

CATEGORY: DIVERSE WORLDVIEWS ON BASIC INCOME

Kristiina Hyryläinen

Finland

FROM NEGATIVE HUMAN CONCEPT TO NEUTRAL HUMAN CONCEPT

The current undemocratic, unfair and resource-centered economic system has drifted into a situation most strikingly described by two extremes: a few billionaires who own as much as half of humanity on one end and millions of poor refugees who own nothing on the other. The reason for this development is the preferential laws embedded in the current economic system.

However, a growing number of people consider the above developments unfair and immoral. Fortunately, the desire to help those in need is on the rise. The idea of a universal, unconditional basic income that guarantees even a minimum income for everyone has been developed to achieve a more even distribution of wealth.

Why, then, has there not been more support for basic income? Is it due to the following two arguments? The first being that there is not enough money for it. That is easy to knock off: there has been, and still is, enough to give to those who already have plenty. Or is the lack of support due to the particular concept of man created by religions claiming that there are "good" people and "bad" people: the good to be given money, the bad to be left without any? Christian ethics underlies all Western ethics.

In Christianity, which I use here as an example, even the initial position is already unfavorable to "man": above is the almighty, perfect, good God, and below is the powerless, imperfect, evil "man". It is our job to love and worship this God. The generalization of "man" binds us all to this equation. The Holy Bible, which represents the Word of God and the stories it contains, builds a "vicious circle" of eternal guilt for "man": the Fall, the Expulsion from Paradise, and the curse of man.

Christianity is a primitive sacrificial religion where the purpose of Jesus' sacrificial death was to atone for "all our sins" to redeem humanity. However, the most severe guilt to which "man" is doomed to be bound arises from the death of Jesus. "People" shouted: "Crucify, Crucify"! Nobody has yet reconciled Jesus's death: it remains an eternal "sin." We all are evil.

However, the current economic system includes the possibility for a person to be "good": if you are a "productive" individual. (In the world of vanishing jobs, even this will be hard to fulfill). The roots of this idea, too, can be found in the Bible. The Parable of Gold Bags (Matthew 25: 14-31) clearly states it and at the same time happens even to conceal the unequal foundation of our economic system. In particular, the last two verses 29 and 30 of the parable are essential: "For every one that hath is given, and hath an abundance; but he that hath not shall take away what he hath. And cast that unworthy servant out into the darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth".

Luckily, faith is not knowledge!

Schools have taught religions for ages. The school must, however, share knowledge, not beliefs. When teaching religion, it is misleading to give the impression that the Bible is anything else but fiction. But as long as it is considered a history book, the negative concept of man continues to prevail. Schools can, of course, teach what different people believe in.

How much evil religions have done by dividing people into groups that fight each other!

I was programmed as a child to believe that it was true that God exists, that he sees me all the time and can even read my mind. What a childhood Orwellian "Big Father" nightmare! Besides that, I felt a vague feeling of shame and guilt as a heavy burden all the time. In the evening prayer, I was comforted by the fact that unless I wake up in the morning, God will take me to heaven. It was not easy to fall asleep, and the thought of the possibility of having to leave for the unknown and part from my loved ones felt creepy!

Updating oneself and getting rid of old beliefs stored in the subconscious mind in childhood is a time-consuming and challenging process. I have had to rethink my opinions on several essential questions: patriarchal dominance, the position of women, sexuality, etc. Sometimes I would have wanted to sue someone (if only I had known who) for the crime of the brainwashing-like way in which I was forced to believe in things that were not true. I firmly refuse to think that I am basically evil, a sinner.

Isn't it high time to update the negative concept of man and change it to a neutral one! We have to give up believing in ancient stories defining us fundamentally imperfect and evil. We have to start treating people as individuals instead of members of different groups.

What is the neutral concept of man?

The neutral concept of man means that all human beings are equal, valuable, and perfect as human beings without any comparison, just like all the other living creatures are allowed to be. Every one of us strives to do one's best. There are more good deeds than evil deeds in the world today. Only deeds do matter, and everyone is responsible for one's own: every act contains either a reward or a penalty. It is clear that in the right conditions, it is easier for a person to do well than in poor ones. That is why everyone must be guaranteed the best possible conditions to live a decent human life. Because in today's world, one cannot live without money, basic income plays a vital role in creating these conditions.

The current unequal economic system must be broken up and updated as soon as possible. But as long as the current system and the accelerating process of inequality continue to thrive and support undemocratic wealth distribution, the introduction of basic income is essential. As a result of it, global competitive pressure between people will diminish, which in turn contributes to the fight against climate change. Universal, unconditional basic income is the first concrete step towards a more humane world.

The all-important thing in life, however, is to love and serve fellow human beings.