

Universal Basic Income and Recognition Theory

A Tangible Step towards an Ideal

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This paper attempts to advance the philosophical recognition debate by exploring recognition theory as a means to justify a concrete policy innovation in the form of Universal Basic Income. The first part of this endeavour involves a comparative evaluation of various theories of recognition so as to ensure an appropriate normative foundation. Having extracted the elements of Axel Honneth's theory of recognition that are significant for the justification of UBI, I trace the recognition implications of this policy innovation from initial feelings of disrespect under current welfare and employment arrangements to the potential impact of particular modifications.

First, it is necessary to say something about the type of UBI I envision. If the tax base is to be used to finance the UBI, the incentive to take part in paid work must be sufficiently high to sustain the grant. Conversely, unless the basic income is of a reasonably high level such that an individual could subsist upon it, the potential for radical change is much reduced. Therefore, although feasible and progressive models do exist that provide a low-level unconditional grant, the level of UBI required for most of the potential effects I outline must be broadly equivalent to a guarantee of material subsistence.

Many justifications of UBI outline its potential role in removing poverty traps and empowering low-wage workers by increasing the autonomy and preserving the dignity of those most dependent on conditional state benefits and precarious employment. It is these aspects that appear to resonate with much of the

recognition literature, and in particular with those asserting the close link between recognition deficits and distributional struggles. Despite its initial appearance as a purely redistributive measure, UBI captures the intuition at the heart of recent recognition literature claiming that equality is as much about respect as redistribution (Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

Recognition is increasingly being used to ‘unpack political claims’ (Honneth & Fraser, 2003, 1) in contexts where traditional concepts of injustice are found to be deficient. So what exactly is meant by recognition? Owen and Tully’s adaptation of the normative sense of the term denotes ‘*acknowledging an object of value in a way that is appropriately responsive to its value*’ (2007, 266). In context, the basic idea underlying theories of recognition is that persons need to have their individual identities ‘recognised’ in the same way they value themselves in order to flourish as human beings. What this entails varies from one account to another, but it broadly requires that each individual must be affirmed for his or her innate characteristics and contributions¹.

The body of literature attempting to justify UBI as a simple but robust idea that empowers the vulnerable and helps to eradicate extreme poverty is vast, and anyone hoping to add to the debate must be clear about the contribution they claim to make. First, it must be established that recognition is currently under-theorised in the UBI debate. Despite a good foundation in terms of specifying the potential for empowerment and the consequences for feminist goals, the failure to link UBI with a suitable theory of recognition represents a missed opportunity to exploit another well founded justification of this versatile policy.

Part of the reason why recognition does not immediately spring to mind in discussions of UBI is the failure of traditional recognition theorists such as Taylor (1992) and Young (2001) to adequately address redistributive struggles. For this

¹ This explanation is more representative of Honneth, Taylor and Young than Fraser, who resists recognition as a view of human flourishing.

reason I focus on theorists such as Nancy Fraser (2001; 2003) and Axel Honneth (1995; 2003), both of whom attempt to theorise the relationship between recognition and redistribution that is, I claim, at the heart of UBI's potential accomplishments.

Setting the normative foundations - redistribution and recognition?

A close examination of the debate between Honneth and Fraser on the link between redistribution and recognition yields the conclusion that Honneth's theory is more appropriate for the purpose of an exploration of the recognition implications of UBI. There are several reasons for this, primarily concerning the more limited notion of recognition employed by Fraser, which refers only to cultural status. Fraser argues that status inequalities that deny individuals the opportunity to participate on a par with others are unjust. 'Precluded, therefore, are institutionalised value patterns that deny some people the status of full partners in interaction – whether by burdening them with excessive ascribed 'difference' or by failing to acknowledge their distinctiveness' (Fraser, 2003b, 36). Put simply, Fraser's approach interprets recognition from the point of view of the status order of society (Thompson, 2009, 57).

In contrast, Honneth is less directly concerned with status hierarchies, and more with how value is bestowed upon individuals in society, as well as how relations of recognition are reproduced over time. Honneth's basic approach is to link together a theory of human flourishing with a social theory outlining the conditions needed to achieve this. More specifically, he differentiates three spheres in which identity formation takes place, linking these to normative practices of social integration existing in society, and subsequently outlining the

manner in which these relations of recognition are reproduced over time, gradually approaching conditions of self-realisation for all individuals.

In the first and most basic recognition sphere of 'love', individuals develop the self-confidence to express their needs without fear of abandonment. While this sphere, because it refers to special organic relationships, does not contain the potential for normative development, it is intimately connected with the other spheres of recognition, in particular legal recognition (Honneth, 1995, 176). In the second sphere of 'legal relations', the normative thrust is that everybody should be respected as the holder of legal rights (Honneth, 1995, 108-9). These rights, enshrined in liberal societies, require a minimum level of mutual respect between all people. To whom these rights are granted is a matter for debate, and as Honneth demonstrates, the category of 'rights-holders' is constantly being expanded to include women, homosexuals and other oppressed groups (Honneth, 1995, 115-6).

Finally Honneth develops the sphere of 'esteem', in which individuals appeal to the achievement principle for recognition of their particular characteristics, accomplishments and talents (Honneth, 1995, 122). It might easily be taken from this idea that relations of recognition should be expanded to include all conceptions of the good life, no matter what their content, a requirement that is understandably both unrealistic and unappealing. To combat this, Honneth states that the correct interpretation of the achievement principle should be the subject of intensive debate, and does not necessarily require the acceptance of practices that are detrimental to the common goals of society, because changes must be adequately justified according to the values of that community. Thus identity claims that call for the annulment of women's rights to property will understandably not be affirmed under optimum conditions, as they cannot be justified according to the recognition principles as currently understood in liberal societies.

Honneth views the process of reducing distortions and imbalances in the application of the achievement principle as resulting naturally in the expansion of relations of recognition, as more social movements emerge from existing experiences of injustice. The most obvious example of this process of course is the reproductive activity of child-rearing and housework. Expanded relations of recognition here are the result of on-going conflict and debate as regards the equal worth of paid activities and unpaid child-rearing. The granting of respect is therefore always an inter-subjective process that emerges as a result of a change in the accepted interpretation of common values, and is not the end result of a form of thought-police.

Honneth's emphasis on the Hegelian idea of a 'struggle' for recognition shows that the interpretation of the normative principles of recognition is gradually altered over time with the occurrence of new challenges. Rather than speaking of contradiction or the suppression of conflicting values, we can understand steps towards human flourishing (in other words the expansion of relations of recognition) as learning or developmental processes over time and across populations. These changes ultimately affect the application of principles of recognition in the three spheres, and are entwined with reproduction of social values rather than simply changes in individual attitudes. Societal transformation and the expansion of relations of recognition thus occur when the justification used to legitimise certain practices is invalidated and re-invented as a result of social struggles.

Despite the attractiveness of Fraser's conception of participatory parity in many respects, if we are looking for the most appropriate theory of recognition (rather than a theory of justice) Honneth's theory appears to offer more. Fraser's theory neglects those recognition spheres that cannot be subsumed under status inequalities. This includes a number of what Honneth would term experiences of disrespect that emerge in everyday life. For example, while Fraser's theory can

easily take account of the African-American Wall Street banker who cannot get a taxi (Fraser, 2003b, 34), it is less capable of exploring the recognition implications (as opposed to the impact on participatory parity) of, say for example, an increase in voluntary work. Similarly, it is difficult to see how Fraser's model can describe the recognition effects of the conditionality of the welfare state, as the idea of 'status' can only go so far here.

More importantly for my purposes, Fraser understands the call for material distribution primarily as an economic struggle, not as a demand for recognition. Superficially, UBI represents a redistributive measure and a guarantee of subsistence needs. However, I view the core of this policy, and the feature that distinguishes it from other proposals, as a call for recognition of the fundamental worth and autonomy of human beings. Where Fraser, then, analyses UBI from the perspective of redistribution, seeing it as a 'nonreformist reform' that leaves 'intact the deep structure of capitalist property rights' (2003b, 78), she misses the extent to which UBI addresses distortions in how the achievement principle is interpreted, and concentrates on the status inequalities of gender. Of course, distortions in recognition principles do impede parity of participation, but it is clear that Fraser's concept of recognition is not sufficiently expansive to capture all the feelings of misrecognition that UBI has the potential to address. In other words, concentrating on Fraser's participatory parity risks revisiting old justifications for UBI rather than offering a new perspective based on the alternative normative base of recognition.

Recognition, Democracy and the Division of Labour

In order to fully explore the recognition implications of UBI using Honneth's recognition theory, it is necessary to understand the manner in which he

subsumes distributive struggles under the category of recognition struggles using a theory of radical democracy. Put simply, Honneth sees some form of a radical democratic problem-solving culture as essential in the foundation of those conflictual episodes which result in expanded recognition relations.

Rather than choosing between proceduralist and republican alternatives to liberal democracy, Honneth advocates Dewey's contention that an orientation to democracy evolves from a model of social cooperation. In contemporary societies that cannot with ease be said to have common, cooperative goals, Honneth sees a just division of labour as a pre-requisite to the evolution of these modes of social interaction (Honneth, 1998, 775). When a just division of labour is instituted, the kinds of pre-political association emerge that are necessary to ensure the utilisation of democratic procedures as mechanisms of joint problem-solving (Honneth, 1998, 777).

This requires that a wider range of cooperative activities be esteemed if they are demonstrably working towards common societal goals. It is unreasonable to argue that those who do not contribute to society, or those who do not receive esteem for their contribution, are still well placed to participate in democratic processes of cooperative problem-solving.² The solution to an unjust, asymmetrical division of labour is therefore much more radical than mere redistribution, although this is clearly an integral part of the granting of esteem. With this argument, not only is Honneth's ability to conceptualise and justify a range of distributive struggles solidified, but the normative foundation for UBI also seems to be established subject to certain conditions.

² This aspect of Honneth's theory obviously leads to the undesirable conclusion that those unable to contribute to society are incapable of achieving human flourishing via reciprocal recognition. Despite my uneasiness with this, I do not see an alternative method of subsuming distributive struggles under Honneth's encompassing theory of recognition.

Instituting UBI – direct and indirect effects on relations of recognition

This section outlines the two most important points of intersection between recognition and UBI. The first of these surrounds the direct effects that UBI could have on relations of recognition, particularly in the spheres of legal recognition and esteem. The second offers some more speculative remarks about the possibility of further indirect expansion in relations of recognition once UBI has been instituted. By way of introduction to each of these arguments, I outline specific areas in which current interpretations of recognition principles deny the opportunity of some individuals to have their social contribution recognised, and then show how UBI might affect current conditions.

The more significant denial of recognition for my purposes is the refusal to grant the necessary material security to enable basic relations of reciprocal recognition. In other words I argue that adequate and mutual relations of recognition are made impossible by the lack of an unconditional guarantee of material security. The second manner in which recognition is denied under current relations of recognition is via the arbitrary prioritisation of paid forms of work over non-remunerated forms of work. Having demonstrated, with reference to Honneth's theory, how each of these current forms of recognition are detrimental to achieving the ideal he sets out in *The Struggle for Recognition* (1995), I argue that UBI can have a significant impact on relations of recognition, and is therefore not just a redistributive tool. I also deal with some objections to my arguments, questioning both my deprecation of the role of paid work in individual development, and also the ability of UBI to directly impact relations of recognition in the manner I outline.

A good starting point is Honneth's foundational view of recognition, which emphasises mutual recognition in particular. In other words positive self-relation can only occur where the source of love, respect or esteem is reciprocally recognised as worthy of recognition (Honneth, 1995, 92).

For only by participating in interactions whose normative preconditions include reciprocal orientation to specific principles of recognition can individuals experience the enduring value of their specific capacities for others (Honneth, 2003b, 143).

Without this reciprocity, an asymmetrical relationship evolves whereby one side may love, respect or esteem the other in a specific capacity, but this is of no benefit or advantage where the feelings are not mutual. It is also important here to outline Honneth's ideal of what constitutes a good society. As Anderson (Honneth, 1995, xvii) succinctly explains, Honneth

claims that a good society, a society in which individuals have a real opportunity for full self-realization, would be a society in which the common values would match the concerns of individuals in such a way that no member of society would be denied the opportunity to earn esteem for his or her contribution to the common good.

Over time, and perhaps across generations, incompatible views will give way to more developed and encompassing forms of recognition.

Material security and recognition

While the republican tradition as far back as Aristotle sees the conditions of freedom as being determined by the possession of property, Rawls argues that 'without self-respect, one is as good as socially paralysed, for nothing seems worth doing' (Raventós, 2007, 37). I argue that these two are inseparable, and that in capitalist societies in particular, relations of material dependence cannot result in positive reciprocal recognition.

While it may seem absurd today to exclude those without property from participation in politics, the foundations of this policy are not so easily dismissed.

The debate over the ability of those without independent means to truly contribute to political affairs goes back at least as far as ancient Greece, and beyond superficial justifications such as 'having a stake in what goes on', surrounds the ability to make free choices. Fundamentally, if one is dependent on another for the means to exist, one cannot be said to be free. And if individuals without independent means are vulnerable to the will of others, their reasons for participating in politics is defeated, as they merely reinforce the power of the wealthy.

The obvious reply to this argument, then, is that every individual should be equipped with the resources necessary to participate in society. This view was to the fore in the debate preceding the establishment of the welfare state, where it was considered unwise to expand suffrage without also granting rights such as education and basic needs. As Daniel Raventós remarks, 'the republican tradition affirms that when citizens have a material base for their autonomous social existence guaranteed by the republic, they can develop the capacity of self-government in their private lives' (Raventós, 2007, 65).

The implications of this view for relations of mutual recognition are not hard to see. If there is some truth in Marx's pronouncement that those without independent means of subsistence must seek the permission of others in order to exist, it would seem unlikely that reciprocal recognition could occur (Raventós, 2007, 107-9). Where an individual's choices are bound by the obligation to accept waged work from employers, how can employer and employee respect each other as self-governing individuals? Of course, dependence no longer means having to vote in public for your landlord or employer, but the effects are still evident when, for example, workers shoulder the financial burden of seasonal or cyclical depressions in sales.

An individual who must work at a job she doesn't enjoy, at times and with wages not of her own choosing, and subject constantly to the fear of losing her income and its associated benefits cannot be respected by others in the same way that those who have an independent income are. The same could be said of those self-employed individuals who are entirely dependent on powerful actors within their marketplace, such that their survival rests on submitting to conditions set almost exclusively by others.

It is true that modern welfare states and measures such as minimum wage and working conditions legislation do mitigate the effects of this imbalance by preventing employers from exploiting their power excessively. As Honneth points out,

The development of social-welfare measures can be understood such that individual members of society should be guaranteed a minimum of social status and hence economic resources independently of the meritocratic recognition principle by transforming these claims into social rights (Honneth, 2003b, 147).

However, access to a secure and unconditional means of subsistence is still not a reality, as welfare assistance is accompanied by the condition that paid work is continually sought. The role played by unemployment benefits here is merely moderating the totalising effects of this power relation slightly, whilst constantly propelling individuals back into the hands of employers. In conditions where job offers must be accepted (a concept that has prominently entered the Irish debate surrounding welfare in recent times), the power relationship between employer and employee is left almost entirely intact, thus diminishing the prospect of reciprocal recognition further.

Even where certain forms of esteem are granted in an employer-employee relationship, the basis of any mutual recognition in the sphere of legal respect must be an acknowledgement of a self-governing capacity. While this capacity should ideally be considered universal regardless of abilities or means, it is clear

that certain conditions must be met before legal recognition is expanded to all parties. These conditions include a minimum standard of education and, I argue, an independent means of subsistence that undermines the capitalist power relation.

For the normative argument which made social-welfare guarantees in a certain sense “rationally” unavoidable is essentially the hardly disputable assertion that members of society can only make actual use of their legally guaranteed autonomy if they are assured a minimum of economic resources, irrespective of income (Honneth, 2003b, 149).

It is no great leap therefore, to see how UBI can help to equalise relations among individuals, so that each can view the others as self-governing, as having the means to choose between meaningful goals. In fact Honneth advocates something of this nature himself, asserting that legal recognition requires that a certain level of economic security be provided (Honneth, 2003b, 152-3). UBI opens up this opportunity, not by weakening the stigma of dependence, but by eliminating the totalising forms of material dependency.

It is essential that material security be guaranteed without conditions, as this stipulation solidifies its status as a right and differentiates it from welfare benefits. In other words only the autonomy granted in an unconditional guarantee of subsistence can lead to the expansion of reciprocal legal recognition.

It is also important to outline another aspect of UBI that may have a significant effect on recognition relations. One of the primary differences between UBI and the majority of current welfare arrangements is that UBI is allocated on an individual, as opposed to a household basis. This may have a considerable impact in households forms of totalising dependency comparable to those outlined above exist, particularly because these relationships are considered ‘private’ and are therefore difficult to regulate. In other words, on a micro level, UBI reduces extreme forms of dependency within families and households where reciprocal recognition is impossible under current relations of recognition, even in the

absence of a more fundamental transformation in recognition relations.

Interestingly, this development may also have a positive effect on relations of love and care, by encouraging housing arrangements based on genuine affection rather than economic necessity.

An obvious objection here that relies on psychological theories of development is that UBI renders everyone dependent, effectively neglecting the vital developmental stage of learning to provide for oneself (see Maslow (1970), for example). There are two ways of understanding this objection. The first may be more simply stated as asserting that paid work is integral to human development. Another, more sophisticated representative of this view is Amartya Sen, who points to the apathetic approach to growing unemployment in Europe as opposed to the self-help attitude prevalent in the United States (Sen, 1997). Whilst not condoning the low-wage working conditions in the U.S., Sen questions the 'smugness' of Europe when it comes to economic inequalities, applauding the American emphasis on the right to work. This view is founded on a comprehensive survey of the effects of unemployment on everyday functionings, not just on economic factors, and overall makes a good case for according paid work a central role in any theory of justice.

Particularly relevant here is Sen's portrayal of the psychological and motivational effects of unemployment. He also cites skill loss, ill-health, and a range of tangible harms associated with being out of work, all of which represent strong reasons to suppose that paid employment is vital for human flourishing (Sen, 1997, 161-2). Unless it can be shown that UBI combats these effects, which are clearly relevant for recognition relations, the case is very much weakened.

A simple but powerful rebuttal to the prioritisation of paid work in developmental theories is that it neglects entirely the other forms of subsistence work that are non-remunerated. One of the goals of UBI, according to Raventós, is

to bestow on the population at large a privilege that has previously been granted only to the very rich, namely the choice of when to work for a living (2007, 130). It seems implausible to suggest that anyone who relies on a safety net from wealthy parents is in some sense developmentally defective. Given the correct supports and social values, those who benefit from a guarantee of material subsistence would seem to be more capable of reaching the higher developmental stages than those confined to meeting subsistence needs. Taken from a distance, the prioritisation of remunerated work as a developmental necessity is insulting to those who are forced to work in order to survive, and reflects ideology rather than an authoritative theory of psychological development.

The second understanding of the emphasis on remunerated forms of work in human development is that these forms of work currently fulfil vital functions, even if these developmental functions could foreseeably be performed by other activities. This view cannot be easily dismissed, as it takes account of how deeply rooted the ideas are about the importance of paid work. Paid employment is currently understood as the only legitimate way of securing one's basic needs. Absent a more diverse division of labour whereby one's needs are met through the fulfilment of unpaid duties, paid work is an integral part of the process of becoming independent. In order to respond to this understanding of the objection, a more thorough investigation of Sen's paper, as well as the potential effects of UBI on recognition relations, is required.

Sen's analysis of the effects of unemployment goes beyond the psychological, and may have a considerable effect on our understanding of 'disrespect', and how it might be remedied. His main point is that unemployment must be judged in many different 'evaluative spaces' if it is to be properly understood. Besides the psychological consequences Sen is mindful of the loss of productive output and increased fiscal burden (1997, 160). Also important for our purposes, he cites a loss of freedom and the potential for social exclusion (1997, 160-1). Finally, Sen alludes

to the impaired family relations of the unemployed, the potential for gender and racial inequality to heighten in periods of high unemployment, and the loss of 'social values and responsibility' (1997, 163).

These are hard hitting criticisms of the continuing toleration of high levels of unemployment in Europe, and need to be dealt with comprehensively if UBI is to be understood as having a positive impact on recognition relations. Of course the main rebuttal of Sen's wider arguments here is that both the European and U.S. systems are wildly inadequate, and that we should refuse to make a choice between equally dysfunctional options. Perhaps it is necessary to examine the U.S. self-help culture a little more closely in order to show this. From Sen's analysis, we can see that the emphasis on the right to work is an alternative way of avoiding the totalising forms of dependency described above. If there are enough jobs available, workers ought to be able to refuse one job offer in favour of another, better offer. In this way, employers are obliged to offer competitive rates of pay and conditions, and workers are guaranteed access to a decent material standard of living.

On reflection however, this is an unrealistically optimistic scenario. Even if a large number of jobs were always available, few, if any, low-wage workers are capable of this kind of bargaining process due to massive inequalities in bargaining power. Even where options exist, the choice is generally between similar opportunities, and cannot be said to be a genuinely free choice. The result, therefore, is a requirement to submit to the conditions set by employers, effectively making reciprocal recognition impossible³.

³ Van Parijs' approach to the question of unemployment is to accept that jobs are limited in number, and represent 'the most significant category of assets ... people are endowed with' (1995, 90). Seen in this way, the Van Parijs argues that the scarcity of jobs means that 'those who hold them appropriate a rent which can be legitimately taxed away', giving rise to a UBI (1995, 90).

Paid work & recognition

This second section focuses on how the distorted emphasis on paid work over other non-remunerated forms of work has a detrimental effect on relations of recognition. More specifically it brings into focus how paid work is elevated above the fulfilment of the conditions for citizenship. For example, if the need for a material basis for democratic participation is taken seriously, why do current welfare arrangements come with conditions attached? The impact of current arrangements on recognition relations is significant. As Honneth (2003b, 141) explains,

the extent to which something counts as “achievement,” as a cooperative contribution, is defined against a value standard whose normative reference point is the economic activity of the independent, middle-class, male bourgeois. What is distinguished as “work,” with a specific, quantifiable use for society, hence amounts to the result of a group-specific determination of value – to which whole sectors of other activities, themselves equally necessary for reproduction (e.g. household work) fall victim.

Not only is paid work accorded an unjustifiably high level of esteem that denies a large proportion of the population the opportunity to have their activities recognised, it also impinges on legal relations of recognition by placing the economic goals of increased production above the right to a minimally decent standard of living. This encourages an instrumental view of those who cannot, or choose not to support themselves financially and impacts once again on the potential for reciprocal recognition of each individual’s self-governing capacity. A more nuanced approach would prioritise individual freedom, and the ability to choose, subject to the constraints imposed by a rational appraisal of the requirements of economic stability.

The primary effect that UBI would have on recognition relations would therefore be a solidification of legal relations of recognition via a guarantee of material

subsistence. In other words, it symbolically puts the welfare rights of individuals above the economic goal of ever more production (although without relinquishing it altogether) by strengthening the freedom to exit. This encourages the view that each individual is first and foremost inherently valuable, and not simply as a potential source of labour. As a member of a particular society, each individual is recognised as being worthy of the material security necessary to participate.

As things currently stand, a large proportion of the population is denied the opportunity to achieve equal esteem for similar activities because of the prioritisation of paid work over other forms of work.

If washing underpants is seen as work, it will be work in all three cases [remunerated, domestic and voluntary]. If it is not seen as work then it should not be seen as work in any of the three cases. What is shocking is that it is considered as work only when monetary remuneration is received (Raventós, 2007, 89).

This represents a clear distortion in the interpretation of the achievement principle, which should value like activities to the same degree. Once again, then, if the common values deny esteem to unpaid forms of work, the prospects of achieving reciprocal relations of esteem are reduced. So what can be done to encourage a more balanced interpretation? Clearly, attempting to put a monetary value on domestic and voluntary forms of work is unfeasible and therefore, given the failure to overturn the capitalist system thus far, a compromise must be reached.

While UBI cannot in itself correct the imbalance in the esteem dispositive, it makes a significant step in this regard by increasing the comparability of the various forms of work (Raventós, 2007, 86). One of the main justifications for prioritising paid forms of work is that it is essential for survival. 'One cannot view voluntary work as an 'alternative' to remunerated work precisely because, in the absence of other sources of income, the latter is essential for survival' (Raventós, 2007, 93). By

removing this consideration from the evaluation of the different kinds of work, the potential for a less distorted appraisal is increased.

Simultaneously UBI takes away one of the strongest claims to esteem. With such a scheme in place, it can no longer be argued that those in paid work should be esteemed in a special way as they are 'keeping food on the table and a roof over their heads'. These emotive phrases are indicative of the priority that is accorded to 'breadwinner' activities. If recognition is accorded in response to demands that particular activities be esteemed due to their social value, surely when the 'breadwinning' capacity is rendered inconsequential the accompanying justification will be similarly weakened. This is particularly important if the effects that Sen outlines are to be avoided. Much of the psychological distress and motivational loss that occurs during periods of unemployment is due to the stark inequalities in the way remunerated and other forms of work are esteemed.

This is not to say that the debate will not be transposed into the economic sphere, with even more emphasis placed on economic activities that fund welfare measures. Without the prioritisation of paid work for its role in the private sphere, it is quite likely that the health of the economy will become a contested domain. The discourse of 'spongers', although typical in a society that prizes material wealth over human dignity, is nonetheless potentially damaging to the realisation of Honneth's ideal. As will be seen in the final chapter, the diffusion of this conflict is contingent on a wider transformation in recognition relations in which the recognition sphere of esteem is expanded, and although UBI is not capable of directly tackling this discourse, it reinvigorates demands that indirectly target the denigration of unpaid work.

As Sen notes, the 'conflict between aggregative and distributive considerations' must be to the forefront of debates on inequality and unemployment (Sen, 1997, 155). However the manner in which he conceptualises this is, at times, quite

narrow. Of course, the economy must be maintained in a healthy state, but does this entail that all productive forces must be commodified? His assertion that unemployment results in an increased fiscal burden cannot be refuted, but I do reject the claim that it automatically entails a loss of productive output. This is only the case if the unemployed are confined to idleness by the conditions of welfare hand-outs.

Under current welfare arrangements it is almost impossible to know the potential or actual productive force of the unemployed, given undifferentiated titles such as 'jobseeker'. Not only do these categorisations encourage wholesale stigmatisation of entire segments of the population and prevent the balanced appraisal of each individual's actions, it also encourages the concealment of productive activities, ultimately to the detriment of recognition relations. If domestic and voluntary activities must be downplayed in the effort to secure welfare benefits under the title of jobseeker, how can these kinds of work ever be considered worthy of equal esteem? It is also worth considering that a society that values non-remunerated kinds of work might actually be more sustainable than one focused entirely on economic production, something I return to later in my rebuttal of Sen's final points.

UBI increases the range of options open to many, but does not guarantee recognition for unpaid forms of work just on the basis that it is unpaid. Demands for recognition ultimately come from individuals, or groups of individuals, for the value of their particular activity. Unpaid forms of work that fail to adequately justify the socially valuable dimension to their activities will not be esteemed. One of the important ways in which other forms of social contribution might gain recognition however, is from individuals *freely choosing* to exit the labour market in order to pursue domestic or voluntary work, which reinvigorates demands for recognition of certain unpaid activities. The fight for paid maternity and paternity leave has to a large extent legitimated and normalised taking time off in a child's

early life – it is now acceptable, although perhaps not esteemed to a fair degree, to exit the labour market to fulfil the necessary parental roles. Paternity leave in particular represents an important step in the recognition of domestic duties. Should increasing numbers exit the labour market, or reduce their working hours to pursue other tasks they see as worthwhile this in turn will trigger a reevaluation of certain activities, not least because these individuals will view their valid choices as equally worthy of esteem.

Once again mutual recognition of the capacity for self-government is vital here. If people freely choose to exit the labour market, or reduce their working hours, there is bound to be some adaptation in the interpretation of the achievement principle. This is also tied up with my rebuttal of Sen, in that he does not consider voluntary unemployment in his statistics. Those who freely exit the labour market in order to pursue other activities cannot but be seen to be exercising their autonomous capacities, and will be acknowledged as such. Also unaccounted for in Sen's analysis is the possibility that during periods of voluntary unemployment, individuals might pick up new skills. Thus while absence from the paid workforce may result in de-skilling in a particular area, new opportunities may open up that result in a diversification of skills.

It seems reasonable to assert, then, that if the primary aim of paid work is no longer to survive, the choice of profession is widened. Those who wish to gain financial rewards and the esteem of a contribution to the economy are encouraged, but not coerced into doing so. It is important to note that UBI does not aim to secure equal recognition for paid and unpaid forms of work. Rather, it opens up a space whereby more individuals are given the opportunity to secure adequate esteem for their unpaid contributions to society.

One important objection to my argument here is that UBI could not influence the kinds of changes I outline unless a significant transformation in relations of

recognition was already underway. The accusation, then, is that there is a certain circularity to my reasoning: UBI can change recognition relations, but it requires precisely those changes it generates to be in place for UBI to be sanctioned initially. In other words, reciprocal recognition of the self-governing capacity of individuals is a necessary requisite for a radical policy like UBI to be accepted. Unless the emotive language of welfare dependency and parasites is eradicated, how can a policy that relinquishes control of the miscreants in society be justified?

One way of approaching this question, is to assume that it is possible for UBI to be enacted on grounds independent of the autonomy of welfare recipients. Given the diversity of justificatory bases for UBI, this is certainly feasible, but leaves open the question of what impact the policy itself might trigger.

One of the major barriers to the kinds of reciprocal recognition advocated by Honneth is the stigma of financial dependency, and the normative assumptions that are made about welfare recipients. A UBI immediately blurs this distinction by making payments universal. Secondly, it begins to weaken the aforementioned 'special status' of breadwinning activities. This of course, takes time, but undoubtedly UBI renders this demand for esteem less valid even where entitlement is not widely recognised. In turn, then the ability to compare domestic, voluntary and remunerated work is increased. Specifically then, it is not that UBI ensures the alteration of relations of recognition. Rather, it empowers those who are denied recognition under current conditions to demand respect and esteem. For example where paid work is no longer directly linked to subsistence, those demanding esteem for their contributions are given stronger reasons for their claims.

It is questionable whether a UBI that has not been founded on legal respect and that includes the right to an unconditional guarantee of material security is capable in itself of impacting the general debate on contributing to the economy.

Unless domestic and voluntary work come to be seen as genuine and worthy alternatives to remunerated work, UBI cannot directly influence these recognition relations.

However the vital function that a successful UBI policy could perform is demonstrating that a lack of coercion as regards participating in the economy does not entail a mass exodus from the labour market and relatedly, that the incentive of remuneration is itself enough to maintain a thriving economy. In this case, the proof of the pudding is in the eating: knowing that the societal goal of economic prosperity and social values such as the emphasis on contributing are protected under a UBI will I believe, lead to its acceptance as a social right.

A similar trajectory can be discerned from the initial introduction of welfare benefits. Some of the stronger reasons for the introduction of welfare systems had nothing at all to do with rights and inherent human dignity. While some interested parties were concerned with ensuring the existence of a healthy army reserve in the case of war, others considered aesthetic considerations of squalor and poverty in the streets. Most importantly, welfare systems evolved from conceptions of charity, not rights. Council housing, adequate healthcare, and unemployment benefits were seen as more humane and consistent methods of managing pauperism rather than rights which could be claimed (Poynter, 1969, 122-4). They were, from the start, conditional, subject to the whims of the wealthy political classes.

From this we can see that the initial motivation behind reforms is often altered over time, giving way to new demands for recognition that emerge from societal transformations. Far from claiming a necessary and unalterable transformation in recognition relations as a result of UBI however, I have merely demonstrated how UBI opens up new spaces for conflicts over how recognition is granted.

To summarise, UBI helps to highlight the arbitrary emphasis on paid work in the midst of many other forms of vital social contribution. By imposing an artificial guarantee on subsistence needs that directs the esteem granted to paid workers away from claims based on breadwinning, the increased choice that results creates new opportunities for the expansion of relations of recognition. In response to Sen's analysis of unemployment therefore, it would benefit from a wider view that takes into account how current recognition relations need to change in order to avoid the detrimental effects of unemployment. It is not, on this account, a matter of choosing elements of European or U.S. policies, but of expanding relations of recognition such that a wider range of contributions are esteemed accordingly. This, I feel would eradicate many of the serious problems outlined, and open up the possibility of a new way of thinking about 'unemployment'.

UBI, solidarity and the division of labour

This section offers a more speculative account of what UBI could potentially do for recognition relations. This involves returning to the broader justifications for UBI outlined in earlier sections, and drawing some longer term goals for the achievement of expanded recognition relations. Once again I do not intend to offer compelling evidence that these effects would indeed come about if UBI were put in place, but instead demonstrate how UBI removes the barriers that currently stand in the way of realising these forms of recognition relations. Finally, this section also addresses the feminist objection to the identification of UBI as a positive step for mutual recognition, as well as fears that UBI will ultimately result in the erosion of social values.

If the political consequences of Honneth's recognition theory are drawn out, some concrete goals can be deciphered. The central theme I have picked out is that

individuals require their social contributions to be valued, as this is where I feel UBI has the greatest potential. When considered in their entirety, both recognition theory and UBI value solidarity and interdependency. This can clearly be seen in Honneth's appropriation of Dewey's writings on the division of labour:

The classical political philosophers also conceived of the relation between individual freedom and political community as an organic interaction, in the sense that the single individual, by developing the appropriate virtues, experiences her freedom in the realization of a common good, which in turn is just an expression of the endeavours of all individuals – endeavours, that is, that are coordinated on the basis of a division of labour (Honneth & 1998, 768).

UBI is also predisposed towards this ideal, by legitimating a variety of forms of work that simply do not sit well in a capitalist division of labour. By creating a space within the capitalist system in which domestic and voluntary work can take place, a society that provides a UBI to its members could potentially create the kind of radical democratic civil society that Honneth envisages.

It is clear from Honneth's appropriation of Dewey that he sees collective conscience and solidarity as emerging from a growing sense of individual connectedness (Honneth, 1995, 178-9). The experience of being valued as part of a community, and partaking in cooperative activities for common goals, is clearly essential to achieving reciprocal recognition. UBI takes the first step in achieving this in post-modern conditions, by removing the financial barriers to self-realisation. In addition to creating the foundations upon which a more symmetrical division of labour might be built, it opens up the debate over the distorted emphasis on paid work. By undermining the strongest and most emotive reasons for prioritising remunerated forms of work, UBI necessitates an overhaul in the manner in which recognition principles are interpreted.

An important question that cannot be ignored due to its pertinence to issues of recognition is gender inequality. Many of the developments in the feminist movement that are said to be undermined by UBI are aimed at encouraging women to enter the male-dominated terrain of paid labour rather than seeking recognition for a wider range of social contributions. The expansion in recognition relations advocated by Honneth is both more radical and, I believe, more effective, than attempting to assimilate to one possible mode of esteem-generation. As can be seen in the exploration of the role played by the division of labour, a wide range of adequately esteemed social contributions is vital to human flourishing.

Whether a society that enacts UBI will foster greater esteem for unpaid activities is therefore at the heart of the feminist question. Rather than admitting more women to the labour market, addressing gender inequalities in the division of labour requires that unpaid forms of work become attractive to males. Only then can a fairer division of labour emerge in which the advantages of paid work will not accrue to a specific group. More specifically, I see a fair division of labour as one in which men and women divide their time between paid, domestic and voluntary work. As indicated above, it is necessary for the benefits and burdens of work to be shared more equally, so that those who wish to pursue full- or part-time paid work are free to do so. UBI encourages this approach by making part-time employment a more viable option.

UBI may not be able to directly address gender inequalities, as they are too deeply rooted to be solved by one simple policy. Indeed Honneth speaks of the depth of gender inequalities, where

‘every professionalised activity automatically falls in the social status hierarchy as soon as it is primarily practiced by women, while there is a gain in status if the gender reversal goes the other way. Gender functions here in the organisation of the social division of labour as a cultural measure that determines the social esteem owed a particular activity independent of the specificity of the work’ (Honneth, 2003b, 153).

However, if barriers that currently stand in the way of demands for the expansion of the manner in which achievements are recognised in society, I think there is huge potential for a more radical transformation. By increasing the comparability of the various kinds of work, and removing the one of the strongest reasons for prioritising remunerated work, as outlined earlier, the demands for recognition may be reinvigorated.

In conclusion, this paper has confirmed the significance of using recognition theories to justify UBI, and demonstrated the importance more generally of attending to the recognition implications of redistributive policies. The transformative potential of UBI lays not in redistribution but in recognition, and the prospect of new spaces of resistance in which demands for recognition can be made. Viewed from this perspective, the unconditionality of UBI reflects a solidification of legal recognition relations by prioritising the autonomy of individuals. Despite the empirical constraints of exploring potential shifts in how individuals are valued therefore, I see this as an important addition to the body of literature justifying UBI as a policy worthy of consideration.

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