

Why we Ought to Listen to Zygmunt Bauman

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Dr Ian Gareth Orton

La Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana – Mexico City.

iangarethorton@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

There are two simple observations that are often missing from the debate on the basic income. Firstly, there are a variety of approaches, and secondly, that they are *all* problematic. This paper introduces the thoughts of Zygmunt Bauman in order to demonstrate this point. His ideas are important because they expose the shortcomings and arbitrary assumptions that exist within the basic income discourse. Bauman helps shake-up and loosen a slightly concerning consensus that has began to emerge within some quarters of the basic income debate; a consensus that is preoccupied with advancing a basic income principally in three ways: through a political strategy of *gradualism*; a discourse that is concerned with demonstrating the *affordability* and therefore plausibility of a basic income, but on terms set by the existing political-economic establishment; and articulating the idea through the language of a '*social policy*'. Bauman suggests none of this is helpful in bringing a basic income closer to political reality. The essential message that will emerge from his argument is that we need as broad a debate as possible. We need both the Baumanian radical-utopian instantaneous approach, where the basic income is expressed as a visionary proposal, *and* the more gradual, sober and number-crunching 'feasibility' approach. However, the papers concludes that there is perhaps a need to re-jig the dominant discourse back slightly, more towards the direction of Bauman so that the basic income discourse can become more effective.

Abbreviations

BI	Basic Income
BIEN	Basic Income Earth Network
ILO	International Labour Organisation

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
1. Bauman’s Critique.....	2
1.2 Critique Two: Where is the political will and force to implement the Basic Income? And who and what are the agents and sites of change?	9
1.3 Critique Three: The costs of the Basic Income are calculated in order to show that it is affordable and therefore plausible.	11
2. A Basic Income Typology.....	19
3. Critical Appraisal of Bauman’s Recommendations for a Basic Income	22
Conclusion	31
Bibliography.....	34

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the thoughts of Zygmunt Bauman to the debates on the basic income [BI]. In many ways this is an unconventional paper; this is because it is more of a philosophical evaluation of an approach that does not concern itself too much with empirical economics or appeasing the demands of mainstream political economy to demonstrate financial feasibility of the proposal of a BI. Initially, this might sound like hubris and reckless chutzpah. But as this paper develops the justification for this becomes increasingly evident. Since the main thinker discussed in the paper argues that the very problem with contemporary economics is economic reason itself (even of the type that features within laterally-thinking symposiums like the Basic Income Earth Network [BIEN]) it seems fitting that we step outside of a purely economic mindset. By doing this, our appraisal is not clouded and prejudiced by hegemonic economic reason. Thus we can hear his novel argument out in a fairer manner. And it is to this goal that the paper now turns.

It seems astonishing that Bauman, a highly respected contemporary thinker, and his thoughts on the BI have not figured in the BI debate in a more central manner. Although he has certainly provided the initial attraction to the idea for some key figures in the BI movement, such as Pablo Yanes and his important and subsequent involvement in the Mexican BI movement. In truth, Bauman needs little assistance in having his profile raised. Outside of the relatively narrow confines of the BI debate he is widely regarded as one of the key social thinkers of our time. He has written on many subjects, most notable of these is his critical re-examination of the holocaust (1991a); his seminal ideas on modernity and post-modernity (1991b; 1997), and more recently his continuing exploration of the vertigo of being and the various sources of humanity's contemporary troubles (2003; 2005). As an advocate of the BI, he is an asset to the BI debate and he lends great succour and legitimacy to calls for a BI to become political reality. This contention underscores the argument made in this paper that he must feature more significantly in these debates.

The absence of his thinking on the BI is, to the detriment of these debates. In many ways then, this paper is an attempt to valorise and expose Bauman's work to a wider audience, and in particular to the discourses on the BI. Critically introducing his ideas to this subject would mark an original contribution. The importance of this contribution is that Bauman's perspective helps highlight some of the shortcomings that have underpinned the discussion so far.

The motivation for writing this paper is three-fold. Firstly, it attempts to redress the fact that his ideas have remained conspicuously absent from the debate. Secondly, there is a need to examine in greater detail the limitations that he has identified within the BI debate. Finally, an evaluation of the validity of his critique will be made. In order to glean which aspects of his argument can we discount? And from what is leftover, to what extent can these ideas be used to shape and direct the BI debate in a progressive direction? Whilst recognising that his argument is not without its problems, one is confident that his ideas would make a positive contribution to the discussion, and that they could serve as an important point of reference in guiding the future development of the BI proposal.

In essence Bauman's critique is a cautionary tale. It represents an appeal to reconsider the nature and direction that the BI debate has taken thus far. His views are important because they shake up and loosen a slightly concerning consensus that has formed within these debates. Consequently, his

approach could radicalise and rejuvenate these discourses. Bauman's view on this matter is nestled in a small, yet intellectually rich section of his book *In Search of Politics* (1999: 180-197). Despite its brevity, the section is replete with many pertinent observations which are all germane to the BI debate.

1. Bauman's Critique

By way of a short prelude of the discussion that follows, his argument embodies and explores the tension between a position of *instantaneity/immediacy* (i.e., we must aim for an immediate and unmodified implementation of income security measures like the BI; of the type that do not yield any political ground) against *varying velocities of gradualism or piecemeal* approaches. His concern is that the latter strategy may impede the goal of implementing a BI. Owing to the fact that political gradualism renders these measures more vulnerable to hijacking by the political right, and that they could peter out through lack of the necessary political momentum. As a result he urges us to be more audacious and utopian,¹ in order to recapture the emancipatory thrust of the BI proposal. This, it is argued, will reveal the deeper (and true) potential of decoupling essential livelihood from employment.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that Bauman is not hostile to thinkers who advocate greater income security; quite the opposite in fact: he lavishes plaudits upon them. Let us be clear then about the precise nature of Bauman's position on this matter. He is without question an earnest advocate, and he is certainly not taking wanton pot-shots at its key thinkers. Nor does he conjecture from an ill-informed and misinformed position. This is why he suggests that the decoupling of income entitlements from paid work and from the labour market could remove *'the awesome fly of insecurity from the sweet ointment of freedom'* (1999: 188). These are hardly the words of a man who wishes to undermine a project aimed at resourcing greater human freedom and establishing a protected egalitarian world through the development of greater income security.

However, he feels that some of the key thinkers within this area do themselves and discourses concerned with promoting income security a tremendous disservice. Firstly, if we consider this criticism *vis-à-vis* the BI, we observe that Bauman feels that its protagonists understate the value of the idea. For its potential is diminished because proponents make the mistake of 'selling it too cheaply' (1999: 186) as simply a social policy rather than a vision-guided strategy that could radically reconfigure the contours of our social world, and secondly these individuals are too preoccupied

¹ Referring to Bauman as 'utopian' is not necessarily helpful in furnishing his ideas with greater credibility. However, there is a need to rescue the meaning of 'utopia' from its pejorative status. Firstly, to do this we must distinguish Bauman's utopian position and that of other post-capitalist thinkers from what might be regarded as being *utopianist*, whereby the belief is proffered that an ultimately perfectible society is attainable. The former do not think this is so. On the contrary they subscribe (tacitly and explicitly) to the post-Marxist idea that power and antagonism cannot ever be fully eliminated from any social system or all social relations. This precept also manifests itself in the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr (1954), who has suggested that the *ultimate* or utopia may not be achievable, but the *penultimate* is a possibility, or what James Meade calls '*agathotopia*': the 'good place' (my emphasis: 1989: 1). This impossibility of ever achieving utopian *telos* is not something which should dishearten us. Quite the opposite, a *permanently displaced utopia actually invites the continuous possibility of progressive social change*, and (in an *ex ante* sense) protects against political stagnation and totalitarianism. To give an example of this kind of thinking, Chantal Mouffe argues that a good society is one that is always in a state of becoming. For instance a good (plural) democratic society:

should be conceived as a good that only exists as a good so long as it cannot be reached. Such a democracy will therefore always be democracy 'to come', as conflict and antagonism are at the same time its condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of its full realisation (1993: 9).

The same philosophical caution ought to feature even in an egalitarian symposium such as BIEN, which can also slide into intellectual stasis.

with satisfying the requirements of (hegemonic) economic feasibility. Consequently, they make the mistake of ‘offering it [the BI] to the wrong buyer’ (Ibid.), therefore curtailing its capacity to act as an exit route to a very different (better) world. This is simply because its possible potentiality remains insufficiently exploited by the existing approach.

Bauman’s position is therefore interesting to anyone who is seriously concerned about advancing significant economic rights such as the BI, and advancing it as effectively and as rapidly as possible. This is why his views matter and this is why this paper matters.

Bauman’s critique centres primarily on the proposal of a BI, and specifically the type that is championed by Claus Offe in his book *Modernity and the State: East and West* (1996). While Bauman’s critique is focused on the key tenets of Offe’s argument, in a broader sense his critique can also be extended beyond this and applied to the work of other key figures within the BI advocacy group BIEN. Obviously BIEN is composed of disaggregated, plural and competing conceptions of the exact purpose of a BI and how best to implement it. There are various ideological currents. Nevertheless, the fact that his critique finds continuity elsewhere, illustrates that there has been an emergence of a subtle consensus. Hence, one can describe this consensus as a ‘soft’ consensus in order to connote that it is not binding or all totalising one, but it is still discernable. This consensus could become problematic over time if left unchecked, especially if the BI proposal edges closer to political reality as it has begun to do. Although Van Parijs does not refer to the actual existence of such a consensus, he does recognise that such mini-consensus can come into being. Thus he emphasises that ‘it is of crucial importance to listen and keep listening to sympathetic and intelligent but unambiguously critical voices’ (2002: 8 – 9). Bauman’s critique fits this description perfectly, which therefore substantiates my argument that we ought to listen to him more carefully. Bauman’s critique is based on three objections to the ‘soft’ consensus approach that shall now be elaborated on below in three sub-sections.

1.1 Critique One: The Basic Income proposal is articulated through the language of a ‘social policy’

Why is this a problem? On the face of it, it seems a perfectly reasonable way to articulate the proposal. Surely it is logical to utilise the existing political notion of a social policy and the bureaucratic mechanisms which accompanies this notion, as a means for transferring income from the state to the populace. Also, isn’t Bauman just being over-fastidious, hence over-psychologising the semantic significance of the referential term that Offe employs? In light of this, the paper will now move on to explore Bauman’s argument and the validity of the reproaches that might be invoked against it.

Firstly, Bauman’s concern is that the greater significance and potential impact of the proposal is diluted if it expressed merely as a social policy. This is because a social policy is invariably expressed through the language of problem resolution. The up shot of this is that in the style of a self-fulfilling prophecy the proposal becomes just that, and more worryingly, only that: a problem-solving device. As a social policy the BI proposal is in danger of being (irreversibly) politically typecast as an income transfer simply intended to ‘resolve the problem of the poor – to lift the poor from their poverty’ (Bauman, 1999: 183). If advocates of the BI become satisfied with promoting the BI on the premise that it can humanise the worst excesses of current economic rationality, they might confine its emancipatory possibilities to mere reform rather than revolutionary reform. To give an example, in

Basic Income on the Agenda: Policy Objectives and Political Chances (2000), Veen and Groot seem intent on answering what they propose is the new social question of our time: the double bind of unemployment and poverty and how this might be remedied. This results in the portrayal of the BI as a 'double-edged sword' intended for poverty mitigation and unemployment reduction. In depicting the BI in such a way, the proponents of the BI underplay the potential value of the BI, precisely because they package it as a social policy. Despite the undeniable good intentions that underpin such an endeavour, Bauman is concerned that the radical potential of the BI is extinguished. Hence it ends up becoming another form of wealth redistribution and social policy, rather than a more concerted attempt to radically alter the human condition.

Clearly Bauman thinks the impact of a BI could be very significant. Like others, he feels that it could fulfil the leftist libertarian notions of 'positive liberty', freeing individuals from morbid existential insecurity or his preferred term '*Unsicherheit*' (i.e. translated into English this conveys the experience of insecurity, uncertainty and unsafety). The potential of the BI for him is that it can limit the risks involved in practising freedom:

This limitation of risks and damages is precisely the most crucial objective of a basic income. When (if) this objective is reached, men and women no longer afraid to use their freedom may find the time, will and courage to construct ever more humane meanings of their humanity, to consider and select forms of life which are both satisfying and rational (1999: 188 - 189).

This would be by no means a small achievement. This is why his argument that poverty alleviation cannot be the only or central reason to advance the BI, ought not to be understood as some nonchalant and petty philosophical swipe at the work of Offe *et al.*

Without question any attempt to address poverty and the damaging consequences of unemployment is certainly an important intervention for many people. However, the concern still lingers that advancing the BI on this ground alone, would only pigeonhole it as a form of 'crisis management'. Promoted in this more truncated form the BI becomes 'another 'one-issue' and 'focused' policy, fully in keeping with the 'problem resolution' approach of conventional (moderate) politics (Bauman, 1999: 183). Whereas, if articulated differently it could be a vision guided strategy oriented towards pursuing a more radical transformatory agenda. By extending the appeal and relevance of the BI beyond one group, we break out of the language of 'needing most'. We thus by-pass all the means testing and conditionality that this implies. Freed from the assignment of such a narrow purpose the BI could:

change radically the nature of the polity; it would transform it from an agency of law and order and a crisis-management fire brigade into a common weal and the arena where individual and group interests are reforged into public issues of concern to all citizens alike. Instead of merely toning down divisions and preventing conflicts from inflammation, the polity might even become the seedbed of solidarity. Last but not least, having liberated its citizens from uncertainty surrounding their survival pursuits, the polity may set them free to pursue their republican rights and duties (Ibid., 184).

While Offe's social policy argument (i.e. poverty alleviation and unemployment reduction) is attractive it cannot be the sole reason to resort to a BI. Further elaboration on this point illuminates the very restrictive framework that the language of social policy places around the proposal. If we delve into just some of the latent possibilities that others have identified in the proposals we can see

this very clearly. For instance, we can see that some think a BI could improve societies for the better by:

1. Promoting historical social justice by distributing the fruits of technological progress (which has been a cumulative social effort) more equally in the form of a BI as an economic/civil right (Ibid, 1999: 181);²
2. Redressing the inequity of geography/birthplace and therefore limit the power of *facticity* to unfairly pre-determine and limit, even prematurely end, some people's lives whilst unfairly enabling others to flourish for no other reason than that they have entered this world under more favourable circumstances. This argument is premised on the idea of social justice and that there is no volition involved in one's birthplace;³
3. Reducing economic and income insecurity;
4. Eradicating unemployment, poverty traps and social exclusion (Veen and Groot, 2000);
5. Addressing growing income concentration;
6. Being more cost-effective fiscally by eliminating all the bureaucracy associated with means testing and targeted-benefits;
7. Destigmatising the act of receiving social security since everyone would receive such a BI as an empowerment right and not 'hush money' to silence the excluded and thereby brush them under the carpet;
8. Satisfying biblical values and the principles of other religions (Suplicy, 2008: 5);
9. Rebalancing the work-free time disequilibrium;
10. Pacifying and democratising violent or war-torn societies such as Iraq (see Suplicy, 2007; 2008);

² Drawing inspiration from Thomas Paine, Van Parijs has also articulated this idea as a kind of 'patrimonial dividend', where:

the land and natural resources within any society's territory are seen as the patrimony of the entire group...[because] the annual production of a national economy must be owing in large part to social interactions, shared understanding, institutional capital' (2001: xi – xii).

³ The notion of *facticity* has been used by a number of philosophers. However, in this instance the Sartrean and Gorzian versions are employed. *Facticity* refers to those aspects of existence that simply cannot be altered (i.e., place of birth, the natural inhospitality of nature towards humanity, and the absolute surety of death (although we now recognise that the latter can be fended-off for longer than in previous times, death is still an irreducible fact)). Thus *facticity* frames the basic backdrop into which an individual comes into this world; *facticity* circumscribes the boundaries of our freedom and the limits of our capabilities. Thus much of the initial fortune or misfortune that confronts/befalls us is essentially beyond our control and subject to the oscillating unpredictability of history and its geographical distribution of fortune. As Van Parijs quips, 'not even the most narcissistic self-made man could think that he fixed the parental dice in advance of entering this world' (2001: 25). Take the following hypothetical example. If I were born in the Republic of Ireland in the 1970s my life prospects would have been considerably different to those that would present themselves to me if I were born in the Republic of Ireland of 2008. The Republic of Ireland is now referred to as the 'Irish Tiger' to denote its economic robustness and radical leap from a more impoverished status just a few decades earlier. Thus there is an inherent (amoral) injustice to geography and place of birth and the opportunities which these forms of *facticity* deal-out. As a result protagonists of a BI argue that in a civilised world this really cannot be allowed to be such a determinant factor in our life prospects. This same logic has been expressed by Suplicy who quotes the Brazilian geographer Aziz Nacib Ab Sáber who makes a basic argument that legitimises calls for a BI:

Nobody chooses the geographic place to be born, neither the womb in which to be born, nor the socio-economic conditions of the family, each person is born where casualty [or *facticity*] determines (2006).

A child cannot choose its fate, so basic justice demands that this situation be changed. This is why Standing suggests that we must attempt to equalise 'basic security' throughout society so that everyone has equal opportunities to fulfil and explore their capabilities (see Standing, 2002) as an economic/citizenship right. In a more simplistic but nevertheless worthy sense, this logic is echoed in the lyrics of the U2 song, *Crumbs From the Table*, where they penned the words 'where you live, should not determine whether you live or whether you die'. This is a valid observation and just goes to show that the idea of a BI taps into and reflects popular sentiments of justice, and thus the idea of a BI is not as unpalatable as it might at first appear to some.

11. Fulfilling existing human rights and meet the requirements of new and *emerging* human rights (see Raventos, 2007; Sheahan, 2004; Yanes, 2004) and resourcing the development of new capabilities along those lines developed by Sen (1999);
12. Resourcing *Real* freedom⁴ and giving people more choice to decide the nature and content of their lives by permitting them the opportunity to ‘consider and select forms of life which are both satisfying and rational’ (Bauman, 1999: 188-189);
13. Reducing superfluous consumption and thus contribute to the greening of society (see: Gorz, 1993; Lord, 2006);
14. Promoting ‘gender-neutral social citizenship rights’ (Cruz-Saco, 2006: 7);
15. Developing more authentic autonomy by creating the right for each individual to transcend the mere function of being productive and therefore have the right to a resourced autonomy that is irreducible to economic instrumentalisation or panopticism (Gorz, 1999: 88).
16. Enabling a form of citizenship that could rejuvenate the fading institutions of the republic and citizenship, thus redemocratising and repoliticising the *polis*;
17. Engendering a process of work humanisation (Offe in Van Parijs, 2001) by granting people more choice in how, when, where and how much they work. It therefore liberates the individual from having to submit herself to ‘the definition of work imposed by the labour market’ (Bauman, 1999: 181);
18. Strengthening social solidarity as is argued could be the consequence of a BI in South Africa (Standing & Samson, 2003);
19. Rewarding and recognising activity that the market does not remunerate yet which is essential for any civilised society to function smoothly (i.e. domestic labour, voluntary work, child care *et cetera*). In other words reproductive social activities ought to be rewarded but provided one rather large cautionary caveat is inserted; these activities must be rewarded in a *non-direct* way (see Gorz, 1999: 86 – 87);
20. Eliminating child labour, by dismantling some of the key forces that necessitate children to labour in the first instance (Orton, Forthcoming).

Clearly when sold just as measure for poverty alleviation the understating of the proposal becomes apparent. By doing this, other potentialities that the proposal might possess are repressed and excluded. Furthermore, Bauman goes on to argue that from a strategic point of view, if the BI proposal is conceived of as a proposal intended only for sorting out the predicament of one section of the society (i.e. the poor) it is unlikely to find societal-wide support. This is crucial precisely because a broad solidaristic form of support will be needed if it is actually to be implemented. Those who articulate the BI as a single-issue policy targeted at a particular group, weaken its prospects of implementation. The proposal stands a better chance of political acceptance if it is made to have universal existential appeal. The richer members of society will not find the idea appealing because of its quantitative income boosting capacity. After all, in the higher to middle echelons of the

⁴ Resourced freedom is a key ingredient for the development of autonomy/capabilities. Leftist-libertarian notions of positive liberty are useful here in helping us to understand this point. If freedom is to be really authentic it cannot be based on purely ‘negative liberty’, or formal freedom, which simply means freedom embodied in the form of laws which designate our rights and freedoms and the need for an ‘absence of illegitimate constraints’ (ILO, 2004: 5). Widerquist refers to negative liberty simply as ‘a continuum of allowances’ (2004: 1) specifying what we can and cannot do. *Real* freedom, therefore, must be based on ‘positive liberty’. Van Parijs sums this argument up well by explaining that unlike ‘formal freedom [negative liberty] ...real freedom is not only a matter of having the right to do what one might want to do, but also a matter of having the means for doing it’ (1997: 4). Freedom therefore has to be enabled. It has to be resourced (i.e., with money, societal, community and familial support translating into appropriate conditions and facilities for its non-coerced development and expression) so that ‘the opportunity for making real choices about substantial matters of personal development’ can be made unhindered by insecurity (Van Parijs, 1997: 5). We need to understand that the choices for authentically pursuing ones’ freedom are restricted by resource availability.

income-earning bracket, a BI will make barely an imprint on the actual and perceived level of prosperity of these individuals. *A fortiori*, it is more the qualitative improvement or satisfaction of principles of justice that a BI could bring to their lives that will be more alluring; that is to say if these people would even be swayed by the remits of such a proposal in the first place. This is because the BI has the quality of enabling different behaviour and different choices. For one, it resources multiple life options. More importantly however, it might help unleash a cultural mutation that strikes at the heart of the work-based society. It may therefore substitute the norms of the wage-based society and heteronomous work with new norms that lead to an existence characterised by greater heterogeneous and autonomous (more satisfying) activity. This is what Gorz calls a 'multi-activity' life.⁵ For Bauman and Gorz the purpose of the BI is to free people from the constraints of the labour market. The BI could enable rich and poor individuals to refuse work and reject 'inhuman' working conditions, or simply reject types and patterns of work that are not conducive to a satisfying and meaningful existence (as footnote 5 explains, this does not mean that people will be discouraged from working). It could become part of a:

social environment which enables all citizens to decide on an on-going basis between the use-value of their time and its exchange value: that is to say between the 'utilities' they can acquire by selling their working time and those they can 'self-provide' by using that time themselves (Gorz, 1999: 83).

It is the fact that a BI facilitates multiple life-options that the political and politically influential class may find a BI attractive in terms of the impact it could have on their own lives.

⁵ *Multi-activity* should be thought of as a key social issue and a precondition for life enrichment. Gorz argued that multi-activity must be forced onto the political agenda, and the BI might help facilitate this. For Gorz, heteronomous work must come to occupy a subordinate position in the life plan of individuals, and this is why for many years Gorz recommended a *Politics of Time* aimed at reducing heteronomous work and redistributing it more equitably (Gorz, 1989). This involves removing waged-work from the centre of gravity in everyone's life, so that it is just one of many components integrated into a multi-activity or 'pluri-activity' life. Under such conditions heteronomous work becomes an occupation which is welcomed for the spontaneity, diversity, chance encounters, contact, the 'rhythm and timing' that it adds to your life (Gorz, 1985: 53). A BI might allow free time to expand so that a multi-activity life finds its normative basis (i.e. becomes regarded as socially normal). Consequently, heteronomous/socially necessary work becomes all the more acceptable and may no longer be viewed as mundane compulsion which we have to do. This is why there are no grounds for the objection that the BI will discourage people from working. On the contrary there is every possibility that the reduction of compulsory wage-labour along with the growth of new socialities will encourage people to seek 'socially necessary work for the same reasons that house-bound women, the retired, the unemployed, sons and daughters of peasants seek waged work, even if unrewarding' (Ibid., 54). What is more, it supports the argument that a BI will expand the range of activities available to an individual rather than limit them. These reasons are best summarized by the following observations:

[Heteronomous work] provides an escape from the narrowness and stifling conformity of the domestic unit or village community, a way of meeting other people from other places with whom a relationship can be freer, less familiar, than those who see you first and foremost as daughter or daughter-in-law, sister or cousin, and tie you to a carefully regulated world where everyone must keep to their allotted place...[and thus allows you] to exist as a fully social individual protected from the pressures of particular groups by anonymous membership of society at large (Ibid.).

Furthermore, as Eduardo Suplicy (2002) argues, the rich still work even though they have the very real option of abstaining from work. At a deeper philosophical level, human life is self-creation – '*autopoiesis*'. Humans give their own meaning to this world, and man is also a 'practico-sensory' creature (Gorz, 1982: 103) which generally seeks the opportunity to engage in a variety of different activities in order to gain fulfilment and meaning. Hence, in a sense there is spiritual necessity to work. Furthermore, according to Richard Layard's study of happiness (2005: 67 - 68), people not only work for an income but also out of a sense of status that work confers and derive a sense of esteem important to happiness. Most anthropologist and philosophers would agree that opportunities to engage in diverse activities, to move between various spheres of action, are a good recipe for a satisfying and meaningful existence. However, this must be buttressed by a guaranteed means of survival, opportunities for meaningful engagement with others and resourced activity, so that contingency is not allowed to prosper. This slightly essentialist, but nevertheless compelling argument, suggests that the vast majority of humans enjoy being creative and engaging in a variety of different activities which are freely chosen. It is qualities such as these that endow the BI with universal existential appeal.

According to Bauman, selling the BI as a one-issue policy essentially erodes the proposal's potential to radically transform society. This is because it is not conceived as a vision-guided strategy. Moreover, there is further reason to be alarmed here, because we live in an age where voices calling for universalism are barely audible (see Mkandawire, 2005). And the approach of Offe renders these voices mute when the BI could actually act as a means of amplifying them. Arguably, many of our contemporary troubles⁶ can be explained by the retreat of universalisms from our lives. The BI and the corollary of effects it might engender could be just the kind of vision-guided political strategy that could radically reconfigure these troubles. Bauman would argue strongly that people need universalisms and ideals. In fact Ernst Bloch thinks that the importance of universalisms lies in their capacity to provide 'hope' (1985), a hope that our lives are on a desirable course and heading in a positive direction. We need a sense of moving towards something better in order to feel good. For Bauman, much of our present existential insecurity can be explained by the absence of universal values and projects. Elsewhere, in his subsequent work *In Search of Politics* (1999), he develops this idea and suggests that the contingent time and contingent lives synonymous with postmodernity are frightening. Postmodern society leaves us with the 'terror of boundlessness... and the vain search for a steady and continuous itinerary' (Bauman, 2001: 44), the fear of the unstructured life without recognisable and reliable points of moral and ethical reference. For Bauman:

It is not the overwhelming pressure of an ideal which they cannot live up to that torments contemporary men and women, but the absence of ideals: the dearth of *eindentlich* [unequivocal] recipes for a decent life, of firmly fixed and steady orientation points, of a predictable destination for the life itinerary. Mental depression - a feeling of one's impotence, of inability to act, and particularly the inability to act rationally, to be adequate to the task of life - become the emblematic malaise of our late modern, postmodern times (Ibid., 43).⁷

Living in a post-political and post-ideological world, void of idealism, is not something to be celebrated. In fact in the view of Hannah Arendt (1995) it is precisely when there is a kind of ideological void, and absence of progressive utopian thought that fascistic ideology and xenophobic tribalism can find a firm footing in society. Fascistic thought engenders its own twisted yet attractive utopias; therefore plugging that (unbearable) gap in the order of being that is precipitated by the absence of universalisms. Fascistic ideologies can stem the flow of existential contingency. People fall back on mysterious laws of history and nature in order to give definition and direction to their lives. We therefore need (a post-Marxist-informed (see footnote one)) universalism and utopian

⁶ It is quite reasonable to argue that at present the advanced capitalist societies are experiencing a societal-wide existential malaise, characterised by growing psychological disorders (depression, mental illness *et cetera*). Evidence of this comes from a wide range of sources: the WHO (2005), Layard (2005), Andrew Solomon (2002), MIND (2004). Cultural references to this phenomenon can also be found in films like *Fight Club* and *American Beauty*.

⁷ Some would criticise Bauman on the grounds that he is too conservative. After all, mental depression can also arise because life is too predictable. However, in defense of Bauman, he is not suggesting that the complete absence of insecurity, (depression, existential malaise *et cetera*) is a desirable goal. Rather he is suggesting that *there is too much insecurity* at present and this is rooted far too firmly in the realm of necessity/survival. It is therefore much better to locate existential insecurity beyond the realm of survival. By doing this we preserve the progressive (life enhancing) aspects of insecurity whilst reducing the constricting forms that typify morbid insecurity. Within the boundaries of security that he is arguing for, he would no doubt welcome all manner of insecurity (existential anxiety) that can foster an economy of being that sets out for self-improvement for example. With wider-philosophical reference, drawing from Schopenhauer and existentialist thought, it seems that some hardship, and hostility from nature and matter is important, otherwise if we are cosseted too much we might be prone to boredom-induced depression. We need some insecurity to ground us. The unobtainability of absolute security is something we ought to be thankful for, because it keeps us on our 'moral toes' as it were; attentive to the requirements indispensable for the maintenance of an ethically sound life.

thought to re-activate our political imagination, without which we have no direction. Quite simply, Bauman thinks we need a coherent vision of a better future and he places faith in the proposal of a BI as an idea that could deliver such an outcome.

Having recognised the vacuum left by the (alleged) death of universalisms, the task that emancipatory politics must set itself is to *recall universalism from its long overdue exile* (Bauman, 1999: 190-197). And this exactly why the BI ought to be articulated as something more than just a social policy. Essentially the BI as a mere social policy is a cop-out, a lame duck.

Bauman's concerns can be understood as an anxiety that some strains of BIEN's approach could be counter-productive, driving the BI agenda down a kind of welfare state cul-de-sac, from which it is difficult to reverse. The fear is that the BI will never have its full significance realised if the debate is not sufficiently developed towards a wider discursive framework. As we will see later Bauman also thinks that the proposal affords the possibility of radically reconfiguring the human condition and renegotiating the dominance of capitalism, and perhaps even points the way towards a world beyond capitalism: a post-capitalist society.

1.2 Critique Two: Where is the political will and force to implement the Basic Income? And who and what are the agents and sites of change?

Bauman's concern here stems from the perennial problem of translating theory into praxis and bridging the gap that exists between the two. For there is always a tension of incompleteness between the promise and the reality of any idea. More specifically, it addresses the fact that we have to identify a suitable agency or agencies for this translation for making the BI happen.

Firstly, can we assume that the political class of our time is 'motivated by the wish, or prompted by necessity 'to fulfil the obligations of the social state' ' (1999: 184) as Offe *et al* assume. Secondly, an argument couched in terms of necessity and poverty alleviation is unlikely to cut much ice with this group. Why is this? According to the perspective of Bauman, with the exception of all but a few nations the political class plays a largely supportive role to the dominant economic system. Arguably, this group's role is to make the majority of the world's population more insecure and thus more amenable to the dictates of profit. As Monbiot illustrates, if we take the example of the British state this is quite evident:

Labour has shifted taxation from the rich to the poor, cutting corporation tax from 33% to 28% and capital gains tax from 40% to 18%, and introducing a new Entrepreneurs' Relief scheme, taxing the first million of capital gains at just 10%. It tried to raise the income tax paid by the poorest earners from 10% to 20%. Labour has lifted the inheritance tax threshold from £300,000 to £700,000, and maintained the cap on the highest rates of council tax. While vigorously prosecuting benefits cheats, it has allowed tax avoidance, mostly by the very rich, to reach an estimated £41 billion (2008).

Today conventional politics is rarely driven by an emancipatory interest or major redistributive politics; it has discharged itself of any major concern with improving the human condition, despite the rhetoric to the contrary. Rather it is driven by what Habermas calls the 'technical interest', an

interest in disencumbering capitalism of the obstacles that lay in the way of its pursuit of economic growth:

In so far as government action is directed toward the economic system's stability and growth, politics now takes on a peculiarly negative character. For it is oriented toward the elimination of dysfunctions and the avoidance of risks that threaten the system: not in other words, toward the realization of practical goals but toward the solution of technical problems (1970).

Nowadays, the majority of the energy of the political class is devoted to supporting the interests of business rather than the promotion of human security. This represents a quite different political-economic context to that which existed just three or four decades ago, where social security and the validity of the welfare state was a generally beyond left and right issue. The entity that might have fulfilled these obligations to the poor— the welfare state – has lost 'a large part of its sociopolitical utility, and particularly that part which underpinned the cross-spectrum consensus' (Bauman, 1999: 184). Since capital (productivity, profitability *et cetera*) has increasingly emancipated itself from labour and deterritorialized itself from the sovereignty of nation states, the welfare state has lost much of its power for intervention. Capitalism is more dominant than it has ever been. Consequently, the social state cannot be assumed to be the pre-eminent site for implementation of a BI. This is a rather large crack in the logic of Offe *et al's* argument.

For some time the idea that the welfare state should help the plight of the poor and make their return to work as swift as possible, was regarded as the norm. Nowadays, however, this has been replaced by the weakly contested assumption that it is not about ameliorating the condition of the poor 'but about getting rid of the poor; deleting them or making them vanish from the agenda of public concern' (Ibid., 185). Bauman suggests that if we consider the contemporary approach to the poor in the Anglo-Saxon world, we see that 'welfare to work' (UK) and 'welfare to workfare' (US) results 'In a fast –shrinking number of 'people on the dole' and perhaps even a gradual evaporation of the morally painful issue of the 'dependent poor' ' (Ibid.). This is useful to the political class because if the poor can be brushed under the carpet through superfluous job creation schemes and the actuarial operation of 'shifting social wages to subsidies' (Ibid.), it makes it more difficult to 'detect the enormous social costs of the kind of modernization which is set in motion and guided by the price of shares and interests of shareholders' (Ibid.).

As will be discussed later, unless a radically different political animal comes into being in the advanced capitalist societies, Bauman thinks we must look elsewhere for an agency capable of translating BI into political reality. This presupposes the construction of new global apparatus capable of intervening in economic forces that have cut themselves free from political powers. Such an apparatus is required because the *globalisation* of economic power has not been matched by an equally powerful globalisation of political power. As George Monbiot states in the opening paragraph of *The Age of Consent: A Manifesto for a New World Order* (2003) 'everything has been globalized except our consent. Democracy alone has been confined to the nation state. It stands at the national border, suitcase in hand, without a passport' (2003: 1). For Bauman, it seems unlikely that a BI could find a planetary-wide purchase unless it expressed at the exterritorial level by an entity sufficiently powerful to put it through or perhaps through some globally administered fund. However, although the debate about a planetary-wide BI has already taken-off and whilst welcoming it, Van Parijs thinks this 'is pure speculation for our generations' (2002: 1). Although at the recent BIEN

conference in Dublin 2008, there were several papers that dealt with the possibility of a global BI illustrating that some consider it a more real option than others.

1.3 Critique Three: The costs of the Basic Income are calculated in order to show that it is affordable and therefore plausible.

Out of all of the objections Bauman makes this critique seems the most fanciful and unreasonable. Surely a sensible advocate of any idea must demonstrate its feasibility (whether this be ethical, financial or political) in order for it to have a realistic chance of being realised and to elicit the support of others. However, Bauman's insights here are very interesting because he makes us realise that what is regarded as 'feasible' and 'plausible' are highly politicised and negotiable concepts. The appeal to advancing the BI along the lines of feasibility alone appears increasingly problematic and does not fare so well after closer examination.

Bauman suggests that all those arguments couched in terms of 'affordability' willy-nilly imply the acceptance of the 'social-state' as, essentially, the transfer of money from those who earn it to those who don't' (1999: 185). The consequences of this are multiple. It continues a restrictive 'doxa-tic'⁸ type of thought that makes it seem right that a super elite minority of wealthy individuals possess incomprehensible portions of global wealth.⁹ To paraphrase Gorz it justifies the arrangement of social time and space that privileges working activity above a range of possible activities. It sustains the idea that it is acceptable for this elite minority to control both the ownership and allocation of the resources that we all need to reproduce ourselves on a daily basis. The self-same resources that we require to maintain a meaningful and satisfying existence. It makes it acceptable that the realm of heteronomy is purposefully swollen, simply to keep us working to produce things we do not need. It therefore denies us the choice of distancing ourselves from waged-labour and consumerism, when in fact we could have more time for more autonomous self-provision.¹⁰ It also makes social gain and social worth dovetail with market value. Basically, such thinking legitimises a whole host of essentially unequal social relations that would be hostile to the development of a BI agenda.

The downside of the affordability approach stems from the fact that it focuses on the feasibility of the BI in discursive economic parameters that have already been delineated and sealed.¹¹ Evidently, arguments that pertain to questions of affordability are highly problematic. Inevitably they involve an acceptance of a welfarist social state and the tendency of its logic to be increasingly rooted in a neo-

⁸ An idea which has achieved the status of *doxa* refers to 'an idea we think with but not about' (Bauman, 2002: 136), an idea that sketches 'the unexamined frame for all further cognition' (Bauman, 2001: 45). Or put another way, Pierre Bourdieu suggests *doxa* is 'an evidence not debated and undebatable' (Cited in Bauman, 1998a: 99). The danger of 'doxa-tic' thought is that it engenders one way of conceiving of this world at the expense of other views. Even within reflexive plural symposiums like BIEN this can still occur.

⁹ To give just one example of the kind of income concentration we are talking about:

we find that the wealth of the richest 191 individuals was just slightly greater than the total income of the low-income countries, which according to the UNDP's figures accounted for 40% of the world's population.' (Frankman, 2004: 11)

¹⁰ It has been well documented that working time has been artificially inflated, and that is more than possible to work significantly less than we do. For example, the total volume of work in the advanced capitalist societies has been artificially maintained, even inflated, by low pay: forcing people to work longer, the expansion of unproductive labour in the service sector and the production of the superfluous (Lodziak; *Capital & Class*; 72, 2000: 128; Rifkin, 1996) and what Finn Bowring suggests is 'the absorption of labour by destructive, defensive and unsustainable forms of production' (*Sociology*; 33:1, 1999: 77-79), epitomised by job creation schemes

¹¹ This is why Bauman's perspective is of value; it keeps us interrogating our suppositions and performing what Sartre thought was a vital ethical act of *thinking against one's self*.

liberal context. The affordability discourse consolidates many hegemonic relations, undermining and concealing the emancipatory potentials that are buried in society.

Surely, in order to advance the BI proposal as effectively and quickly as possible, the arbitrariness of these myths needs to be exposed. We ought to be revealing economic impossibility for the impostor that it is. However, the approach of Offe *et al* unwittingly and ‘obliquely reconfirms [the] validity [of these myths] while refraining from meeting them point-blank.’ (Bauman, 1999: 185). Forever being strategically minded, Bauman argues that demystifying these assumptions is crucial to the success of a BI. So it is self-defeating not to unveil these myths for the contingent ideas that they are. As counter-intuitive as this sounds, arguing within the paradigm of affordability may make the BI chances *weaker rather than stronger*.

Today there is a tendency to think that the major problems that confront us are insuperable and we cannot achieve co-operation to fund the kind of macro-social projects that a global BI would necessitate. This pessimism is not helped by the recent undermining of talks in Bali to resolve carbon emission to protect the biosphere, or the blatant flaunting of international law by the US and UK’s invasion of Iraq. However, if we follow Bauman’s logic we see that there is a need to resurrect the idea that international co-operation can be achieved. There are many positive and ‘negative’ examples that demonstrate that moving a BI onto the top of the political agenda is not that improbable given the right political will and sufficient time; it is more the lack of will that is the problem, and wills can be bent and changed. The desire to make the social world more egalitarian and improve social protection pales in significance when we compare it with the complexity of organisation that other forms of global co-operation have required.

The reconstruction of shattered European countries after the Second World War through the Marshall Plan, as well as the development of the European social/welfare state which was quite extraordinary, even if its extraordinariness is diminished with the passage of time, are both good examples of how great things can be achieved if the will exists. The Global Fund to Fight to AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is another example of how, given the right political will, we can make a concerted global effort to fight burdensome problems. The money has been found to fund these projects so why not for a comprehensive BI. As Frankman says ‘one doesn’t have to search under rocks to find a suitable tax base for a Basic Income, either on a national or world scale’ (1: 2004). To cite a negative but nevertheless instructive example, we can see that the Manhattan Project pulled all the leading scientists (excluding Einstein) and 130,000 people to develop and atom bomb and win the race against Germany to achieve this goal. While the morality of the outcome of this endeavour is a moot point, one can observe that to develop a fund or global plan to administer a BI really is not that ambitious when compared to these achievements. The idea of governments getting their best social thinkers together to devise the most appropriate means to fund and launch a global BI really ought not to be that inconceivable; one imagines that it could even be a project that would promote cross-cultural unity and solidarity.

The previous discussion also corroborates and demonstrates Monbiot’s aphorism that money is always available to terminate life but never to preserve life. Tanks can always be rolled into remote villages; however when medical supplies or pensions need to be delivered to those same villages the typical refrain with which one is greeted is that ‘it is out of the question’ or ‘too costly’. To pursue this line of argument further, around 0.7 per cent of GDP is the general standard that countries make available for foreign aid. This is dwarfed however by the scale of military budgets that countries set

for themselves. We can see this quite clearly in Blackburn's arithmetic for a Global Pension Plan where he calculates that:

The cost of introducing a Global Pension of a dollar a day in the next few years would therefore be around \$205 billion a year, one fifth of the projected cost to the US of the Iraq War, or one half of the annual us military budget prior to the Iraq invasion (2007: 4).

So if schemes such as a BI seem politically unrealistic then we need to recognise that this alleged irrationalism is connected with policy choice rather than an absolute lack of resources. We, therefore, need to develop an argument that highlights the abundance that exists within the current economic system, which will grant more latitude to the generosity and extensiveness of the BI we might bring into being.

Even if the BI were to be ushered in under an accountancy-style discourse as the Citizen's Income Trust has attempted to do (2007), the BI will not be free from future problems. For the affordability approach 'will burden [the BI] with a potentially terminal blemish tremendously difficult to erase and will thus store up trouble for the future.' (Ibid., 185). Rather than being a radical transformative proposal it will be consigned to a life of 'haggling and log-rolling' (Ibid.). If we condemn the BI to such a future we will have wasted many opportunities, in particular to radically 'renegotiate the meaning of the polity and of citizenship' (Ibid., 186). Do we wish to commit ourselves to a future of squabbling over the scraps from the carcass of a once magnificent proposal? Of course Bauman accepts that the BI is not the ultimate panacea.¹² Still, we do not want to fritter away the possibility of advancing a proposal capable of cultivating a political context more conducive to further radicalisation. If so, why assign the BI to political mediocrity and such abbreviated horizons? Our aspirations for it should be greater. This is why Bauman's argument *matters*, because he makes us realise just how high the stakes are for the BI. Likewise, Van Parijs has been at pains to stress that the BI could significantly improve the human condition (2001: 3). The importance of this can hardly be over-stated.

Gorz also shares similar concerns. He feels that the transformative power of a BI will be diluted by the orthodox approach of satisfying the criteria of affordability. He thinks that too much energy can be spent pandering to the demands of 'economic realism' and therefore surrendering too much ground to the dominant economic model: neo-liberalism. As a consequence the deliberative space given to other innovative ideas is diminished. This contention can be linked to the fact that the BI performs one very important function: it 'provide[s] us with the distance from the existing state of affairs which allows us to judge what we are doing in the light of what we *could* or *should* do' (Gorz, 1999: 113). In other words, it allows us to break out of the constraints of 'doxa-tic' thought. This is a key quality of the BI: 'it reflects the most basic and advanced meaning of present developments' (Ibid., 91). A BI engenders a dynamic philosophical tension that could be very constructive. It allows us to consider what has been, what is, and what can be in our lives. This tension posits the possibility for the consideration and realisation of what can be better than what is now. However, by kowtowing to the demands of external (contingent) criteria, this constructive tension is sidelined and its heuristic value is obscured. Whereas, if we step outside of the neo-liberal paradigm we can escape

¹² For example, he suggests that:

a basic income by itself would leave quite a few unprepossessing side-effects of consumer society unaffected. Indeed, the issue of scarcity and the ultimate finitude of earth resources it unlikely to be resolved by a BI (Bauman, 1999: 187).

its stranglehold on the political imagination. In this new context, other possibilities emerge. To give an example, the BI helps illuminate the futility and stupidity of a society that conceals and squanders its own emancipatory potential.¹³ As Gorz argues the BI provides a counter logic to the absurdity of a system that makes tremendous savings in working time, but destroys the potential of this time for those who save it, because it supposedly ‘cannot’ and will not redistribute this saved time. Nor can it equitably redistribute the wealth produced, and fundamentally it is a social system that does not recognise the ‘intrinsic value of leisure and time for higher activities’ (Ibid., 91).

What the preceding discussion does is to encourage us to think more deeply about what we mean when we talk about the affordability of any proposal. Affordability can take on the mantle of neutrality. We need to be demonstrating the opposite and remain mindful that considering the affordability of any given idea is not value-neutral endeavour. Discussions of affordability are grounded within certain (epistemological and ontological) conditions, and therefore certain limits. At present the prevailing economic rationality and what it says is possible tends to be presented as inevitable rather than a matter of political choice. If we think of the affordability of a social policy through the context of Anglo-Saxon capitalism, then the parameters of what is affordable is very different to those which appear if we consider affordability through the logic of Nordic capitalism. Decent social security is affordable in the latter because they have made it a priority in their social planning.¹⁴ Whereas, in the former context, a policy is made to take on the rigours of a much more neo-liberal form; a form invariably depicted as the only form that is possible, when patently this does not have to be the objective reality.

To an extent, the social security department of the International Labour Organisation [ILO] has attempted to satisfy the challenge that Bauman has set those who want to promote better security, by demonstrating that there is considerable fiscal space/latitude in how far countries can finance a basic floor of social security. The ILO’s costing simulations suggest that less ‘than 2 per cent of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would be necessary to provide a basic set of social security benefits to all of the world’s poor’ (ILO, 2008: 3). However, there needs to be more a concerted effort to stretch what we imagine is possible fiscally in order to envisage other possibilities and gather more fiscally sound and credible voices around the idea of a BI since the ILO does not possess the same gravitas in terms of shaping opinions as institutions like the World Bank.

For Bauman, surely advocates of a BI should be trying to subvert the parameters of economic possibility and thus feasibility in a direction that is more favourable to the realisation of the BI. And in doing this they should avoid compromising its key characteristics, hence maximising its potential.

The thought of Jürgen Habermas is germane to this discussion. He suggests that we should be doing the exact opposite to the neo-liberal mantra of non-intervention into the market. We should adopt a less deferent attitude towards the market. We should shun the ‘rules’ that corroborate the neo-liberal fantasy that the market is beyond control. A key aspect of emancipatory politics for him then, is to be bolder and ‘find out how much strain the economic system can be made to take in directions that might benefit social needs’ (Habermas, 1990: 18).

¹³ As post-capitalist thinkers consistently argue, the possibility of transcending capitalism is inherent in the very development of that system. This possibility of moving beyond capitalism does not exist outside of capitalism, as some abolitionary approaches would have us believe. The latent possibilities within capitalism can act as a road to a different society. We can take a capitalist road to a post-capitalist society.

¹⁴ The same is true of Brazil with its *Bolsa familia* scheme and the *Universal Citizen’s Pension* in Mexico City (see Yanes, 2004).

Why should proponents of the BI feel compelled to justify the BI on terms set by others, which are in no way more legitimate than their own? For instance Glyn Daly (1999; 2004) has suggested that it is not as if the economy exists in some extra-discursive realm, unsullied by politics and human agency. The same point is made in excellent fashion by Hardt and Negri:

Many of the proponents and detractors of the present world order conceive of globalization as if it were determined by an unregulated capitalism – with free markets and free trade – which often goes by the name of “Neoliberalism”. A brief trip to snow-covered Davos, however, can help dispel this notion of an unregulated capitalism because there we can see clearly the need for leaders of major corporations to negotiate and cooperate with the political leaders of the dominant-nations, and the bureaucrats of the supranational economic institutions. And there too we can see that the national and global levels of political and economic control do not, in fact, conflict with each other but actually work together hand in glove. At Davos, in short, we can see the institutional relationship that support and regulate the global political economic system. That is a nerve centre of the global body politic... In more general terms, it [Davos] demonstrates that no economic market can exist without political order and regulation (2004: 167).

In other words, the economy is not value neutral or a form of *autopoiesis*, which naturally and divinely sprang/springs forth spontaneously *ab nihilo* - out of nothingness.¹⁵ This distinct lack of recursion is visible in the economics of Western governments who rarely question their own economic reason. A classic example of this is when neo-liberal governments champion economic growth without factoring into their calculations hidden costs or externalities (i.e., economic activity that is damaging to the environment and the health of human populations), as an eco-social rationality would encourage us to do. Economics is thus a hegemonic struggle over what is possible and what is not. Economic ‘impossibility’ is merely a social construct. It is a negotiable and potentially shiftable frontier rather than a transhistorically fixed boundary. Insights such as these are important because they provide a philosophical egress that prevents appeals to impossibility circumscribing our political hopes and desires. The value of Bauman’s argument is that it performs an act of philosophical

¹⁵ For instance Niklas Luhmann’s systems theory (1995) emphasises the arbitrariness of arguments that suggest systems are transhistorical, by dismantling their normative, reproductive and self-validating basis. He achieves this by making the obvious observation that there was once a pre-capitalist era, and that capitalism’s evolution is significantly tied in with the dynamic of human agency. Moreover, all systems, in order to exist, have to repress their opposites and exclude antagonistic antithetical forces. Systems are defined by what they are not – X is defined by its not X. (Daly, 1999: 83). Negativity is thus the life-blood of positivity. The positivisation (*becoming*) of a system can only take place in relation to an irreducible negativity. This is what Derrida means when he talks of the ‘constitutive outside’: to have an inside there needs to be an outside. Furthermore, it is why Derrida discusses ‘the violence of the law before the law’ (1996: 83), in other words as the law became sedimented over time; it laid more and more law on top of itself. As a result the law now appears as if it has always been present. However, in its nascent state the early legislators performed violent acts of exclusion and repression in order to constitute that which is legal and that which is not legal. In this way, we can see that systems tend to conceal their fundamental constitutive dimension – the Political or *Le politique* (Lefort, 1989: 11) - the radical dimension in every system, which shows the:

contingent nature of all structuring principles...To make the same point in different terms: all systems are ultimately ‘arbitrary’ (i.e. historical rather than ontological) insofar as they originate from an essential condition of Undecidability (Daly, 2004: 3).

Systems tend to hide their own ontological contingency as well as their lack of foundation or point of origin, when really they are configured out of a hegemonic-discursive struggle. As a result of the dimension of *the political*, systems can never be fully mastered and as a consequence they are prone to failure and crisis, and reconstitution. When this observation is applied to the economy we begin to see that the hegemony of economic reality is actually *protean*.

rupture, which punctures the intellectual ‘limits’ that surrounds hegemonic economic thinking, in such a way that new possibilities are opened up.¹⁶

Consequently, there is a need to engage in a hegemonic-power struggle over the meaning of political economy and reactivate it in a more radical form. Politicising impossibility is very important since today we are blighted by the timorous politics of *impossibility*. A more disturbing result of this kind of impossibility is the notion that we exist in a post-political world, where further politicisation is rendered impossible. This kind of thinking consolidates and perpetuates the pervasive ideology contained in Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s famous dictum that ‘There Is no Alternative’ (TINA) to neo-liberal capitalism. This is mirrored in the French-speaking world where the notion of ‘*la pensée unique*’ – one way of thinking – has become quite dominant (see: Touraine: 2001).¹⁷

The significance of the foregoing discussion on the BI, is that it encourages us to side step the grip of economic orthodoxy, but still Bauman thinks we should transcend it more thoroughly. Admittedly, the preceding discussion demonstrates that BI theorists exist in a kind of catch-22 situation as they would be accused of naivety and being out of touch if they did not couch the BI in a context which recognises the conditions of the present.

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to argue that affordability does not exist in a value neutral paradigm. When discussing affordability within the rationality of capitalism, there is a danger of conceding too much ground to neo-liberal thinkers and their attempts to monopolise the idea of economic rationality, where they posit their economic rationality as the pre-eminent rationality. In other words, once you start arguing for what is feasible in terms of what the current system will afford you, you have already lost your argument; you have stopped developing your argument. What Bauman’s argument hints at but does not express clearly and strongly enough, is that there is a need to foreground and affirm a politics of rationality, which does not lie on the exclusive terrain of neo-liberal rationality. In other words, we subvert economic rationality beyond capitalism’s existing economic logic. We demonstrate that others forms of economic rationality are also of value. For example, the approach of the greens and post-industrial socialists is not devoid of rationality (see

¹⁶ Here it is interesting to consider the psychoanalytic notion of *the act*, an idea which Slavoj Žižek employs. *The act* refers to the moment when psychoanalytic methods aimed at *cathexing* an idea, fantasy or memory that traumatizes an individual are successful. The cathexing of these sources of psychic discomfort means that they are transferred in a cathartic way to a psychic space from which they can no longer interfere with the well-being of that individual. As a consequence the individual is then able to radically reformulate the precise nature of their trauma in a way that allows them to break out of the destructive economy of being, which that trauma has hitherto forced them to inhabit. Thus they can experience themselves differently and with less psychic distress. This occurs because there is realisation that things do not have to be the way they are. In a similar way, the recognition that impossibility with regards to the economy is merely a human construct is also a vital performance of *the act*. Through this act the reality of the economy can be transformed in a *Real* sense. Daly explains that the effect of *the act* is to engender:

a basic rupture in the weave of reality that opens up new possibilities and creates the space for a reconfiguration of reality itself. Like the miracle, the act is ultimately unsustainable – it cannot be reduced to, or incorporated directly within, the symbolic order. Yet it is through the act that we touch (and are touched by) the Real in such a way that the bonds of our symbolic universe are broken and that an alternative construction is enabled; reality is transformed in a *Real* sense (Daly, Forthcoming: 18).

¹⁷ This political reasoning manifests itself in various forms and is informed by influential theories such as Francis Fukuyama’s historical teleology (1992); the ‘Third Way’ approach of Anthony Giddens (1998) which has found many outlets and willing recipients. To a considerable extent it has also penetrated the thought of some of our more profound contemporary thinkers. For example, it finds expression in Habermas’ notion of deliberative democracy (1995) which reasons that through rationalised deliberative debate the fundamental tensions between democracy and liberalism can be forever reconciled. Ulrich Beck’s *New Enlightenment* (1998) and the notion that we can have a democracy without enemies is another such disappointing capitulation to the seductive notion that we can permanently transcend antagonism, and enter a post-political world.

Little, 1998). Rather they present a different rationality, which Gorz has described as an ‘eco-social’ rationality that is just as legitimate as that of neo-liberal rationality.¹⁸

If we are seriously interested in achieving this, we will need to politicise this rationality to such an extent that it becomes the hegemonic rationality. Such an approach basically means that we must reformulate economic/non-economic relations in such a way that serves social need and a more secure egalitarian world. This could mean the development of a more radical kind of economic diversity (beyond monopoly capital, standardisation; Microsoft, Disney *et cetera*) that rejects the relentless purist of profit as the only goal. For example, take the instructive notion of an entrepreneur. In the current context this connotes a dynamic individual who by dint of his own struggle and creativity manages to innovatively fashion new opportunities for profit making. However, if economic conditions and priorities were reformulated these innovative skills could easily be re-routed to serve non-market goals such as innovatively meeting social needs. Entrepreneurship does not have to be the sole preserve of activity that takes place in the sphere of commodity exchange.

To recap then, the very discursive framework that some BIEN thinkers have placed around the BI could limit its radical transformative potential. This is not to accuse BIEN of being unreceptive to new ideas, but rather to suggest that a kind of subtle consensus has begun to crystallise that needs to be tempered somewhat. In order to radicalise this approach, the debate could be developed towards the discussion of the BI working in conjunction with or through other radical strategy proposals, such as: work time reduction policy and the redistribution of work, (Gorz, 1985; 1994; Hayden, 1999) the regulation of capitalism on a global scale in the form of a non-capitalist regulator of global capitalism (see: Lodziak, 2002: 175-176) empowered with the capability for global taxation of capital flows, trade and production control (i.e. with the ability to enforce the norm of ‘fair swaps’ of goods rather than modes of exchange underpinned by the profit motive) and the means for *ex ante* planning on a macro-continental scale.¹⁹ Admittedly, this is all very utopian and perhaps asks more questions than it answers since it theorises with political apparatus that do not exist. But history shows that utopianism plays an important function in bringing forth social change.

Having said all of this, the conventional approach of BI theorists may be more strategically astute and shrewd than it first appears. The intention may be to introduce a partial watered-down BI into capitalist society. Ostensibly this would be articulated as a conventional welfare policy, but surreptitiously used as a lever to promote other more radical egalitarian ideas and socialities once it becomes a more substantial income. In this view the BI would be a kind of decoy or Trojan horse, introducing an important egalitarian principle into society, which might eventually significantly change society. However, it is unlikely to be experienced as too disturbing to the politically squeamish, because it will not appear as some radical systemic break or unsettling political shift. Furthermore, it would not overtly violate the social norm of reciprocity: where the connection

¹⁸ For example Gorz has neatly summarized this rationality, which would subordinate economic rationality to different eco-social needs:

[Individuals can] emancipate themselves not by abolishing capital and the sphere of economically rational commodity activities...but by *assigning them a limited subaltern function* in the development of society. In other words the societal objective of productivity gains must be to bring about a contraction of the sphere governed by economic calculation and an expansion of self-determined, self-organized spheres of activity in which human faculties can develop freely (my *emphasis*, 1994: 20).

¹⁹ Having said that Myron Frankman who has presented several papers at the BEIN biannual congress, has made a genuine attempt to do this. For instance he has explored how a planet-wide citizen’s income could be advanced by democratic world federalism, a single global currency, and the development of global public finance mechanisms (2004).

between work performed and income earned is of paramount importance for many people, and the transgression of this norm is inviolable and unthinkable at this present time in a society which values the (almost atavistic) *quid pro quo* ethic very highly.²⁰ To entertain the possibility of this norm receding would require a significant cultural mutation.

On the other hand, introducing a BI as a Trojan horse could mean that it is easily co-opted and perverted by the system. There is no guarantee that a modified partial BI would automatically develop into a full one. It could easily become a wage directed a certain number of the population, and one intended to stay with just this sector. Hence, we return to Bauman's consistent argument that the BI must not be diluted; it must be articulated as a vision guided strategy. If we want a BI we should just make it happen would be Bauman's attitude; we must make it a priority and privilege it in our socio-economic planning. If we cannot identify an existing agency to bring it into being, we must seek out other alternatives, and other ways of advancing the goal. We must not be limited by the reality of the present. Bauman would argue why not embrace those radical ideas which can give us what we want, rather than what we think the existing social order might be prepared to concede. Furthermore, compromised ideas perhaps do not foster the same popular enthusiasm as other more radical ideas. This is the danger that lurks in watered-down or deferred idealism.

Bauman's argument may sound reckless and naïve to some, but he goes to great lengths to stake out his position in a compelling and thoughtful manner. In fairness however, some key members of BEIN acknowledge the arbitrariness of economic thinking and the importance of an historical perspective on social change. On the same topic, Standing reminds us of Hirschman's wise observation that all great progressive ideas are denounced through three typical objections:

through the claim of *futility* (it cannot be done), the claim of *jeopardy* (if done, it would endanger other goals) and the claim of *perversity* (if done, the unintended consequences would undermine the benefits). Once introduced, many reforms previously opposed on those grounds have soon been seen as normal and civilised (2005: xiv – xv).

Elsewhere, Standing gives a tangible example of how proposals that are 'regarded as unrealistic, unfeasible and out-of-the-question have a habit of suddenly becoming reality' (Standing, 2003b: 10). For example, he cites François Mitterand's government's almost overnight u-turn on the *Revenu minimum d'insertion* during the 1988 election, where it suddenly became his big new election idea. A similar insertion of a BI as a 'big bang' policy or a more gradually introduced idea is perhaps equally plausible.

Bauman's argument recognises that radical demands are always deemed unrealistic, that is why, when implemented, they are so transformative. Nonetheless, radical ideas soon normalise. Quite often progressive social change is objected to on the grounds of impossibility, and when that change actually comes to pass, we find that what seemed unreasonable and audacious becomes a regular part of our lives about which we rarely think twice. In the dark-ages of South Africa apartheid, it would have seemed unthinkable that Nelson Mandela would have become president several decades later, and more relevant to this paper that he would be in a position to insist 'that all older citizens should

²⁰ However, some have attempted to argue that even those individuals who do not work and only consume still contribute to value in society and this therefore could entitle them to economic rights such as BI (see: Caputo, 2004).

be entitled to a public pension, making South Africa one of the few developing countries with universal provision' (Blackburn, 2007: 8). The same recursivity might also be applicable to the concept of a BI. Therefore, pushing for a significant BI might not be so out of the question. In short, Bauman's approach is one that makes an appeal to aim for an instantaneous and immediate approach to implementing a BI. Clearly then, there is a need to discuss the merits of this approach against others.

2. A Basic Income Typology

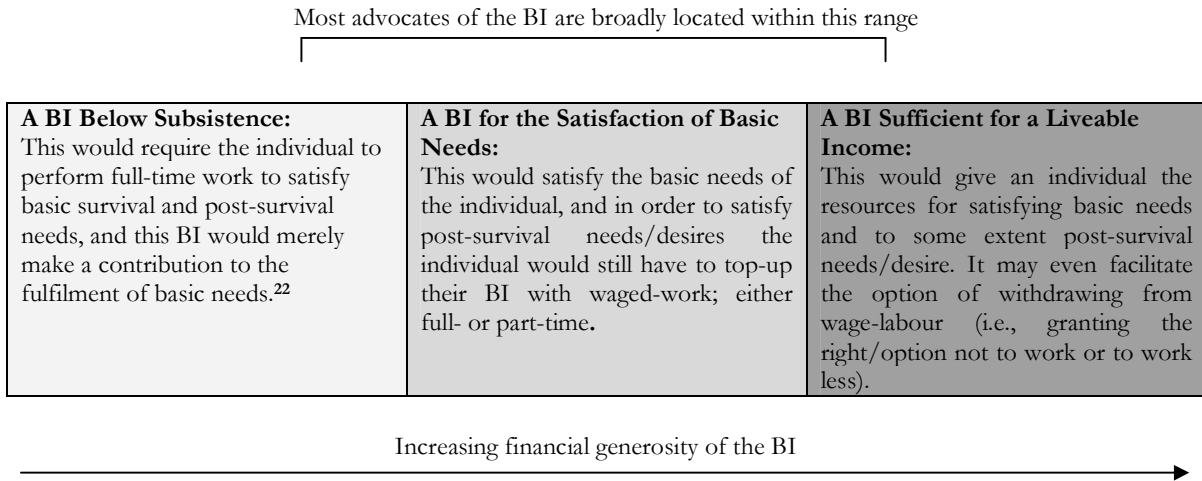
There has been considerable discussion within the community of theorists of the BI about the form of a BI that will be most likely to be translated into reality. One can identify two main tendencies or fault-lines along which these differences are graduated. This is the (positive/constructive) tension between *gradualism* and *instantaneity*. However, in an approximate sense one can say that generally the consensus regarding the BI tends towards gradualism. Nevertheless, it is important to bear-in-mind that the majority of BI advocates want to arrive at a point where *universality and unconditionality* are the key characteristics of the BI cash transfer, but it is on how we get to this point where the fractures arise. For instance, doubt centres on the questions as to whether a BI should be launched in its pure form from the start or, to borrow the phrase from Standing, as 'big bang' over night reform (i.e., a strategy of instantaneity/immediacy) as Bauman argues passionately, or is it more strategically advantageous to drop or sublimate the idea of a full and generous BI until a more opportune political climate materialises, so as not to negate the potential of the idea before it has even started *viz* the logic that underpins gradualism.

Some BI theorists argue that the necessary pre-requisite for a successful and fully-fledged BI would be a Eurodividend or Participatory Income (Veen & Groot, 2000: 27). In this prefigurative approach a transitional or partial BI (e.g. partial in the sense some elements of conditionality will be attached at first) is required to reach a full and more generous one. In other words, would it be best to introduce a BI as a participatory income – whereby from time to time one is required to perform some voluntary or social necessary work to secure one's eligibility; almost like national service except that it would be activity performed for the satisfaction of socially defined social needs - or under some other name. Thus in this scenario, a BI would be introduced in an initially 'less than ideal form' (Atkinson in Standing, 2005: 51), but one that would successfully sneak the idea through a political backdoor without offending the delicate and squeamish sensibilities of the dominant *quid pro quo* establishment.²¹ A further curveball that can be rolled into this discussion is should a BI be a full-one in which meeting basic needs is not a problem or, perhaps it ought to be a less substantial universal cash transfer which would require additional topping-up to satisfy basic necessities through the performance of waged-labour. This is an open-ended discussion, since the continuum between a BI designed for basic needs satisfaction and one equipped with the power to resource an independent liveable income, where the individual could withdraw from wage-labour entirely, is indeed considerable. Figure one below demonstrates how when the BI becomes more financially generous, the options that fall at the feet of an individual change significantly; this is especially true in the way in which an individual's relationship with waged-labour would be significantly reconfigured. Having

²¹ This refers to a common objection directed against a BI by a social group that believes that a BI would violate *the social norm of reciprocity* or *quid pro quoism*; a norm which states that there can be no rights without obligations and that financial assistance must be earned through the seeking of employment or making some other form of social contribution, or that there is such a notion as the deserving and undeserving poor. It is curious that this social norm is never extended to those classes who live off rent or inherited wealth which was simply a gift of birth.

said all of this, perhaps it is better to pursue some third way between the two, as a form of *rapid gradualism*; a strategic approach that will be discussed extensively below.

Figure 1: A Continuum Delineating the Possible Generosity of a BI and the Types of Behaviour Options it Might Resource

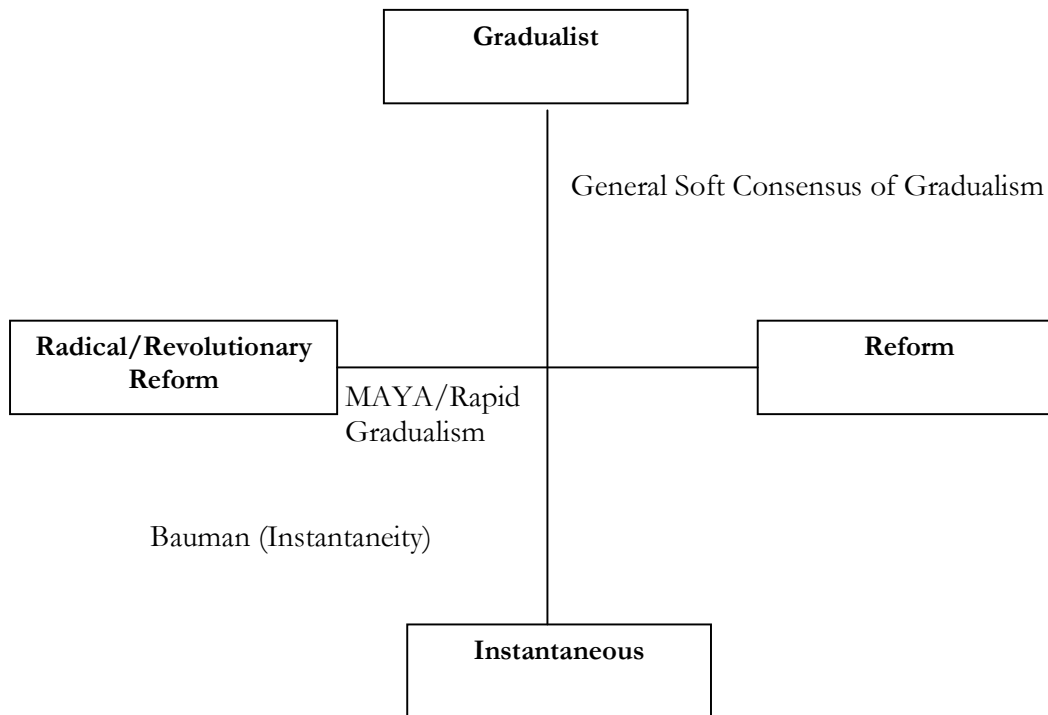


To return to the position of Bauman in relation to the rest of the BI movement, we see that one of the key differences is one that can be graduated by the distinction between radical/revolutionary reform and reforming reform. But this is still a rather reductive model. There is a need to dispense with a simple bi-polar spectrum. Hence, there is a need to distance one's self from what might be regarded as a regurgitation of a transversal political spectrum approach; one that juxtaposes radical/revolutionary against reform. We must not reduce the typology down to a one-dimensional plane. There is a need to develop a further typology that encapsulates the complexity of the positions that exist on the subject of the BI. This is not a straightforward process, because one of the significant problems with the BI is that it has been articulated in different ways, and there is division within the community of theorists over what kind of strategy would best engender a full BI. One distinctive feature of each of these positions is that in and of themselves they are also differentiated by their approach to *the speed of the politics* they intend to set in motion. Hence we can insert a vertical axis into the conceptual model that is being developed here (see: figure two below).

In reality, BI theorists represent various positions in this two dimensional typology. Although, the majority are most likely to be located in the top right-hand quadrant: the gradualist-reformist position. This is where the 'soft' consensus seems to exist, and from Bauman it is where the problem exists. He wants to flip this over so that the majority exist in instantaneous revolutionary quadrant. This diagrammatic representation is useful in helping us conceptualise these differing positions in a more tangible way. But obviously the typology cannot fully capture the nuances of opinion. Nonetheless, a cross-sectional analysis at least gives us a more intelligible picture of the different tendencies operating within the BIEN symposium.

²² Of course the content of, and distinction between, survival and post-survival needs is culturally, historically and subjectively defined. Nevertheless, the continuum in Figure 1 above gives a simplified sense of the options a BI might facilitate.

Figure 2: A Two-dimensional Typology of Positions on a Basic Income



While each of these positions on the two-dimensional typology has its respective merits, Bauman feels that given the current political-historical conjuncture the radical/revolutionary and instantaneous position is most suitable for the political articulation of a BI. How reasonable is this?

Bauman certainly does not think we can introduce a BI overnight. But this is by no means a reason to locate it too far away in our political aspirations and time horizons. To be more precise, he stresses that we should aim to be as immediate as we can with it. This staves off the possibility of the BI becoming a proposal that becomes too modest, or is re-routed to serve non-emancipatory goals or reappropriated and used for other purposes.²³ As Gorz, argues a BI could easily be reappropriated by the political right and used as a ‘social wage for compulsory passivity’ (1985: 40). In other words, it could be used as hush money. Therefore, if we do not cede too much ground by justifying the BI on terms set by others (those with an interest in undermining it) political ambitions are not abbreviated and the gains that can be made will not be reduced. And most importantly the proposal will be less vulnerable to politically damaging co-option.

What Bauman is asking us to do then, is not to throw caution to the wind, but temper the consensus and norms that have gathered around the concept of gradualism and encourage us to re-radicalise approaches to the BI and therefore dissolve this consensus, and have a greater sense of urgency. Bauman is fairly explicit in how we should do this and thinks it is futile to comply with political-

²³ In a similar fashion Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue in their book *Empire* (2000), that the ethic of humanitarianism has been recuperated by dominant powers and redirected for their means. For instance, although humanitarianism started out as a well-intentioned idea, it has now been pilfered by the U.S., and used to justify interventions in foreign territories on the grounds of *bellum justum* (i.e. just war) when clearly selfish and less righteous interests are being served.

economic reality or what is considered as political-economic reality. For example, should we really bother to advance the BI through conventional means such as the social state? *So what would be required to advance the kind of instantaneous revolutionary BI that he proposes?* Bauman has so far only critiqued the existing approach to the BI. Therefore it is reasonable to enquire about the efficacy of the recommendations he makes for a BI?

3. Critical Appraisal of Bauman's Recommendations for a Basic Income

As was hinted earlier, the essential predicament of forwarding a BI on the grounds that Bauman recommends boils down to the problem of praxis and more precisely the identification of a suitable *agency*. He recognises this and suggests that 'under the current conditions it is difficult to find an agency potent enough to put the idea through' (Bauman, 1999: 190). In addition, the existing global political architecture is straining to cope with the complexities of the modern era. Its cause has not been helped by the firm blows that have been delivered by the U.S. and its' vassal states (i.e., the U.K.), which have deliberately attempted to undermine and wrest power away from the rest of the world. While the UN may be moving in a direction of arguing that human rights should also come to encompass economic rights conducive to basic economic security, it is far from a situation where it could make a global BI reality.²⁴ Having said that Frankman has shown that even within the existing aid budgets of developed countries, a modest planetary-wide BI could be financed (2004). Likewise, Kunnemann, has also demonstrated that freedom from hunger is more than affordable even within the limited aid budgets of the advanced capitalist societies (2004). Food security is more than achievable. This is not a new observation; in the 1970's Marcuse suggested that capitalism possesses 'a social wealth sufficient to abolish poverty [and] the technical know-how to develop the available resources systematically toward this goal' (1972: 7).²⁵

Bauman thinks we need to develop an argument that highlights the abundance that exists within capitalism, which will grant more latitude to the generosity and extensiveness of the BI we might bring into being. The excesses of capitalism could be subverted in a direction in which greater basic security is generated. In Bauman's view capitalism produces more than enough wealth for each and every individual to live in conditions of basic economic security. And in its post-industrial, post-Fordist forms it has unmasked tremendous emancipatory openings, which could be harnessed to promote much greater possibilities for enhanced well-being than have hitherto existed. The argument that this is not so, is one of the greatest and most effective neo-liberal myths.

Nonetheless, the pivotal problem for Bauman's instantaneous approach is that 'the truly potent powers of today are essentially exterritorial' (1999: 190), while the sites of political action remain hopelessly local. The separation of power from politics, or what Habermas refers to as the migration of politics 'from the life-world into the political system' (cited in Lodziak, 1995: 16) is a real problem. Contemporary mainstream politics is quite poor in acting as bridge between civil society and the state, hence we have the emergence of political fatalism (i.e., a 'what's the point?' attitude); what Habermas suggests induces 'civic privatism' where people withdraw from the public sphere and from

²⁴ This is because a proposal with potentially as radical implications as the BI will not be supported by the one remaining super power nor the other advanced capitalist states, and certainly not at the supra-continental level. As Monbiot (2003) shows, the U.S. possesses veto power in both the UN and World Bank (2003: 16; 69 - 71). In fact the G8 countries possess 48 *per cent* of the votes within the World Bank giving *carte blanche* for veto. In addition the superior financial might of these countries means that smaller countries votes can easily be bought with the promise of much needed aid packages on a *quid pro quo* basis; therefore preventing these countries from supporting proposals that are patently in their people's self-interests.

²⁵ Here is a good example of the problem of the affordability debate. We are already sucked into the discursive paradigm of affordability pitched at the level of necessity, and thus the possibility of BI resourcing a post-sufficiency life remains undebated.

public engagement. This manifests itself in apathy/antipathy towards mainstream politics and general departure into privatism and consumerism (see Lodziak, 2002). This only serves to broaden the widening gap between economically globalised power and political power rooted in actual territorial locales. This is because civil privatism tends to engender a depoliticised public realm incapable of influencing the nature and direction of globalised power. Subsequently, the course of world affairs ‘stays essentially ‘out of bounds and out of control, acquiring a quasi-elemental, unplanned, unanticipated, spontaneous and contingent character’ (Bauman, 1999: 191).

To give a hypothetical example of why this is a problem, if an individual nation-state wished to push through a significant BI proposal, by adjusting its economic priorities accordingly, it would encounter many problems. This could result in it becoming a political and economic pariah. Firstly, to finance a significant BI *might* mean the taxation of capital flows or super-income earners, although a modest BI could be funded by existing welfare budgets and the money saved by the simplicity of a once-monthly cash payment that transcends the costly imperatives of testing and targeting. In all likelihood this would result in this country being branded as troublesome. A stigmatisation such as this could provoke highly destabilising capital flight, and the possibility of economic attacks and sabotage by those agencies that do not look favourably on overt moves to create a more protected egalitarian society. Although a subtlety introduced BI may not cause such concern. It is likely that the nation-state in question could experience a mild loss of credibility on the global stage if it makes the BI its defining policy; some discretion is perhaps needed. *Ex ante* co-ordination between a regional constellation of states would be the only way to avert fiscal and social competition between neighbours. Otherwise we would be left with a worrying situation that Bauman calls ‘negative competition’. Bauman illustrates the repercussions of what would happen if a state was to go it alone by referring to the instructive American example:

Once welfare ceased to be a federal issue, the ‘negative competition’ between the states took off, each state trying to outdo its neighbours in niggardliness, in cutting down welfare services and making access to them more onerous and humiliating - each state being scared of turning into a ‘welfare magnet’ if it happened to be more generous in its provisions’ (1999: 191).

So if one state did go it alone it also risks the very real possibility of becoming a ‘welfare magnet’, if it happened to be more generous in its provisions. In the context of the European Union [EU], where borders are relatively porous for EU citizens and where these individuals can seek domicile and work in member countries, this could be a problem. It is important to recognise that a state or constellation of states, pursuing a BI agenda might become extremely attractive to economically insecure people. These people already risk their lives to enter ‘fortress Europe’, in spite of an often hostile reception and meagre financial assistance with which they are greeted. With the added attraction of a substantial and generous BI, this trend might be amplified. Having said this, the possibility of apocalyptic immigrant inundation tends to be massively over-stated, since the absolutely impoverished; those struggling to survive on daily basis can barely leave their immediate locales let alone their country or continent (see Harris, 2002).²⁶ For instance even in the EU where

²⁶ There is also plenty of evidence to suggest that contemporary migration is not so much about permanently settling in a new host country but rather working hard to improve one’s financial situation or education credentials, and then returning to one’s original homeland after a few years (see Omaar, 2008). Moreover, the remittance payments sent back to one’s homeland may off-set and quell the need for further migration, as remittance payments are effectively a natural human response to redistribute wealth and reduce or contain poverty.

citizens have significant opportunities to move around, only about one per cent actually (Hutton, 2003) chooses such an option. Although the push and pull factors of migration are no doubt far less compelling for EU citizens than those individuals from elsewhere on the planet. To off-set BI migration, eligibility could easily be based on having had residency for at least five years in any given place. This has occurred in Mexico City to stop people migrating to the federal district of Mexico City in the hope that they might attain access to the Universal Citizen's Pension that now operates there (see Yanes, 2004).

To avoid such possibilities might ultimately require a radically revised and transformed North-South relationship. Disregarding the obvious and compelling ethical exigencies of addressing the inequalities between the global North and South, from a pragmatic perspective, a BI might well have to be developed with an internationalist outlook; an outlook that has already taken shape within BIEN, accompanied by an additional strategy aimed at altering the inequity of this relationship. Hence, Bauman draws the conclusion that the nation-state is *at present* the 'sole legislating agency technically able to undertake the introduction of a basic income (within its sovereign territory) of course, [but] it is simultaneously singularly incapable of doing this on its own' (1999: 191), because of the supremacy of globalised economic power. In such a context, what right-thinking state would go it alone? Globalised power has the nation state by the jugular, or perhaps something far less euphemistic. Bauman therefore concludes that only concerted continental or supra-continental action can prevent such outcomes:

Politics must catch up with power which has cut itself free to roam in the politically uncontrolled space – and for that purpose it must develop instruments allowing it to reach the spaces through which those powers 'flow'(to deploy Manuel Castells' term). Nothing less is needed than an international republican institution on a scale commensurate with the scale of transnational powers' operation (Bauman, 1999: 192).

While there is some talk within BIEN of global taxation of capital flows and the development of a global currency that could compete with the hegemony of the dollar, the problem of agency still persists. If the global political architecture that advocates of instantaneity, such as Bauman and Gorz, propose to put through a BI is not even visible yet, what else are theorists of the BI, especially, gradualists, meant to theorise with, other than the extant political structures? While it is possible to conceive of quite different circumstances, the inevitable and natural tendency of theorists of the BI is to work within the existing framework of what we have already. Indeed, this is one of the important residual features that Bauman's argument of instantaneity does not answer in a sufficiently satisfactory manner. Perhaps, more of an effort has to be made by BI activists to branch out and connect with other groups, rather than just at an academic, governmental and institutional level. We need organisations that articulate the BI in a brief, succinct and reasonably argued explanations that have universal existential appeal, and therefore encourage further civil mobilisation around the proposal.²⁷ At the discursive hegemonic level more effort should be made to steer the debate in such a direction.

For example, how can we activate interest in the BI in the massive political force of the 'non-party of non voters' (Beck, 1998)? Admittedly, at present this hardly constitutes a coherent political movement. Still, glimpses of significant political stirrings are visible. This is especially evident at the

²⁷ In fairness Van Parijs has suggested elsewhere that there is need to compose a book for the layperson, so that the BI can broaden its audience.

World and European Social Forums.²⁸ Nonetheless, BIEN could explore the continental forums as a possible avenue of change along with conventional means.²⁹ For example, could it be that Hardt and Negri's notion of 'the multitude' (2000; 2004) - the radical and diffuse subjectivity they identify within capitalism and bestow with tremendous transformative potential - clearly visible at these forums, could have some bearing on the future of the BI? Might not the BI provide a pole of coherence and garner a political movement around this idea, so much so that pressure is exerted on mainstream politics and economic power so that change follows.³⁰ Perhaps the hesitancy to engage and operate though this means is because these forums are too radical and may damage the hard-won credibility that the BI has obtained over recent years. This may be put down to the fact that these movements have engaged in significant (and occasionally violent) civil disobedience. For instance, Standing appears to reflect on these recent insurrections in major metropolis such as Seattle and Genoa, and suggests that:

What was exciting at the turn of the new millennium was that there were signs that anger was reviving. It was messy, incoherent, degenerate sort of anger; most of us, this writer included, *could not identify* with much of what has been happening; and have been riled by some of the excesses. Yet this anger bodes well. It means that there is a discontent about injustice *per se* (*my emphasis*: 2002: xi).

Whilst Standing does not condemn these unconventional forms of politics outright, he neither views them too positively either. Furthermore, he says he cannot identify with them. Although, he does recognise that this discontent should be commandeered in some way. Perhaps more of an effort should be made to connect and identify with the many groups that are encompassed within these new social movements (i.e. anti-capitalist, post-capitalist, ecological *et cetera*) in order to embolden the political chances of the BI, and establish even more broad based support.

In a similar fashion, Van Parijs suggests that the case for the BI must be *swollen* and *spread* (2002). Would not connecting with these groups satisfy the latter aspect of this strategic assertion? An economic right such as the BI may just be the kind of proposal that these radical groups could gather around and apply more focused pressure to change society and thus establish the civil backing for a BI that is so conspicuously absent.³¹ This is because the BI is not an all binding blue-print for another world. Therefore it can traverse the many political position that exist on the radical left without necessarily forcing them to evaporate or absolve their worldview entirely. The BI illustrates perfectly Ernesto Laclau's notion of the 'political surface of significant inscriptions'. This concept refers to a situation where many different groups can sign up to the BI as a way to achieve their more

²⁸ Over the last decade many political commentators have observed the development of this new kind of politics. It is one that operates by and through a minoritarian logic. This new politics expresses itself in a horizontal fashion, as opposed to the vertical, arborescent, sedentary and striated kind implicit in the majoritarian logic that is a 'government in waiting' (Tormey, 2004: 153) - i.e. *viz* the Bolshevik storming of the White Palace scenario. A minoritarian political model or rhizomatic non-model is a dispersed, disaggregated and decentred movement that manifests itself in one location only to evaporate and reappear elsewhere and elsewhere. Intrinsic to this logic is the rejection of political organisation through hierarchy, and the idea of an alternative system that must be modeled and developed outside of the current system.

²⁹ Admittedly, the Brazilian president Lula Da Silva, whose party has close links with BIEN (and now heads the first fledgling BI state), did help finance the first World Social forum in Porto Alegre. Furthermore, important members of BIEN do recognise the potentially transformative potential of the continental forums. (see: ILO, *Economic Security for a Better World*, 2004: 332)

³⁰ This is not as extreme as it might first sound. George Monbiot has outlined brilliantly in his book *The Age of Consent* (2003), that the continental social forums could evolve to provide an alternative force of intervention, and he proposes a means by which this grassroots power could be translated into real global power (i.e., in the form of a world people's parliament).

³¹ It is instructive to note that the intellectual double-act Hardt and Negri, who many cite as the philosophical spokespersons for this diverse movement, also argue for a BI for all. Their argument is based on a rationale of historical justice that the multitude is deserving of a BI since without them capital could never exit.

specific demands. The BI could function as a hegemonic pole of resistance and unity – a commonality that connects these (dis)organisations in a non-totalising way. In other words, a BI could be just the kind of radical proposal that these organisations are crying out for, since they seem to be searching for something to suture and galvanise them into a coherent, focused and more self-conscious political assemblage, whilst at the same time retaining their individual identity. However, at present these new movements (or movement of movements) are afflicted by two problems. Firstly, they suffer from ‘movementism’ or what is also known as ‘serial protesting’:

Movementism equates to the view that merely by protesting or blockading important gatherings, significant blows are delivered to the structure of global capitalism, and thus what is needed are more and even larger protests (Tormey, 2004: 149 – 150).

Within this movement there is a recognition that while these large urban insurrections may be spectacular conscience raising exercises, they do not really challenge the structures of power in a tangible way. They are far too transient; and in the words of Hakim Bey they are ‘temporary autonomous zones’ (1991)³², which is paradoxically both a strength and a weakness simultaneously. Is it worth protesting merely for the sake of protesting? For example, particularly in the UK, the anti-capitalist movement has made a conscious effort to engage in actual context-specific struggle in order to affect power, and connect with ordinary people in ways that carnivalesque uprising do not do in a sustained and intelligible manner.³³

Secondly, another problem is that there is a lack of institutionalisation with these movements. This refers to the fact that many of the groups encompassed under the umbrella-like rubric of anti-capitalism purposefully choose to be ‘(dis)organisations’. By opting to be a form of disorganisation they avoid what they perceive as the inherent injustices and dangers synonymous with hierarchicalised power structures (i.e., the state, corporate business, patriarchal family *et cetera*). A ‘(dis)organisation’ is:

a form of organisation that is non-hierarchical, flat and easily remoulded in terms of shifting needs and priorities. It is a logic orientated towards action over representation, participation over command. Minority politics points towards *horizontal* political practices, and sees resistance developing organically rather than strategically, that is, out of the immediate concerns felt by people and groups in particular locations (Tormey, 2004: 151).

The problem with such a non-hierarchical and molecular ‘movement’ is that consensual action has to be groundout and therefore it can become cumbersome and lack direction. It is difficult to move on a coherent political course without some kind of plan. For example, the movement lacks direction because opinion is so diverse that no concerted and focused action can occur. Heterogeneous argumentation can preclude political stasis but it can also result in inertia. In addition to this, this

³² A temporary Autonomous Zone:

is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the state, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, before the State can crush it. (1991: 101)

³³ For instance in the early 1990’s the anti-roads movement forced the Conservative government to perform a large u-turn on its expansive road building programme. This movement was successful because it rooted itself in a local community who were awaiting eviction from the houses lying in the way of the M11 link road project. Together they engaged in long-term and successful community resistance against the British state.

kind of politics is still too local and 'localised actions cannot drain power from power elites. Only coordinated [and sustained] action designed to confront global elites can be effective as a form of resistance' (Ibid., 2004: 166).

Nevertheless, it is possible to maintain that the BI is just the kind of idea that might appeal to these groups. The power of these groups should not be underestimated. Resolute action by this ragged band of international protest organisations meant that the highly significant Multilateral Agreement on Investment was disabled.³⁴ In addition, action against biotechnology companies resulted in the GM issue being pushed to the fore of public debate, and even resulted in the precipitous fall in the share price of Monsanto. These two examples are testimony to the effectiveness of this diverse movement. Because the BI is vaunted to have multiple desirable effects, it is likely to be appealing to too all shades of the left. Therefore the BI could act as a common theme around which a new and effective European, perhaps global left could unite. This is what Bauman's perspective encourages us to believe. Of course, Bauman's perspective is not without its problems, and space ought to be given to outlining these deficiencies. For example:

- **Evidence of a new Global Political Architecture is Barely Discernable**

If the global political architecture that he proposes to put through the BI is not even visible yet, what else are theorists of the BI meant to theorise with, other than the extant political structures?

- **Immanent Agency Cannot be Relied Upon**

This is a critique aimed at his philosophical reasoning. The problem of a coherent human agency to advance the proposal still persists. There is no immanent logic that guarantees that such a revolutionary subjectivity will come into being. This is a common political mistake. Typically it bares all the hallmarks of a Marxian tendency, where the logic of immanence engendered an assumption that capitalism carried within itself a latent force of negation: a force that would inevitably result in capitalism producing its own gravediggers. This belief held that the ontological basis for the abolition of capitalism was embodied by an extant revolutionary subject: the archetypal proletariat who sought the negation of their immiserated state through revolutionary transformation. This subject supposedly had an implicit self-interest in socialism, and when he realised this he would rise up and dismantle capitalism. History shows that we cannot rely on the logic of immanence. And perhaps Bauman's argument would be improved if he steered clear of such reasoning even if the influence of immanent logic hovers between the stated and implicit.

- **The Problem of Financial Feasibility Still Persists**

³⁴ As John Pilger makes clear the Multilateral Agreement on Investment would have has significant repercussions:

Behind closed doors, the world's richest nations had been negotiating a Multilateral Agreement on Investment which would give multinational corporations unprecedented powers over governments and local communities across the world (2005).

At a stroke it would have given corporations the right to circumvent national environmental and labour law, and any attempt to block their potentially damaging behavior would have meant nation states having to pay compensation to the 'offended' corporation. In his book *Captive State: The Corporate Takeover of Britain* (2000, 302 - 330), Monbiot has demonstrated how such a proposal would have granted the same rights to corporations, as those that apply to humans; the significance of which are of considerable concern.

The problem of satisfying requests for demonstrating the affordability of a BI will not disappear despite Bauman's philosophical efforts to unleash paradigm-shifts in our thinking. Financing the BI still remains a real issue and will continue to do so if we wish to advance more generous forms. Perhaps we need a multifaceted approach to the affordability question, demonstrating that a modest BI is affordable in the here and now, therefore introducing the idea into the very core of society, as well as a discourse that outlines the possibility for a more generous and (globally) universal BI (see figure three below). Although, there is still room for political co-option and dilution, since power elites would most likely opt for the less troublesome and easily achievable version of a BI. In order to expand the debate, this would require a multiplication of discourses arguing for a BI. Although, one ought to concede that the BIEN forum does attempt to cultivate such a context.

- **Disengagement with the Political Economy of the Present**

This criticism shares parallels with the previous one. While it is important to critique the neo-liberal notion of globalisation which frames the contemporary BI debate, we should not be too quick to surrender the term 'globalisation' to a neo-liberal paradigm. For example Gorz, like Monbiot, reasons that:

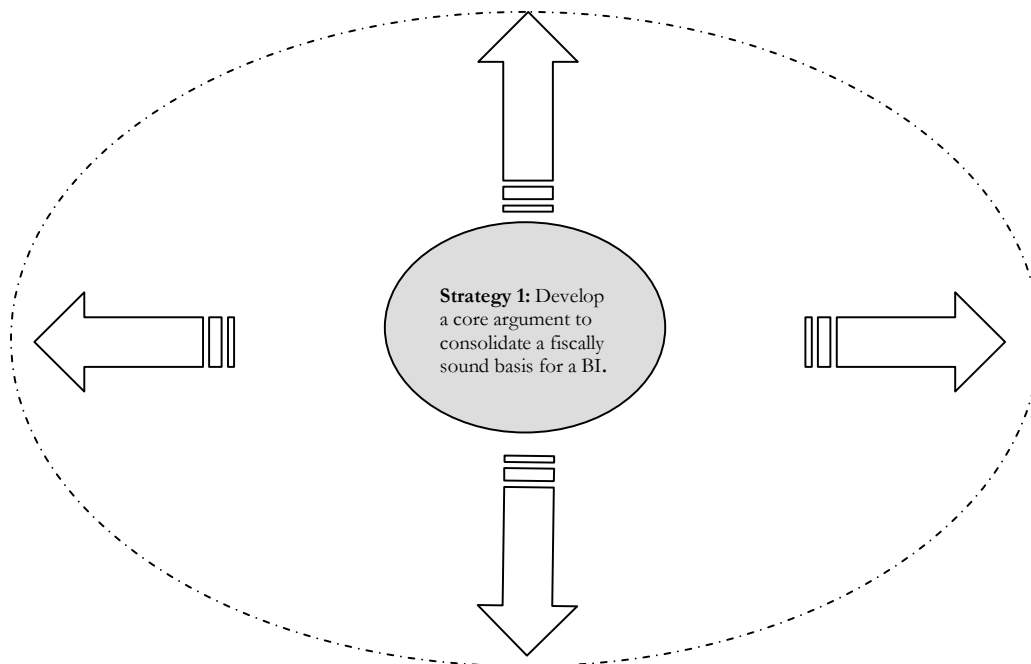
We should not be fighting globalization as such, seeking to pull back from it; we should rather be fighting within the context of the current globalization, for a different form of globalization (1999: 16).

Likewise, Daly argues that 'the left should demand more globalization not less' (Žižek & Daly, 2004: 17) to undo the 'widespread repression of those forms of research and development that have real emancipatory potential beyond exclusive profiteering' (Ibid.) In other words, by exposing the real potential(s) of globalisation, we also reveal the possibilities for radically transcending the economic limits of the present; one that circumvents hegemonic economic calculus. And to a large extent Bauman's perspective on the BI does encourage just such an endeavour, but he should be more explicit on this point. Nonetheless, even though one can sympathise with the impulse to reject affordability. One cannot leave affordability to neo-liberals. Perhaps there is need to articulate the affordability of a BI along new lines (i.e., social justice, equity, can we afford not to finance a BI (in terms of social and ecological costs) *et cetera*). Put another way, advocates of a BI should not let the concept of affordability be monopolised by neo-liberal semanticists alone.³⁵ In a sense, perhaps there is a need to *bend and tweak* the discourse in a more radical direction; one that circumvents the current hegemonic economic calculus whilst reminding mindful of the need to contend with hegemonic economic thinking; a scenario that is depicted diagrammatically below in figure three.

³⁵ There are some lessons of history here that we should heed and factor into this critical analysis. For example, Bauman's approach makes a similar mistake to the logic employed by the Second International, which did not see 'democracy' as something worth fighting for because it was viewed as irrevocably 'Bourgeois democracy'. It therefore relinquished any opportunity to reclaim it for a different (emancipatory) agenda. In 1930s Germany, the power vacuum left over by this capitulation was filled by the political right and the severe and tragic consequences of this hardly need to be mentioned.

Figure Three: A Two-Step Strategy to Expand the Feasibility Basis of the Basic Income

Strategy 2: Expand the parameters of the economic basis upon which a BI could be viable.



Key: Parameters of economic feasibility = - - - - -

As figure three demonstrates, perhaps there is a need to keep one eye on consolidating a fiscally sound and feasible argument for a BI by advancing a version of it which satisfies the demands of the economic hegemony of the present. In other words, there is a need to make the BI conform to the rigours of the existing economic-political establishment. This is necessary to win favour and recruit support from credible voices within the *status quo* in order to normalise and graft the idea onto the very tissue of society (e.g. as per strategy one). Such an approach could act as a solid launching pad which would permit a subsequent expansion programme of the BI; in a similar vein to Van Parijs' notion of the need for a *swelling* and *spreading* of the idea. Since the two strategies are best pursued simultaneously (although with an initially stronger emphasis on strategy one), strategy two would then come into play at the stage when strategy one has established a firm footing in society. This is because strategy two would have already been busy badgering away, advancing and expanding the parameters of economic feasibility, and therefore making the case for the plausibility of a more universal or generous BI through the aforementioned '*bend and tweak*' discursive approach. Such an approach might well provide an apt way to deal with the seemingly inescapable problem posed by the affordability/fiscal feasibility problem. Furthermore, it would also be useful in a general sense if the BI discourse expanded both the endogenous and exogenous debate, by identifying what is possible within national economies and at that international level. In fairness, theorists of the BI have attempted to do this, as demonstrated with the calculations of the Citizen's Income Trust which

have fulfilled the task of strategy one and likewise through the work of Frankman and Kunnerman which have satisfied strategy two.

- **The Problem of Political Counter-modelling**

Bauman's argument seems to veer towards the logic of political counter-modelling. Surely to bring the BI closer to political reality, we need to be radicalising the existing structures and agencies of power rather than displacing the avenues for political change, elsewhere and elsewhere to some as of yet unspecified context/entity. Bauman's aim ought not to be to create a new *socialist system*, but to formulate a mode of socio-economic organisation in which non-systemic autonomous activities and goals are regarded as highly as those which take place within the sphere of market governed activity. Therefore, the move towards a beyond capitalism does not necessarily involve a quantum leap or break to some radical *Other*, where grandiose counter-modelling politics is pursued. Thus if Bauman is interested in operationalising a beyond capitalism he might better achieve such an aim, by conceiving of it as a process of surpassing/transcending (through and by capitalism). In a metaphysical sense, the movement beyond capitalism is perhaps better understood as a reformulation or the taking of an exit route rather than a violent break or rupture.

- **Lack of Recognition of Contextual Diversity**

Another critique that could be levelled at the instantaneity approach to the BI is that it is too totalising and lacks an awareness of contextual diversity. For instance, a radical instantaneous implementation of a BI may not be that impossible or strange a thing to envisage for the Nordic countries and other nation states with a history of a welfare/social state. Whereas, in a context where the social state is unheard of, other, more gradual approaches might be more appropriate. Perhaps the instantaneity approach is guilty of a fiscal ethnocentrism or myopia in this instance. It looks at the debate from a perspective far too heavily grounded within the context of the advanced capitalist countries. Thus, there is a need to recognise contextual dissonance, i.e., the diversity of contexts, stages and circumstances that befall the political implementation of a proposal like the BI. What is possible in one place is not possible in another place.

- **Rapid Gradualism: A Third Way Between Gradualism and Instantaneity**

Clearly, the approaches of Bauman and gradualists such as Offe, Veen and Groot, have their respective merits, and thus so as not to lose the advantages of both, perhaps BIEN's best bet it to pursue a fusion of the two approaches so as to preserve the best aspects of the two approaches, and dispense with their less attractive and more cumbersome features too. This combined approach, can best be described as *rapid gradualism*.

Rapid gradualism recognises that what is possible in one place is not possible in another place, and the speed with which we can implement a proposal will differ depending on context. Perhaps a more appropriate way to think about the degree of radicalness and speed with which to advance the BI is encapsulated by Van Parijs' *MAYA* principle.³⁶ He suggests that political and economic feasibility should be based on the idea that we must aim for the *most advanced yet achievable goals* in any given context. In other words, in every context we must attempt to apply the BI as rapidly as is possible but without cutting off our nose to spite our face by trying to be too puritanical in our

³⁶ This idea was delivered at the closing ceremony of the BIEN 2004 conference in Barcelona.

approach. This might be the best watchword by which to forward a BI. Whilst Bauman is encouraging us to avoid the perils of gradualism, Van Parijs and Suplicy³⁷ urge us to stay alert to the dangers of instantaneity. Suplicy does this by quoting Martin Luther King's beautiful and eloquent warning against this seductive revolutionary impulse in his 1963 'I have a Dream' speech which, incidentally, was delivered in the midst of incendiary racial tension and, where the attraction of instantaneity was no doubt very alluring:

This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling or to take the tranquillising drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy.... It would be fatal for the nation to overcome the urgency of the moment... But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads to the palace of justice... Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred... Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with *soul force* (*my emphasis*, cited in Suplicy, 2006: 8).

Suplicy uses this quote to remind us not to set up all those who appear to block out political demands and desires as sources of no-hope as the approach of instantaneity seems to imply. In an almost Gandhian and biblical way, he recognises that the 'enemy' can be *bent* to our demands. We should not rule out the possibility of assistance from unlikely, seemingly inhospitable, sources. We should not burn our bridges. For Suplicy, the right path for a BI 'is to move gradually, but rapidly, in the right direction of a full basic income' (2006). This kind of sense is lacking in the Bauman zero-sum game approach. The utopian realism exuded by Van Parijs and Suplicy may then be a more appropriate way to think of forwarding a BI at the global level, and advocates of pure gradualism and unadulterated instantaneity ought to remain mindful of this perspective also. Moreover, might not the flexibility of a rapid gradualist approach to a BI provide a pole of coherence and garner a political movement around this idea, so much so, that pressure is exerted on mainstream politics and economic power so that change follows.

Conclusion

Bauman is not in denial of the enormity of the task involved in implementing a global BI or even regional or national BI programmes, especially as an instantaneous and radical measure to develop a secure egalitarian world. Nor does he assume that a BI will automatically provide an exit route to a different society. However there are reasons to be cheerful and optimistic.³⁸ There is clear evidence

³⁷ It is interesting that, on the subject of gradualism, Suplicy quotes Martin Luther King's poetic appeal to resist the temptation of instantaneity and immediacy. This is because Suplicy's differing position from Bauman's mirrors the difference between King and Malcolm X. At the same time as King was preaching non-violent gradualism, the Black power and civil-rights' movement also had a less-compromising wing: that which was represented by Malcolm X. X's position of 'by any means necessary' can be likened to Bauman's notion of immediacy. Sometimes political trends do come full circle.

³⁸ We should always remain mindful that seemingly 'radical' proposals have ushered in positive social change and made that which has seemed unthinkable quite possible and perfectly 'natural'; a lesson from history highly applicable to the BI. For example, to the poor and destitute of early 20th century Britain, it would have seemed unthinkable that the notion of free universal health care (at the point of delivery) would have become a staple component of British society. Today the principle of a free National Health Service is so deeply ingrained in the British psyche that *The Financial Times* has lamented that the British public are 'hopelessly collectivist' when it comes to health care (cited in Pilger, 1999: 11). When considering social change we must, therefore, retain an *historical perspective* and not wantonly dismiss potentially life-improving proposals just because they appear ambitious or unconventional, or worse, commit the error of assuming they will never come into being because the current social-historical juncture does not appear particularly conducive to their realisation. Of course, there are perhaps more examples that suggest a more pessimistic interpretation of social change since we have come close to nuclear immolation and the biosphere is hardly fairing too well at present. Nevertheless, it is important to

that *states* - and the pluralised sense of *states* is emphasised here - are 'not without the prerequisite levers for changing the direction and nature of globalisation' (Gorz, 1999: 16). They can intervene and transform global capitalism, but not if they act alone. And if we step out of the nation-state mindset, Bauman also maintains that unconventional political forces, such as those manifested in the various world and continental social forums, could evolve to provide an alternative force of change as Monbiot outlines in *The Age of Consent* (2003). Still, even the more promising regions of the world are not that hospitable to the BI. For instance Europe is often cited as a possibility, but as Will Hutton argues, contemporary Europe can hardly be thought of as an ideal 'social space' with all its mini power struggles and differences (2003: 189). Nevertheless, there has been evidence indicative of Europe emerging as the social space in which 'positive integration' could occur (Hutton; 2003: 291).³⁹ However, even more recently the clime down on the EU constitution undermines this idea. Having said this, it has been well documented how the 'no' to further EU integration was more of a 'no' to the state of national politics (i.e. a protest vote) than some highly self-conscious vote against a social Europe.

The value of this exploration of Bauman's thoughts on the BI is that it valorises the importance of utopian thought that shakes up the dominant discourse on the BI. It is a morale boost and compliment to advocates of the BI that such a prestigious thinker believes the BI has real potential. It re-ignites the radical thrust of the debate. It encourages us to think outside of our comfort zones and to think against ourselves in constructive ways. In particular, his affordability argument gives us an important counter-intellectual argument in dealing with objections of detractors on the affordability approach to plausibility. This paper therefore encourages us to explore Bauman's views more deeply. It is not as if the current agreed approach for advancing the BI has to be the only one we should consider.

And one very important insight that Bauman's thesis brings to the fore, is that the difficulty in radically altering the human condition is not so much due to a dearth of transformative ideas or pragmatic possibilities; rather it is due to *a lack of political will and resolve*. Bauman's paper illuminates an extremely germane, yet frequently over-looked, observation about contemporary capitalism: *that it has generated the very conditions necessary for its own transcendence*. The value of his argument lies in the fact that it helps us consider the maximum number of paths that can be constructed out of capitalism for creating a more egalitarian and humane capitalism, where citizens can expect quite normally to have access to economic rights such as a BI. This is important because it demonstrates that capitalism does carve out exit-routes/emancipatory moments and alternative possibilities for reconstituting our world. As Bauman has argued elsewhere, it is important to understand that social arrangements are essentially arbitrary and discretionary and thus by, 'Being arbitrary, they may as well be replaced with other arrangements, if only the case for such a replacement could be convincingly made' (Bauman, 1998b: 95). By recognising that our social world is unfixed and malleable Bauman permits us a glimpse of how it could be progressively altered; and herein lies one of the key assets of his thinking.

remain mindful that there is always an opportunity for progressive social change, and it is worth striving for these things simply because they are possible and quite simply if we do not strive for them, they will never come to be. Thus, it is very possible that the same recursive logic ought to be applied to a BI. In fact a BI could become a new form of political common sense, so much so, that a consensus is established around it and it continues to normalise and encourage new forms of better social conditions to blossom.

³⁹ By 'positive integration', Hutton means the building of coalitions for positive action among EU member states, rather than the negative integration which has dominated EU politics so far, which is characterised by a tendency to dismantle rules and regulations at the national level without the power to build-up at a European-wide level. Therefore the BI could act as a common theme around which European member states and a new and effective European, perhaps global, Left could unite.

In short, Bauman essentially sees a rejuvenated, democratic political sphere as necessary if capitalism is to be controlled. Democracy is not possible if the polity is made up of insecure people, and this is why the BI is important; it could radically reduce insecurity. Thus his main argument for a BI (1999: 182-3) is political. All the radical potential of BI remains as *potential* without a radicalised democracy (a classic chicken-egg problem).

It seems that one way out of this paradox, is along the same lines as that embodied in the strategy of *rapid gradualism* (which factors into its rationale the Baumanian perspective) which could develop a campaign for an unconditional BI whilst constructing a radical democratic movement at the same time. Fortunately this is what some key thinkers such as Suplicy and Van Parijs seem to be thinking. Finally, even if one is not swayed by any aspects of Bauman's argument, as the very least his short passage on the BI would certainly prove to be an engaging read to all those interested in the BI.

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