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Basic income policy: Objections and possibilities for gender equality

Política de renda básica: Objeções e possibilidades para equidade de gênero

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the position of feminist authors regarding Philippe Van Parijs' proposal of unconditional and universal basic income policy. The initial hypothesis of this research is that Van Parijs' proposal manages to resist, satisfactorily, the feminist objections that are opposed to its content, with regard to the implementation of a freedom project and the minimization of gender inequalities. It is concluded that, under the aspects of security, self-ownership and the *lexmin* opportunity, although there are a set of advantages, the basic income model under study is not a sufficient measure to meet all the conditions of real women's freedom.

Keywords: Basic Income; Gender Equality; Feminism.

Resumo

O objetivo deste trabalho é analisar o posicionamento de autoras feministas acerca da política de renda básica incondicional e universal de Philippe Van Parijs. A hipótese inicial desta pesquisa é que a proposta de Van Parijs consegue resistir, satisfatoriamente, às objeções feministas que são contrapostas ao seu conteúdo, no que se refere ao implemento de um projeto de liberdade e à minimização das desigualdades de gênero. Conclui-se que, sob os aspectos da segurança, da propriedade de si e da oportunidade *lexmin*, ainda que haja uma série de vantagens, o modelo de renda básica em estudo não constitui medida suficiente para atender a todas as condições de Liberdade Real das mulheres.

Palavras-Chave: Renda Básica; Equidade de Gênero; Feminismo.



1 Introduction

This work is based on the normative conceptions of Philippe Van Parijs, specially on the work *Real Freedom for All - What (if anything) can justify capitalism?*, in which the author conceives and justifies an unconditional and universal basic income policy as a project of freedom.

Such methodological approach aims to analyze whether Van Parijs' (1995) libertarian argument in favor of basic income, when opposed to gender inequalities, is able to offer a viable way to overcome injustices and to accomplish the egalitarian values that it claims to support.

By placing real Vanparjisian libertarianism in feminist perspectives, it will be possible to analyze the effects of the Vanparjisian basic income and Real Freedom proposal for structural gender injustices.

Considering the big impact of libertarian ideas over political philosophy, as well as the activism associated with basic income, such questions help in the understanding of reform strategies arising from theories of justice, such as Philippe Van Parijs'.

The analysis on the objections and possibilities of the Van Parijs unconditional and universal basic income, in relation to gender equity, will be developed from the three components of Van Parijs (1995) Real Freedom, which are: I) security; II) self-ownership and III) *leximin* opportunity.

The initial hypothesis of this research is that Van Parijs' proposal manages to resist, satisfactorily, the feminist objections that are opposed to its content, with regard to the implementation of a freedom project and the minimization of gender inequalities.

This research has a qualitative approach, that is, it does not focus on numerical representativeness or social correlation tests, but rather on deepening the understanding on a given problem and the explanation of the logical dynamics of social relations. It is a research on the normative field of theory of justice, with basic nature (SILVEIRA and CÓRDOVA, 2009).

The work will be divided as follows: Firstly, it justifies the choice of Philippe Van Parijs' work, outlining an overview and pointing out the impact of the author's thought. Second, it clarifies how liberty can be used as a basis to Van Parijs' theory of justice. Subsequently, the author's unconditional and universal basic income proposal will be



presented. And, finally, it will make a dialogue between Vanparijsian's proposals and gender equality, when the objections and possibilities of the proposal will be presented.

2 Propositions by Philippe Van Parijs: overview, repercussion and justification

This section seeks to justify the methodological choice of Philippe Van Parijs' work, in addition to providing an overview of the author's thought on the feminist debate on the feminist debate on basic income.

Philippe Van Parijs (1995), in his book *Real Freedom for All: What (If Anything) Can Justify Capitalism?*, outlined a sophisticated liberal and egalitarian scheme for implementing an unconditional and universal basic income as an expression of justice (BIRNBAUM, 2012). By making an ethical defense of basic income, proposing unconditional income without having taken tests or followed work requirements, Van Parijs (1995) raised some thorny moral questions and stood out as one of the great contemporary political philosophers (HUNYADI e MÄNZ, 1998).

Van Parijs (1995) argues that for a Society to be free, it is essential that each one of its members have a structure of rights that provides security for the exercise of freedom and self-ownership – but that alone is not enough – it is necessary that to each individual it is given the greatest possible opportunity to do anything that this person wants to do. The philosophical justification, from the libertarian perspective, is that the implementation of the highest sustainable basic income would be the best way to transform a mere *formal liberty* into *Real Freedom for all*, since it would ensure a firm material base for each one to develop their own conception of good life (VAN PARIJS, 1995).

According to Van Parijs (1994: 70), the introduction of an unconditional and universal income should be seen as a “*strategy to carry forward everything that had and still has appeal in the old emancipatory ideal associated with the communist movement, without requiring anything similar to a socialist mode of production*”. The expression *basic income capitalism* is used by the author to describe a socioeconomic regime in which “*most of the means of production are privately owned*”, and each Citizen receives a “*substantial basic income, in addition to the income that can be obtained through*



participation in labor or capital markets, or even that is due to any specific status” (VAN PARIJS, 1994: 69).

The prominence of Van Parijs’ publications inspired debates and brought contributions on self-ownership, on the relation between freedom and equality, and also on the nature of exploitation (REEVE, 2003). There have also been conducted studies on the possible effects of the implementation of basic income on the labor market (ATKINSON, 1996). In recent years, the proposition of a basic income – unconditional and regardless of employment status, the availability to work, the levels of wealth and equality –, has permeated the philosophical field of Van Parijs, also boosting debates over unemployment, poverty, change of family living standards and the future of social politics (VEEN and GROOT, 2000).

In academic debates, theorists who support Vanparijsian propositions emphasize how an unconditional and universal basic income can provide greater security, work opportunities and bargaining power for those who have greater difficulties in finding decent jobs (BIRNBAUM, 2004). Besides that, such propositions would have an impact not only on reducing poverty and unemployment, but would also improve women’s life and avoid environmental damages caused by overproduction and rapid growth (COHEN and ROGERS, 2001).

All these points of Van Parijs’ theory deserve careful study. However, this research is focused on the debate of the basic income that reached feminist literature, generating antagonistic positions (ROBEYNS, 2000; ELGARTE, 2008). On the one hand, theorists of a first current suggest that basic income would increase the autonomy of poor women (MCKAY and VANEVERY, 1995), as well as would increase the autonomy of women and men to manage participation in the domestic sphere and in the formal labor market (JORDAN, 1998; ROBEYNS, 2013). Basic income, therefore, would be a support mechanism for contemporary structures of labor market, as well as an instrument for achieving social well-being, or a way of integrating economy with social policy through the valorization of justice and economic efficiency (MCKAY, 2013).

The proposition of this current is that basic income could help achieve gender equality in labor market since, in theory, it would increase the bargaining power of women and encourage part-time work of men, as well as the sharing of domestic work (STANDING, 1992). According to Robeyns (2000), basic income can be seen, in this sense,



as an *emancipation rate* for women, because it would allow them to obtain financial recognition and support for a way of life that valued unpaid work and care, when appropriate.

On the other hand, a second current understands that basic income is not a good strategy to achieve gender equality and justice. They consider it a kind of *salary for housewives*, sending women back home and revoking their emancipation (GHEAUS, 2008). According to Orloff (2013), the unequal division of domestic responsibilities is crucial in explaining the disadvantageous position of women in society and, for that, other elements of social policy that change the structure of paid and unpaid work can be much more effective in achieve gender justice.

In this sence, Withorn (2013) explains that a basic income policy could increase the risk of privatization of public services that are essential to womens's authonomy, such as health, education, work, daycare policies etc., as well as could introduce a notion of authonomy and purchasing power directed exclusively to the needs of private life. In other words, basic income does not necessarily lead to female emantipation if the money is potentially directed to family reinvestment (WITHORN, 2013).

From this perspective, Robeyns (2000) suggests that basic income can be seen as a *bribe*, providing a financial reward for domestic work and care, in a way that women are grateful (or at least content) rather than advocating deeper changes on their social position and gender roles.

This discussion is broad and importante for the terms of this research, so before entering it, it is necessary to understand the principles that underlie these conclusions, as we will see in the next section.

3 What is Real Freedom for Philippe Van Parijs?

Freedom is the basis of Van Parijs' theory of justice. Real Freedom is the term used by Van Parijs (1995) to refer to a freedom that incorporates three components, namely: security, self-ownership and *leximin* opportunity. In order that there is Real Freedom for everyone, the following conditions must be met: I) the existence of a solidly guarateed rights structure (*condition of security*); II) that this structure allows each person to owns herself



(*condition of self-ownership*); and III) that this structure allows each person to have the greatest possible opportunity to do what one might want to do (*condition of leximin opportunity* or *lexicographic maximin*) (VAN PARIJS, 1995).

This concept serves to institutionally characterize a free Society and also to differentiate the *Real Freedom* from the classical *formal freedom* from libertarianism. The latter Only incorporates the first two conditions. The former embodies all three, given that the security granted by a structure of rights and self-ownership are necessary to grant the greatest possible opportunity for each person to do whatever they might want to do (VAN PARIJS, 1995).

As for the first condition, security, it involves a well-reinforced rights framework necessary to create an environment in which people can be free. The establishment of rights, including property rights, is necessary to grant freedom to members of society (VAN PARIJS, 1995).

The second condition, self-ownership, focuses on the idea that people have a natural right over themselves and over their properties. The idea is that individuals should be allowed to use their talents, income or all other types of belongings without any external coercion (SOMMER, 2016).

Van Parijs' position on self-ownership can be understood as follows:

Note that self-ownership is here to be understood in a sense that is weak enough to be consistent with the impossibility of actually doing anything with oneself, owing, for example, to not being entitled to stand anywhere; but at the same time in a sense that is strong enough to exclude not just slavery or feudal bondages, but also compulsory schooling or military service and the imposition of lump-sum taxes on people's talents.

Vallentyne (1997) notes that Van Parijs' concept of self-ownership is defined by three different aspects, which are: (a) *control self-ownership*; (b) *leisure self-ownership*, e (c) *non-brute luck income self ownership*.

According to Vallentyne (1997), *control self-ownership* gives each agent the moral right to control the use of her or his body. On the other hand, *leisure self-ownership* considers that no taxation of wealth on the value of personal talent is legitimate, thus, it prohibits the taxation of the value of human capital, such as skills and aptitudes, as it would lead to an implicit enslavement of talent, that is, those who with productive talents will be forced to work because their skills are taxed. Finally, *non-brute luck*



income self-ownership prohibits the taxation of “*optional luck*”¹ income, except to the extent necessary to correct inequalities arising from “*brute luck*” (VALLENTYNE, 1997: 324-327).

According to Vallentyne (1997), it appears from Van Parijs’ definition of self-ownership that the author, on the one hand, is liberal, because of his emphasis on self-ownership and rights related to the freedom of individuals, and, on the other hand, is egalitarian in the way he takes on the common ownership of natural resources which, to some extent, should be used to improve equality among members of society.

Moving on to the third condition of Vanparijsian Real Freedom, the *leximin* opportunity stands out for surfacing the distributive issue, by demanding that the *greater possible* opportunity is provided to everyone. Van Parijs (1995) does not propose maximum total freedom, nor equal maximum freedom, but a *leximin* freedom, in a way that the opportunities of those ones in worse conditions should be maximized.

Thus, someone can have more opportunities than others, but only if having more does not reduce the opportunities of someone who has less. In other words, institutions should be conceived in a way that they offer the greatest real opportunities for those who have less opportunities, given the condition that the formal freedom of everyone is respected.

The “*lexicographic maximin*” expresses the idea that the members of a free society (to the highest degree) are as free as possible, being, for Van Parijs (1994: 72), a superior formula to both a “*purely aggregative formula*” (e.g., one that focuses on the opportunities of the average member of society), and to a “*more egalitarian formula*” (in terms, for example, of maximum equal opportunities).

In a free society, as established by the third condition:

The person with fewer opportunities still has opportunities that are not worse than those opportunities available to the person with fewer opportunities under any other possible arrangement; in the event that there is another possible arrangement that is equally good for the person with fewer opportunities, then the person who lies just above the scale of a free society must have opportunities that are not less than the person occupying the second worst place on the opportunity scale under that alternative arrangement; and so on (VAN PARIJS, 1994: 71-72).

¹ Contemporary liberal theories of justice have been discussing how state could make up for luck. Different liberal egalitarian theories of justice advocated several ways to make this compensation, starting from the distinction between the luck of choice and brute luck. The first is a consequence of decisions taken by people during their lives and they are responsible for them. The second is due to mere chance. In this sense, see: DWORKIN, 1981a; DWORKIN, 1981b.



The *leximin* opportunity expresses that the size of the set of opportunities is used as a measure of the Real Freedom for all, that is, the *leximin* opportunity aims both to measure the Real Freedom, as to its distribution (SOMMER, 2016). As the focus of the analysis is on the proposal of unconditional basic income, the set of opportunities then emerges as a set of income-laisure combinations that depend on an individual's ability to obtain income, as well as external wealth endowments (VAN DER VEEN, 1998).

Sommer (2016) teaches that, as Van Parijs' concept of Real Freedom changes from *doing what one wants* to the more general *to do what one might want to do*, the size of the set of opportunities of each individual becomes central to the author. Thus, the size of the individual opportunities set is the *distribuendum* of Van Parijs' approach, that uses the *leximin* rule to compare different states.

In addition to the lexical priority in the distribution of opportunities for those who have less, there is also a weaker priority relationship between the three conditions, that is, there is a pattern according to which conflicts between the three conditions must be resolved. Security has priority over self-ownership, which in turn has priority over *leximin* opportunity. This demand of priority means that little violations on the second condition of justice would be acceptable if the gains in the satisfaction of the former were sufficiently broad, for example (VAN PARIJS, 1995).

Therefore, the free society must give priority to the security condition over self-ownership, and to the latter over the *leximin* opportunity; however, this priority does not need to be rigidly lexicographic, since mild disturbances of law and order can be tolerated if major restrictions of self-freedom or large deviations from *leximin* opportunity are necessary to eliminate them (VAN PARIJS, 1994). Therefore, light self-ownership restrictions can be incorporated into the institutional structure of a free society if it is possible to sustain a significant improvement in terms of *leximin* opportunity.

This real-libertarian conception of real justice defended by Van Parijs (1995) meets the general postulate of neutrality or equal respect of standard libertarianism, that is, the view that the just should not be determined on the basis of some particular substantive conception of good life. Freedom comes through the postulate of neutrality, through the restriction of self-ownership and through a concern, not directly with people's own happiness, but with the means necessary to achieve it (VAN PARIJS, 1995).



The measure of a society considered good for Van Parijs (1995) is determined exactly to the extent that a society is free; therefore, the author accepts the departure of strict or maximum justice, for example, if this allows social relationships to be more fraternal. That is, Van Parijs (1995) advocates a real-libertarian conception that gives to justice a first lexicographic priority, so that injustice is admissible only when large gains in terms of other assets can be acquired, with insignificant deviations from Real Freedom.

Following the perspective of real-freedom, Van Parijs (1995: 17) then asks “*free to what?*” and responds, in the light of the positive conception (*freedom to*), “*free to do whatever one might want to do*” (VAN PARIJS, 1995: 20). The author explains that treating all society members with equal concern requires a neutral conception of justice, that is, one that is not determined by a conception of good, but, on the contrary, which respects various conceptions of good equally, allowing a wider range of possible options, so that any positive meaning of freedom does not refer to a specific path so as not to contradict this precept (VAN PARIJS, 1995).

In the light of the negative meaning (*freedom from*), freedom “Consists in not being prevented from doing not just what one wants to do, but whatever one might want to do”, without obstacles that prevent or restrict freedom (VAN PARIJS, 1995: 19). Van Parijs (1995) considers insufficient the libertarian view that considers that coercion occurs when practiced exclusively by third parties – individual or collective entities, both private or public – over the set of strictly formal rights, alluding to their security and self-ownership of individuals, who, in such cases, would be entitled to complain.

According to Van Parijs (1995), it is not possible to characterize someone as really free, even in a scenario without formal constraints, if it is not possible to perform any activity, whatever it is, without the material means required for this. Taking into account only the formal sphere is arbitrary, because the absence of material means can be considered an obstacle to freedom. For example, “*it is not enough to say that John is free to practice cycling because he has legal permission and guarantee of security (free of threats, violence and confiscation) if he finds himself unable to do so due to the lack of enough money to purchase a bicycle*” (RAJÃO, 2018: 702, our translation).

It is thus noted that security conditions and self-ownership are influenced by the negative concept of freedom and represent formal freedom. Furthermore, negative freedom extends through positive freedom to give individuals the means to actually use



their formal freedom. It is in this way that material resources are added to formal freedoms, in order to maintain the conditions that protect the integrity of the process by which values are acquired or formed (VAN DONSELAAR, 2009).

Therefore, the free Society identified as a just Society from real libertarianism elevates worse off people as much as possible, increasing the real opportunity for them to develop their good life conception. However, freedom is not only a matter of right, it is also a matter of means to exercise it. This brings to the fore the most salient institutional consequence of the provisions of Real Freedom for all – the unconditional basic income to all members of Society.

4 Van Parijs' unconditional basic income proposal

Van Parijs (1995) states that the Real Freedom ideal for all requires the maximization of people's income, subject to the respect for the formal freedom of all and, more specifically, the ideal requires unconditional basic income as a guarantee of *means* and not only of *right* to do whatever one might want to do.

Van Parijs (1995) explains that *Real Freedom for all* is concerned not only with the choice between the various bundles of goods that one wishes to consume, but also with the freedom of choice between the various lives one might want to lead. What the author supports, with this differentiation, is that income is important, to the extent that it is unconditionally given to each citizen, without restrictions. That is, without any limitation on what one can buy and how one can use one's time.

In other words, Van Parijs (1995) cares not only with Real Freedom of choice between consumer goods sets, but also with the Real Freedom of taking one's own life the way one wishes. According to Reeve (2003), this position indicates that the relationship between *opportunity* and *income* is twofold in terms of opportunity for consumption and opportunity of experiences. On the one hand, the money available defines the sets of goods that can be bought by one person. On the other hand, it increases the range of choices of how to live.

Van Parijs' (1995) unconditional basic income proposal is crucially important to guarantee income without any restrictions on the conduct of the benefited person;



without any limitation specially arising from the exercise or not of paid work. This unconditionality is considered to be “*radical*”, according to the author, because, by ensuring Real Freedom for all – taking into consideration that it is possible to abstract for a moment both dynamic considerations and interpersonal differences in capabilities – the goal is to grant the highest possible unconditional income so that it is compatible with security and self-ownership (VAN PARIJS, 1995: 33).

The basic income thought by Van Parijs (1995) is paid to each effective member of society, regardless of the person’s resources – whether rich or poor, the willingness to work, the familiar arrangements or where one lives. Therefore, it is regularly paid to everyone in the population, individually, and not as a single domestic payment; it is untested and not conditioned to family or work situation.

The first condition – paid to each member of the society – is a consequence of neutrality in relation to different life plans. The second condition – regardless of the person’s resources – corresponds to Van Parijs’ claim that such a transfer should be paid *ex ante* as an unconditional basic income, and not as a negative income tax *ex post*. The third and last condition – individually paid, without testing – focuses on unconditional transfer, that is, regardless of the household situation and life arrangements (SOMMER, 2016).

According to Sommer (2016), Van Parijs’ unconditional basic income was conceived as “*an individual transfer regardless of any concern related to subsidiarity*” (SOMMER 2016: 32). It results from the claim to maximize each individual’s Real Freedom, thus maximizing the sets of opportunities.

Therefore, in summary, unconditional basic income is different from standard social welfare policy payments which are often subordinated to entrepreneurial will, work or are related to local considerations, income levels, positions of partners or other people living in the same home. Basic income is fully individualized and normally is not reduced when income from other sources are added (VAN PARIJS, 1995).

Moreover, due to its unconditional nature, people can safely rely on a material basis on which life can firmly rest, and any other income, either in kind or in cash, from work or savings, from market or from the State, can legitimately be added (VAN PARIJS, 1995). On the other hand, in the vanparijian definition of basic income, there is no



connection with basic needs, that is, this basic income can be insufficient to what is considered to be “necessary for a decent existence” (VAN PARIJS, 1994:77).

It can be observed, therefore, that the size of the set of opportunities is directly linked to income, so that regular distribution assumes central role for Van Parijs. Based on *Real Freedom for all*, the author sought to normatively justify the introduction of an unconditional basic income, paid to each effective member of society, without testing, regardless of the family or work situation, of the willingness to work or of the place where one lives. Unconditional basic and universal income, in this way, generated controversies within the feminis literature, so in the next section we will analyze what are the effects of the Vanparijian basic income and Real Freedom proposal for gender structural injustices.

5 Unconditional and universal basic income: Objections and possibilities to gender equity

The analysis of the adequacy of the Vanparijian’s unconditional and universal basic income, in relation to gender equity, will be developed from the three componentes of Real Freedom proposed by the author, namely: I) security, II) self-ownership and III) *leximin* opportunity.

The first condition for the implementation of Vanparijian Real Freedom (1995), *security*, as previously treated, concerns to a strong structure of rights supported by a robust institutional structure to ensure its implementation. Security does not concern only to the formal existance of law or to the legislative provision for the creation of benefits, but also involves the political, social and economical arrangement that guarantees the effectiveness of the norm, as well as its inviolability.

In this context, Paterman (2004) stablishes a severe objection to the creation of a basic income. According to the author, the implementation of a basic income is of difficult acceptance among modern Western societies, for the symbolic link built over centuries between work and income. Even with advances in care policies, based on fragility, such as maternity benefits, sickness benefits and other forms of social security, the linking of benefits to people relates to temporary contributions that serve to help



people to exercise the potential of their productive activity in the labor market (PATERMAN, 2004; PATERMAN, 2013).

In this sense, Lina Coelho (2018) explains that an unconditional basic income, even if set at an adequate amount, would not by itself ensure the set of changes necessary for the realization of a model of society with gender equity. Thus, other structural changes must be made in order to create an institutional apparatus broad enough to deal with the challenge that lies ahead, such as: a) a work legislation with shorter working hours for all; b) labor laws that authorize the reduction of working hours upon request of the employee; c) implementation of salary parity in a rigorous way to avoid wage gaps; d) encouraging part-time work for all workers; e) sharing the costs of caring for people; f) universal health care systems, regardless of employment, and, finally, g) non-discriminatory taxation systems that ensure gender equity.

Thus, it can be noted that even with the realization of basic income, complementary structural changes of flexibilization of employment are necessary to generate, to some extent, effectiveness to this new social model of redistribution of resources. Such changes, as Coelho (2018) states, would have the task of ensuring a fair division between paid work and care work hours, ensuring an equitable redistribution of the resulting income.

Regarding the issue of taxation, Birnbaum (2004) states the need for an adaptation period, so that there are no surprises in the way the tax collection would proceed. In this real-libertarian model, the relevant set of external resources should be gradually equalized in increasing opportunities. The tax collection would be according to the contribution capacity of the productive agentes, without penalizing those who opted to work – in the most appropriate scenario, people could choose to work or not.

The option for work would bring two major implications for the labor market: a) on the one side, wages should be attractive enough for people to perceive advantages on salaried work, as well as taxation should be fair enough so that those who do not work do not covet those who do; and b) employments should meet minimum attractiveness standards with good labor conditions, as well as work opportunities should be enriched to become more attractive to professional who wish to dedicate to non-repetitive and mechanical work.



Such a scenario – in which work itself is a voluntary choice – of course, would suffer resistance from productive business sector, whether due to increased expenses related to productive capacity, or due to the reduction of their profit margins through progressively more intense taxation. In this sense, in countries characterized by a high concentration of income and low bargaining power of the worker, such as Brazil, the proposition of basic income would be a controversial measure and the object of great lobbying of specific economic groups, as already happens with transfer policies, such as the “family allowance²”.

Robeyns (2013), following this logic, understands that the introduction of a basic income system, along the lines proposed by Van Parijs, would only be properly introduced together with social security measures that considered individual and more vulnerable situations, to guarantee a basis of minimum rights. In addition, a great expansion of social rights would be necessary, especially with regard to family distribution of resources. Thus, for example, the social security rights related to the work can be divided between the spouses to the extent of their production. In this way, the amounts acquired by the salaried work of both spouses would be added up, and then the amounts received would be divided equally. These measures to equalize the control of resources within families, according to the author, would have a greater impact on reducing gender inequalities in the private sphere (ROBEYNS, 2013).

What can be concluded from these constructions is that it is very difficult, in Western societies, to overcome the imposition of the need to comply with working hours and, in the case of women, complementary hours of care work. Van Parijs’ great difficulty, in accordance to Birnbaum (2004), is to transpose his theory to real societies, considering the main sociocultural biases and the subjective relations of power that exist between the most favoured classes and the most fragile classes. In this sense, as much as a plausible liberal conception of justice demands that the policies create fair and safe conditions to genuine choices and critical ethical reflexion to education that do not take individuals to

² “Bolsa Família” is one of the most successful conditional cash transfer programs in the world. In Brazil, it was created with the aim of combating poverty and misery, through a monthly monetary benefit conditioned to per capita income, with the obligation to comply with the counterparts related to prenatal exams, nutritional monitoring, health monitoring, school attendance of 85% (eighty-five percent) in a regular education establishment, according to Law nº 10.836, of January 9, 2004. On the subject, see: COELHO, D. B. (2012), REGO, W. L.; PINZANI, A. (2013).



the traditional roles of work and gender, this claim finds structural and political objections that go far beyond the efficiency of the basic income model.

The analysis of the basic income policy, under feminist perspectives, will now be made in the light of second Real Freedom condition by Van Parijs (1995), *self-ownership*. This condition, translated as the positive (*freedom to*) and negative (*freedom from*) exercise of freedom, constitutes an imperative of equality and non-subordination of any nature for all people, so that each person's conception of a good life is respected. In feminist debates, this discussion is transposed to gender equity and, especially, to the subordination arising from the division of public and private spheres that constitute subaltern gender roles for women in the traditional *breadwinner* model.

Paterman (2004) explains that the Anglo-American social security systema has been built over the assumption that wives were not only economic dependents on their husbands, but disabled citizen whose rights derived from Private Statutes and domestic relationships, and not from public citizenship. Primary citizens, the husbands or worker men (breadwinners), were the ones responsible for the acquisition of benefits in the event of unemployment or illness and, in their old age, were the direct beneficiaries of social policies.

Thus, the contemporary feminist challenge does not necessarily require the rejection of the idea of two spheres, but the rejection of their rigid separation and the implicit or explicit relegation of men to one sphere and women to the other sphere (ZELLEKE, 2008). Therefore, "*Gender equality depends on the recognition of their interdependence and the restructuring of social institutions to allow fluidity between both spheres for both men and women*" (ZELLEKE, 2008: 5-6).

In this sense, when criticizing the *breadwinner* model, Fraser (1994) establishes a reference for gender equality in the universal caregiver model, which recognizes all people as relational beings committed to caring for each other. According to the author, "The key to achieving gender equity in a postindustrial welfare state [...] make women's current life-patterns the norm for everyone" (FRASER, 1997: 61).

According to Fitzpatrick (2013), when restructuring institutions, guided by Fraser's model of universal caregiver (1994), basic income would be one of the ways to materialize the status of women's equality, equalizing the treatment of genders within the system of benefits, individualizing the payment of transfers in a simple and



unbureaucratic way. In this sense, the measure incorporates a strong element of human rights, providing financial independence for women — which constitutes progress, since, even if there are no guarantees that gender roles will be changed in the short-medium term, there is an increase in women's ability to free themselves from situations of oppression. Basic income “could open the doors between the public and the private, permitting women greater access to the former and men greater access to the latter [...]” (FITZPATRICK, 2013: 167).

However, its true realization still needs to overcome the fears posed by the spectrum of *freeriders*, especially with regard to the continuity of women in domestic tasks and men in an unserviceable position in care relationships. According to Fitzpatrick (2013) by eliminating obstacles to shorter working hours between men and women, the basic income could not guarantee that men would spend their free time from work on household chores, as they could assume the role of unoccupied subjects (*freeriders*). By assuming this role, men would have greater access to freedom of occupation, leaving the domestic burden to the wife, thus relegating women to the private sphere of the relationship and accentuating inequalities (FITZPATRICK, 2013). One of the objections of feminist theory, therefore, is not just that unconditional and universal basic income fails to provide women with greater bargaining power, but that it provides men with greater power and freedom at the expense of their wives' individual rights (ORLOFF, 2013).

The existence of *freeriders* violates the principle of reciprocity, as they obtain the fruits of the efforts of others without contributing anything in return; thus, even though the basic income contributes to women's capacity for liberation, it is not a guarantee that it will be a watershed in the restructuring of family arrangements. In this sense, the idea of reinforcing gender stereotypes and discrimination in the market constitutes the notion for some authors that, perhaps, basic income leads to precisely the opposite effect of equality (PATEMAN, 2004; PATEMAN, 2013).

However, basic income can lead to good chances of effective change of the individual condition:

My argument is that in light of these reasons a basic income is preferable to a stake. A basic income is a crucial part of any strategy for democratic social change because, unlike a capital grant, it could help break the long-standing link between income and employment and end the mutual reinforcement of the institutions of marriage, employment, and citizenship (PATEMAN, 2004 90).



Van Parijs' model (1995) bets on the distribution of resources to provide self-ownership, full citizenship and bargaining power to the individual. The measure, by reinforcing the bargaining power of people who provide care in exchange for remuneration, as well as the most vulnerable people, eliminates the serious risk of the absence of the most basic rights and of the abuses to which workers are so often subject (COELHO, 2018). To handle this task, Van Parijs proposes the maximum unconditional basic income for all that can be sustained in a society. If that income is significant, it would have a greater impact on meeting your goals. *"However, Van Parijs (1995, p. 76) admits that this income can be very low, even nil"* (ANDERSON, 2014: 177). Thus, the objection arises that a low basic income may not be satisfactory to materialize gender equity, alleviate the risk of poverty or absence of the most basic rights.

In summary, it is possible to state that self-ownership, translated into the exercise of negative freedom, refers, on the one hand, to the potential liberation from economic and quality-of-life constraints and constraints that people suffer due to their marginal condition; on the other hand, the potential freedom of family relationships characterized by an unequal division of domestic responsibilities. Thus, it potentially increases positive freedom by rising effectiveness in prevention, rather than simply alleviating poverty (MCLEAN, 2015), allowing people to dedicate their time to whatever they might, in fact, want to do, without facing risks of loss of minimum living conditions, due to the reduction of working hours.

The use of the adverb *potential(ly)* repeatedly in the previous paragraph is due, as already stated by Robeyns (2000), to the uncertainty that such collective empowerment will, in fact, lead to gender equity. According to the author, the measure may not be as effective as other elements of social policy that change the structure of paid and unpaid work. However, there is no consolidated theory as to what the objectives of these policies should be or what metrics can be used to measure the effectiveness of basic income. To fill the gap on tangible gender equity goals to be pursued, McLean (2015) presents a table (Table 01) in which the gender equity principles proposed by Fraser (1994) are analyzed to understand the extent to which basic income would be effective in promoting Real Freedom:



TABLE 01 – Contributions of Basic Income to the Principles of Gender Equity

<i>Principles of Gender Equity</i>	<i>Content of the Principle</i>	<i>Theoretical contribution of Basic Income</i>
<i>Anti-Poverty</i>	Denial of precarious living conditions and economic constrictions	Security of an income floor with no job disincentives from proven effective benefits
<i>Anti-Exploitation</i>	Denial of abuse of power relationships for disproportionate distribution of tasks	Reduction of the power of the employer, husband and bureaucrats
<i>Income Equity</i>	Fair distribution of control over family resources	Redistribution of income between and within family arrangements
<i>Leisure Time Equity</i>	Fair distribution of time for leisure activities and self-realization	Reduction of economic pressure in men can facilitate the redistribution of domestic activities
<i>Equity of Respect</i>	Absence of discrimination due to gender roles and appreciation of female work	Lack of conditionality respects the value of activities that go beyond salaried work
<i>Anti-Maginalization</i>	The living standards of men and women should be equivalent	Income not linked specifically to domestic care makes discrimination against women more difficult
<i>Anti-Androcentrism</i>	Power relations between men and women should be minimally symmetrical in the family arrangement	Income not linked to participation in the labor market

Source: McLean (2015), adapted from Fraser (1994).

It is noted through Table 01 that the basic income can bring great implications for women in determining their life choices, and also that it would provide the foundations to rethink the relationships between men and women in families. However, as McLean (2015) points out, the formal establishment of equal rights through basic income does not necessarily lead to equal results.

In recent work, Fraser (2020) goes further. The author states that the current stage of financialized capitalism promotes equality between men and women in the sphere of production and material labor, treating care work and social reproduction as obstacles to be removed. However, capitalism depends on non-monetized care work and socio-reproductive activities. That is, domestic work, raising children, schooling and the replacement of workers are indispensable for economic production and for the existence of paid work in a capitalist society. Fraser (2020) believes that this generates a “*crisis of care*” that has roots in this social contradiction inherent in capitalism. If this thesis is



correct, “*such a crisis will not be solved with patches of social policy*”, such as unconditional basic income (FRASER, 2020: 283). According to the author, the “*path to its resolution can only pass through the profound structural transformation of this social order*” (FRASER, 2020: 283-284).

Therefore, the robust gain of the thesis of unconditional and universal basic income lies in the ability to enhance women's freedom, however, without constituting a *de facto* guarantee of self-ownership. In this sense, there is a gap in the issue of the exercise of positive and negative freedoms, given the uncertain nature of the measure, as well as the nature of the bet that feminist theorists have attributed to it.

The analysis of the unconditional and universal basic income policy, under feminist perspectives, comes to an end in the light of the third condition for Real Freedom by Van Parijs (1995), the *leximin opportunity* or *lexicographical maxmin*. This condition assumes that the social structure manages to allow all individuals the opportunity to do whatever one might want to do. Thus, the basic income presents itself as a fruitful measure, since, as seen, it would have the capacity to free individuals from economic constraints.

The great controversy here concerns, once again, the issue of exercising this choice of individuals (BIRNBAUM, 2004). As discussed earlier in this work, the existence of freedom does not guarantee, in itself, that these opportunities will be fully exercised only due to greater access to resources. If there are no guarantees that men would dedicate themselves more to domestic activities, there are also no guarantees that women will oppose to current gender structures. This is because, after centuries of references based on gender domination, it is possible that some women make use of basic income to strengthen a subjective attachment to the subaltern condition, thus reinforcing gender stereotypes (FITZPATRICK, 2013; MCKAY, 2013; ROBEYNS, 2013; COELHO, 2018).

In this sense, as Pateman (2004) argues, the *leximin* opportunity depends on the way individuals interact with each other in their daily routines; therefore, it does not only concern the creation of conditions and opportunities, but the effective ability to use these opportunities — in terms of the desire to use freedom itself. In this way, such a desire will be constituted by the cultural meaning given to such freedom; therefore, the basic income itself would not be able to transform reality without an education and training structure, support institutions for the care of young children, as well as housekeeping, among other



measures that allow the sociocultural development of such way that men and women want to exercise the fullness of their abilities. With the current ideological separation of the public and private spheres, this is na extremely difficult task to accomplish (ZELLEKE, 2008).

In other words, basic income does not guarantee the equalization of opportunities or capabilities, but rather guarantees the resources for individuals to pursue their own goals consistent with their innate abilities and with a similar degree of autonomy over their own lives in relation to others. (ZELLEKE, 2008). In this sense, a great sense of cultural solidarity between men and women must be developed in a society before the concrete realization of gender equity in social relations (BIRNBAUM, 2004; ZELLEKE, 2008). The main dilemma of liberalism, in this regard, is that such solidarity should not be forced or imposed, but should be a demand of a movement of individuals based on their own critical ethics.

However, one cannot fail to observe the social advances that are possible through unconditional and universal basic income. It is a gender equity instrument, both in family and professional aspects. Therefore, basic income can be an efficient measure for gains in subjective well-being. However, their ability to realize the *leximin* opportunity depends on gradual changes in structures that are deeply rooted in society. The arguments presented can be summarized according to Table 02 below:

TABLE 02 – Feminist Critical Factors to Van Parijs’ Real Freedom

Security	Difficult acceptance of legislative agendas related to basic income
	Strong cultural linkage of income and the product of work
	Need for complementary policies and laws for effectiveness
	Resistance and lobbying of policial and economically powerfull sectors
Self-Ownership	Instrumental way of materializing equality between men and women
	Great fears in relation to the existance of <i>freeriders</i>
	Basic income is steel a bet for gender equity
	Possibility of reinforcing choices of gender stereotype
Leximin Opportunity	Society is socialized to naturalize gender roles
	There is no guarantee that people will choose to exercise freedom
	Need for alternative ways to deepen cultural changes
	Need for free development of a sense of solidarity

Source: Author, 2021.



6 Final considerations

The theoretical constructions about the adequacy of Van Parijs' (1995) basic income and Real Freedom proposal in relation to gender equity can thus be summarized.

Considered the first component (*security*), the limitations of real society indicate insecurity regarding the realization of rights, due to the existence of a wide and multiple spectrum of divergent interests. The second component (*self-ownership*) reveals that there are still great uncertainties as to whether access to resources would allow equal division of care responsibilities, in a way that the basic income is presented as a bet. Finally, the last component (*leximin opportunity*) indicates that there is no certainty of the desire to effectively exercise freedoms, since there are cultural and social aspects that have not been taken into account. Thus, the biggest objection to basic income concerns the character of uncertainty in relation to its results for gender equity.

What is possible to conclude, in relation to gender equity, is that even though there are several advantages of basic income, the model under study does not constitute a sufficient measure to meet all the conditions proposed by Van Parijs regarding Real Freedom. This refutes the research hypothesis initially raised, since the Vanparijsian proposal cannot satisfactorily resist the feminist objections that were opposed to its content, with regard to the infallibility of a project of freedom and minimization of gender inequalities.

From an optimistic perspective, Van Parijs' vision has great potential for change; however, when the various gender inequalities are taken into account, their fragility becomes evident. In this regard, it is possible to state that the unconditional and universal basic income would be an instrument to increase the range of life options, through resources, but it is not a measure that, in isolation, constitutes the definitive solution to injustices related to gender. This is a valid action, but not substantive enough to overcome the dilemmas and objections presented so far. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that the basic income has some validity, however, not absolute validity as a theory of gender justice.



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