimize the risks to noncitizen or ineligible workers?

[EOW: If the only way to get people to pick chili peppers is to coerce them – i.e. to take advantage of their vulnerability – then we should not consume chili peppers. But in fact the option is to pay pickers twice what they are now paid or three times what they are now paid. Make chili peppers really expensive because that is what they are really worth in terms of costs imposed on people who pick them. This is an issue whether or not you have UBI: chili peppers are too cheap if the only reason people are willing to accept the job at the low wage is because they have no options. Of course UBI will trigger a range of problems – a black market in undocumented chili pepper labor so to speak. But these problems just call for effective regulation and monitoring as best as one can do. Guest workers? This is definitely a design problem that poses many moral ambiguities. Still one might decide that a two-tiered system of UBI labor markets and guest-worker labor markets is still a move towards greater equality and fairness, especially if the GW market was tightly regulated and included a transition to citizenship and UBI after some reasonable period of time.]

4. Yotaro Natani

Bergmann claims that it would take approximately 15% of the GDP to implement and generate basic income in countries with per capita income as high as Sweden or the United States. While she uses this fact to show that having both a robust welfare state and basic income is not feasible, it also seems to show that basic income itself is feasible under the current level of productivity. However, the proposal for basic income still lacks of specificity concerning the amount of payment and its sustainability. It rests on some key assumptions: that the paid amount is high enough for everyone to live in decent material conditions, but low enough to prevent too many people from quitting work; *and*, once implemented, even if people quit work or choose different lifestyles, the overall economic output of society will be high enough to keep funding this. If these don't hold, then basic income is impossible. Do we have enough social scientific knowledge to claim that basic income is sustainable in this sense? What would count as certain/valid knowledge? Is this ambiguity or lack of knowledge a major obstacle to political mobilization for this policy, even among the left?

[EOW: First a comment on the 15% of GDP issue: In a rich country I do not see any inherent reason why 50% of GDP couldn't be spent on ordinary affirmative state provision of public goods + UBI, so 15% of GDP for UBI doesn't seem like all that much to me – it still leaves 35% for all of the other public goods of the society. There may be political objections and obstacles to this, but there is no strictly economic reason even in a capitalist economy why 50% of GDP isn't sufficient for accumulation and ordinary income distribution processes. You are right, however, that the distribution of motivations in the society may make a proper UBI unsustainable.]

5. Jake Carlson

Neoliberals will argue that workers are not coerced in employment, because if working conditions are too unbearable, then the worker has the freedom to leave their job. The response that, "Yes, people do have the freedom to starve," points to the fact that the disciplinary power of unemployment is a real factor that puts downward pressure on wages and working conditions.

Broadly, the struggles for higher wages come in part from workers feeling that their labor is underpriced, yet the fear of unemployment and other factors allow it to persist. Low-wage work is possible when workers have so little power, that their only option is to accept the low wage and try to survive. By minimizing the power imbalances from the high cost of job loss for workers, UBI could help lead to a fairer wage and a more accurate price for labor. Also, since basic needs would be covered, workers would seek wages in order to secure the means for the "frills", and not the means of subsistence. This also removes a certain ethical dimension from wage negotiations.

UBI seems to make the neoliberal claim that workers are free to leave their jobs more of a reality. If workers are getting a fairer price for their labor, do owners conversely get a better value on the productivity of their workers? Under vastly different labor market conditions, could owners make more precise demands on productivity of their workers,

while workers would be able to leave if those productivity demands grew to the point of exploitation?

[EOW: It is a nice point that perhaps by improving the market mechanism in the normative sense of making the market more like an arena of purely voluntary exchange perhaps UBI would support the neoliberal vision for the world better than ordinary capitalist markets do. I think you would need to clarify your intuition that owners might “get a better value on the productivity of their workers.” I think this clearly depends on the nature of the labor process. In some labor processes, coercion seems to generate quite a high level of productivity, in others much more voluntary cooperation is needed (thus the arguments for “efficiency wages” and “loyalty rents” in the wage structure). Much depends on the measurability & monitorability of productivity and the importance of creative problem solving and other elusive worker contributions to productivity.

6. Emanuel Ubert

I would like to bracket the issue of the viability of UBI as a (real) utopian institution, and instead discuss how to best think about UBI’s strategic merit as a transformative device/ strategy regarding the advancement of different moral principles.

Bergman (ch. 7) thinks that “the fully developed welfare state deserves priority over Basic Income because it accomplishes what Basic income does not: it guarantees that certain specific human needs will be met” (p.141). She argues that progressives, etc. “should in the immediate future concentrate on achieving provision of a satisfactory menu of government-provided merit goods” because such a provision is more efficient in achieving equality; the welfare states takes better account of inequalities in needs. According to her, only when this has been accomplished, should one consider starting to phase in UBI.

Is Bergman here too focused on the value of equality and ignores other moral principles, e.g. democracy or freedom (with UBI, people might have more positive economic freedom to determine the course of their own lives than under an expanded welfare state)?

What role does the timing of its implementation and the interaction with other transformative strategies play in considerations of the efficiency in advancing different moral principles (e.g. better to institute UBI before participatory budgeting or after)?

[EOW: I like the point about identifying the specific list of values that are enhanced by different strategies and policies. Often UBI is invoked in discussion of injustice – especially around poverty – but as you note there are many other values in play. There is also the issue of synergies between UBI and other institutional devices or strategies – UBI may provide a context for the acceleration of worker cooperatives, for example, or sustainable locavore agriculture. This also bears on the sequencing/timing issue. Just as the sequence of the development of industrialization-democratization-bureaucratization has consequences for the nature of class formations after all of these are in place, so the sequence of introducing UBI relative to other changes could affect the array of forces operating at the end of the process.]

7. Michael Blix

Universal basic income is a very interesting and potentially liberating social welfare initiative that would guarantee some level of financial security for all citizens of a given country, and even “eliminate employment relation[s]” thus altering class power dynamics within a capitalist system (Wright 95). It can take many forms. For example, Philippe Van Parijs mentions that it can take different forms in which households are paid instead of individuals and vice versa, some type of work requirement may or may not be present (though most do not include a work requirement in their conception of UBI), and children may have to wait until a certain age to receive payments, or not. Furthermore, the level of payment itself is a major component to the design of a UBI policy. For example, Garfinkel et al. describe various UBI plans in which levels of payment differ for seniors, adults, and children. Different UBI plans may address different societal goals.

My questions: What should be the main goal of UBI, and how should this be reflected in its optimal design? (For example, should the goal be to raise the poorest citizens out of poverty and into some respectable standard of living? Should its focus be on addressing child poverty? Should it be to make the jobs unnecessary? Are families treated differently than individuals?) Given that social policy is ideally designed to positively impact the lives of individuals, how would we measure the effectiveness and of UBI? Finally, what could be some unintended consequences of UBI, specifically with regards to citizenship, and how might we handle those?

[EOW: There are lots of dimensions to the general question about the central goals of UBI. There is first the theoretical question of what kinds of goals would be advanced by what sorts of UBI structures. Depending on the level of UBI and other provision, different goals would be accomplished. Then there is the question of whether some goals are more pressing as reform issues, so even if there is an array of goals potentially dealt with by UBI, some may be more pressing now. This may pose design problems if some goals require certain designs, but those designs undermine other goals. And then there is the pragmatic question of what is achievable first.]

8. Kerem Morgul

Is Universal Basic Income in One Country Viable or Desirable in a Globalized Economy? (The problem of capital flight and/or the dualization of the labor market).

Philippe van Parijs defines “unconditional basic income” (UBI) as “an income paid by a political community to all its members on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement” (p.4). He argues that UBI would confer a decommodified economic status onto each person by decoupling income from work.

Similarly Erik Olin Wright highlights the transformative potential of UBI in capitalist employment relations. The double separation of workers from both the means of production and the means of subsistence is the basis for the power imbalance between capital and labor, as a result of which workers are forced to accept unfavorable

contracts and working conditions. UBI poses a challenge to this power imbalance and the resulting exploitation and alienation of workers, for it provides workers with a real exit option.

These are indeed very important potentialities. After all, as Marx states, capital is not a thing but a relationship. And it is a relationship between unequal parties. If UBI is implemented, it can change the capitalism as we know it.

Having said that, I have doubts as to whether UBI in one country, like socialism in one country, is viable or even desirable in a globalized economy. Although, as Parijs notes, in principle UBI can be implemented in a global scale, in most UBI proposals the basic income is supposed to be paid at the level of a nation-state, covering citizens and perhaps also legal permanent residents. Given that we are living a globalized economy and that most employers have incentives to reduce costs of labor in the face of global competition, would not UBI lead to a) a considerable degree of capital flight and/or b) a dualization of the labor market with privileged citizens and legal permanent residents on the one hand and temporary residents and undocumented workers on the other? The former possibility would undermine the viability UBI whereas the latter undermines its desirability.

[EOW: The viability issue is a more straightforward problem than the desirability one. I think the viability question depends on what the actual labor market effects and tax distribution effects would be of a UBI. It isn't at all obvious that in high productivity countries where labor costs are not the pivotal issue at this point, that UBI would be incompatible with capitalism. This is, of course, something to discuss. But at least in countries which already in effect guarantee a minimum basic standard of living, the simplification of UBI could even lower the tax burden. Also, if the working class as a whole felt that UBI was a freedom and autonomy enhancing reform, it could be treated as a tax on wage earnings rather than profits – a way of redistributing income within the wage-earning class – rather than a redistribution from capital.

On the desirability issue, I don't see how this is different from every anti-poverty measure that applies only to the rich countries, or for that matter any public goods expenditure within rich countries. Of course it could result in a two-tiered system, but this doesn't necessarily mean that the lower tier is worse off than in the present world (where there are also two-tiered systems), or that paths between tiers couldn't be part of the mechanism of UBI.

9. Jaqi Lu

The implement of unconditional basic income contributes to breaking of the link between a basic standard of living and participation in the capitalist labor market (EOW). In order to do so, the standard of the income is important, because it has to be above certain level, let say 125% of minimum living standard or 125% of poverty line. These relative settings could impose potential problems.

In some cases, especially in an economic crisis (and thus political challenge from the right), the government would have to reduce the amount of UBI. If the ratio relative to poverty line is fixed, the government has to reduce official poverty line, which impose more damage to the poor.

How would your response to this problem?

[EOW: In practical terms of course the level of UBI is likely to be perpetually contested, just as the level of social security payments at least periodically is contested. I don't think that there is anything very general that can be said about this. If the value of UBI for solving social problems and creating a new, more constructive dynamic to a variety of issues is broadly recognized, then a fairly stable coalition could emerge to defend a reasonable level. This is what in fact has happened around Social Security, although right now it is under some attack from the right.

10. Alisa Pykett

While Bergmann's (2006) claims about work as a given requirement in Western societies, work as the main avenue for respect, and the assumption that many people will waste their BI payments demonstrate a refusal to take a utopian leap, I do think her essay points to the crux of implementing UBI in the United States. Despite UBI's economic feasibility, quality of life benefits across all residents, and reduced administration costs, would the wider public support a model that essentially provides for people unconditionally and is built on the underlying claim that everyone, whether they work or not, has the right to the conditions of human flourishing? What might break the hold that the dominant relationship between work and subsistence has on the American psyche in order to make UBI more feasible?

I suspect that supporting UBI depends, to some extent, on a commitment to collective interest or at least the understanding that one's self-interest is inherently tied to the collective interest of one's community, state or nation. Feelings of solidarity with others within the geographic boundaries of the benefit area would also play a role. How does geographic size, population, and levels of heterogeneity within a state or nation impact the development of a sense of solidarity and support of an experiment like UBI? Given the size and complexity of the U.S., would state or regional experiments in UBI have a better chance for implementation and sustainability than a nation-wide initiative?

My previous threads on work and size and composition of nation-states, raise questions about mild conditionality for me. Van Parijs (2013) offers mild conditionality as a possible mediator for the risk of specific culturally distinctive communities (e.g., squatters, gypsies) becoming net beneficiaries of UBI. I am interested in exploring additional ways mild conditionality or compulsive civil service in UBI might impact 1) UBI's ability to function as a "broad socialist challenge to capitalism" (Wright, 2006, p.2); 2) the political feasibility of implementation; 3) the level of public support; and 4) the development of solidarity and the capacity to embrace pluralism.

Unrelated side question: Are there any examinations of the economic structures of tribal nations and UBI? There seems to be some parallels to tribal roll benefits despite the unique context and history.

[EOW: I agree that support for UBI is likely to be very thin in the US. After all, even universal health care is not supported. Perhaps a UBI for children – a child allowance stipend – might be a way in, but even that would not resonate with the punitive "take responsibility" mentality in the US. I am

not sure, however, if the issue is a lack of commitment to “collective interest”. UBI is in the personal interest of a very large number of people even if they don’t exist the labor market and use it as their main income – it increases their freedom to act and provides broad-based security. It gives their children opportunities that they would not otherwise have. Those are individual interests, not collective interests in the quality of community.

I think conditionality provisions could well be useful. We should discuss different ways this could be done and what the logic would be.

The tribal income issue is certainly relevant here. Some tribes do distribute to all members a generous UBI from oil royalties or, in a few cases, Casino revenues. I don’t know what research has been done on the behavioral impacts of these.

11. Taylor Laemmler

Wright states: “By itself, of course, basic income only contributes to solving one of the problems facing an empowered social economy – the breaking of the link between a basic standard of living and participation in the capitalist labor market,” (2006: 9). How might unconditional basic income enhance the viability and achievability of other real utopian institutions by breaking this link? For example, unconditional basic income could allow for individuals to devote themselves more to projects of empowered participatory governance, both in terms of allowing individuals who choose to do so more of the time required for participation, as well as, at a more cultural level, in terms of evening the level of discourse—perhaps by evening out the differences between individuals which “hinder fair deliberation,” (Baiocchi 2003:46). (However, this particular example leads me to question the extent to which a structural change in the connection between participation in the capitalist economy and achieving a basic standard of living would lead directly to a discourse change that would allow for less hierarchical participation—perhaps this is not a problem that basic income would solve.) A better example might be seen in how peer-to-peer collaborative production might benefit from basic income. The population that could participate might be greatly increased, in terms of access to the physical technology required for participation (perhaps a basic standard of living by definition would include having access to a computer and the internet), as well as in terms of having time spent not earning a wage to devote to education and participation in things like coding and project development.

[EOW: The issue of synergies between UBI and other real utopian projects is very interesting to think about. This is a specific example of the more general issue of the context-dependency of the effects of any given real utopian institutional design. In this case, the “context” is the co-presence of other real utopian innovations. This is one of the main reasons I support UBI – it enhances the viability of other initiatives. It can also be, of course, that different projects contradict each other, or may contradict each other in some situations, if they politically are forced to tap into the same resources. An expansive set of real utopian public goods may be in tension with UBI because of tax constraints, for example. Anyway, this is a good theme to discuss.]

12. Madeleine Pape

I valued the perspectives provided by Bergman and Pateman in *Redesigning Redistribution* for the critical questions that they raised in relation to Unconditional Basic Income [UBI] (and to a more limited extent, Stakeholder Grants [SGs]). There were two major challenges to the idea of the UBI raised by both authors that I think should seriously be considered, even if this means invoking a more critical rather than constructive sociology.

First, thank you to Pateman and Bergman for raising the question of how UBI could potentially interact with gendered inequality in the workforce and society. Yes, we want to see workers empowered in their relations with capital. Yes, we want people who engage in work that falls outside of the market to have some degree of security and independence, which UBI may deliver. But let's think seriously about the consequences, particularly those raised by feminist scholars, as referenced by Pateman. Could UBI serve to justify the position of women in the home? Or, alternatively, could it open the door to fathers to become stay-at-home dads? Can we presume that UBI will automatically lead to the latter, or will UBI operate along the lines of existing inequalities within our society? For example, minority groups could still find themselves in the lower rungs of the workforce. I'm not sure that there is anything inherent to UBI to suggest that it will overcome unequal opportunity along gender or racial lines.

The second challenge that I want to raise comes from Bergman's contribution. I think that her comparison of the Swedish welfare state with the US raises important questions in relation to UBI. Consider this important question: how does UBI make college education affordable? Is it better that individual 'consumers' have the right to choose and pay for their own childcare provider, or should there be an 'unconditional basic childcare' program that all workers, no matter what their income, are entitled to make use of? Perhaps we want both, but as Bergman illustrates in relation to the Swedish case, the only way that both could be possible without raising tax to a damagingly high level would be if a state body experienced unprecedented (and unlikely) levels of growth. Bergman's piece made me ask: should we see UBI as a conservative solution to the issue of delivering public goods in a context where the state is under increasing fiscal strain? Does it replace the interventionist state and appeal to those that value an individualist and market-driven approach to the provision of public goods? If it is indeed a choice between a deeper welfare state and UBI, which one is going to deliver the greatest benefit to society and genuinely extend the freedom of workers and citizens?

[EOW: You raise lots of important issues. I will briefly comment on some of them.

1. On the gender equality issue: UBI by itself, I think, would have indeterminate effects on gender inequality. It would make it possible for women to stay at home. It also makes it easier for them to be single-moms. But it also makes it easier for men to do these things, and how this plays out would depend on other changes in the society, other reactions. I'm not sure if there is any reason to think that the new gender equilibrium of Capitalism + UBI would be less egalitarian than in capitalism without UBI.

2. The same point can be said for minorities: UBI, like any anti-poverty program by itself doesn't reshuffle people across the levels of the income distribution of workforce, it just makes life better and more autonomous at the bottom. But I also think in the case of poverty issues UBI would facilitate other anti-poverty initiatives – it makes worker cooperatives easier, community development projects easier, job training programs easier. Basically all of the kinds of programs which are currently hampered by the problem of getting income to the participants would be facilitated.

3. On the public goods issue. The first question here, as I mentioned in some earlier comments, is: how serious is the trade-off between public goods and UBI and where does the trade-off come from? I am sceptical that the constraint here is really economic, rather than political and ideological. I think it is possible to have both and UBI and good publicly-funded day care centers, good universal health, etc. It is not possible to have all of those and have mega-high income inequality and low taxes. But that is a political issue, in my view. It is true that some neoliberals and conservatives – Charles Murray in the US is an example – do propose scrapping the entire welfare state and replacing it with a UBI on the grounds that public goods interfere more with the market than does UBI. But I think it is possible to have both even within capitalism.]