Sociology and Basic Income: A Case Study of Four Theorists
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By;
Buford Farris, Ph. D.
Sociologist
163 Pinehill Drive
Bastrop, Texas 78602
512 303 6768
farrisbe@att.net

The idea for this paper emerged at the last USBIG Congress when I was involved in the section on Ethics and Basic Income. Charles Clark was presenting the critique of dominant economic theory by Catholic Social Thought. As I listened to his paper, it came to me that there was a group of secular theory that made similar critiques of what Fred Block calls *market fundamentalism.* This group was the discipline of Sociology where Emile Durkheim, one of its founders, viewed economic behavior as embedded in social relations that provided norms that made such activities possible. He argued that if all economic behavior really followed the rules often assumed in some economic thought, then such a society would fail to function. The so-called *invisible hand* of the market had to be guided by social norms such as trust. Alvin Gouldner (1980, 363) places this critique as one among three:

> The emergence of sociology was in part shaped by its critique of three main preceding intellectual commitments, and it is these that help to define it and establish *civil society (italics mine)* as sociology's scientific object. First, sociology developed a critique of political economy's emphasis on a competitive, market individualism, Second, early sociology opposed institutionalized religions, including both Catholicism and Protestantism, regarded the critique as a necessary foundation of the sciences, and saw the sciences as the necessary base for modern society. ---Third, and finally, early sociology rejected the dominance of society by the state as undermining society and as essentially archaic insofar as its characteristic form was domination by force.

American sociology, under the influence of George H. Mead, added the critique of the reduction of the social to biology (particularly in the form of *Social Darwinism*) or the reduction of behavior to a conditioned response. By the time I began to study sociology, in the forties, the complexity of the concepts of the social is reflected in who were considered the major classical theorists—i.e. Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, George H. Mead and Sigmund Freud. The attempts to integrate these theorists together are reflected in the work of Talcott Parsons (1937) and later in a major critic of Parsons, C. Wright Mills (1959). There are other American social theorists, who wrote around the same time period, that some in American sociology would consider classic—i.e. W. E. B. DuBois, Jane Addams, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Anna Julia Cooper.

In this paper, I will examine the theories of four sociologists who support some form of a Guaranteed Income: Fred Block, Robert Bellah, Erik Olin Wright and Richard Sennett. From their differences and similarities, I will show what contributions a sociological perspective has made and can further make to the general discussions of a Guaranteed or Basic Income. All in their own way develop a critique of *market fundamentalism* that has dominated economic policies since the 1980's and suggest various policies including a guaranteed income to address the inequities in modern society.

Fred Block:

The first of the sociologists that I want to present is Fred Block. He was a founding member of USBIG and serves on the coordinating committee. He has long been an advocate of a guaranteed income in several of his writings. Block is generally labeled as being a part of economic sociology, which is an attempt within the discipline of sociology to develop a sociological perspective on the economy and economic policy issues. His writings in this area have been influenced a great deal by the work of the economic historian, Karl Polanyi, and his concept that the free market economy is always *embedded* in social and political structures. Block's analysis of various aspects of the economy reflects Polanyi's concept of *double movement,* in that efforts to disembed the economy from society inevitable encounter resistance. "Polanyi argues that market societies are constituted by two opposing movements – the laissez-faire movement to expand the scope of the market and the protective countermovement that emerges to resist the disembedding of the economy"(2000, 10). Block sees his role as both to analyze this process and to recommend policies that contribute to the protective countermovement. He also views that there is a contradictory role that state managers play within the totality of society, which allows movement toward progressive reforms such as a guaranteed income. In his analysis of the postindustrial economy, he shows the creative role that an emphasis on the service sector or the *care economy* could make toward a more humane system.

Block would see the policy of a *guaranteed income* as one that contributes to a countermovement toward what he now calls a *moral economy*. In reaction to the *welfare reform* of 1996, he wrote an article with Jeff Mantza in which he proposed a *progressive* form of a *negative income tax* (1997: 473-511). In their proposal, using 1990 figures, they suggesting giving an individual adult citizen $6,000 if they have no earned income and children between the age of eighteen and twenty would get $2,500. For children, under eighteen, the custodial parent would be eligible for $2,500 for the first child, $2,000 for the second child, and $1,500 for each additional child. Block and Mantza say that these levels would bring all families up to 90 percent of the federal poverty level. They also suggest a "work incentive" in that if an individual earned $3,000 the grant would only be cut by half or $1,500 giving a grant of $4,500 or a total income of $7,500. When an individual earned $12,000 they would receive no grant if they were living by themselves. There would be different grant levels for different sizes of families based on the combination of adult and children grants presented above. This form of a guaranteed income could be enacted by extending the present Earned Income Tax Credit to those

who are not employed, since this is the remnant of the negative income tax proposed by Nixon. Block and Mantza suggest that this would cost a net sum of $55.3 billion 1990s dollars. They estimate some savings on some present programs and would also suggest some new taxes on higher income families. Following Edward Wolff, they suggest another possibility of a wealth tax of 1 percent on assets above a certain level. Another possibility that they mention is a "transaction tax" on financial exchanges both in this country and on foreign exchanges as suggested by James Tobin.

In his book, ***The Vampire State,*** Block critiques the economic policies that began in the mid-1970s and culminated with the "Reagan Revolution." He argues that these policies are based on *deep metaphors,* such as the *vampire state* that suggests the state sucks blood out of the system and these metaphors do not allow for alternative thinking. In this book he does a type of Freudian therapy to bring the unconscious in to the open. In the process, he suggests alternative metaphors. (Block 1996, 84)

> If people understood that the state was the steering mechanism for a complex starship making its way through a dangerous and threatening universe, it would be obvious that leaving the steering to an "invisible hand" is utter folly. But the ongoing argument about whether it is necessary or desirable to steer the starship makes it impossible for society to agree on the direction in which we want to head or the mission we want to accomplish.
>
> One vision Block uses is that of *popular entrepreneurialism.* (235-236)
>
> A culture that emphasized popular entrepreneurialism would encourage the growth of small businesses and employee cooperatives. This culture would also expect that both its nonprofit and local governments continually find new ways to respond to perceived needs.

Block proposes a variety of policies that would be needed to create this type of culture; a major part would be the guaranteed income outlined above, plus changes in the international and domestic financial system. He also proposes a more progressive tax structure with a limit on the maximum income. He also suggests changes in the political system and begins to discuss ideas for changing corporate structures, developed further below. Subsidies would be provided to both profit and nonprofit enterprises that meet this cultural standard. Bock's basic idea is for the Starship to recover productive potential that now is hidden by rigid metaphors of the *Vampire State.*

In Block's recent writing, he has furthered this critique of rigid metaphors by his analysis of what he calls *market fundamentalism.*

> Market Fundamentalism is a quasi-religious faith that unregulated markets will somehow always produce the best possible results. It rests on the idea that markets are natural and government regulations are artificial.

In an article in the ***American Sociological Review*** that he wrote with Margaret Somers, he compares the *welfare reform* of 1996 to the changes in the English New Poor Laws of 1834 and compares the writings of Charles Murray in this country to the writings of Thomas Malthus in England. They both develop the thesis of the *perversity of the poor.*

> --the assertion that policies intended to alleviate poverty create perverse incentives toward welfare dependency and exploitation, and thus inexorably exacerbate the very social ills that they are meant to cure. (Block and Somers 2005, 265)

In both periods of time, *market fundamentalism* had three components to its epistemological infrastructure; *social naturalism, theoretical realism* and *a conversion narrative.* Block and Somers said these dimensions tended to make the theory immune to empirical refutation.

> --the very strength of the perversity—relies on abstract thought experiments and naturalistic models that have no empirical referents. Given the common assumption that in the marketplace of ideas successful theories are those that best confirm empirical data, these findings may be puzzling. But in seems inescapable that Malthus and Murray triumphed because they relied on arguments driven by the seemingly inevitable and timeless laws of nature and biology rather than empirical contextual referents. (2005, 281)

In addition to the *guaranteed income* Block would suggest some other policies that critique *market fundamentalism* and develop what he calls a *moral economy.* One such idea is to produce a different model of a corporation—*A Corporation with a Conscience* (Block 2006). This will require the public to agree that this is how corporation should operate and then will require a legal frame work "that would hold firms to an ethical path." He includes in his possible ethical incorporation principles some of the following, "limits on executive compensation, a requirement that members of the boards of directors be representative of different stakeholders including employees, agreement on card checking neutrality in union organization campaigns, acceptance of higher public disclosure standards, agreement on monitoring overseas operations, development of environmental plans for conserving resources and reducing various forms of waste, and commitment to protecting public health." He also developed in writings this year an analysis of the *U.S National Innovation System.* With his colleague, Matthew R. Keller, he shows that in the last few decades the sources of award winning innovations have changed in two key ways:

> First, large firms acting on their own account for a much smaller share of award-winning innovations, while innovations stemming from collaborations with spin-offs from universities and federal laboratories make up a larger share. Second the number of innovations that are federally-funded has increased dramatically. (Block and Keller, 2008)

Block sees the existence of this *U.S. developmental state* "undercuts Washington' efforts to export market fundamentalism and it opens up strategies by which other nations can accelerate their own processes of technological development." Domestically, "the reality that government initiatives are at the core of modern U.S. innovation economy can be the foundation for a more reciprocal partnerships between business and government, helping to establish the legitimacy of public revenue collection and program expenditures.

Robert Bellah:

The next case study is Robert Bellah who approaches issues from the standpoint of the sociology of religion. He has written major works on the religion of Japan and has studied Islamic history and religion. He also has written on religion among Native Americans. In his graduate work he was student of Talcott Parsons and is considered by many as a leftist Parsonian. Bellah considers four social theorists as the classical core of sociological thought—Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud—and in modern thought he considers himself to be close to the perspective of the German theorist, Jurgen Habermas. In his writings on religious evolution he particularly draws on Max Weber, whose writings have become important to him in critiquing modern capitalism. A review of his works says: (Bergman 2006, 1)

> It's tempting to see Bellah—as a study in contradictions. Bellah, though, resists any such efforts at reductionism, whether as a scholar or as an object of scrutiny. Devoted to rigorous critical analysis in his Marxist youth, he remains so today as an avid churchgoer, and insists the undergraduate and the emeritus share much the same ethical concerns.
>
> He was denied a teaching position at Harvard (during the McCarthy period) when he refused to "name names" of others in the Communist Party, to which he belonged as an undergrad from 1947 to 1949. Bellah headed to Canada, spending two years at the McGill University's Institute for Islamic Studies before finally being offered a job as a Harvard lecturer after McCarthy's death. (2)

Looking back, Bellah says he failed to realize how "extremely evil' the Soviet rule was and the authoritarian nature of the American Communist Party. He continues, however, to see socialism, as "a very, very powerful idea. It was a way of expressing what was wrong with unrestrained capitalism."

> I'm not saying that socialism can be revived. I'm saying that criticism of a market economy without any kind of ethical constraint is a valid criticism, and it will continue to be expressed in one form or another—I hope not in an ideological extremist way, but nonetheless it needs expressed in one form or another. So, in that sense, there is a continuity, which is ultimately rooted in the Hebrew prophets and the New Testament, in their ringing opposition to oppression and poverty. So it's part of the great tradition. (3)

Bellah's own religious faith was influenced by his encounter with the theologian Paul Tillich, who was in residence at Harvard as a professor at large. He was drawn to Tillich's notion of God as "a power" rather than "a person, separate from the world. To say God is a being, even highest being, is blasphemous, because a being is alongside other beings. Being itself is not alongside other beings, (but) the power of being in all there is. That power makes it possible for us to exist an also to love and care for others. We did not create ourselves, human beings did not create the human species, we are a part of something larger that includes us "

One of the major contributions of Bellah to the study of religion is in the area of *Religious Evolution.* This is the area of his work that he is in the process of revision but the general outline, based largely on Weber's study of religions, remains the same. Some of the recent revisions, which I will discuss later, are the basis of his major criticism of American capitalism in its present form. In his recent volume of essays Bellah discusses his earlier article on "Religious Evolution' how he relied in Weber and where he is moving in the present writings:

> He (Weber) began with societies organized in terms of kinship and neighborhood, then moved to large scale-scale agrarian societies organized politically by patrimonial, feudal, or bureaucratic mechanisms, and concluded with what he called "modern capitalism," which is really his way of referring to modernity generally. "Religious Evolution" expanded Weber's kinship-neighborhood phase into "primitive" and "archaic," named his treatment large-scale agrarian societies, "historic,' and divided his modern period into "early modern" and "modern." Although "Religious Evolution" does consider changes in the social division of labor as an important factor of the evolutionary process, a careful reading should make it clear that the essay focuses on the changing symbolism of ultimate reality and the implications of those changes for society and personality. In the light of work in progress on religious evolution, this essay is in need of nuance at many points. In particular, the description of "modern religion" requires radical revision. (Bellah and Tipton 2006, 20)

In some of Bellah's writings he introduced the concept of *civil religion,* which he took from Rousseau, to describe the *public piety* in most modern societies. He does not use the term as such now but in his analysis of America, Italy and Japan, he shows how the actual religions and even secular ideologies reflect sectors of the society at different stages of religious evolution and may reflect regression as he argues in his most recent criticisms of American society. For instance *fascism*, in both Italy and Japan, though a child of modernity represented a tendency to deep regression into the archaic past.

Bellah also is considered a scholar in American Studies. In is in that context that his support for a guaranteed income was developed. In the late sixties, he had written an essay on "Civil Religion in America" and expanded this in book form, ***The Broken Covenant.*** Bellah's intent in this writings was to critique where he saw America going and in particular its involvement in the Vietnam War. This critique in the late sixties led to two volumes of *public social thought, which* he did with four other social scientists and

one philosopher—Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton. The first book was ***Habits of the Heart*** (1985) was based on depth interviews with a large cross section of American and reflected a cultural analysis. The stress there was the presence of *utilitarian individualism* as a dominant frame for many Americana with *expressive individualism* as a moderating influence. They viewed both of these as limiting for the facing of public issues. They also pointed to two other traditions *biblical religion* and *civic republicanism* as possibly giving resources to meet the challenges. In the second book, ***The Good Society*** (1991), they present some alternative policies drawing on these two traditions that should be implemented in the economy, government and education. A major part of the emphasis for the economy was on *economic democracy* with a *guaranteed income* providing for participation of all citizens in the rewards from economic production. They also seem to imply something like the *community action programs* of the sixties—"public commitment to institution building, family support, quality education, and self respecting work, and a concerted effort to involve skilled volunteers in the task of community building"--- to go along with the guarantee of an income. Also they see regulation of corporations "that limits irresponsible and destructive activities (toward workers, toward the environment, toward productivity itself) while enhancing and encouraging others (greater worker participation, ecological responsibility, and effective growth in productivity)." Thus this would imply greater economic citizenship in the workplace and as consumers. In other sections of the book they make suggestions for government and education.

In recent writings, Bellah has become even more critical of the Protestant core of American values. In this critique he draws on Weber's analysis in his sociology of religion and in his book, ***The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.*** In this book, Weber continues an analysis that he made of World Religions. He argues that in the large imperial agrarian civilizations the *suffering* caused by the extreme economic and political inequalities produced in reflective individuals and groups forms of *prophetic* and *redemptory religions* based on *universal brotherhood (Caritas).* (In his recent work on religious evolution, Bellah now calls this period the *Axial Age* drawing on the work of a friend of Weber, Karl Jaspers.) Among such groups there emerged an ethic that reflects a sense of humanity experiencing common sufferings from such economic and political inequalities in society.

> The more imperatives that issued from the ethic of reciprocity among neighbors were raised, the more rational the conception of salvation became and the more it was sublimated into and ethic of absolute demands. Externally, such commands rose to a communism of loving brethren; internally they rose to the attitude of *caritas,* love for the sufferer *per se*, for one's neighbor, for man, and finally for the enemy. (Weber 1972, 330)

> Further he argues that:

> The religion of brotherliness has always clashed with the orders and values of this world, and the more consistently its demands have been carried through, the

> sharper the clash has been. The split has become wider the more that values of the world have been rationalized and sublimated in terms of their own laws. (330)

For those groups or individuals who do not want to give up their power, Weber argues that there are two consistent "avenues of escape" from the demands of this "universal ethics of brotherliness" or *caritas.* One is the avenue of *mysticism* that moves the ethical demand to a different level of reality than the real world. The ethic of *caritas* then only applies to the *spiritual world* and to only certain groups such as *monks* or *saints.* The other consistent response for Weber is the Puritan ethic:

> As a religion of virtuosos, Puritanism renounced the universalism of love, and rationally routinized all work in this world into serving God's will and testing one's state of grace. God's will in its ultimate meaning was quite incomprehensible, yet it was the only positive will that could be known. In this respect, Puritanism accepted the rountinization of the economic cosmos, which, with the whole world, it devalued as creatural and depraved. This state of affairs appeared as God-willed, and as material and given for fulfilling one's duty. In the last resort, this meant in principle to renounce salvation as a goal attainable by man, that is, by everybody. It meant to renounce salvation in favor of the groundless and always only particularized grace. In truth, this standpoint of unbrotherliness was no longer a genuine 'religion of salvation.' (336-337)

` Thus "God's Will" is not to help the poor because their failure in terms of material success means the God has not elected them for salvation. Poverty becomes a moral issue and one can make a classification of "deserving poor" from "undeserving poor." One might view the link between Bellah's use of Weber's *Protestant Ethic* and Block's *Market Fundamentalism* is the figure of Thomas Malthus, who was a Protestant minister as well as writing economic thought. It should be noted that Weber wrote his famous study, ***The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,*** after a visit to America and he was struck by the way Protestant groups functioned in this country. Bellah sees this negative form of *protestant ethic* as having a major influence on the American value system:

> Just when we are in many ways moving to an ever-greater validation of the sacredness of the individual person, our capacity to imagine a social fabric that would hold individual together is vanishing. This is in part because our invincible individualism, deriving as I have argued from the dissenting religious tradition in America, is linked to an economic individualism that, ironically, knows nothing of the sacredness of the individual. Its only standard is money. What economic individualism destroys and what our kind of religious individualism cannot restore, is solidarity, a sense of being members of the same body. In most other North Atlantic societies, including other Protestant societies, a tradition of an established church, however secularized, provides some notion that we are in this thing together, that we need each other, that our precious and unique selves aren't going to make it all alone. (Bellah 2000. 343-349)

Bellah does recognize that forms of the original *ethic of brotherliness* remained in force for many of the American Protestant groups and formed a basis for what was called the *Social Gospel* that influenced many leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. His own work as an active member of the Episcopal Church is directed in the recovery of this social gospel in American thought. In the collection of his writings, he ahs included sermons that were given within the church. He also was used as a consultant for the Catholics Bishop's statement on the economy which came out in 1986 called *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy.* It remains a statement that any liberal Protestant could agree with and Bellah may have been instrumental in having it recommend a guaranteed income.

Erik Olin Wright:

The third case study is the sociologist, Erik Olin Wright. He defines himself as both a Marxist sociologist and as a socialist. For Wright, basic income is a part of a socialist project. As a Marxist theorist, he primarily uses quantitative research to define his concepts empirically. He says in an autobiographical essay that part of the reason for deciding on quantitative research was that it legitimated his Marxist categories.

> My decision to launch a series of projects at the core of which were sophisticated statistical techniques was not driven by any epistemological conviction that these techniques generated deeper or more reliable knowledge. Indeed, on that score I have found nearly always that I learned more from good qualitative and historical research than from research by quanto-maniacs. (Wright 1994, 10)

Wright's closest colleague in Sociology is Michael Burawoy who is also a Marxist who uses ethnography as his research method. They have written articles together even though their intellectual styles are quiet different. Another reference group for Wright is the NBSMG—Non-Bullshit Marxism Group—made up of theorist such as Jon Elster, Adam Prezeworski, G.A. Cohen, John Roemer, Robert Brener, Sam Bowles, Robert Van der Veen, Philippe Van Parijs, Pranib Barhan and Hillel Steiner. Wright says this has been the group that has meant the most to him in terms of intellectual discussions. Wright defines this group as part of what is called Analytical Marxism. One major aspect of this group is "the importance accorded to the *intentional action of individuals* within both explanatory and normative theories"(182). Other characteristics include commitment to *conventional scientific norms*, *systematic conceptualization,* and a relatively *fine-grained specification of the steps in the theoretical arguments linking concepts* in either the logical construction of explanatory theories or in the construction of normative theories.

In the survey research mention above, Wright developed a comparative study of class relations and the possibilities of social change across various societies including much of Western Europe, the U.S.A, Canada, Australia, South Korea, Taiwan and Russia. In analyzing these surveys he uses a formulation of class combining Marx and Weber, and points to the *contradictory* role of the *middle class* in Capitalism. He divide the class of *employees* along two dimensions; "first, their relation to authority within

production, and second, their possession of skill or expertise." Overall Wright ends up with possibly 12 *locations:*

> On the ownership of the means of production dimension this involves distinguishing between proper capitalists, small employees who only have a few employees, and the petty bourgeoisie (self-employed people with no employees). On the authority dimension this means differentiating between proper managers-people who are involved in organizational decision-making-and mere supervisors, who have power over subordinates but are not involved in policy-making decisions. And, on the skill dimension, this involves distinguishing between occupations, which typically require advanced academic degrees. And other skilled occupations, which require lower levels of, specialized training. (Wright 1997, 21)

For Wright, these are the *direct class locations.* These are other situations, which he calls *mediated class locations* with family ties being the most important. The important question for Wright here is "how do the social relations in which a person's life is embedded link that person to various mechanisms of class exploitation and thus shape that person's material interests?' He analyses different types of *cross-class families* in different societies and how this effects *class identifications*. In his overall analysis he locates the *underclass* in the following way.

> --the underclass consists of human beings who are largely expendable from the point of view of the logic of capitalism. Like Native Americans who became a landless underclass in the nineteenth century, repression rather than incorporation is the central mode of control directed towards them. Capitalism does not need the labor power of unemployed inner city youth. The material interests of the wealthy and privileged segments of American society would be better served if these people simply disappeared. However, unlike in the nineteenth century, the moral and political forces are such that direct genocide is no longer a viable strategy. The alternative, then, is to build prisons and to cordon off the zones of the cities in which the underclass lives. (Wright 1997, 23-24)

It is the development of what is called *The Real Utopias Projects* that Wright has written the most about a basic income. This is very much an ongoing process with drafts of various aspects of his formulation *on line* for download and critique. As is true of all of the four sociologists, Wright sees other basic changes as needed to create a more humane society, which he labels as *socialist.* In his latest formulation *socialist* is labeled as *associationalism* or even with a longer-term *egalitarian democratic associationalism*. "Other kinds of associationalism are also possible. A society within which various exclusionary forms of status hierarchy in civil society exercised predominate power over the state and economy would be a variant of associationalism, but would not be socialist." One might have a *racist society*, such as proposed by the Klu Klux Klan, that would be based on associationalism but would not be inclusive. Also societies based on a gender hierarchy or any other social category would not be. In his definition, socialist. This

definition is based on his separation of three domains of power: the *state*, *economy*, and *civil society*: (Wright 2004, 5)

> *The State* is the cluster of institutions, more or less coherently organized, which imposes binding rules and regulations over territories. (power is based on the ability to use *coercion* or force)
>
> *The Economy* is the sphere of social activity in which people interact to produce and distribute good and services. (power is based on the *control* of economically-relevant resources)
>
> *The Civil Society* is the sphere of social interactions in which people form voluntary associations of different sorts for various purposes. (power is based on capacities for collective action through voluntary associations)

He then distinguishes three ideal-type configurations: *economyism, statism,* and *associationalism*: (8)

> *Economyism* is a social order within which the allocation and use of resources for different social purposes is most strongly shaped by the exercise of economic power (that is the economy is dominant with respect to the state and civil society)
>
> *Statism* is a social order within the allocation and use of resources for different social purposes is most strongly shaped by the exercise of state power (that is, the state is dominant with respect to the economy)
>
> *Associationalism* is a social order within which the allocation and use of resources for different social purposes is most strongly shaped by the exercise of civil society rooted power (that is, the civil society is dominant with respect to the economy and the state)

As indicated, *socialism,* for Wright, is "one form of associationalism in which economic power is distributed in an egalitarian manner and associational power is organized democratically. Wright argues that four changes are needed to move capitalism to socialism: (17)

1. *Increasing the autonomy of civil society with respect to the economy*—that is reducing the extent to which capitalist markets and capitalist power penetrate civil society.
2. *Increasing the autonomy of the state with respect to the economy*—that is, reducing the extent to which economic power gets translated into political power.
3. *Increasing the power of civil society over the state*—That is, deepening the democratic accountability of the state policies to civic association.

4. *Increasing the power of civil society over the economy*—that is, increasing the ways in which civic-based collective action can set priorities for economic activity.

Wright discusses the Universal Basic Income proposal primarily effecting the first and fourth of the above changes. (18)

> UBI can be considered, in part, a mechanism for transferring part of the social surplus from market-centered capital accumulation to what might be called "social accumulation." Much of what it takes for actors in civil society to organize decommodified activities of various sorts is labor time. This is particularly salient for a wide range of care-giving activities, but also for much social production in the arts and also for political and community activism. By unconditionally guaranteeing everyone an adequate, if minimum, standard of living, UBI frees up labor time from the necessity of being exchanged for wages on a labor market. Labor power is itself thus partially decommodified, and this increases that autonomy of actors to enlarge the scope of civil activity.
>
> UBI also has likely effects on the empowerment of civil society with respect to the economy and perhaps the state. With respect to the economy, by partially decommodifying labor power, labor unions are likely to have greater bargaining power with respect to capitalist firma. UBI in effect, functions like an inexhaustible strike fund.
>
> UBI also could have effects on empowering civil society with respect to the state, at least insofar the partial decommodification of labor power allows for higher levels of citizen political activism in all of its forms.

In his project Wright has detailed discussions of possible examples of *social economy* and *democratic empowerment* that can be built upon to move toward his form of *socialism.*

Richard Sennett:

The fourth and last of the case studies is the sociologist, Richard Sennett. He defines himself as a socialist, but does not draw on Marxism as Wright does. Sennett talks about meeting President Clinton, who said to him "It's always good to meet an intelligent Democrat." "When I told him I voted Socialist Worker the famous Clinton smile froze." Like the other three sociologist he has related to the different discussions on the Left about where it should go. His father and uncle were members of the Communist Party and fought in the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War and Sennett was a member of the New Left in his college days. Of the classical theorists he draws most on the Chicago School of Sociology, (under the influence of George H. Mead and Georg Simmel), and Freud as particularly interpreted by the Object Relations School and Erik Erikson. He says this about himself:

> I am an old-fashioned humanist and, I suppose an old democratic socialist. I am a pragmatist. That's my philosophical church. The pragmatic movement from William James and John Dewey to Richard Rorty, Amartya Sen and myself is about discovering what people are capable of doing. It tries to understand social injustice and oppression by finding something positive that has been suppressed. (Tonkin 2008, 2)

In some ways Sennett projects have been influenced by one of his friends, Hannah Arendt, in trying to recover a *public sphere.* The difference is that Sennett believes that the content of that public sphere has to be the *social.* For Sociology, the *polity* is viewed as embedded in the *social* as much as the *economy.* This concern around the *social* has be developed particularly two sets of writings. On is to look at the city, especially in a historical mode, to find out what is a *humane way* of living together in space that enables us to accept and respect the *stranger*. The other is in studies of how persons experience their work and attempt to find meaning in it. I will look at the studied of urban life first and then look at the studies of work next where he comes to recommend a basic income.

In a recent speech he summarizes what he thinks is the virtues of urban life but is not expressed in most urban design. The first virtue is sociability where people learn to live with strangers. "The practice of modern democracy demands that citizens learn how to enter into the experience and interests of unfamiliar life such as differences of class, race, gender or other ways of life. "The second virtue has to do with subjectivity, and derives directly from the first." He feels that the experience of urban life can teach people how to live with multiple selves within their life.

> For me, the writings of the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, though no urbanist, has form a bridge between two urban virtues: Levinas asserts that, when a person's experience is so complex as to become multiply-defined or open-ended, he or she has need of others whom he or she does not know. He calls this, "the neighborliness of strangers," and the phrase aptly captures the aspiration we ought to have in designing cities. (Sennett 2008, 23)

Sennett finds the same sensitivity in James Baldwin's essay, "The Fire Next Time." He sees Baldwin as furnishing a deeper sense of the *social* than offered by Hannah Arendt.

> Baldwin's essay suggests the emotional experience that lies beyond identity; it is experience that incorporates incompleteness and doubt rather than aims at assertion. In this essay we are told the story of someone whose confusion turns outward rather than plunges him even more inward, looking for a resolution, for answer. His language comes to include the enemy. (Sennett 1990, 147)

His historical studies of urban space discuss various successes and failures to do this through both the urban design of space and the encouragement of civic rituals. In his book, ***Flesh and Bones,*** he particularly analyses the religious rituals and ideologies at different periods that helped to overcome these divisions in society. The richness of this

survey is hard to recover here. He discusses how Athens recognizes the public spaces of the *polis*, but does this by eliminating women and slaves from these spaces. The main urban ritual, the *Panthenia* did mix men and women together, but two other rituals for women helped the gender division.

> One of these, the *Thesmophoria* aimed to dignify the cold female body; another, the *Adonia,* restored to women the power of speech and desire Perikles denied them in the Funeral Oration. (Sennett 1994, 70)

At the height of the Middle Ages, Sennett points to the indentification in Christ suffering on the Cross and the practice of the Imitation of Christ as a leveling ritual as exemplified by Frances of Assi. However as merchant capitalism developed in Venice the fear of the stranger went into the creation of the Jewish Ghettos and restrictions on other groups. In modern designs, because of the emphasis on individual mobility, the modern form of the ghetto has developed for those left behind in the economic process. He sums up:

> At the beginning of this study, I said that I have written it as a religious believer, and now, at the end, I should explain why. In ***Flesh and Stone*** I have argued that urban spaces take form largely from the ways people experience their own bodies. For people in a multi-cultural city to care about on another, I believe we have to change our understanding we have of our own body. We will never experience the differences of others until we acknowledge the bodily insufficiencies of ourselves. Civic compassion issues from that physical awareness of lack in ourselves, not from sheer goodwill or political rectitude. If these assertions seem far from the practical realities of New York, perhaps it is a sign of how much urban experience has become divorced from religious understanding. (370)

The other project of Sennett has been a series of studies of work situations over a period of time. In these he combines, depth interviews, ethnography and personal reflections. His first was a joint effort with Jonathan Cobb, ***The Hidden Injuries of Class,*** which was first published in 1972. This study was partially prompted by his involvement with the New Left in the Sixties and the concern of lack of the student group to engage the white working class. He sets the interviews in the context of earlier labor militancy that had created a partial welfare state for at least unionized workers. At this time some of the *urban villages* or ethnic enclaves were becoming fragmented and in some areas there was white backlash against blacks. Most of the interviews and observations also described a large *anti-welfare* feeling against those on state aide. Sennett and Cobb describe the pyramid-like structure of the work place (Fordism) and the replication of this *meritocracy* in the school system. Professional jobs and academic credentials were emphasized and often the working class students were pushed aside. They see this same emphasis on merit on the job and the separation of white collar from blue collar as creating an inner conflict. The problem is that the opportunity to move up are limited and without the mechanism of social recognition the person blames himself for the failure to *measure* up.

> What fled to an interior life was their loving, because love was violated when they were working for rewards from someone else. Could it be that, in abolishing a hierarchy of rewards, a society might bring these feelings back into productive forms of men's life? (Sennett & Cobb 1972, 262)

In later works as he deals with what he calls the *new economy* Sennett recognizes the strengths of this *social capitalism,* as unions decline in influence and *flexibility* without security becomes the order of rule.

> Time lay at the center of this military, social capitalism: long-term and incremental and above all predictable time. This bureaucratic imposition affected individuals as much as institutional regulations. Rationalized time enabled people to think about their lives as narratives—narratives not so much of what necessarily will happen as how things should happen. It became possible, for instance, to define what the stages of a career ought to be like, to correlate long-term service in a firm to specific increased wealth. Many manual workers could for the time but a house. (2006, 25)

These aspects of security seemed to be melting and individuals left even more vulnerable to the expansion of the competitive market forces. In his ***The Corrosion of Character***, based on interviews and observations at the upper end of the *new economy,* he finds a different type of individualism emerging.

> What's peculiar about uncertainty today is that it exists without any looming historical disaster; instead it is woven into the everyday practices of a vigorous capitalism. Instability is meant to be normal, Schumpeters's entrepreneur served as an ideal Everyman. Perhaps the corroding of character is an inevitable consequence. "No long term" disorients action over the long term, loosens bonds of trust and commitment, and divorces will from behavior. (1998, 31)

In Sennett's analysis of the New Economy, meritocracy is still a problem because it is set within an organizational framework that gives no new security and profit is the bottom line. A major part of his book, ***The Culture of the New Capitalism,*** is spent on speaking of how the new criteria and their application create the feeling of *uselessness.* He makes a major distinction between *meritocracy* and *craftsmanship* (development of some special talent, some set of special skill, over time). *Craftsmanship* can involve skills of working with objects or skills of serving and working with people. The main difference is the lack of rigid standards and the time that it takes to develop the skills.

Basic Income comes up as a suggested policy first in Sennett's book, ***Respect,*** which is based on personal history and interviews with social service workers. Here, Sennett deals with the problem of maintaining respect in an unequal society. Here he deals with the *new economy* in its attempt to get flexibility by so-called welfare reform, particularly *welfare to work.* He labels Basic Income as "caring for others without compassion" and is set within a discussion around Hannah Arendt's reaction to compassion. He supports the idea but also feels that there is need for other programs

where there is personal contact with social service workers. At this point his roots in the Chicago School of Sociology is implied in his positive portrayal of Jane Addam's Settlement House approach and the later gang work project, the Chicago Area Project. He mentions similar *street work* with addicts in Paris.

> In Chicago as in Paris, good street work requires a planned narrative whose denouement is exit from crime, if not addiction; the Chicago Area Project looks highly bureaucratic to an outsider only because this long exit requires the assistance of doctors, legal advice, and financial support for the offenders themselves and occasionally for their families. On the street, to assume help, which eschews formal bureaucracy, means providing little help. Serious care means moving beyond the time frame of flexibility. (2003, 192-3)

He also proposes the support of public service worker in their attempt to recover a sense of "usefulness" which he develops further in his last book, ***The Culture of the New Capitalism.*** Here, Sennett builds Basic Income in to a recommendation around three areas of culture that need strengthening and building a new *social capitalism*: narrative, usefulness and craftsmanship. He discusses Basic Income as a part of narrative, "events in time connect, experience accumulates." Two other ideas are mentioned. One is "parallel institutions" which give workers continuity. "The idea is to make the labor union serve as a kind off employment agency, booking jobs; the union buys pension and health care for its members; most important, it provides the community missing in the workplace, organizing crèches**,** discussions, and social events." The other is the job sharing plans, particularly as done in the Netherlands.

> All three of these efforts address a hard reality; insecurity is not just an unwanted consequence of upheavals in the markets; rather, insecurity is programmed into the new institutional model. That is, insecurity does not happen *to* a new-style bureaucracy, it is made to happen. These and kindred efforts aim to countervail against that program without retuning to the rigidities of time within the old-style social capitalism organization. (2006, 187)

His suggestions around usefulness are directed to two realms: public service workers and people doing unpaid domestic labor. "A truly progressive politics would, in my view, seek to strengthen the State as an employer, rather than hive-off public service work to private companies." Sennett also proposes that the State should pay all care work.

> Care work may be loving, but the work itself has no public recognition, it is an invisible gift, and many men and women who do it feel they have dropped out of the adult society of their peers. Were government to reward care work, people would not labor in that limbo. (2006, 192)

His recovery of usefulness for public workers is related to the third value for Sennett in the recovery of *craftsmanship,* "the desire to do something well for its own sake."

> What I have sought to explore in these pages is thus a paradox: a new order of power gained through an ever more superficial culture. Since people can anchor themselves in life only by trying to do something well for its own sake, the triumph of superficiality at work, in schools, and in politics seem to me fragile. Perhaps, indeed, revolt against this enfeebled culture will constitute our next fresh page. (2006, 197)

This further in his latest book, ***Craftsmanship,*** which as indicated, not only covers skills with objects but also social services. In some ways, Sennett proposal here resembles Guy Standing's discussions of *Occupational Citizenship* at our congress in 2008.

Conclusions:

One can see that the four sociologists differ significantly in their styles and even research methods. However, they all draw, with varying proportions, on the *classical theories* of Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, George H. Mead, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. Thus, in many ways they differ in how they define the *social* and what types of *practices* they consider to be important. However, I would like to develop several areas where they seem to agree.

First, in their normative frameworks, these four put an emphasis on emphasis on the *priority of the poor.* Forms of domination, exploitation and/or exclusion are perceived as negatives and those groups that are at the bottom of the social structure, who experience these negative social processes the most, must be helped the most if total society is to be *humane.* A guaranteed or basic income is seen a basic necessity to provide a safety net for the poor and to prevent others from becoming poor. At the same time, all four see the necessity of other programs as a part of the safety net, such as healthcare or compassionate services. In many ways they see the value of keeping aspects of the old and present welfare state and in some cases they view positively many of the experiments made under the *community action programs* of the sixties. Lynn Chancer's statement probably reflects their point of view very well.

> --one is led in the direction of a conclusion quite different from the seemingly more "pragmatic" liberal/left conventional wisdom. For it may be that the more an idea such as guaranteed income cease to seem preposterous, the better chance *other* entitlements programs have also to be accorded legitimacy because the very notion of an entitlement would have become acceptable. Ironically enough, then, ideological advocacy of a concept like guaranteed income may have more potential to unleash greater acceptance of universal child care, health care, or social security as its by-product, then if many liberals and leftists persist on what is now at best an only moderately successful and exceedingly defensive course. (1998, 98)

Second, a normative framework that the four seem to share is what some recent works call *the commons* (the *gifts* from the past). The concept of the *social* implies an interdependence of individual on each other. In the field of science, Robert Merton dared to call this a norm of *communism*—even in the midst of the McCarthy era.

> The communal character of science is further reflected in the recognition of their dependence upon a cultural heritage to which they lay no differential claims. Newton's remarks—"If I have seen farther it is by standing on the shoulders of giants"—expresses at once the sense of indebtedness to the common heritage and a recognition of the essentially cooperative and cumulative quality of scientific achievement. (1942, 611-612)

Thomas Paine's statement probably reflects the views of these four theorists as it relates to the rest of social life. In a sense, "all life is a gift from society."

> Personal property is the *effect of society*; and it is as impossible for an individual to acquire personal property without the aid of society, as it is for him to make the land originally. Separate an individual from society, and give him an island or continent to possess, and he cannot acquire personal property. He cannot be rich … All accumulation, therefore, of personal property, beyond what a man's own hands produce, is derived to from by living in society; and he owes on every principle of justice, of gratitude, and of civilization, a part of that accumulation back again to society from whence the whole came. (Paine 1945, 442)

Last, they all four suggest further policies and programs that would make the *economy* and *polity* more *democratic*, therefore more responsive to the *social* in its *inclusive* form. They would see the necessity of social movements that move in this direction. Their own role as public sociologists indicates that they perceive a personal role in this endeavor. As indicated, they all have at one time been involved with either the *Old Left* or the *New Left* or even both. Therefore, the direction of the *Left* is of concern to all. How they define the particular form that should take would require much more than this paper proposes and can be taken up at another time.

In many ways, I feel the analysis here is incomplete. I did not realize in the beginning how complex the writings of these four sociologists would be. There are many areas of thought that I will be exploring in future papers. One small area is the implication of Sennett's concept *craftsmanship* for the general discussions, in arguments pro and con around a *basic income,* of supporting the *surfer.* This is a part of my attempt to critique the use of *reciprocity* in the *basic income* literature. There are further implications of a *sociological perspective* that can be developed form these writers

Let me end on a personal note that shows the *eclectic* nature of the sociological perspective. As a sociology student in the forties at the University of Texas I was exposed to a variety of creative social thought going on at the time in various departments of the

University. There were professors, even then, that were dealing with the crisis of depending on oil and other resources for our energy sources and were proposing various solutions that would be progressive today. On person that I took courses from in the economic department was Clarence E. Ayres who combined Keynes, Veblen and Dewey in his economic thought. At that time he was beginning to propose a guaranteed income to solve the problem of poverty and world peace. He says:

> The truth of the matter is that the national dividend is the product of the community. It is conditioned both positively and negatively by every member of it, and in ways so complex and recondite as to make the attribution of credit and discredit, responsibility and blame, the most difficult of judgments—one which is indeed traditionally reserved to God. (Ayres 1944, 272)

Ayres does not want to leave "the decision to God," but wanted society to make a conscious decision to redistribute income to the poor. This idea was reinforced for me, in the fifties, in the writings of Lewis Mumford, Eric Fromm and a Methodist theologian Nels Ferre. At that time, even though I was doing community center work, I considered myself a Parsonian sociologist. His writings on the *youth culture* helped me to formulate the beginnings of my work with gang groups. I always interpreted his formulations of the integrative value of citizenship (including *civil, political* and *social rights*), borrowed from the British sociologist T.H. Marshall, implied support for a guaranteed income (Parsons, 1965). This was latter confirmed in a verbal comment he made to me when I was giving him a tour of the Mexican American poverty areas in San Antonio, Texas, where we were engaged in developing a gang project. Guaranteed income came up as a needed policy and he agreed with the basic idea and indicated that he had though about for some time.

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