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# *Basic Income: an open challenge between labour transformation and welfare shrinkage*

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## **1. Basic Income: what are we talking about?**

The idea of a Basic Income grant to provide for fundamental life needs dates back a long time in the history of the broader *ius existantiae* debate (Bronzini, 2011). Basic Income sits in the debate concerning the historical issue of wealth redistribution, rather in the discussion about the allocation of that amount of affluence generated by a determined social order, in a specific historical time. Indeed, we will see how Basic Income focuses directly on the relationship between social and productive organization, which is at the heart of the capitalist contemporary mainstream development model (Gorz, 2009).

A first attempt to summarize this historical debate and to equip research of a commonly shared definition of Basic Income has been led by the philosopher Philippe Van Parijs and the political scientist Yannick Vanderborght. In their book, *L'Allocation Universelle*, they not only rebuild a thoroughly genesis of the principle of *ius ad vitam*, but they also refine what is today the most notorious explanation of Basic Income: “*a revenue paid individually by a political community to all its members, without a means test and working requirements*” (Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2005, trad. it. 2006:5). However, despite this first conceptual framing, which at first glance appears to undermine the social stratification basis in terms of material and symbolic rewards, it is still missing a deeper level of specification to clarify the following issues: How much does Basic Income amount to? Who are the exact targets? Is it a *distributive* or *re-distributive* measure? The extraordinary multitude of approaches and methods employed throughout time to identify the mechanisms of wealth creation have led to a great confusion in the definition of what a Basic Income is and how it should work.

To this day, there has been a partial attempt to shed light on the fragmented terminology in the final report of the “*Commissione Parlamentare per l'analisi delle compatibilità macroeconomiche della spesa sociale* (so called Commissione Onofri, Roma, 1997)”<sup>1</sup>. Here, the Italian sociologists Chiara Saraceno and Maurizio Ferrera have tried to outline some pathways, addressed to the national Italian government, that will provide for a direct support to individual income. In spite of that, together with Greece, Italy is still today the only European country lacking a national-net of income support. Saraceno and Ferrera have sketched out a distinction among some of the most employed terms for individual cash transfers: Basic Income, Citizenship Income, Guaranteed Minimum income, Insertion Income and Last Resort income. However, we are still lacking a careful taxonomy of the several measures calling for a cash transfer and of the resulting levels of social protection.

The whole redistributive debate orbits around two main phenomenological axes: the crisis of the fordist labour and the crisis of the related welfare system (Sennet 2006, Rifkin 2002, Fraser-Honnet 2003, Paci 2007, De Masi 1999, Mantegna-Tiddi 1997). Therefore, we must interpose the research on the Basic Income idea between the passing of the wage society and the overcoming of the charitable

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<sup>1</sup> The parliamentary commission appointed under the first Prodi's government, with the goal of reshaping the Italian fragmented welfare system, accordingly with domestic economic sustainability. Please, find for free the original document visiting the following website [http://www.astrid-online.it/Amministrazione/-Commissione/Comm-Onofri-Rel-Fin\\_28\\_02\\_1997.pdf](http://www.astrid-online.it/Amministrazione/-Commissione/Comm-Onofri-Rel-Fin_28_02_1997.pdf), 24/01/13

state (Accornero 1997, Paci 2007, Fumagalli, 1997b). For this reason, in this review I will go over the main literature dealing with the idea of Basic Income. First, I will try to outline a brief historical bibliography about the issue of *ius existantiae*. Secondly, I will provide an empirical picture of the experiences of such a monetary transfer. Thirdly, I will depict a general map of the socio-economic approaches to Basic Income in the contemporary redistributive debate. In conclusion, I will attempt to point out a possible research direction.

## 2. The historical background

### 2.1 *The Humanist roots*

The idea of a right to the *essential means for life* is certainly not new (Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2005, trad. it. 2006). During the Renaissance thinkers pointed economic and political elites towards the problem of the poor and indigents, extracting it away from the usual church protective layer. Thomas More (1478-1535) was the first in his well known text *Utopia* (More, 1516, trad. it. 2000) to speak about the need to give a minimum guaranteed income to the worst off in order to hinder criminality and vagrancy. However, during this time, Christian Thought developed the universal call for an unconditional right to life (Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2005, trad. it. 2006:7). The great humanist thinker Johannes Ludovicus Vives (1492-1540) was the first to develop a comprehensive argument in favour of a universal right to life. In fact, in his most famous essay *De Subventionem Pauperum* (Vives 1525, trad. it. 2008) he bestowed the responsibility to ensure citizens subsistence through a minimum amount of money, as an effective exercise of moral charity, on the municipal government.

### 2.2 *The approach during Enlightenment*

The coming of the Enlightenment provided two main contributions on the income redistributive discussion. Among others, it was Thomas Paine (1737-1809) who most contributed to the idea of a natural right to life. In a brief paper directed to the French Revolutionary Government, *The Agrarian Justice* (Paine 1797, trad. it. 1978), Paine regains the thesis of the Dutch humanist Hugo Grotius on the common property of the earth, trying to demonstrate the right of every adult man and woman to be endowed with a small amount of money in compensation for the loss of their original right to land. Moreover, recently Paine's intuition has been regained and developed also by two professors of the Yale Law School, Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott, who have promoted the idea to distribute a substantial endowment to every adult citizen upon reaching of the age of consent, by virtue of the alleged natural law theory (Ackerman and Alstott 1999). Their *una tantum* proposal is unique from Paine's original because it addresses not only the deprived people, like in Paine's theories, but would concern the whole citizenry.

On the other hand, it is the utopian socialist Joseph Charlier (1816-1896), who many scholars consider the true inventor of the modern idea of Basic Income. In his book *Solution du probleme social ou constitution humanitaire* (Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2005, trad. it. 2006), he theorizes that it was the right of every citizen to own land at the grounds of the claim for a universal and unconditioned allowance. He went as far to call his proposal *local dividend*, assuming that such a redistributive system would have made an end of capital supremacy on labour. What is very interesting here, is that Charlier's legacy keeps already inside the sources of that thorough critique against capitalism and its ethics of labour. A critique that is today at the centre of many post-fordist analysis on the transformations affecting nowadays relations of production.

## 3. Empirical practice

Before turning our attention to the review of the main theoretical approaches to Basic Income, it is noteworthy to glance at the existence of a literature reckoning with some concrete experiences of an unconditional and universal cash transfer. However, after going over most of the dedicated literature (Van Parijs, 2003, Ferry, 1995, Atkinson, 1991, Del Bò, 2004) it is possible to be immediately aware of an *empirical spectre*. In fact, if on one hand there has been no real utilisation of a pure Basic Income

transfer around the world (which in this discussion is defined as a universal and unconditioned individual cash transfer), on the other, we are not facing an utopist measure. As a matter of fact, at the moment there exist two countries which have introduced something similar to a Basic income provision.

The first example can be found in the United States in Alaska (Hammond, 2011, Widerquist and Howard, 2012). In 1976, Alaska enacted a constitutional amendment establishing a *yearly permanent public fund dividend*, which would give all of Alaska's inhabitants 25% of the proceeds coming from oil extraction. Since 1982 this public fund has subdivided more than \$24.000 per citizen, on the average of \$1.000 per year, without any means test (Del Bò, 2004). Alaska's permanent fund dividend still represents the only working institutionalized device for an individually and unconditionally universal sharing of a national wealth. Why did I say *working*? Because it exists another institutionalized case of universal and unconditional distribution of the national wealth that is nevertheless not enforced yet. This is Brazil.

In accordance with the law n°10.835 8/01/2004 (*Institui a renda básica de cidadania e dá outras providências*) in Brazil a Basic Income transfer addressed to all that citizens experiencing a certain degree of poverty has been introduced. This law does not straightforwardly call for a universal cash transfer, but it is rather evident that it comes close because there are no workfarist offsets requested. Moreover, the law in its preamble explicitly envisages a universal cash transfer for the whole citizenry which will be reached by a progressive extension of the provision and in accordance with the fiscal and budgetary conditions. Considering the status of Brazil, as a growing economic power, the institution of the *renda básica de cidadania*, together with the *Bolsa Família* program, makes Brazil one of the leading countries in the world in constructing a universal web of basic social protection (Suplicy, 2006).

Even though not institutionalized, but no less significant, there are two other experimental projects, which are still ongoing and that provide useful data. In the interest of being succinct, it is not possible to thoroughly describe both of these experiences; however I can not exempt my self from giving some references about. The first project of a universal Basic Income cash transfer has been implemented in Namibia, where a mixed public-private coalition has distributed a basic amount of money to all the inhabitants of the village Otjivero-Omitara for two years (2008-2010).<sup>2</sup> The second pilot-project is under-way in India since January 2011. Here, the *Self Employed Women's Association* (SEWA) in collaboration with Unicef and local governments, is allocating a basic income monthly transfer to all the residents of eight Indian villages. Their behaviour will be compared with residents of twelve “*control*” villages, in order to study the village-wide effects of the transfer.<sup>3</sup> Even though these experiments have been undertaken in two developing countries which are difficult to compare to a post-fordist socio-economic context, they convey meaningful evidence of the relationship among socio-economic objective conditions, relief programs and human development capacities. This is evidence which should not be ignored also by scientific and political debate on welfare's future in western countries.

#### 4. Theoretical approaches

After having gone over the unique examples of a universal and unconditional cash transfer practice, it is fundamental to turn our attention to a comprehensive framework of the contemporary main approaches to the redistributive issue and, in turn, to Basic Income proposal. The following classification is borrowed by a blend of other taxonomies suggested so far by different authors (Mantegna-Tiddi, 1999, Del Bò 2004, Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2005). The *taxon* proposed is the following: Post-labourists, Radicals-libertarians, Neoliberals, Ecologists and Antiutilitarists. Afar from being complete, this classification emerges from the twine of three conceptual axes, along which the different author's stances deploy: 1) the concept of development, 2) the theoretical construct of human action and 3) the philosophical reflection on the so called *social contract*. The several contributions lie down on the different theoretical intersections identified by the twine of these parameters, following author's main theoretical concepts. Thus, depending on the combination, Basic Income becomes always one of the favourite tools to solve the problems detected.

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<sup>2</sup> For further informations see: <http://www.bignam.org/> 22/01/13

<sup>3</sup> For further informations see: <http://binews.org/2011/09/india-basic-income-pilot-projects-are-underway/> 22/01/13

Therefore, Post-labourists will mainly take their position starting from a straight analysis of western variations in the developmental model, then advocating for a necessary overcoming of contemporary neoliberal socio-economic weak points. As opposed to them, Neoliberals do not criticize economic market structure, invoking if at all its strengthening, rather they begin their analysis from social dilemmas like social exclusion or unemployment, adopting then a residual and selective point of view on the idea of people's role in society. Radicals-libertarians instead move directly from a philosophical hypothesis on how a right society should be, thus referring directly at the heart of modern social contract, that is to say the connection between recognition (citizenship) and redistribution (welfare). To follow, Antiutilitarists start their analysis mainly from an anti-economistic view of human being's action, where income redistribution comes to be seen as a way of freeing man's time from the chains of waged labour and commitment. Last but not least, Ecologists criticize mainstream developmental model sustainability, so inserting Basic Income in an holistic reshaping of western paradigm of production.

#### 4.1 Post-labourists

The label of '*post-labourist*' has been bestowed on all those scholars equated by a common and precise point of view on the evolution of the post-fordist productive paradigm.<sup>4</sup> In particular, scholars of the calibre of Andrea Fumagalli, Giuseppe Bronzini, André Gorz, Sergio Bologna, Guy Standing, Carlo Vercellone, Erik Olin Wright, Luigi Ferrajoli and Andrea Tiddi. What ties them together? They all share a common perspective on the crisis of the XXth century labour society grounded on the fordist-taylorist *one best way* model of production (Bologna, 1997, Wright, 2009, Gorz, 1992, Lazzarato, 1997, Fumagalli, 1997a). Such a crisis is coming directly from those processes of capitalist reorganization determined by the new information technologies (one for all the electronic control machineries) and by the ICT (information and communication technologies: internet above all). Since the 1970s these innovations have deeply affected the technical composition of labour and production. The ongoing flexibilization of the relations of production and the breakdown of social cooperation are currently shifting not only the process of wealth accumulation, but are also transforming the inner nature of the labour as we have known it since the Industrial Revolution took place (Mantegna-Tiddi, 1999, Gorz, 1997, trad. it. 2009, Accornero, 1997).

Particularly, these scholars have developed four trajectories of research dealing with what they assume to be the main traits of this paradigmatic shift: the de-materialization of labour, the break in of the autonomous labour, the production of goods by way of language and the general intellect objectification. Following the order, by *de-materialization* of labour we refer to all jobs manufacturing the cultural and informative content of items and assets (Lazzarato, 1997). For autonomous labour we point towards the increase of those sociological organizations of labour such as like cooperatives, franchising, developed industrial craftsmanship, self-employed professionals and freelancers. All these forms of labour feature a progressive and intensive extension of working times, often overlapping with life times, and by extension, outsourcing of working spaces (Bologna, 1997). Furthermore, it is noteworthy to recall those working conditions which discriminate performances in respect to the standardized fordist labour. The greater reliance on banking funding, enlargement of the workaday, shift from the salary to the income billed retribution and total absence of any forms of welfare tutelage make the huge growth of autonomous workers a phenomenon marked by striking contradictions: insecurity, precariousness and most of all lack of a safeguard (Gorz, 1988, trad. it. 1992, Fumagalli and Lazzarato, 2002, Standing, 2011).

On the other hand, the production of goods by way of language is probably the main feature connoting what Fumagalli calls *bio-economy*,<sup>5</sup> while the sociologist Codeluppi indicates it as *bio-capitalism*.<sup>6</sup> That is, work is more and more seen as a set of communicative and interconnected acts, following the so called *relational act theory* (Donati, 1991, Mantegna-Tiddi, 1997). Thus, the sharp increasing of

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<sup>4</sup> Here, the term paradigm can be understood under the light of Kuhn's teaching. In fact, in the world of labour and production we are in the presence of a well shared epistemology among different disciplinary fields and scholars. While the features and the models of our post-fordist structure of production are commonly recognized and accepted, following Kuhn's description of the paradigm shift we are facing many disputes on the effects and on the anomalies of the paradigm itself. 29/01/13

<sup>5</sup> Fumagalli A., *Biocapitalismo e capitalismo cognitivo. Verso un nuovo paradigma di accumulazione*, Carocci, Roma, 2007

<sup>6</sup> Codeluppi V., *Il Biocapitalismo. Verso lo sfruttamento integrale di corpi, cervelli ed emozioni*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 2008

communication processes characterizing so soundly the post-fordist era cross-refer us directly to the necessity of a deeper understanding of social cooperation processes. From this point on, a critical rereading of Marx's *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie* (Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy) helps us to better grasp the powerful role played by social cooperation in modern post-fordist process of production and accumulation. Inside the general intellect dimension labour does not consist any more in the attainment of a single or a series of repeated goals, but rather it entails the coordination and regulation of such social cooperation through linguistic performances and highly intensive technologies (Marx, 1997, Mantegna-Tiddi, 1997).

From this perspective, the Basic Income proposal becomes an inescapable fact for the social re-settlement of a fragmented and insecure labour force and for a fair acknowledgement of the whole social cooperation at the heart of post-fordist processes of production. Along these lines, a universal and unconditional Basic Income combines the varied strands of unemployed and unoccupied people (including all those social activities of production and reproduction carried on without remuneration) with the plenty of the autonomous workers without a social coverage. According to these scholars, Basic Income is a powerful tool in the hands of regularly employed people too. It could increase workers' bargaining power and hinder processes of social marginalization covering all those profiles at the edge of a strongly competitive labour market (Fumagalli, 1997b, Gorz, 1997, trad. it. 2009).

#### 4.2 Radicals-libertarians

The tendency on which radicals-libertarians fit in focuses on the discussion about the '*right society*', that is the reflection on the principles and on the values on which our western societies rest on. Pivotal in this perspective, which was widely developed by John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, is another interpretation made by the Belgian philosopher Philip Van Parijs, who stands for the most well-known theorist of this philosophical trend. According to Van Parijs a right society must be based on *real freedom*, rather than a mere formal one (Van Parijs, 1995). *Real freedom* lies in the respect of three principles: 1- security (formal safeguard of human integrity); 2- self-ownership (being master of oneself); and 3- opportunity (the effective conditions allowing people to act in accordance to their will). On one hand, the first two elements send us back to the classic liberal individual right structure, so defining what is usually called formal freedom (Bronzini, 2011). However, on the other hand, to reach a real freedom every man must be put in the objectives conditions to express oneself (Van Parijs, 1995). In order to attain these goals, Van Parijs states that a right society should combine two factors: the *maximum minimorum* distribution of the gifts and un-dominated diversity (Van Parijs, 1995).<sup>7</sup> Due to space constraints it is not possible to go into Van Parijs' theory here, but what is vital is that the best way for those thinkers, like the Belgian philosopher, advocating for an overcoming of liberal formal freedom consists in Basic Income proposal.

Another radical proposal of Basic Income is carried on from a sociological point of view by the German political scientist Claus Offe. He develops an argument directly linked with the ongoing crisis of the modern welfare state. In fact, he moves from an idea grounded on an objective realization, that the social protection we have known so far has left too many people in a state of need and dependency from labour market volatility (Offe, 1997). In effect, the German sociologist criticizes all those theories (liberal and social democratic) which have tried to solve all the socio-economic contradictions through the labour markets rules (Offe, 2009). He moves some step forward in an horizon definitively post-labourist, in which citizenship is the bedrock for social protection and human activity in general, not only waged labour, is the moral justification for the right to benefits. In his thought not only the mere preservation of a social status but the warranty for basic needs is the main criterion for social justice and, last but not least, not only absolute safety but a sustainable level of risk and autonomy are the values to be hypostatized by a social protection system (Offe, 1997). Thus, Offe, Van Parijs and all the other radicals-libertarians thinkers advocate for a Basic Income provision, fiscally guaranteed,

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<sup>7</sup> Maximin: it is a parameter of social justice stating that among the worst conditions available it is always right to choose the less worst.

Un-dominated diversity: it is another principle of justice which completes the fallacies of a maximin policy. In fact, the distribution of the gifts must determine a situation in which nobody has a total endowment so low that nobody else would take his place. In Van Parijs's thought, this kind of situation is achievable adopting an iterative version of maximin criterion, the so called leximin, that is once attained the maximization conditions for the worst off, we must maximize the conditions of the people immediately after better off.

universally distributed and not means tested in order to go quickly beyond the striking aporias generated by those welfare system built not on citizenship (meant just as membership of a living community), but on a restrictive workfarist and familist premise.

Both the American sociologist Richard Sennett and the political scientist Nancy Fraser agree on such an approach. The former does it from a sociological perspective, analysing the evolution of the old capitalist system in what he calls '*the new capitalism*' (Sennett, 2006), while the latter advocates for a redressing of our understanding of the redistribution-recognition dilemma (Fraser and Honnet, 2007). What emerges from a close examination of Sennett is the undeniable need for *biographic continuity* (Sennett, 2006). He admits that three political proposals have struck him within the post-modernist debate: aside from job sharing and the reconfiguration of trade unions' mission as employment institutions, he soundly marries Claus Offe and Van Parijs' offer of a universal and an unconditional Basic Income as warranty for a more inclusive, egalitarian and consistent society. Nancy Fraser comes to support the idea of a Basic Income starting from another dialectical position. Both in her co-authored book *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, written with Axel Honnet<sup>8</sup> (Fraser and Honnet, 2007), and in her previous text *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition*, Fraser adopts a de-constructionist approach to deconstruct the cultural and material dualism typical of the industrial era (Fraser and Honnet, 2003, trad.it. 2007).

Here, then, she identifies a difficult dilemma that she names *the redistribution-recognition dilemma*. What does it entail? This dilemma lies in the conflict affecting people subjected to both cultural and economic injustice, and the reason why they need both recognition and redistribution. Without delving into the relation developed by Fraser between claims for recognition (aimed at remedying cultural injustice) and claims for redistribution (aimed at redressing economic injustice), here it is enough to underline how this scholar sees in Basic Income a *transformative* tool able to minimise conflicts between redistribution and recognition. This is why Basic Income could stimulate an active parity among different members of society. What is more, Fraser states that a Basic Income provision could succeed also in our post-fordist societies because it points at balancing the relation between waged labour and extra-working commitment (both social or reproductive), and it also encompasses this harsh contrast, pursuing simultaneously redistribution and recognition.

#### 4.3 Neoliberals

The neoliberal approaches are represented above all by thinkers like Ralf Dahrendorf, Milton Friedman and Ulrich Beck, obviously with related differences. While Milton Friedman theorised a welfare system reform pivoted on the *maximum minimorum* principle of a negative income tax, where assistance should serve through market devices with the market correcting its distortions, theorists like Dahrendorf and Beck try to bypass this planning by focusing on the undeniable phenomena of social exclusion and unemployment. Indeed, income negative tax, rationalizing institutional aid through the warranty of a minimum income level, would not work to subvert the basis of our modern welfare system, or the capitalist devices of wealth distribution (Fumagalli, 1997a). Dahrendorf and Beck, instead of narrowing the issue on a mere subsistence level, typical of a Keynesian policy approach, turn attention to the intense changes occurring in modern post-fordist economies. Unemployment and labour flexibilization of labour relationships make inequality not an accident to be corrected any more, but rather a structural feature of our productive system to deal with in a different manner.

While in Dahrendorf's opinion Basic Income should be enacted on the grounds of western civil rights, above all the right for a material guarantee of life (Dahrendorf, 1993), Beck calls for a public remuneration of a general work of *civil commitment*. Objectively, Dahrendorf acknowledges how without the warranty of material basis the same social contract of our societies would be in danger so in his opinion, by virtue of that, institutions should grant all unemployed or marginalised people a minimum income level. On the other hand, starting from the same analytical premises, Ulrich Beck fosters the proposal for a citizenship income to be allocated to those who have been left outside a well-paid position in a free labour market (Beck, 1999). However, Beck promotes the idea of an independent citizen agent, as autonomous entrepreneur of *civil commitment*, but he does not explain how people should be conveyed on this way, and he is extremely vague also on the contents of this *civil commitment* (Beck, 1999). Nevertheless, what lacks in this perspectives (both in Dahrendorf's and Beck's)

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<sup>8</sup> For whom redistribution is a dependent variable of recognition.

respectively to the formers, is the yearning for universality in order to sanction once for all the detachment from an inescapable duty to work as a means to be recognized and included in society (Mantegna-Tiddi, 1997). Thus, all the neoliberal perspectives on income redistribution have so far rested on selective and residual proposals.

#### 4.4 *Anti-utilitarians*

To deal with a Basic Income idea from an anti-utilitarians point of view means to extend theoretical reflection beyond the economic and philosophical borders, and to embrace a critical view of the rational action theory. The antiutilitarian approach indeed is widely ascribable inside the Mauss school (Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales), well represented by the French sociologist Alain Caillé (Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2005, trad. it. 2006). The critique of this trend is based on the rejection of the economic prejudice conveyed by the *homo oeconomicus*'s one-dimension analytical view (Caillé, 1997). Since not all the human actions are attributable at the mere calculus of interests, Caillé calls for a rediscovery of those economic forms built around the concept of gift. In the course of time, the Anti-utilitarian movement has developed an out-and-out socio-economic paradigm based on three complementary pillars. If on one side they suggest a large reduction of the working day and recommend the acknowledgement and the backing of all those forms of economic solidarity, on the other side, they vividly argue in favour of an unconditional citizenship income able to relieve humankind from material life needs and, in turn, to trigger the release of free time from wage blackmail (Caillé, 1997). What limits the range of what Caillé himself has called '*the revolution of chosen-time*', is the non universality of his wealth redistribution thinking, addressed mostly to that growing bulk of unemployed and excluded people. In this way, Caillé and his followers underestimate the consequences of the communicative and informative transformations on post-fordist model of production, disregarding the subsumption of social cooperation and free time under capital value (Mantegna-Tiddi, 1997, Gorz, 1997, trad. it. 2009). definitively, what emerges is an unconditional but selective proposal of redistribution that does not tackle directly the issue of wealth creation, but it is rather based on a general re-organization of welfare regimes on a more emancipatory and individualistic perspective.

#### 4.5 *Ecologists*

Coming to a pretty different tradition of thought, the ecologist perspective attempts to adopt a more holistic vision between anthropological activity and environmental cosmology. It has been developed mainly by authors like Erik Christensen, Gianluca Busilacchi and Alain Lipietz, obviously with the usual theoretical and methodological specifications. However, at the heart of the analysis lies the strong belief in the innate limits of our developmental model based on an endless economic growth (Mantegna-Tiddi, 1997). However, Lipietz does not advocate for a universal and unconditional basic income, asserting that the welfare state crisis will be solved through the workday reduction and the useful social works, which are both ways of slowing down the productive machine and converting the exchange value back in value of use (Fumagalli, 1997b). On the other hand, Busilacchi and Christensen share a common analytical perspective, differentiating themselves only for the socio-economic dimension on which they implement their reflection. They both identify with the ecological belief in sustainability the roots for a normative reasoning which supports Basic Income (Christensen and Busilacchi, 2009).

In particular, drawing from the theory of the stationary economy, elaborated by the American economist Herman E. Daly, Christensen maintains that a Basic Income device would hinder the logic underneath the traditional welfare system. In effect, he argues that the belief in boundless growth has led and fostered the false expectations on which our welfare state has been built so far (Christensen, 2009). To believe that economic growth is unlimited, means to believe in the hope that unemployment will someday disappear and, in turn, to allow public institutions for the construction of a welfare system to plug provisionally contradictions like unemployment, underemployment and job insecurity. While Christensen develops his reasoning by arguing both for an ecological humanism and for an intergenerational responsibility (by way of Basic Income supposed reduction of that excessive consumption, through a more equal redistribution of economic resources), the Italian Busilacchi suggests adopting a global eco-tax, set up on the ecological footprint of every economic activity, in



order to fund a universal Basic Income. In this way, it is argued that the overconsumption of rich countries will be automatically constrained and the revenues collected can contribute to the decrease of income inequalities between the north and the south of the world (Busilacchi, 2009).

## 5. Pathways for a sociological research

“*The universal and unconditioned allocation of a Basic Income that can be accumulated with a job income is the best way to redistribute both rewarded labour and unpaid activities*”.<sup>9</sup> Even the great French sociologist André Gorz has embraced a critical analysis of our post-fordist societies, observing the fragmentation of working biographies, the increasing value produced by social cooperation, the ongoing individualization of labour and the close linkage between the workforce and life in the immaterial economy. By virtue of that, he proposes the introduction of an *Existence Income*, with the same features of the Basic Income we have dealt with so far, in order to answer to the increasing distributive issue arising from contemporary productive organization. Recalling also the Marxist Grundrisse analysis, Gorz acknowledges how every single contribution to national and international economies is not easily definable any more in our immaterial and advanced economy (Gorz, 2003). Thus, according to him the issue opposing waged labour crisis against the agony of welfare state systems must be tackled outdoing the residual and selective logic of redistribution. This in order to go toward a new distributive approach (Gorz, 1997, trad. it. 2009).

What is particularly interesting for the development of a socio-economic research trajectory, it is the overall reformist position of Gorz. In effect, he holds to be true that a Basic Income provision for itself is not enough to confer a full membership in post-fordist societies (Gorz, 1992, trad. it. 1995). In effect, he distinguishes between two sociological spheres of action: the macro-social (political communities) and the micro-social (families, associations, clubs). He argues that, since the belonging to a macro-social entity entails always a little obligation inside the interactive exchange, it is really in macro-social level that a recognized work can lead actors to recognition and integration in society, and not the only commitment in personal or micro activities (Gorz, 1992, trad. it. 1995). Here Gorz highlights the strong ties bounding individual actions in micro-everyday life, the collective dimension and the symbolic devices allowing for social integration. He is strongly sure that we can achieve social integration not only throughout income integration. In this way, Gorz binds a Basic Income perspective to other three political arrangements: workday decrease, construction of a permanent life learning system truly accessible and a public device for the acknowledgement of volunteering social activities.

## 6. Conclusion

Taking into account Basic Income proposal, this paper has briefly tried to recapitulate the theoretical wide redistributive debate, adopting a particular point of view: the idea of an unconditional and universal right to a minimum income to protect human dignity from destitution and exclusion. Moreover, for argument's sake, we have divided contemporary conceptual stances in five groups, pooling each one of the well-known authors who have expressed a similar position dealing with Basic Income idea. First, the Post-labourists launch a thorough glance inside labour and production changes where subjectivity is getting more and more pivotal for the creation of an added value and capital accumulation, thus claiming for a universal redistribution of the wealth produced by the so called general intellect. As opposed to them, Neoliberals emphasize market's dynamics and calls for a selective and conditional Basic Income as replacement of old and inefficient welfare regimes. Radicals-libertarians philosophically point directly at the heart of modern social contract, entailing a reappraisal of the dichotomy between redistribution and recognition on which modern social contracts stand. To follow, Antiutilitarists see Basic Income as a way of freeing man's time from the chains of waged labour and imposed commitment. Lastly, Ecologists thinkers look at Basic Income primarily as a way of compensating people for the depletion of natural resources and, above all, as a way to reduce pollution and hydrocarbon exploitation via taxation.

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<sup>9</sup> André Gorz, *Misères du présent, richesse du possible*, 1997, trad. it. *Miseria del presente, ricchezza del possibile*, Manifestolibri, Roma, 2009, pg. 111 Translation from Italian by who is writing

Moreover, an approach that seems to be comprehensive of many of the stances treated is Gorz's theoretical perspective. Gorz takes in consideration relational and cultural factors in order to go beyond some ideological swamps. In fact, the great French sociologist calls for a universal and unconditional Basic Income<sup>10</sup> in terms of a public payment for that part of wealth socially produced; a sort of right to income based only on the fact to be part of society. A side from some dilemmas tied to economic feasibility, what matters in this point of view is the opinion that such a provision cannot be split by other cultural and organizational provisions in order to generate sociality and social integration (Gorz, 1997, trad. it. 2009). Thus, in conclusion, treasuring all the contemplated literature, from which Gorz's conceptual approach stands out for its social insight, what could be really interesting for sociological research in dealing with the idea of an unconditional and universal Basic Income can be summarized in the following questions: Does Basic Income heal the disarray caused by the crisis of Fordist labour and by the collapse of the related social protection system? How does a fragmented and insecure working biography undermine social interaction? Can alone a Basic Income provision, answering to job insecurity and biographic fragmentation, to convey a greater social integration? And, in order to do that, do we need to reckon with other fundamental cultural, symbolic or organizational factors? As many authors have noted so far, the problems threatening welfare states can no longer be engaged separately from cultural and labour issues, in fact many welfare constraints are strictly intertwined to the disease of labour market and families (Esping-Andersen, 2000, Ferrera, 2006, 2012). From this point of view, the Ph.D. research in progress among the 'Te.s.i.s. Department' of the University of Verona aims at shedding light on these essential questions, as well as to essay to clarify some of the most controversial lexical and conceptual matters related.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Even though his first theoretical stances were pretty critical

<sup>11</sup> The research is part of the doctoral course in Sociology and Social Research led by the writer, under the supervision of Prof. Giorgio Gosetti.

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