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**SHOULD PARASITES OWN A SHARE OF
PARADISE? BASIC INCOME VS RECIPROCITY
IN SOCIAL ASSISTANCE**

Guillaume Allègre



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CONTACT US

OFCE
10 place de Catalogne | 75014 Paris | France
Tél. +33 1 44 18 54 24
www.ofce.fr

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Guillaume Allègre, OFCE-Sciences-Po,
Email Address: guillaume.allegre@sciencespo.fr

ABSTRACT

Should society demand reciprocity in assistance? This article replies to Van Parijs' response to the reciprocity objection against basic income in terms of common ownership of external resources. The idea that common ownership of land should give a right to an unconditional income has an old tradition, linked to the utopian literature. However, the search for an ingenious solution that combines different logics of income distribution, notably contribution and equality, omits the qualitative question of reciprocity in assistance. According to the reciprocity objection, individuals who willingly enjoy a share of the social product, through a guaranteed minimum income or a basic income, must contribute to the community in return. This principle is widely shared amongst citizens across countries and cultures, and thus, to be realistic, ideal institutions should incorporate this social demand. From a Rawlsian perspective, we show that the principle of ownership of external resources does not answer this objection satisfactorily in most realistic contexts. We conclude that, in theory, common ownership of external resources should logically give a right to usus, not fructus. In practice, if one takes seriously the goal of reducing poverty, minimum income schemes should presume reciprocity with ex-ante unconditionality, and sanctions would only occur when the breach of reciprocity is manifest. The aim should be reciprocans in paradise.

KEYWORDS

Social assistance, reciprocity, unconditionality, basic income.

JEL

D31, D63, I38.

Should parasites own a share of paradise?

Basic income vs reciprocity in social assistance

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Introduction

Should society feed surfers or demand reciprocity in assistance? By surfer, it is meant someone who, by choice, gives up contributing socially, or in a more restricted way those who are voluntarily unemployed. The question arose in these terms when Van Parijs (1991) suggested to Rawls that a basic income would conform to his theory of justice (Rawls, 1971). Disagreeing, Rawls responds "*Those who surf all day in Malibu should find a way to support themselves and not be able to benefit from public funds*" (Rawls, 1993). According to Van Parijs society should be neutral towards values (including work) and respect everyone's concept of what the good life is, in a liberal non-perfectionist approach. Van Parijs (1991) begins his defence of unconditional basic income with the words of a Republican senator from Hawaii, annoyed by the arrival on the island of "social welfare hippies": "There should not be any parasites in paradise". Defending the unconditionality of a basic income or a social minimum means defending the right of surfers and welfare hippies (or "Basic income hippies") to lead this type of lifestyle, to earn social allowances for leading an idle or leisurely life despite being able to work. It does not however necessarily mean approving these choices: it is an ethical stance on how society should be organized, not a moral stance on how individuals should live their lives. Following Van Parijs, this article proposes to raise the question of the unconditionality of social assistance (basic income or minimum income schemes) intended for able-bodied individuals of working age, or in other words of reciprocity in assistance. Beyond the discussion of basic income, the question of the conditionality of welfare benefits is recurrent in the public debate. The "reciprocity objection" to basic income has been raised by many, notably White (1997), according to whom "where the institutions that govern economic life are sufficiently fair in terms of the opportunities they afford for productive contribution, and the awards they apportion to it, those citizens who claim the high share of the social product available to them under these institutions must make a decent productive contribution, proportionate to their abilities, to the community in return". Several answers have been made to this objection. Widerquist (1999) agrees with White that unconditional income may create a form of exploitation of workers from nonworking free riders. However, in a capitalist society, this type of exploitation is dwarfed by labour market exploitation. In this context, an unconditional guaranteed income would reduce total exploitation and therefore "is essential to reciprocity" since it addresses the problem that some people must work or starve. In other words, it is not the case that "the institutions that govern economic life are sufficiently fair" which is a requisite in White's objection. In another argument, Van Parijs defends that basic income can be derived from a right to external resources, which overcomes the objection since external resources are not produced by labour (or only by past labour). According to this argument, basic income is a right just as rentiers have the right to live off their capital income without working.

This article is a reply to Van Parijs' sophisticated answer to the "reciprocity objection" through the "external resources argument". We show why common ownership of external resources does not necessarily justify a right to an unconditional income. One should think of common ownership as giving a right to *usus* (right of usage), not to *fructus* (right to the fruits – income – of property). Also, in an instrumental approach, not allowing what is perceived as free riding is probably best for the least favoured as it should foster consent for redistribution.

The article is structured as follows. Universal unconditional income is usually justified by the common ownership of some external resources, notably land, which raises the question of the coincidence between external resources and the right not to work (I). Unconditional income has been criticized

through the reciprocity objection (II). Van Parijs uses Dworkin islanders' parable (1981) and his own Crazy/Lazy Challenge to defend a right to an unconditional income, as a dividend from external resources. However, if common ownership of natural resources seems just, there are alternative ways to understand what this common ownership entails (III). Conditionality can be viewed as a requirement for generous assistance (IV). We conclude on what should be done.

Basic income, external resources, and the right not to work: a utopia and a coincidence?

It is no exaggeration to say that unconditional income is an old utopia. Some even see its inspiration in Thomas More's Utopia (1516), which is also an island, although not one where individuals would have been prone to surf. Since More, utopians ask: what if we started from scratch without having to deal with neighbours or history? The island thought experiment makes it possible to dispense with history, geography, or the current political balance of powers, which might be useful as a first step. The counterpart to the thought experiment is that by starting from scratch it might forget the complex reasons why existing institutions exist.

The link between Thomas More and Basic income is very thin. It is true that on Thomas More's imaginary island, everyone is assured of his or her means of subsistence, but there is neither income nor money and above all, in Utopia work is compulsory. The economy resembles that of the family: everyone takes part and the needs of all are filled, which is also the correct interpretation of the communist principle: *"from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs"* (Marx, 1875). In Utopia (More, 1516), the relative abundance of society is due to the obligatory work for all the abled persons (women and men), to a good organization (proper to all utopias) allowing them to respond to needs, and to a very sober way of life, even monachal, where *"idleness and laziness are impossible"* in the absence of accessible leisure. Home economics, asceticism, compulsory work: More's Utopia is very far from the idea of unconditional income as a legal if not moral right to "laziness" as with Lafargue (1883).

Unconditional income is more the child of the enlightenment and the age of revolution. The first specific proposal for a universal income came from Thomas Spence, in response to Thomas Paine's *Agrarian Justice*. In this last pamphlet, written in 1795 and published in 1797, Paine discusses the private property of land and proposes a plan for social transfers. The context is one of predominantly agricultural societies where a large part of the wealth is captured by landowners. Paine starts from the idea that *"it is an incontestable truth that the land, before being cultivated, was, and always would have been, the common property of the human race"*. He recognizes that men have made improvements to this land and that these improvements may even be greater than the original value of the land. But there is still some value to the land without its improvements. Therefore, improvements are not a sufficient justification for the full appropriation of the land. By principle, *"Every proprietor, therefore, of cultivated lands, owes to the community a ground-rent"*. Then, Paine proposes to set up a fund through a tax on inheritances which has *"the advantage of not disturbing the possession of any present owner"*. The tax would amount to 10% of inheritances and would pay an annuity to people aged 50 and over, and a small capital for all people reaching the age of majority. This capital, paid only once, represented about 2/3 of the average annual salary in England. The rest would be used to assist the disabled.

In a pamphleteer style typical of the period, Thomas Spence responded to Paine in a mocking but pertinent manner (*The Rights of Infants*, 1797). According to Spence, Paine asserts great principles, the common ownership of uncultivated land, but delivers little due to grand compromises aiming at not disturbing the current owners. In an uncompromising but consequential manner, Spence goes much further in his proposal, advocating the collectivization of land and housing. Rents would no longer be paid to landowners, but to the community, which - at the time - would have sufficed to eliminate all taxes. Once public expenses are paid, the surplus - about two-thirds of the rents - would be divided equally among all the individuals of the parish, from the infant to the old man, woman, or man, legitimate or illegitimate child, from the farm worker to the merchant, paid to the head of the family according to the number of people living under his roof. This equally divided surplus is "*the imprescriptible right of all human beings in a civilized society*". Spence's proposal is the first consequential proposal for a universal income as we understand it today: paid by a public authority, paid regularly and in cash, sufficient, individual, universal (paid to all), and unconditional¹. It is the consequence of the right to ownership of land, a right that is asserted through the collectivization of land. The article, a short self-published pamphlet, does not go into complicated calculations: its intended public was ordinary people, and its explicit goal was to spread revolutionary ideas among them. However, Spence's proposal is financed, and the financing comes from the rent of land, which corresponds precisely to the justification (common ownership of land) in a coherent manner.

At the end of the 19th century, basic income was defended by "utopian socialists" (an expression coined by Marx), notably Joseph Charlier who was influenced by Charles Fourier (1772-1837). As the title of his main book indicates, *Solution du problème social ou Constitution humaine* (1848), Charlier's starting point is the social question and not agrarian justice. The problem is how to guarantee the right to assistance: "*Man is born with the right to live*". The problem to be solved is this: "*absorb territorial wealth for the benefit of collective wealth, without infringing on acquired rights and while respecting legal property rights*", legal property being property arising from work and its transmissions in opposition to land property. This problem has a "*mathematical solution*": common property in natural resources with guaranteed individual shares but full private property in produced assets. Like Paine and Spence, Charlier starts from the principle of common property of the land: "*From where it follows that the bare ownership of the land is inalienable of its nature; it is undivided and belongs not to the individuals in particular, but to the collection, to the whole of the created beings*". In this, there is a coincidence: the natural property right is sufficient to solve the social problem.

In practice, Charlier's solution lies between Paine and Spence. As with Spence, all real estate must be collectivized, but as with Paine, it is necessary to avoid upsetting the current property owners too much. Charlier then proposes to nationalize the land at the time of inheritance, up to a quarter of the landed property per inheritance, so that within four generations, the land would be entirely collectivized. The product of this income, once public expenses are deducted, is then paid out equally to all: "*The State provides bread to all, truffles to none*". Then the fortunes will no longer fall to the luckiest, as they do today, but to the most deserving: to reward effort is Charlier's second objective. The two objectives, to fight against poverty and to reward merit, converge because at the time the poor worked more than the well-to-do. However, if the goal is to respond to need, should the amount of the income paid vary by age and gender? Is the dividend an individual right or does it allow for the collective provision of needs? To these questions, Charlier answers that the ownership right to natural resources is "*an equal, uniform and indivisible right of everyone*" that therefore should not vary according to need. The question highlights the dilemma between justifying income by property rights

¹ The only difference with today's propositions is that it was paid to the "head of the family", whereas today it is supposed to be paid to all adults individually.

- hence an equal right - or by need, which usually implies that differences in needs are considered. The problem with Charlier's solution is that the right derived from land might in other circumstances not be sufficient to cover needs.

Utopian socialism and anarchism were strongly criticized by Engels and Marx at the beginning of the 20th century. The Marxist line prevailed over "*utopian socialism*" according to Engel and Marx's denomination. The utopian tradition was nevertheless extended by Bertrand Russell, mathematician, philosopher, and pacifist activist. In *Proposed Roads to Freedom* (1918), he takes up the ambition to imagine a new social order from Plato's Republic, More's Utopia, and the 19th-century utopian socialists. Russell is attracted by anarchist themes but admits that a full anarchist society is not feasible. On the other hand, socialism gives too much power to the State. Russell thus proposes an analytical synthesis between anarchism and socialism. Concerning the guaranteed minimum, the reasoning is the following. In an ideal anarchist society, the objective is to minimize all forms of domination, there should therefore be no form of obligation to work. Work would be sufficiently enjoyable that people would engage in it completely voluntarily. However, Russell admits that the anarchist doctrine is desirable but has a flaw: "*Would individuals do the necessary work if their standard of living were assured?*" For Russell, the "childish" question "Who will do the hard work?" must be answered. One could say that what is childish is not to raise the question. A well-functioning society needs miners, garbage collectors, and people who accept to do (all the needed) monotonous work: "*The ultimate fact in economics is that Nature only yields commodities as the result of labour.*" Russell proposes to combine anarchism and socialism: "*Anarchism has the advantage as regards liberty, Socialism as regards the inducements to work. Can we not find a method of combining these two advantages?*". Russell then proposes to implement the anarchist program for a small portion of the income, just enough for the necessities. In the system Russell imagines, there would be an unconditional minimum income for the necessities, supplemented by public service incentive wages determined by wage grids (the socialist part of the program). He adds that there would have to be a strong public opinion in favour of work so that relatively few individuals would choose idleness. Otherwise, a working day of four hours would be sufficient to live comfortably. Remuneration for work would not depend on actual work but on willingness to work, so that illness, lack of work, or unemployment would not affect statutory remuneration. Women would be paid for domestic work at industry rates. Russell justifies a basic income mainly by what we can call reasoning about optimality or efficiency in policy in the sense that basic income is found to be the best instrument considering the objectives (real freedom for all) and the right production incentives corresponding to human psychology.

In 1986, Van Parijs published with Van der Veen a text with a provocative title: "*A Capitalist Road to Communism*". Although the context and the semantics differ from Russell's, the demonstration is very similar. The authors try to combine freedom, equality, and adequate incentives for production. Communism is defined as the abolition of alienation and the distribution of social income according to the principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs", which implies that the minimum needs of everyone are met, that their share of the resources does not depend on voluntary contributions. The authors' "communism" thus shares its definition with Russell's... "anarchism" (for Russell, communism means grid salary). As with Russell, the authors find that an unconditional universal income meets this principle. From a Rawlsian perspective, it must be as high as possible, which requires a certain economic efficiency... which the authors find in "capitalism" defined as the private property of the means of production. This shows a change of era: in Russell's text, efficiency was achieved by... socialism. The authors thus advocate a high universal income and a capitalist functioning beyond that. Basic income in a capitalist society is therefore also an optimal or efficient policy if we define optimal policy as the best instrument to achieve the objectives pursued considering the constraints faced.

In a subsequent text, Van Parijs (1991) defends, from a real freedom perspective, the surfers' right not to work by their common ownership of external resources (notably land): they have a right to the competitive market price of their fair (equal) share of these resources. However, Van Parijs shows that these resources are not enough to finance a sufficient basic income. He then proposes to include employment rents in the external resources pool: "*These rents are given by the difference between the income (and other advantages) the employed derive from their jobs, and the (lower) income they would need to get if the market were to clear*". Said differently, if someone as apt as you is willing to do your job for less than your wage, then you benefit from an employment rent. We will discuss the conclusion of this article later but for now one can agree with Van Parijs that these rents are probably huge in our economies and that they can most probably finance a sufficient basic income.

To conclude this part, there is thus a strong filiation between most of the defenders of unconditional universal income, from Paine to Van Parijs passing through Charlier and Russell. First, there is a strong link to utopian thinking. Second, they all justified some form of guaranteed income through the common ownership of external resources, especially land. However, there are also important differences between these writers, in part due to writing in different historical contexts. For the earlier writers, land reform was seen as a right ("agrarian justice") and they explored the good consequences stemming from that right. This changes somewhat with Charlier who searches first for a "*solution to the social problem*", but even more with Russel and Van der Veen and Van Parijs (1986) who try to combine left-wing political philosophies. These writers somewhat search for an optimal or efficient policy, in the sense that it combines optimally the different economic logics to pursue social goals. Van Parijs (1991) returns to the property rights-based approach of Spence since he justifies basic income from the common ownership of external resources defined. However, compared to earlier writers, Van Parijs needs to expand the definition of "external resources" to fund a sufficient basic income: since the nineteenth century, minimal needs and public spending have grown. Land rent is not sufficient anymore to fund both. Also, the earlier writers seek effective public ownership of land, while the more recent writers finance their basic income proposal through some kind of taxation, instead of outright collectivization. On one hand, taxation is more efficient because it leaves some market-based incentives. However, on the other hand, unless the goal is to tax away 100% of the rent, taxation in practice departs from its theoretical justification, the principle of common property.

The reciprocity/universality objection

Pleas for a universal, unconditional income are commonly met with arguments about laziness, work values, or reciprocity. One can assume that all these terms refer to the same argument: if able, one should not be dependent on others. "*Surfers should find a way to support themselves*" was the answer Rawls (1993) gave to Van Parijs. This is also how one should interpret the phrase "*He who does not work shall not eat*" from Saint Paul. Saint Paul did not mean that society should let the invalids starve. What is meant is that he who can work but does not work shall not be given food, which means that – for other reasons set aside (disability, old age, infancy...), everyone should contribute to work efforts required to meet fundamental needs for all. This is White's main objection to basic income (White, 1997). White defines fair reciprocity as follows: "*Where the institutions governing economic life are otherwise sufficiently just, e.g. in terms of the availability of opportunities for productive participation and the rewards attached to these opportunities, those who claim the generous share of the social product available to them under these institutions have an obligation to make a decent productive*

contribution, suitably proportioned and fitting to ability and circumstances, to the community in return".

Reciprocity is widely accepted, across countries and cultures, and therefore it can be argued that it should be considered by institutions. The World Value Survey is an international project exploring values and opinions through nationally representative surveys in nearly 100 countries. One of the statements the surveys are asked to agree with is: "Work is an obligation to society". Out of 79 countries responding to the latest survey, the average (unweighted) response of surveys answering "agree" or "strongly agree" is 70%. They represent a little less than 50% in only 5 countries: Russia, Andorra, New Zealand, Ukraine, and Armenia. Most people, in almost every country, and of every faith, believe that the work of the able-bodied is a duty to society. Indeed, work and reciprocity are valued by all cultures. In a broader sense, the ethic of reciprocity, or Golden Rule, enjoins us not to do to our neighbour what we would hate to have done to us, or, turned in a positive sense, to do for others what we would want them to do for us. This rule is formulated in the New Testament: "*Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.*" It is found in Buddhism ("*Do not hurt others in a way that you yourself would find hurtful*"), Hinduism ("*This is the sum of duty; do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you*"). Receiving assistance income following voluntary inactivity can be thought to not respect the ethics of reciprocity since it amounts to wanting others to work, without working oneself even if capable.

To receive a share of the social product, through basic income or guaranteed minimum income, without any intent to contribute, does not respect either the Kantian categorical imperative: "*Act as if the maxims of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature*". The imperative thus entails not being a free rider. One could rename the "reciprocity objection", the "universality objection". White's definition of the objection is coherent with the categorical imperative since it can be summed up as not being a free rider (unless you have good reasons).

So unconditional income faces a difficulty: at first glance, receiving an unconditional income in an unreciprocal manner is not perceived to be fair. It could have several consequences. First, it could reduce the acceptability of the instrument, which explains why all guaranteed minimum incomes across the world are conditional on work efforts. Second, if implemented, it could reduce the acceptability of a generous instrument and thus create a dilemma between unconditionality and generosity.

In what context would this reciprocity objection not stand? The answer in White's definition is "unjust institutions". The argument goes like this: capitalist institutions are unjust, giving workers market power tilts the balance the other way and is therefore just. According to Widerquist (1999), following this line of argument, a basic income respects reciprocity, if you define reciprocity "*to state that society should not favor one group over another*". It is hard to argue against the injustice of current capitalistic institutions in terms of exploitation. However, many instruments seek to reduce capitalistic exploitation such as labour laws, collective reduction of working time, unemployment benefits, minimum wages, public education... Generous guaranteed minimum schemes also reduce capitalistic exploitation, even though they are conditional on social and professional insertion efforts. If one thinks the reciprocity/universality objection holds, then it is the nature of these requirements that should be discussed, not their existence. For example, an obligation to accept a reasonable job offer increases the risk of capitalistic exploitation. On the other hand, if requirements only include a vague obligation to participate in insertion activities or actions, then the risk is not capitalistic exploitation, but bureaucratic arbitrariness. These two risks need to be distinguished. Bureaucratic arbitrariness can also be minimized if obligations are weak, and sanctions are scarce, which can be defined as "weak

conditionality". The problem with weak conditionality is that it does not guarantee close to 100% take-up, which poses the problem of the effectiveness of the positive right to assistance.

Why should a social system adopt weak conditionality if it creates voluntary and involuntary non-take up? First one could defend that it promotes economic goals such as employment, but the current literature tends to find only weak economic impacts of strong conditionality and sanctions, so one cannot expect much labour market impact of weak conditionality. Why adopt weak conditionality if the economic impact appears null, and the social impact appears negative? In this sense, weak conditionality does not appear optimal. If the social goal is to maximize individual utilities, then conditionality seems inefficient. However, all countries that have social assistance schemes put in place weak or strong conditionality. Why do they put in place inefficient duties? We argue here that the duty is supposed to reinforce the right and its justification, and that justifications matter². The case for *assistance* relies on some incapacity to meet some basic or necessary needs, which implies a duty to meet these needs by oneself, if possible. If this is the case one cannot separate the right and the duty, take the right, and declare the duty inefficient.

If unconditional assistance is vulnerable to the reciprocity/universality objection, basic income has been justified by shifting away from a needs-based assistance principle to an equality property-based principle. This is the goal of Van Parijs (1991).

The external resources argument: a fable about islanders to defend unconditional income?

Despite the universal nature of the reciprocity principle, some abled age-working people do not work in our capitalist societies: rentiers (capitalists). If rentiers are allowed not to work, why not slackers? To defend this view, one needs to transform surfers into rentiers. As a justification, property rights are attractive to unconditioned basic income advocates for two reasons. First, an exogenous property right (not derived from a contribution) would justify an egalitarian sharing among individuals since no one can claim merit. Second, property justifies an unconditional right. In our capitalist economies, capitalists have the right not to work, so why not surfers if they also have a legitimate property right?

Are people who do not wish to contribute entitled to an income? Are surfers entitled to be fed, to use Van Parijs' expression? To answer positively to this question, Van Parijs uses Dworkin's parable about castaways and adds what he calls the Crazy-Lazy challenge. This is probably the most sophisticated defense of common ownership of external resources as a justification for basic income. Van Parijs' argument is convincing insofar as the idea of common property of external resources is easily acceptable. However, in our view, he takes a shortcut on how this common property should be exercised. But let us begin by discussing Dworkin's parable of the castaways.

In *What is Equality? Part 2: Equality of resources*, Dworkin offers the following thought experiment. Shipwreck survivors are washed up on a desert island with abundant natural resources and possessions left behind by a vanished population. The thought experiment assumes that these castaways have the same physical characteristics - the same talent - and differ only in their preferences. The question asked is: how should the resources of the island be distributed? What institutional arrangement should be chosen? The islanders accept the principle that no one is entitled to any of the resources: they arrive

² As Thomas Scanlon (2018) writes, justifications is what we owe to each others.

completely naked, without any antecedents, resources, status, or rights, and with the same basic needs. But how should this equal entitlement to the island resources should translate? There are several ways to divide equally a resource.

Dworkin proposes to distribute the different resources on the island by an auction, using shells that the islanders would distribute to each other in equal numbers. With these shells, the castaways can bid on banana and raspberry trees according to their respective preferences. In this way, by construction, no castaway envies anyone else's resource basket since they have all spent the same number of shells on their respective baskets. Dworkin points out that with the auction, all preferences are treated equally, with everyone's preferences given equal weight. The auction process allows for equality of resources in terms of equality of market value, or opportunity cost. It considers the value to others of the resources I mobilize. The market value also considers the importance that each person gives to the different resources in a decentralized way. There is thus no discrimination concerning preferences. It is a specific kind of resource egalitarianism: "shell egalitarianism" or "market-valued resources egalitarianism".

Van Parijs (1991) completes this parable with the Crazy-Lazy challenge: not only do the castaways differ in terms of consumption preference, but they also differ in preferences for work or leisure. Crazies like work while Lazies prefer leisure. To illustrate Van Parijs' point, let's say the Crazies are interested in the island's fields for farming purposes while the Lazies, are interested in banana and raspberry trees for gathering. If many islanders want to bid on the fields, the few who want to make a living from gathering will be able to do so by picking only the most easily accessible raspberries and bananas. It is possible to go even further: if the fields (and the tools to cultivate them) are rare and in high demand, then the Crazies should compensate the Lazies for the market value of the use of the fields, for example in the form of a share of the harvest so that the Lazies would not have to work at all. This is a justification for an unconditional universal income as a counterpart to an unused right to external natural resources. Van Parijs then extends this entitlement to a larger set of exogenous resources (unpolluted air, inheritances, employment rents) to be shared. The extent of these exogenous resources can be discussed but it is not our point here. Are the conclusions of this thought experiment convincing?

The proposed arrangement is neutral concerning preferences and life choices; it respects the non-envy test as in Dworkin's case because everyone prefers his basket of resources to that of each of the others (no one is envious of the resources of others). Since the baskets of resources all have the same market value, if an individual prefers the basket of another, he could buy it. It gives equal weight to every individual. Market value guarantees efficiency.

But is this arrangement fair? A rights-based approach is willing to sacrifice some economic efficiency for fairness. Van Parijs' proposal creates undesirable paradoxical situations that do not exist with other, more satisfactory arrangements.

We have already discussed the first problem. If the Crazies decided to work less, the Lazies' rent would be reduced, since it depends on the Crazies' work. If all the Crazies stopped working, no one would be able to survive: the Lazies may not work only because the Crazies work. Donselaar (2009) compares Lazies to parasites, but a more appropriate image is "free riders" who benefit from an action without contributing. This relationship between workers and castaways goes against the Kantian categorical imperative: "Act in such a way that the maxim of your action can be erected by your will into a universal law". The problem here derives from the fact that Lazies and Crazies have the same characteristics. If Lazies were instead invalid, old, or non-productive, the argument would be different. From a deliberative justice perspective, this is only a problem if Lazies and Crazies have conflicting views and demands. If Crazies love to work and have no problem with feeding the Lazies, everybody is happy,

including the ethicist. The free-riding problem is not a (moral) argument about the superiority of work, it's an (ethical) argument about institutional arrangements: the right of Lazies over external resources and the corresponding obligation of Crazies consisting of paying the Lazies a dividend on the external resources commonly owned. Widerquist (1999) has a reply to this argument which can be called the state of nature counterfactual: in the absence of a modern society, people "are free to build their own homes and hunt, farm, or gather their own food, and there are free to cooperate with others who face the same choices". The paper holds government policy explicitly responsible for the social structure it makes possible. There should be compensation for the freedom lost with modern society, so that society is mutually advantageous for all, even those who would have liked to be gatherers. This argument is sound but is not decisive. It holds that society should be mutually advantageous for all but cannot help us discriminate between unconditional and weakly conditional benefits. Also, the kind of life described in the state of nature cannot be made universal in a world with 7 billion inhabitants.

To understand the second problem, let us assume that new cultivable lands are discovered, reducing the rent from scarcity enjoyed by the Lazies. The Lazies could lose out even as the resources they co-own increase. Their welfare could decrease while their resources in volume increase. The proposed rule is thus contrary to the axiom of monotonicity in resources, the respect of which is generally perceived as desirable. For a welfare function, "monotonicity in resources" means that when the resources of a group increase, then the welfare of any individual in this group should not decrease): if there are more resources to share, all agents should be (weakly) better off. This axiom is a classical principle in the Fair Division literature (see Moulin, 2004). It's not the case in Van Parijs' arrangement since Lazies might have to start working if total resources (and therefore their share of total resources) increase. This is true because Lazies are not interested in the volume of resources but only in their price: they are only interested in the rent from scarcity.

So, the Lazies are interested in resources because they are scarce and worked by the Crazies. In that sense, they are interested in the Crazies' work in a non-reciprocal way. This is also true of rentiers, but one question that arises is why generalize a situation that is perceived as problematic, when the liberal egalitarians' objective has usually been to euthanize the rentiers, according to Keynes' formula. Rent situations are not desirable in themselves but they are tolerated as the consequence of the application of property rights, which are desirable for other reasons than the rent they create (incentives, economic security...). For Keynes, the economic value of rents must be minimized, whereas for Van Parijs, this value must be maximized to finance the highest possible basic income (and thus increase the real freedom of the most vulnerable) ... One can however doubt that transforming slackers into rentiers is the best road to an egalitarian society: if one believes that arguments matter, then this program weakens legitimate Marxist and Keynesian arguments about exploitation or rent extraction.

Is there another possible theoretical arrangement when land is scarce? If we think within the fable of the castaways with Crazies and Lazies, one could propose to share the external resources, in an egalitarian way, potentially by rotation, but only among those who want to work them. In this case, the ownership of the land remains collective, but the enjoyment belongs only to those who would work it. In other words, common property would be limited to *usus*, the right of usage, to the exclusion of *abusus*, the right to sell, and *fructus*, the right to rent. The solution proposed by Van Parijs already limits the right of common ownership since the "owners" possess – theoretically - only the *fructus*, the recurring income, but cannot sell their right against financial capital (*abusus*). It is thus a matter of granting (in thought) a right of (co-)ownership of external resources to citizens, but not the same component as in Van Parijs: the *usus*, the right to use the land, rather than the *fructus*, the right to derive an income from it (by renting it).

With this arrangement, the co-ownership of *usus*, if resources increase, everyone's income and welfare increase or at worst remains stable, which respects the axiom of monotonicity in resources. There is no free rider phenomenon, and the Kantian imperative is respected, as well as the non-envy test. However, this arrangement is not necessarily utility-maximising or efficient. This arrangement establishes a collective property with a collective *fructus* that is limited to the right to use the property, like a tennis court in a condominium that each co-owner can use but not rent for a fee to an outsider. The arrangement is more in line with the idea that social arrangements are decided between citizens who live together in a society or a political community. Co-owners could rent their time-share of the tennis court at market price but then why bother having a tennis court on the property instead of playing on private courts?

This arrangement (equality of *usus*) does not necessarily imply that the income of workers should be strictly proportional to their production: they can choose other modes of remuneration, and perhaps share the production in an egalitarian way among contributors. Nor does the arrangement imply that those who do not work are not entitled to any income, in a pure contribution logic. The point of the argument is that external productive resources should be shared by everyone willing to work with them. However, the payment of an income to resource-less citizens can and should be justified with different arguments (dignity, assistance). But assistance concerns needs, it should then be given according to need, which varies according to household income and size, home ownership, etc.

Let us emphasize another decisive problem that the fable of the castaways raises when justifying a universal income by ownership of external resources: it is a fable and resource ownership remains virtual. Even if society implements the basic income proposed by Van Parijs, the "market value of external resources" is a concept, not a real-world tax base. It is difficult to set up real-world institutions based on abstract concepts. Income is never distributed based on the fictitious ownership of capital. Where some form of universal income is paid equally, it is based on legal forms of property ownership, as they are in Alaska and its permanent fund. Alaskans, Emirs, and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians collectively own oil or casinos that distribute income unconditionally. The ownership is real, not derived from a thought experiment. The State of Alaska legally owns parts of its resources in the form of gas and petrol and distributes earnings from this ownership to residents. Property rights are then the basis for a basic *dividend*, not (necessarily) a sufficient income. The problem with dividends is that they fluctuate with capital income – they are justified by property of capital - while essential needs remain constant: income from property and needs do not necessarily coincide.

Like Spence, it is possible to suggest instead the effective nationalization of land – possibly in three generations – and the egalitarian redistribution of land rent through the State. However, it is difficult to imagine doing this in a fictitious way. Also, if land rents are not collectivized, there is a double count: rents are used both by rentiers and by the State to fund the basic income. The other problem with the thought experiment is that real-world financing might depart greatly from the philosophical justifications. For example, I agree with Van Parijs that the employment rents are large and probably high enough to finance a sufficient basic income. But how does it translate into taxation? As Van Parijs puts it, taxing jobs as a function of their wage is a "handy second-best". But then why use "employment rents" as a theoretical justification of taxation when taxation according to "contributory capacity" is available and corresponds more closely to what taxation does in practice³?

³ See Seligman (1909) for an extensive review of the different justifications of income tax progressivity. He concludes that socialistic, compensation, benefit and equal sacrifice doctrines are not satisfactory to justify tax progressivity (rather than proportional taxation), and that "faculty" is the most coherent and convincing justification. Faculty increases more proportionally than income, not just because of the decreasing marginal

A condition to generous assistance?

One condition for a generous assistance level is perhaps a high level of work value in society. In a logic of reciprocity, the more effort citizens think those on welfare put in, the more they will approve of a higher assistance income. The social preference for equality is therefore not an independent parameter but depends on the judgment of the efforts made by those who benefit from welfare - and on the set of positive or negative characteristics associated with potential beneficiaries as imagined by the public. So, social preference for equality might be endogenous to the rules concerning social minimum income. The risk associated with the unconditional nature of social minima is that the image of real or imaginary surfers will erode the reputation of social minima recipients and the consent to guarantee them a decent income. Fong (1990) shows that the belief that effort is important to success, or that the poor are poor for lack of effort, has a greater impact on support for welfare than respondent income, years of education, and parental social class combined. In an earlier study, Williamson showed that the perceived work ethic of the poor was a better predictor of welfare support than income, education, or religion. When individuals assume that welfare recipients make efforts to find jobs, they are more supportive of the minimum (Mau, 2004). This result is not the consequence of an economic calculation but of a representation of just relations, in terms of rights and duties according to the homo reciprocans model (Bowles and Gintis, 1998). Despite differences between countries, surveys of values and opinions about the welfare state tend to show that European citizens behave like homo reciprocans: they are in favor of reducing inequalities through the social-fiscal system; they are in favor of a social minimum that covers basic needs; they are in favor of a system of rights and duties (Forsé and Parodi, 2007). As we have seen, the last two points are partly contradictory: if the social minimum is justified by vital needs, it should logically not be conditioned on duties. This contradiction is difficult to resolve. Vandamme (2017) presents the tension between the principle of sufficiency ("everyone should have enough resources to live a decent life") and the principle of reciprocity ("all should contribute to social efforts and no one should receive benefits without reciprocating"). The author advocates for unconditionality mainly because it reduces the exploitation of workers by capitalists (see also White, 2003).

The existing literature insists on the tension between the principle of sufficiency and the principle of reciprocity, but the two principles might also be viewed as complementary. An ethos of reciprocity, affirmed through legal norms, might increase the consent to redistribute since consent to redistribution increases when the poor are perceived to make efforts. It is only a small step to think that the poor will be perceived to make efforts if they are explicitly asked for it: the law is performative and becomes the perceived norm. This is however only true if the law is written in goodwill, in a non-stigmatizing manner that reinforces the presumption of reciprocity.

The principles of justice, such as they are displayed in the legal norms, are important to citizens. One can make the following assumption: the principle of reciprocity in assistance is an important principle of justice, which must be affirmed even at the cost of some loss of efficiency or inequality resulting from the breakdown of lower principles (in our case, at the cost of some non-take up of social benefits). The surfer can only be admitted as an anomaly.

Does unconditionality erode the level of consent over time, by focusing the public debate on "surfers", in the same way that individuals contribute less and less in repeated cooperative games (Dawes and Thaler, 1988)? For a society to function, people need to confront each other with a presumption of

utility of consumption, not a very convincing way to justify taxation from a liberal perspective, but because power increases more proportionally than income. Progressive taxation is a proxy taxation of rents and exploitation.

reciprocity. This presumption only holds if free riding is not widespread or if it is not a salient issue. Basic unconditional income makes this issue salient, which potentially weakens the entire case for redistribution. This is somewhat like reciprocal altruism as modelled by Axelrod and Hamilton (1981). In reciprocal altruism, individuals act altruistically until they face uncooperative behaviour. When this uncooperative behaviour is seen as sufficiently problematic, they switch to a Tit for Tat strategy where they cooperate when the other cooperates and defect when the other defects. Then, once the individual has made the other understand his ability to retaliate, he must offer his cooperation again in order not to be trapped in reciprocal retaliation. It seems that giving the benefits of doubts, being nice, in the first encounters and forgiveness are key to avoiding vendettas on each side. Furthermore, Kramer et al. (2001) show that underreaction is usually a better strategy than an eye for an eye. This means cooperating fully until a threshold of acceptable behaviour and not being too reactive to any sign of non-cooperation, especially if the observation of cooperation is noisy (which it is in real life).

What to do?

What then to do about guaranteed minimum income? One solution is an automatic social minimum with *ex-ante* unconditionality that would reflect a presumption of reciprocity. It could only be suspended *ex-post* in case of manifest abuse, in the form of an "*anti-skirter clause*". The mechanism of *ex-ante* presumption and *ex-post* sanctions responds to two objectives. First, it aims at increasing the take-up of the service by reducing stigmatization. Second, it promotes the presumption of reciprocity in the representation that citizens have of recipients of assistance benefits. According to this model, the presumption of reciprocity reflected in the instrument has a performative impact on representations. It acts as a social norm or self-fulfilling prophecy: reciprocity is presumed in institutions so that people anticipate others would be reciprocal so that people ultimately act in reciprocal – non-parasitic -ways. The rational aim is *reciprocans in paradise*.

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