

1 INTRODUCING A UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

Introduction

Imagine living in a society in which you are given money for nothing – a monthly cash sum with no strings attached. Imagine a world in which, by virtue of being a citizen, you're provided with enough cash to keep you over and above the poverty line. This might sound like a radical idea, or utopian, but is exactly the kind of world which is discussed and examined in this textbook – an idea which has been labelled (among other labels) a universal basic income. This idea is very controversial. For some, a universal basic income is a way forward, a way of achieving a more egalitarian world in which the lives of every citizen are looked after and cared for by the safety and economic security of the State. For others, a universal basic income is an extension of the 'nanny state'; an absurd idea, which is both unrealistic and unaffordable. It may stifle economic growth, crash the economy and even bankrupt the state. Whatever one's opinion, nobody can dismiss the fact that the idea of a universal basic income has been gathering a lot of attention, and is currently a 'hot topic' being discussed all over the globe. This popularity is not simply based on talk and debate, but is also based upon policy and practice, with countries such as Finland, Canada and India (among others) conducting 'basic income' pilots and experiments. What is your opinion about universal basic income? Is it a crazy idea which will never work or a sensible solution to solving society's social issues and social problems? You may already have an opinion and want to express it in academic writing or public debate. Or your thoughts may be emerging from the reading of this text. Whatever your stance, reading this textbook will provide 'food for thought', allowing you to extend your thinking and develop your arguments for or against a universal basic income. This textbook is primarily designed for undergraduate students wishing to learn about universal basic income, providing a reliable source which can be used for academic writing and discussion. It

introduces the ideas of universal basic income by providing an overview of its principles, examples and current debates.

This chapter provides readers with an introduction to universal basic income by examining what it is and discussing it in relation to other welfare provisions. It details some of the pros and cons of a universal basic income and discusses how it contrasts with current forms of welfare policy such as income support and means-tested subsidies. Readers will learn how a universal basic income might help to combat the unemployment trap, showing for example, how a regular and guaranteed income could incentivize citizens to take more risks to find new work – without fear of losing welfare payments or having to reapply for them should their new employment not work out. Finland’s basic income experiment (discussed in Chapter 4) is one example of a policy trial aimed at addressing their unemployment troubles. This text shows how a universal basic income might provide a stimulus to engage in remunerated work; replace means-tested subsidies, and remove disincentives to work. But the text shall also examine the downsides to a universal basic income, such as the potential difficulties in funding it; getting the public onside to support it, and how its implementation might impact on certain social groups. In Chapter 7 (‘Against a universal basic income’), readers shall look at arguments which suggest that a universal basic income might exacerbate the sexual division of labour, having adverse effects on women in particular. The chapter will also examine how a universal basic income might lead to the tightening of border controls, leading to adverse effects for migrant workers. Readers shall also engage with a debate on whether or not a universal basic income can provide compensatory justice and re-shape lax welfare policies to ones which are more stringent. These discussions are laid out in Chapter 2 of this text, where a number of different theories and theorists are discussed, alongside some conventional philosophical debates around work, liberty and social justice (such as ‘What is freedom?’). This chapter introduces how the idea of a universal basic income or citizen’s income has emerged, examining some of the problems of a capitalist economic system, and showing how a universal basic income might be emancipatory and provide a redistributive safety net to all citizens of a given society. The chapter shall also lay out the general aims and objectives of the text on universal basic income and

provides a breakdown and brief introduction of the forthcoming chapters in this book.

What is universal basic income?

What is a universal basic income? A universal basic income is a regular cash income paid to all on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement. The basic income is ‘universal’, because it is paid to all in a given community or society. Whether or not individuals are rich or poor, and regardless of whether or not they receive income from other sources, a universal basic income is paid to everyone by virtue of being a member or citizen of that community or society. It is for this reason that a universal basic income has also been referred to as a ‘citizen’s wage’ or ‘citizen’s income’—‘an unconditional, automatic and non-withdrawable payment to each individual as a right of citizenship’ (Torry, 2016). In various books and articles, a ‘universal basic income’ or ‘basic income’ has also been referred to as a ‘existence income’, ‘universal dividend’, ‘universal grant’, or ‘guaranteed universal subsidy’, as well as a range of similar terms in a variety of languages. Universal basic income may appear to be a far-flung idea, a utopian proposition, or ambitious set of policy ideas. In recent years, however, governments around the world have started putting this idea into practice.

Why is this topic so important? In recent years, the teaching of universal basic income in higher education is becoming more and more popular to an array of courses across the social sciences, including undergraduate degrees in social policy; sociology; education studies; economics; law; business; politics; social work and community studies. But students are not the only ones interested in understanding the debates about universal basic income. Human rights activists, community leaders, politicians, lawyers and business leaders also want to understand more about universal basic income. Universal basic income represents not simply a social policy or means of welfare, but a fundamental change in the way in which society is constructed and developed, so it draws upon the expertise and specialisms of scholars and practitioners from a vast range of subject areas and industries. Everybody, including those of you who

are studying universal basic income for the first time, can contribute to this important debate.

Many see universal basic income as a policy which will radically change capitalist society as we know it. But universal basic income is not developed to dismantle capitalism. On the contrary, in most cases, the arguments put forward to implement a universal basic income are based on the idea that a basic income is needed in order to allow capitalist societies to survive and to work effectively. Capitalism, driven by neoliberal economics, is currently failing many in societies across the world. A universal basic income has the potential to rescue some of the shortcomings of neoliberal capitalist society, providing more security where very often there is none. But arguably, a universal basic income itself can be considered ‘neoliberal’, in the sense that it emphasizes individual choice and freedom, with only minimal interference from the state – though this is controversial.

So, what is the basic philosophy of a universal basic income? This question of course depends upon who is implementing a basic income and how it might be implemented and where. But current literature on universal basic income suggests that there is a basic philosophy – a nature, or set of basic ideas of what a universal basic income should be. First, a universal basic income is supported by those who believe that a fair and just society is possible – so it has a moral and ethical philosophy. Second, it has the potential to improve and replace current welfare provisions in many ways, such as abolishing the stigma associated with means-tested benefits, and solving the problems of the poverty and unemployment traps. Third, unlike the way in which many other welfare provisions are perceived, a universal basic income can be understood as an investment in society, rather than a cost. Take for example those who wish to change careers or start their own business. The risk involved in taking such bold decisions can arguably be minimized with the provision of a universal basic income. Another important aspect of a universal basic income is that it can enhance the mutual responsibility within a community or society because everyone is given the income by virtue of being a citizen. This in itself can support social cohesion and provide the basis of a strong community.

Providing a minimum income to every citizen can also provide more freedom. Recipients of a basic income are able to move more easily among paid work, education, caring and volunteering when there is a universal basic income. Rather than keeping people stuck in the jobs they may dislike, a universal basic income allows individuals to have more autonomy to choose the jobs they want, or move from one job to the next with less hassle and financial burden. Van Parijs and Vanderborght (2017: 26) argue that ‘making an economy more productive (sensibly interpreted) in a sustainable fashion is not best served by obsessively activating people and locking them in jobs that they hate doing and from which they learn nothing’. But does a universal basic income assume the goodwill and good intentions of the individual recipient? Critics of a universal basic income suggest that a basic income will generate a culture of idleness, a reliance on the state, and a selfishness of individuals to squandering their money, for example, on alcohol and video entertainment. Many of these criticisms are banded about in public media, often without real substance or detailed evidence. But in *The Right to Exploit: Parasitivism, Scarcity, Basic Income*, author Gijs van Donselaar (2009) provides a more nuanced account of how the nature and value of freedom of choice can be understood. He argues that policies like a universal basic income can lead to exploitative relations. He shows how a universal basic income could license parasitic behaviour – bettering oneself by worsening another. And so, although the majority of real case studies and experiments of universal basic income discussed in this textbook show many positive outcomes, there are still many concerns of whether such a policy is morally right and whether it will work.

Experiments from various countries are still in the early stages, but research results show that recipients of genuine basic income pilots tend to invest in themselves, their families and the communities in which they live. Many examples show that money is not squandered, but used to improve important aspects of social life, including employment conditions, housing, education and healthcare (see Chapter 4 to read about the experiment in Madhya Pradesh, India, in which more than 6,000 people from twenty villages benefitted from a basic cash income). Some critics of a universal basic income often argue that it would disincentivize work – assuming that people on low incomes would not

bother to work if receiving a ‘comfortable’ level of income. But rarely is the same said about the super-rich. After all, billionaires such as Bill Gates (Microsoft), Richard Branson (Virgin) and Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook) still work, though they do not need the income. A study of lottery winners (in 1999) found that most people continued to work (in one form or another) even after receiving large lottery payouts. Few were still in the same jobs they had before but most ‘still worked’ in some capacity (see Standing, 2017: 165). Paulsen’s (2008) research found that when people were asked what they would do when winning the lottery, a clear majority said they would carry on working, though not necessarily in jobs they did before.

A universal basic income has the potential to radically reform welfare systems all over the world. Existing welfare systems often restricts what people can do and holds back their potential for developing themselves and their families in financial ways, and other ways too. A British woman (lone parent) in receipt of means-tested benefits (including tax credits) might hesitate to move in with (cohabitate) a partner (with earned income) because she would immediately lose her benefit income. An Indian woman living in a poor district of Uttar Pradesh must marry in order to pay for her children’s school fees, if she wants a better life for her children, and whether or not she wants to marry. A universal basic income would arguably free up these constraints, and provide people with more autonomy over their own lives.

The emergence of a universal basic income

How has a universal basic income emerged? The idea of a universal basic income may have become more popular in recent years, but it is actually an old idea suggested at least two hundred years ago. In 1795, the English-born American activist Thomas Paine advocated a citizen’s dividend to all US citizens as compensation for ‘loss of his or her natural inheritance, by the introduction of the system of landed property’ (Paine, 1795). More than 150 years later, Paine’s sentiments were echoed by another revolutionary of his time. In 1967, during the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King suggested that a guaranteed minimum income was the most simplest and effective way of abolishing poverty in the US, arguing for an end to social inequality and social

justice for all. Less than ten years later, one US state created a policy which has resonance with the idea of a universal basic income, or citizen's income. In 1976, the state of Alaska created the Alaska Permanent Fund, a dividend paid to Alaska residents using oil revenues, one of Alaska's most abundant and rich resources. The fund may not exactly be what Thomas Paine or Martin Luther King had in mind, and has become a topic of discussion and scrutiny for Alaskan residents, but it has been, until recently, one model which has resonance with to the notion of a permanent and universal basic income.

Over the last twenty years however, the idea of a universal basic income has become increasingly popular, and more and more governments and NGOs (non-government organizations) all over the world have begun piloting and experimenting with the idea of a universal basic income (these pilots and experiments are discussed in Chapter 4 of this book). This popularity of universal basic income is not due to chance, but comes in response to a changing economic climate – one which has been based upon neoliberal economics, ideas and values. Current ideas about how economic and financial systems should work are rooted in a style of economics known as 'laissez-faire', or 'leave alone'. Free from the restrictions imposed on it by the state, the market can supposedly do as it pleases (see Friedman, 1962). Without state interference, the 'free market economy', as it is known, develop 'naturally' and freely, allowing capitalism to flourish and wealth to be created. Without the protections afforded to it by the state, however, these free markets have had dire consequences (or adverse side-effects) for societies (see Polanyi, 1944). Driven by neoliberal policies, these free-market economies have been characterized by instability and adverse change. Rather than securing stable living conditions for families and individuals, a neoliberal economy creates uncertainty and fragility which can often lead to crisis. For example, in the pursuit of market efficiency, the labor markets of economies have become more and more deregulated. The removal of regulations or restrictions in industry has created an emerging culture of precarity in work and employment (Standing, 2015; McDonough, 2017). Precarious employment involves instability, lack of protection, insecurity and social or economic vulnerability (McDonough, 2017). One way this has happened has been the demise of traditional employment contracts (full-time

and permanent) – replaced with short-term (often zero-hour) contracts. Known as the ‘Burger King contract’ (named after the multinational chain Burger King, infamous for employing to low skill and low paid jobs) employers are increasingly using precarious contracts of employment often without a guaranteed set number of hours each week – ‘resulting in the pure casualization of labour’ (McDonough, 2017: 99). This kind of contract has been implemented in all sectors of work, including universities, hospitals, schools and a plethora of private companies and multinational organizations. In this textbook, we outline the notion of precariousness (see Chapter 3), examining how a universal basic income intends to resolve the problems caused by this uncertainty – such as providing a steady resource which counterbalances the unsteadiness of precarity and the gig economy.

Contemporary capitalist societies are driven by neoliberal imperatives which, by their very nature, create a number of adverse side-effects, including: uncertainty; insecurity; poverty, and social inequalities. A universal basic income has emerged as a response to these side effects. It can reduce uncertainty because it is a regular and therefore constant resource available for use. It can also provide a basic security, because it is a sustained income which takes families above the poverty line and is provided continuously. Having a stable and certain income provides a stability and assurance which allows individuals and families the time and resources to plan their future, giving them the means with which to provide self-improvement, escaping poverty and acquiring a better quality of life.

Universal basic income: a progressive social policy?

A universal basic income is seen as a progressive policy in several ways. First, it provides a secure financial foundation on which all members of society would be free to build upon. It would help to reduce or eliminate poverty by providing every citizen with an income regardless of capital they possess (property, for example) or income they receive from family (parental income or inheritance, for example). It can improve living standards in relation to wide range of factors including health and nutrition, housing, schooling and education. Second, a universal basic income is a policy which goes beyond welfare in the sense that

it can also contribute to growth, by raising productivity, creating a more sustainable platform for work and the development of income. Third, a universal basic income is emancipatory (if implemented correctly). It is a means of enhancing, or in some cases reclaiming, personal freedom or basic rights. A universal basic income has the potential to be particularly emancipatory for women (see Chapter 5), and those who normally receive lower priority in social policymaking, including those with disabilities or the elderly (Devala et al., 2015). However, some critics believe that people will squander their money on bad habits, or what Standing (2017: 79) calls ‘private bads’. There is an underlying discourse which depicts poorer people in society as untrustworthy and irresponsible. Giving people an unconditional income could result in money being wasted on alcohol, drugs and other ‘private bads’. Standing (2017) argues however, that the evidence from current basic income pilots points in the opposite direction – for the most part, recipients of basic income or cash transfer programmes spend their money on ‘private goods’. Standing (2017) argues that contrary to popular prejudice, studies show that basic income is more likely to be spent on food for children, family healthcare, and education. Standing (2017) further expands this argument by saying that receipt of a universal basic income can actually reduce spending on drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Because a universal basic income can reduce poverty and radically alter a hopeless situation, it can also change the mind-set of families and entire communities. A shift in the way in which people understand their situation can reduce the need to alleviate a difficult and hopeless situation by turning to alcohol and drug misuse.

The idea of a universal basic income is very controversial. First, why should a basic income get paid (to everyone) universally? If a basic income aims to eradicate poverty then why not target the poorest in society? One reason is that benefits targeted at the poor often require those eligible to take steps which they may fail to take, whether out of ‘ignorance, shyness, or shame’ (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017: 17). With a means-tested scheme there are considerably more human and administrative costs than with a universal basic income. Furthermore, the means-test itself is problematic. Decisions to include or exclude can ‘leave a lot of room for arbitrariness and clientelism’ (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017: 18). Unlike other welfare schemes, there is no stigma

attached to receiving a basic income when it is the right of every citizen. But it is not only the dignity of people which is afforded by a universal basic income. Such a scheme would also enhance the effectiveness of poverty alleviation. By avoiding complication and stigmatization, a universal basic income can ‘achieve a high rate of take-up at a low information cost’ (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017: 18). There are other reasons why a universal basic income might be better than welfare policies targeted at the poor. In a neoliberal economy where work is often characterized by insecurity and precariousness (McDonough, 2017), a universal basic income not only frees people from a lack of money, but also provides more flexibility for individuals to take on work they require. As Van Parijs and Vanderborght argue:

if they are unsure about how much they will earn when they start working, about whether they will be able to cope, or about how quickly they might lose the work and then have to face more or less complex administrative procedures in order to reestablish their entitlement to benefits, the idea of giving up means-tested transfers holds less appeal. (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017: 17–18)

Under present welfare arrangements, in many countries, it can take several weeks of form-filling and administrative work to sign up someone to the correct benefits based upon their specific circumstances. The prospect of signing-off and losing benefits is a disincentive to work. By contrast, with a universal basic income, people can take on jobs with less fear.

One of the most significant differences a universal basic income makes is the avoidance of the ‘poverty trap’ or ‘unemployment trap’. This problem often occurs with current benefit systems, whereby an increase in someone’s income through employment is offset by a consequent loss of state benefits, and set of costs involved in employment activity (travel or nanny costs, for instance). Torry (2016) for example, cites the example of a British carpenter who has been promoted to the position of foreman – and then wished he had not been. His wages had risen, but the effects of additional Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions, and the loss of Family Income Supplement (as the means-tested benefit was then called) resulted in the man being no better off. Linked to this

problem, is the scale of government deductions from additional earnings of those who receive welfare benefits and are also active in the labour market (whether it is part-time or full-time work). Torry (2016) describes this situation in the UK:

In the UK, a family receiving Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Working Tax Credits, and with the main breadwinner earning enough to be paying Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions, can find that each extra £1 that they earn will benefit the family's net income by just 4p. This is because Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions will be deducted from each additional £1 earned, and the additional earnings will cause means-tested benefits (in this case, Working Tax Credits, Child Tax Credits, Housing Benefit, and Council Tax Support) to be reduced. (Torry, 2016: 62)

The taxes in Britain all contribute to the infrastructure of British society: a free national healthcare service, free education, the police, the judiciary, and transport systems. All of these are essential to British society and its economy. But when the wealthiest in Britain pay to the government 47p of every extra £1 that they earn, compared with 96p for every extra £1 earned by the lowest earners, there is something amiss with the system (Torry, 2016).

In stark contrast to current welfare provisions, a universal basic income is not withdrawn or reduced when individuals find work because it is applicable to all, regardless of income. Rather than making the often daunting leap straight from means-tested welfare benefits into work, recipients of a universal basic income will have nothing to fear, for the basic income is continuous and obligation free. Current welfare systems in developed nations usually require countless hours filling out forms with personal information and involve continuously collecting data to support evidence that recipients are 'honest' in their claims. Aside from the high costs to implement this, are the costs involved in investigating those who have tried to dupe the system by making false claims for welfare. Governments often outsource work to private companies to carry out the administrative functions of the welfare system. In the UK for example, companies such as Serca, Capita (a leading outsourcing business for

professional services), G4S (a leading supplier of security solutions and other services), Pertemps and Seetec are paid millions of pound in order to enforce welfare regimes in Britain. The implementation of a universal basic income might eliminate the need for corporate outsourcing which drains the welfare budget and diverts the money which should be helping all members of society. However, the administration for a universal basic income could be outsourced too, depending on how it is implemented.

Can a universal basic income benefit women? When governments slash spending on welfare provision it is always women who lose out most. In Britain, for example, more than 70% of tax credits and more than 90% of child benefits go to women. Reductions to welfare spend can have dire consequences for women in particular, which can exacerbate gender inequalities, and often make women more reliant on men within the family. In contrast to means-tested welfare provisions, supporters of a universal basic income argue that it can provide ‘liberty’ (Torry, 2016) or ‘freedom’ (Devala et al., 2015), particularly for women, because it provides more autonomy over life choices. For example, women are able to choose the kinds of employment patterns which suit their needs, allowing the flexibility to take up short-term or part-time work, without the additional income affecting the amount of welfare benefits they receive – a drawback with means-tested benefits. In Britain, like other countries around the globe, having children can put a great deal of strain on families, with some women feeling that having a baby is a burden. A working woman who has children must sacrifice her income to raise her child. A universal basic income will of course not match the paid income from paid work, but it can compensate those who wish to drop employment, for the important ‘work’ of raising children. This of course is more beneficial to women (and arguably to society more broadly), who are still more likely than men to have child caring responsibilities. However, it is easy to see why some feminists may be sceptical of a universal basic income – it is only good for women if we assume that more women will be the ones at home looking after the children and taking care of domestic responsibilities. Policies that seemingly support women can at the same time reinforce the caring roles of women and exacerbate the sexual division of labour (as discussed later in Chapters 5 and 7).

One of the biggest problems with the current means-tested benefits in developed nations is the way in which it is perceived by the public. People often oppose the idea of ‘hand-outs’ from the state, or the use of taxes to be given to those who seem too lazy or idle to work. A universal basic income, however, is paid to everyone, so there is no envy or strong opposition to those who receive it, when it is a provision for all. A good example of this is the National Health Service (hereafter, the NHS) in Britain. Because it is free at the point of use for all in the UK, it has very strong public support across the political spectrum. A survey of 1,111 people carried out in 2017 by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Bath found that 49% of British people aged 18 to 75 years old generally supported the introduction of a universal basic income. However, support for the scheme dropped to 30% when people were asked to consider universal basic income funding through increased taxation. Luke Martinelli (2017) argues that the data show ‘surprising levels of support for basic income in the UK – although this falls when asked to consider UBI’s fiscal implications’. The research also found that those leaning politically to the left were more likely to support the scheme than those who lean towards the right, with 63% of Labour Party-leaning adults supporting the principle of universal basic income, compared with 40% of those who are Conservative Party-leaning.

Motivating people to work has for a long time been a matter of simultaneously incentivizing and threatening. This contradictory approach simply does not work. The problems with the welfare state were best illustrated in British movie director Ken Loach’s film *I, Daniel Blake* (2017), in which a 59-year-old joiner called Daniel Blake is depicted as a victim of the British system of work and welfare, in which he is sent from ‘pillar to post’ in order to make ends meet when he loses his long-term job. Having suffered a heart attack, Blake is instructed by doctors to rest. But because he is able to walk 50 metres and able to raise either arm to his top shirt pocket, the welfare state considers him ‘fit for work’ and send him on a number of CV writing workshops and classes in order to find work. The film depicts the British welfare regime as a cruel system that stigmatizes unemployment and vilifies people for not having a job. Blake eventually dies. And so, a universal basic income is not just a policy aimed at

alleviating poverty but can also be seen as a progressive policy for overcoming the necessity to means-test, degrade and devalue citizens who are unemployed.

Social inequalities and universal basic income

Equality is one of the key reasons for implementing a universal basic income. But what is ‘equality’? In most discussions on universal basic income, equality refers to the rights or equal opportunities to live in a society which is fair and just in a myriad of ways. Equality refers to having equal rights politically, economically and socially. Under a capitalist system however, many aspects of equality are hindered by capitalist values – arguably dictated by the rich and powerful. For example, in Tony Atkinson’s (2015) *Inequality: What Can Be Done?*, the author examines how the wealthy disproportionately influence public policy and influence governments to implement policies that protect wealth of the ruling elite. Take for example tax avoidance by multinational corporations, such as the internet giant Google and the coffee chain Starbucks, who have entered markets of countries all around the world but managed to avoid paying tax in so many of them. Unlike many ordinary citizens whose tax is deducted automatically from their wages, large corporations can negotiate the tax they pay, or invest in teams of accountants to lawfully avoid paying out any tax altogether. Many multinationals have ‘parent’ or ‘sister’ companies which can offload expenses, or use loopholes to move money around in a way which permits them to operate without the need to pay tax in a given location. Many of these parent companies are registered in offshore tax havens, such as the Isle of Man (off the coast of England), or parts of the Caribbean. The avoidance of tax by the rich and powerful is just one example of inequality in capitalist society. Advocating for a basic income, Atkinson (2015) argues that government interventions are required to provide better equality across society, by ensuring that there is a fairer distribution of wealth for example.

The issue of equality is taken up by social researchers Wilkinson and Pickett, in their key text *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*. Wilkinson and Pickett (2011) argue that a plethora of social issues, from life expectancy, to poor housing and healthcare, to obesity, illiteracy and violence are not affected by how wealthy a society is, but how equal it is. Drawing on years of

empirical research from data on countries around the world, Wilkinson and Pickett (2011) found that societies with a bigger gap between the richest and poorest are some of the worst for social problems and social issues which affect everyone (the rich and the poor). Using a variety of sociological measures, the authors found that countries with a smaller gap between the wealthiest and poorest in society tended to be 'happier', 'healthier', with a better standing of living for all. Countries with the largest gaps between the rich and poor (such as Britain and the US) tended to suffer from chronic social problems. There is also concern that precarious work is accelerated by an increasing gap between the richest and poorest in society (Standing, 2015). Wilkinson and Pickett (2011) show that this is no coincidence, but that there is a direct link between wealth distribution and the health, lifestyle conditions and wellbeing of communities living within that country.

More recently, in 2019, Wilkinson and Pickett published *The Inner Level: How More Equal Societies Reduce Stress, Restore Sanity and Improve Everyone's Well-being*. In this key text, Wilkinson and Pickett (2019) show how inequality affects individuals, and that material inequalities have powerful effects on the ways in which individuals feel, think and behave. One of the important perceptions they challenge is the idea that people are naturally driven by competition and self-interest. Societies with more equality, sharing and reciprocity are more likely to provide a healthier, less stressful and more positive environment and wellbeing for the individuals who live there. Overall, Wilkinson and Pickett (2011, 2019) find that countries with bigger income differences between rich and poor, tend to suffer from lower life expectancy; higher rates of homicide and suicide; worse physical and mental health conditions; worse problems with drug dealing and drug abuse; poorer literacy among the young, and higher rates of crime with more people incarcerated. These arguments are useful for understanding the benefits of a universal basic income, which could be used as a way of tackling some of the problems brought about by wealth inequalities in societies around the world.

Summary

Across the globe, universal basic income is gaining momentum as a philosophy and social policy, which can bring about positive social change and social equality. But universal basic income is not some ad hoc idea without sound and robust foundations. On the contrary, a universal basic income rests upon a number of philosophical foundations and underlying theories. These foundations are laid out in Chapter 2 of this text, examining the underpinning theories and philosophical positions of universal basic income, and analysing how these ideas might support and provide a fairer society. Among other perspectives, the chapter draws on John Rawls's (1971) *A Theory of Justice* and Van Parijs's (1997) *Real Freedom for All: What (if anything) Can Justify Capitalism?* to understand notions of equality, social justice and freedom and examine how these ideas might support a universal basic income. The chapter also draws upon Marxist theory through commentary on the work of Gorz (1999) to show the systematic problems of capitalist society and how different approaches have given rise to the idea of a universal basic income.

In the third chapter, this textbook addresses precarious work and the social inequalities it creates. Against the backdrop of Guy Standing's (2015, 2017) works and other contemporary perspectives that lay foundations for a universal income, this chapter examines how a basic income can address the precarious nature of work and the social inequalities and insecurities this creates. By drawing upon several examples from different sectors of workers who might benefit from a universal basic income, this chapter also describes the inequalities experienced by those who suffer from the economic effects of neoliberalism – precarious workers who are subject to insecure, unprotected and poorly paid working conditions. It maps out how a universal basic income can remedy some of the problems of precarious and insecure forms of employment and livelihood.

Chapter 4 examines several examples and experiments of universal basic income. It includes the case of Finland, one of the first countries in Europe to launch a universal basic income pilot, in which, over a two-year period, 2,000 unemployed citizens between the ages of 25 and 58 received 560 euros a month.

The chapter also looks at the case of Alaska, an oil rich state of the USA, in which a Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) is paid to Alaska residents living within the state – a minimum salary distributed to every citizen, regardless of age, employment, or social standing. Another example of basic income this chapter examines is an ‘experiment’ based in Madhya Pradesh, India, in which more than six thousand people from twenty villages benefitted from a basic cash income. The chapter also examines other historical and contemporary experiments examples from around the world. Using real examples, and contrasting how a universal basic income might work in different kinds of nations, this chapter looks at the varied effects a basic income has on the poor and wealthy; unemployed and working; young and old and those who are privileged and under-privileged.

In Chapter 5, universal basic income is examined in relation to the work, roles and status of women. With an emphasis on laying out a feminist economics perspective to raise the issue of a universal basic income, the chapter explores several examples and test-cases in which basic income has been implemented and changed the economic and social experiences of women in various social contexts. In some of these cases discussed, the chapter explores how a basic income can provide women with financial dependence, allowing them a new means of ‘freedom’. But the implementation of a universal basic income can have varying effects on women from diverse social class and ethnic backgrounds. This chapter will discuss the potential a universal basic income has in promoting equal rights for men and women and how this would challenge the institutionalized and disadvantaged relationship between work and welfare as experienced by women of different ethnicities and social class positions.

Chapter 6 examines how universal basic income might help the environment by helping to reduce the ‘carbon footprint’. In this chapter, the notion of sustainable consumption is presented as an alternative to counteract the consumer attitudes and choices which give rise to patterns of consumption adversely affecting the natural environment. This chapter shows how a universal basic income can change consumerist mind-sets and behaviour, as well as changing our perceptions towards work. Mapping out the new green agenda in politics and wider society, we show how universal basic income has been advocated by

green parties across Europe and the rest of the world, explaining how green politicians think a basic income policy would help rescue the environment. The chapter also looks at the implications of ecotaxes and how this could help fund a universal basic income.

A universal basic income is approached from a very different perspective in Chapter 7. Examining some of the key problems with a universal basic income, this chapter focusses on arguments against a universal basic income, explaining difficulties which might arise from its implementation. This chapter will explore the financial costs associated with a universal basic income provision; the incentive or disincentives to work; the notion of parasitism – living at another person’s expense; the expansion of the nanny-state and the attack against freedom, and the alternatives to a universal basic income which could arguably provide more freedom. Drawing on several different economic and political perspectives, this chapter examines the pitfalls of a universal basic income and shows how a universal basic income can be problematic and may disadvantage certain social groups, such as ‘non-citizens’ or migrant workers.

The final chapter reflects upon a universal basic income, evaluating arguments for and against a universal basic income by revisiting some of the key examples discussed in previous chapters. Drawing on real examples of welfare implementation, the chapter highlights some of the fundamental advantages and difficulties, of putting a universal basic income into practice. For those readers who are studying basic income for the first time, the concluding chapter offers an avenue to reflect on your own learning, and revise the overall debates which have been presented throughout the entire textbook.

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