

I will now write an article about Basic Income

An Unconditional Basic Income is when a government gives a set amount of money, enough to survive, to all its citizens. It is essentially a promise the government makes to everyone. A promise saying, “you deserve food and shelter, because you’re a human.”

Now, if you haven’t heard of this idea, you probably have two objections to this. First, if everyone gets free money, people will stop working. And second, there is no way to pay for a basic income. There are straightforward, evidence based, widely accepted counter-arguments to these objections. For these counter-arguments, and other common ideas in favour of the basic income, I will point you to this video, because what I’m about to write is much more radical than the standard arguments.

I’m more radical because I’m angry. I’m angry at our current culture, which forces people into drudgery, deception, exploitation, and sometimes theft, in order to survive. In a country where fewer than 1% of people work in agriculture, doesn’t it seem awful that we force everyone into a competitive race for survival? We easily have enough food and shelter for everyone, so why make people compete for it? If this doesn’t seem awful to you, let me explain my position.

This race for survival means that everyone has to spend a lot of their time trying to get money. This is largely wasted time. True, some people have an amazing mixture of luck and skill which allows them to make money doing something they would want to do even if they weren’t getting paid, but this is very few of us. Most people, even most artists, have to spend a significant amount of time making sure they will get enough money, rather than making sure they are serving the world in the best way they can. This is a huge amount of wasted potential. How many good people are prevented from doing good work because they have to make money? We’ll never know until we try a Basic Income.

Some might argue that money is the reward system which gives people incentive to do good work, but this idea falls apart under examination.

Money doesn't reward goodness, it rewards, firstly, the ability to convince other people to give you money. You *could* convince people to give you money by doing good things for them, but this is not as common as we want it to be. You could convince other people to give you money in many ways. Some of these ways are straight-forward, like providing a service. This seems alright, but when the goal of the service is to make money, and not to do good in the world, there are obvious negative consequences. Fraud, scams, botched construction jobs, and most of the "financial services" industry are negative examples of the money reward system gone wrong. You could also convince people to give you money by offering them a product. If you offer them a product they need, that's great, but people don't need much. Most products on the market in wealthier countries are things we don't need. We think we need them because there are a lot of brilliant people working in the advertisement industry, and they are good at convincing us we need things. (By the way, the entire advertising industry is something we could scrap if people didn't need to work for money. What good does advertising do?)

Money also rewards people for their willingness to submit to the will of someone who has money. If you yourself are not good at convincing people to give you money, then you must spend forty hours a week taking orders from someone who is. This gives rise to the exploitative practice of wage labour. This obvious lack of freedom prevents many people from figuring out the best way to spend their time.

All of this chasing for money is caused by the fear of not having enough money. This is a crucial point. Money rules by fear. Lower class people live by the fear of not being able to survive, and upper class people live by the fear that they will lose all of their wealth. Give everyone, including wealthy people, enough money to survive, and all of the other motivations are unleashed. Motivations like the desire to help, have fun, make art, make people happy, and many others, would eventually become the main motivation for many people. These motivations are much more powerful than fear. If this doesn't excite you, I think you should rethink what is important in life.

But what about essential services? If we remove the money motivation, what will we do about all the unpleasant but necessary jobs? Let's look at the example of garbage collection. What will we do if people don't want to drive garbage trucks? Well, god forbid, we might have to pick up after

ourselves. Maybe we would have to reduce the amount of waste we produce. This is a good thing. All of us would have to work together to find a solution to the garbage problem which doesn't involve forcing a lower class of people to deal with it. I can only see positive outcomes to this. Sure, there would be a brief period of garbage piling up on the streets, but then a solution would arise, because we are smart people.

The same is true for every other example I can think of. Allowing people to choose not to do unpleasant work would result in a problem solving effort that would actually improve society. Cashiers? Replace them with machines and save money. Public transport drivers? Automate the subways and eliminate human error.

If you can think of an example where we absolutely need people to do unpleasant work, then the Basic Income would force us to pay them more money, so they will continue to do their job. This is also a good thing. These people should have been paid more money in the first place, given that their job is so necessary and so unpleasant. They are the heroes of society, and should be making the most money. Our current system gives the most money to the people implementing financial schemes which do nothing but extract money from the population via interest payments, fees, and penalties. This is backwards.

The Basic Income might cause people to quit their jobs, but it won't cause people to do less work. It will free people to do the work which they believe is most important. Personally, I want to grow food, build houses, and make art. Right now, this is very difficult for me because I have to spend so much time trying to get money. If you are afraid people will be lazy and live off the Basic Income without working, I feel sorry for your impoverished view of humanity. People want to do good things. Even if they didn't, what's so bad about having a small percentage of people not working? They would spend time with their families, travel, play sports, video games, read books, and enjoy their life. Is that bad? We can easily provide for everyone without their help.

As for the argument that we can't afford a basic income, this represents a misunderstanding on many levels. Firstly, there is plenty of money out there, but we have the idea that this money should sit in wealthy bank accounts, doing nothing, rather than provide people with food and shelter. Or, we think that this money is better spent subsidizing the destructive

fossil fuel industry, or sending militaries over-seas to fail at solving problems. I should also point out that there isn't a fixed, limited amount of money out there. Banks create money every time they make a loan by merely declaring the money to exist. A bank could easily give a loan to a government for the amount of money we would need for the Basic Income. We saw this happen in America when they bailed out the banks after the 2008 recession. Where did that money come from? The Federal Reserve made it up. For some reason, governments think it is important to take advantage of this when the banks are in trouble, but they don't think it's important when people need food and shelter. Remember, money is an agreement. We can agree to spend and create money however and whenever we want. This is where we should rethink our priorities. Ensuring people have food and shelter should be our number one priority.

We can't do this by ensuring everyone has a job. We've been trying to do this for decades and it's not working, and it's only going to get harder as automation continues to erode away the job market. It is not good to make everyone have a job anyway. As I said earlier, it's a huge waste of human potential.

Some more radical thinkers might suggest that we could provide food and shelter to people by restructuring society so that food and shelter are free. Some people think we should get rid of money altogether. Whether or not this is a good idea, it will nevertheless take a very long time. We need food and shelter *now*. I think Basic Income is our best option.

You may have noticed I've been using some provocative language. I use the phrase "get money" instead of "make a living," and the phrase "fail at solving problems overseas" instead of whatever terms our politicians use to justify military action. I'm not "marketing my product," I'm trying to convince people to give me money. This is deliberate. I think we, the general population, have failed to realize what is really going on, and part of the solution is to call things by their real names. These euphemisms, like "make a living," distract us from reality. I think we need to get back to reality. The reality is, people need food and shelter, and we can give it to them. People want to do good things, and we can give them the freedom to do it.



Paul Barton

Follow

Thoughts on how we live, and how we might make a more beautiful world.

Published on May 15. All rights reserved by the author.

