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Will a Basic Income Do Justice to Women?

*A Contribution to the Symposium on P. Van Parijs's "Real Freedom for All" in Analyse & Kritik 22(2)**

Abstract: This article addresses the question whether a basic income will be a just social policy for women. The implementation of a basic income will have different effects for different groups of women, some of them clearly positive, some of them negative. The real issues that concern feminist critics of a basic income are the gender-related constraints on choices and the current gender division of labour, which are arguably both playing at the disadvantage of women. It is argued that those issues are not adequately addressed by a basic income proposal alone, and therefore basic income has to be part of a larger packet of social policy measures if it wants to maximise real freedom for all.

1. Introduction

The basic income proposal is usually discussed from two points of view: as a redistribution scheme based on a underlying theory of justice (e.g. Van Parijs 1995), or as a welfare state reform aimed at decreasing unemployment without worsening poverty (e.g. Atkinson 1995; Van Parijs 1990).

This particular feature of the basic income literature provides us with the opportunity to bring insights from studies in social policy and welfare state reforms into the philosophical debate about distributive justice. Whereas some theories of justice are locked up in philosophical discussions, the basic income debate is an excellent example of multidisciplinary research. It includes philosophical theories (Van Parijs 1995), economic analyses providing a theoretical analysis of implementation proposals and labour market effects (Atkinson 1995), micro-simulation models predicting the labour market effects and testing the budgetary feasibility (Atkinson 1995; Gilain/Van Parijs 1996) and socio-economic analyses studying a basic income in the context of the social policy and welfare state reforms (Atkinson

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1996; Schokkaert/Van der Linden/Van Parijs 1997; Van Parijs 1990; 1996; Walter 1989).

Most of this research is gender blind in the sense that it does not tackle the question whether a basic income would differently affect men and women. However, a thorough gender analysis could be interesting for two reasons: there is a public interest to know more about this issue and currently there are opposite claims being made about the expected gender effects.

Proponents of a basic income argue that unpaid work would get some recognition (Miller 1986; Walter 1989; Withorn 1990), that the autonomy of poor women (McKay/VanEvery 1995) or all women (Walter 1989) would increase, that it would help to achieve greater gender equality in the labour market by improving women's bargaining position and by encouraging men to work part-time, thus allowing them to share more in domestic work (Standing 1992) and that it would be possible to choose for unpaid labour (Miller 1986; Walter 1989). Parker (1993) claims that a basic income holds more advantages for women than the current British social security system, not because a basic income favours women, but because the British social security system benefits men more. However, according to Parker a basic income is not enough to change the current situation, and equal opportunities and equal wages remain important.

These positive evaluations stand in contrast with the belief among some feminists that a basic income will turn out to be some kind of housewives wage or hush money, sending women back home and tempering emancipation. According to Orloff (1990), a basic income is not a good strategy to reach gender equality and justice. She claims that the unequal division of household responsibilities is crucial in the explanation of the disadvantageous position of women in society and that other elements of social policy, which alter the structure of both paid and unpaid work, can be much more effective to reach gender justice. Although there are very few academic articles arguing for this point of view, it has often been raised by the audiences of academic or public debates on basic income. Some feminist pamphlets and articles in popular magazines also strongly oppose a basic income. However, it is important to stress that this belief is not shared by all feminists—there are also feminist advocates of a basic income.

Authors on basic income proposals are not alone in neglecting the gender dimension and its moral problems. Feminist philosophers and feminist theorists haven't raised this question either. As Nussbaum (1999a, 278; 1999b, 38) argues, feminist philosophy has increasingly turned away from the material side of life, towards theories of verbal and symbolic politics. Similarly, Barrett (1992) describes the "shift from things to words" in feminist theory. Recent handbooks in feminist theory, like Kemp and Squires (1997), hardly make any reference to economic subjects or material inequality, but instead focus on topics like the body, representation, sexuality, and race and ethnicity.

In this article, I want to make a first step towards a better understanding of the moral questions and problems of gender justice that can arise with the implementation of a basic income. In her recent book on gender inequality and injustice against lesbians and gays, Nussbaum (1999a) has repeatedly argued that

real-life political issues, especially those where deep disagreement exists, can only be solved if we approach them rationally and lay out the arguments to feed the civil public debate. In an attempt to take this route, I will use insights from social and economic research on basic income to introduce the gender-related normative questions into the philosophical discussion.

Hence, this article will address the question whether a basic income does justice to women in the context of West-European welfare states. The article is structured as follows. The next section provides a descriptive gender analysis of a basic income. Section 3 analyses some of the normative arguments. Section 4 spells out the genuine moral issues underlying the tension between gender justice and basic income. The last section concludes.

2. A Descriptive Gender Analysis

If we introduce a basic income, which effects relevant for a gender analysis can we expect? A basic income causes two kinds of effects: first order effects (visible, important and easily recognisable effects, taking place in the short run) and second order effects (less material effects, less visible, and with some effects only in the long run.)

I will discuss three first order effects (2.1–2.3): changes in labour supply, changes in incomes, and changes in well-being derived from a change in (professional) activities. I will also discuss six second order effects (2.4–2.9): a revaluation of unpaid work, psychological effects on housewives, a change in the bargaining position and power in the household, non-pecuniary advantages of paid labour, the decrease of human capital, and spill-over effects due to statistical discrimination.[1]

2.1 Labour Supply Effects

If a basic income would be introduced, what would be the expected labour supply reaction of men and women? Neo-classical economic analysis concludes it to be theoretically impossible to predict these labour supply effects (Atkinson 1995; Nelissen/Polk 1995).

As far as I am aware, there are two studies estimating women's labour supply changes after the implementation of a basic income (Késenne 1990; Nelissen/Polk 1995). Both studies, modelling monthly basic incomes amounting to 360 resp. 390 Euro, found that a basic income would make women want to work less hours. However, if enough (small) part-time jobs would be available, only few women would withdraw totally. Nelissen and Polk also found that especially low skilled women would withdraw. However, a recent social policy change in Belgium, allowing parents career interruption premiums (around 300 Euro monthly) to raise small children, shows that this opportunity is predominantly used by high skilled mothers (Szabo 1997).

[1] There are many more first and second order effects. I have tried to list all effects relevant and important for a gender analysis.

Hence, the studies available do not predict that women will withdraw *en masse*, but they do indicate that some women will become less attached to the labour market, either by working less hours, or by withdrawing. The direction of the female labour supply effect is clear, but the magnitude is uncertain.

2.2 Total Income Effects

Based on the existing literature, it is impossible to predict the changes in total income for women expressed in absolute levels or relative to their husband's income. We can only make a few general remarks.

First, it is obvious that the amount of a basic income will be of crucial importance to make any financial evaluation. Second, those women who had no income from labour or unemployment benefits, will experience a pure income improvement.

Third, for married or cohabiting women, it is impossible to predict whether their income share relative to their partner is increasing or not. To judge this effect, one has to take into account all the details of the basic income proposal which would be implemented, and of the particularities of the fiscal system of the country under consideration. For example, in a country with currently a progressive tax on labour earnings, a basic income proposal including a flat tax on wages will on average lead to a larger decrease in net wages for wives compared to husbands, as wives on average earn less than their husband. This also implies that if such a basic income is introduced, and husband nor wife change their labour supply, the average wife will have a greater labour income loss compared to her husband, as her gross labour income will be smaller.

Finally, for single mothers, a basic income appears to be an improvement because it is likely to weaken the poverty and unemployment trap. If social security allowances will still be paid for the amount exceeding the basic income, like proposed in Gilain and Van Parijs (1996), single mothers will never be worse off.

2.3 Effects on the Choice of Labour and Job

The last first-order effect of a basic income is the higher direct well-being that individuals can gain when they can choose the job they like better but which is worse paid, or when they can choose for unpaid care labour instead of market labour. Many young mothers want to withdraw (temporarily) from the labour market to raise their children themselves. If these women have the choice between a badly paid job, or the possibility to stay at home, the second option is for many of them much more attractive.

2.4 A Revaluation of Unpaid Work

Which second order effects can we expect? First, we might expect that a basic income will lead to a revaluation of unpaid work. In Western societies there is a societal tendency to undervalue unpaid work, especially household work and care

labour. European societies value the job one has often as the most important source of status and integration into society. A basic income will in an indirect way contribute to a financial revaluation of unpaid work, which might also help to increase the respect people show for this kind of work.

2.5 Psychological Effects on Housewives

One can expect that a basic income, even when it is small, will be positively valued by housewives (or househusbands). It gives those women a feeling of contributing to the incomes of the family, and to get more recognition for the care and household work they do. Pahl (1989) notices that for British housewives the child allowances they receive are psychologically very important, even when they are very small.

2.6 Bargaining Position and Power in the Household

In principle, all family members gain by the formation of a household, but the share of those gains that different individuals get can differ considerably from one arrangement to another. Therefore, households can best be seen as "co-operative conflicts" (Sen 1990). How the gains from the co-operation are divided depends, among other things, on the bargaining position of the individuals.

There is evidence on the existence of links between money and power in the household. Power is then conceptualised by the ability to take (part in) decisions. It appears that the partner with the highest income is more dominant in decision-making, and women with paid employment have on average more power than women working unpaid at home (Pahl 1989).

Ott (1995) shows that specialisation in unpaid labour weakens the bargaining position of housewives. Her empirical tests confirmed that education and non-labour income increase the power of housewives in the household. The higher the income of the husband, the less power the wife has.

Although these studies are limited in number and most of them are small-scale and thus difficult to generalise from, there is growing evidence that personal income increases power. This implies that the introduction of a basic income will increase the bargaining power of housewives, but that for women working on the labour market, everything depends on the effects of the labour supply and total net income change.

2.7 Non-Pecuniary Advantages of Paid Labour

Women who would leave the labour market will not only lose their labour income, but also some non-pecuniary advantages. For Orloff (1990) these advantages are the construction of a network of colleagues, a place where one can demonstrate his/her competence, and a feeling of self-respect. Steil (1997, 18–19) adds to this list increased self-esteem, affirmation, enhanced social contacts and more independent children.

2.8 Decrease of Human Capital and Expected Income in the Long Run

Studies on the division of labour between partners do not always recognise the long-term effects of this specialisation. Specialisation can indeed be optimal in the short run, but it can lead to unwanted dependencies in the long run (Wunderink-van Veen 1997).

Human capital depreciates when it is not used. As a consequence, when re-entering after some years out of the labour market, the potential wage will have decreased. The total expected income over the lifetime cycle will therefore decrease by three sources: the lack of income during the period that no paid labour is done, a decrease of the expected wage in case of an eventual return to the labour market and smaller personal pension rights. If the human capital of a woman erodes because she didn't have a job for some years, the probability of financial distress in case of divorce or death of her husband increases.

2.9 Spill-Over Effects on All Women Due to Statistical Discrimination

A last second order effect is an expected increase of statistical discrimination against women. Statistical discrimination is a form of indirect discrimination based on the fact that a person belongs to a group that has certain characteristics. These characteristics are used as proxies for the average productivity of that group.

Women on average get one or two children and take maternity leave. They also work less hours on the labour market than men, and bear more responsibility for the household and the care of the children and the elderly. They have more career interruptions and are more absent from the workplace. For all these reasons, it is assumed by many employers that women are on average less productive than men. Furthermore, it is rational for an employer to think of an individual woman that she will share these characteristics of her group, as he has no information on her future commitments.

Hence, an employer discriminates a woman (by not hiring her or giving her a lower wage) because the employer has no exact information on her productivity and therefore his *perception* of the average productivity of all women will count. A woman who does not want children, or wants to make a career or has a husband who takes half of the household responsibilities, will still bear the consequences of the fact that other women are more 'child and household oriented'—which is *perceived* as a good indicator for lower productivity.

This implies that if a basic income is introduced, and a group of women decreases her labour supply, it will also be *expected* from other women that they will be less labour market attached. Hence, a basic income will probably worsen the statistical discrimination against women.

One could argue that if statistical discrimination increases efficiency, this efficiency gain can be used for the worse off, for example women. If one follows this argument, statistical discrimination should not per definition be morally condemned.

However, I strongly oppose to this argument. First, the little empirical research on discrimination that contains detailed and direct information on productivity (e.g. Wenneras/Wold 1997) shows that even when a woman is two times as productive as a man, employers might prefer to offer a job to him instead of her. I would therefore argue that the best assumption to start from is that statistical discrimination *lowers* aggregate productivity and efficiency. Nevertheless, this efficiency suboptimality can sustain because of three elements. First, it is rational for employers who have no information on individual productivity to use groups-based proxies. Second, perception biases (which can be formed by sexist, racist or other believes) can lead to a misfit between the observed proxies and real productivity. And finally, I see no reason why other considerations next to productivity (like a preference for employee homogeneity or preferences for certain types of people) would not interfere with the profit maximising strategies of employers hiring people.

Furthermore, even if statistical discrimination would lead to efficiency gains, it should still be condemned on moral grounds. It violates the basic principle of equal concern and respect for all individuals. Therefore, I think it is a real challenge for theorists of justice, including basic income proposers, to find strategies to end statistical discrimination and integrate them in their theories.

3. Gender Justice and Basic Income: Normative Arguments

In this section, I will discuss three arguments that should be considered when evaluating the relation between a basic income and gender inequality in a normative perspective.

3.1 Basic Income and Economic Independence

Economic independence is the key-concept of most second-wave western feminists in their arguments against a basic income. However, dependency has many different meanings (Lister 1990).

Absolute economic independence is the degree to which a person can take care of herself and eventually dependent others, now as well as in the future. Relative economic independence concerns the income of one spouse relative to the income of the other. In this case, a threshold has to be defined: for example, the income of one spouse should not exceed 55% of the total household income (Ward/Dale/Joshi 1996).

Ward, Dale and Joshi (1996) argue that full-time employment is the only route for women to avoid economic dependence, either on their partner, or on the state. Absolute economic dependence on the husband can have disadvantageous consequences in the case of marital breakdown. This has been shown by Jarvis and Jenkins (1999), who studied the financial consequences of divorce or separation in

the UK. The mean net income after divorce increased for men (+ 2%), whereas for women and children it decreased dramatically (–14 resp. –18%).

Can the claim that a basic income will worsen women's economic independence be supported?

Whatever the level of the basic income would be, the women (and men) who did not receive any income before, will experience an improvement both in the level of their absolute as well as relative economic independence. The level of the basic income determines whether this improvement is limited to the psychological effects. If a basic income will not replace other social security allowances, but made complementary to them, women on the bottom of the income and employment distribution will benefit from a basic income, also regarding the increase in economic independence. Again, the problematic evaluation concerns in particular the women who might decrease their labour supply. It is very difficult to judge how their incomes will change.

3.2 Basic Income between Housewives Wages and Unemployment Benefits

In the strict sense, a housewives wage is an allowance for individuals working in the home, who are paid for their household and care labour. It could be made explicitly conditional upon taking care of small children. Some housewives in Europe advocates such a housewife's allowance. They refer to the unjust situation occurring as some women who are now receiving unemployment benefit use it in an improper way (as they are not really looking for a job), while housewives can not make use of this system.

In several European countries, working parents can apply for career interruption premia, if they want to withdraw temporary from the labour market, mostly to take care of small children. Those premia are strictly conditional upon being at least half time employed, at the moment of application. It is obvious that housewives are being treated unjust here too, as they might perform the same care labour, but are not paid for it.

It is not sure, however, whether a housewife's wage would not create other injustices amongst women. It would have to be financed by general tax revenues. A working wife doing household chores after work and in weekends, would hence have to pay taxes for women who do the same household chores in a 'paid' fashion. Empirical studies have shown that on average women active on the labour market work significantly more than housewives, and a few hours more than their husbands (de Hart 1995, 41–42; Steil 1997). With a housewife's wage, working women would then face a triple disincentive: working outside the house increases their workburden, they are extra taxed to pay for the housewife's wage, and they do not receive any allowance for the household work they perform.

I would argue that a basic income will resolve part of these problems. Housewives would get an allowance, and would not feel treated unjustly especially with regard to the improper but necessary use of the unemployment benefits. Neither would they feel treated unjustly with regard to persons taking career interruption

who receive an allowance for this. For unemployed women, a basic income has the advantage that everyone receives it unconditionally. In several West-European countries, the fact that the unemployment benefits are conditional on the willingness to work and on an unemployment duration that does not substantially exceed the average duration, results in especially women being denied benefits (Schokkaert/Van der Linden/Van Parijs 1997).

3.3 The Importance of the Individual Character of a Basic Income

The second wave women's movement in Europe argues for the individualisation of the social security entitlements since derived entitlements would increase the dependence of women on their husbands. It has also been argued that an independent benefit entitlement for women in the social security system is necessary for a full exercise of her social and political rights as a citizen (Lister 1990).

A basic income is an individual right par excellence. However, it is not at all obvious that individual social security rights will work at the financial advantage of women. If these rights are implemented in a society with persistent earnings differences between men and women, a complete individualisation of the pension rights will in any case work at the disadvantage of women (Joshi/Davies 1994). It has been argued that the individualisation of the entitlements may be part of a long-term strategy for gender equality, but in the short run it can worsen the social security position of women (MacDonald 1998). If a basic income would be introduced, it might better be implemented together with a credit split system, where individual entitlements are determined based on the entitlements partners build up together during the period of marriage or cohabitation (Okin 1989).

4. Gender Justice and Basic Income: What are the Genuine Moral Issues in this Debate?

The implementation of a basic income raises issues that touch feminist concerns. I argue in this section that most of those issues are related to the gender structured nature of western societies *in general*. Therefore they are to be considered with any welfare state reform or theory of distributive justice, not only with the basic income proposal.

4.1 What's Wrong with Gender Roles and the Gender Division of Labour?

In all countries, studies show that women do more unpaid household and care labour and less paid work compared to their male partners (de Hart 1995; Okin 1989; Steil 1997; Strober/Chan 1998; Wunderink/Niehoff 1997). In contradiction to the claim that this division would be an individual free choice, part of the literature gives another interpretation (Okin 1989; Ferber/Young 1997; Folbre 1994, 1995; Neumark/McLennan 1995; Phipps/Burton 1995; Steil 1997; Strober/Chan 1998).

Many feminists, including liberal philosophers (e.g. Kymlicka 1990; Okin 1989) have argued that the gender division of labour is unjust. Not all liberal philosophers are convinced by this claim. For liberals, individual free choice is crucial, and most of them see no problem of injustice if women choose to stay at home. If feminists believe that this gender division of labour is not a natural thing, or not a simple uncomplicated matching of preferences of two partners, how can this division then be explained?

The combination of (at least) seven elements, and especially their interaction and mutual intensification can explain why so many women perform so much household- and care work. Unfortunately, this attempt to explain the current gender division of labour will remain rather tentative and loose, as it would require a huge study analysing all its details.

Firstly, children are from a very young age in a different way confronted with images and ideas on the desirable roles of their own gender. Small children see their mothers taking more care of household work, whereas their father is the absent person, whose position and status in society is determined by activities in the public sphere. If children are raised with these examples of their own gender, and identify themselves with it, then small boys grow up with the idea that their realisation as adults will take place outside the home, whereas girls see that for them this will (partly) take place through care labour.

A second element are the role patterns following from socialisation, and the confirmation of these role patterns through the media, movies, television and so on. These representations of gender roles and gender stereotypes are weaker than some decades back, but recent research still shows their existence (Van Zoonen 1994).

Thirdly, due to the different expectations boys and girls have regarding the importance of care labour in their life, they will take this into account when choosing a course of study or profession. Girls will easier choose for subjects related to the care sector, or for professions that are easier combined with care labour. This hypothesis is consistent with the empirical fact that girls do not study fewer years than boys, but they choose other subjects and professions, which are considered more 'soft' and have a lower income generating capacity.

Fourth, there is a group of labour market conditions leading to the fact that *ceteris paribus* women earn less than their husbands. Major elements here are labour market segregation and discrimination. Although there is a general tendency to believe that gender discrimination has almost virtually disappeared, recent evidence shows its persistence (Darity/Mason 1998; Neumark, Bank/van Nort 1996; Neumark/McLennan 1995; Wenneras/Wold 1997). Furthermore, Neumark and McLennan (1995) showed for the US that women who report gender discrimination in their workplace, will *subsequently* have a higher incidence of marriage and childbirth. This undermines the commonly assumed causality that marriage and children lead to a lower labour market attachment and are hence the cause of discrimination.

Fifth, a husband is on average about 3 years older than his wife, which implies, through the seniority rule in the wage formation, that wives earn less than their

husbands. Phipps and Burton (1995) find a significant negative effect of this age difference on the labour market participation of wives. They argue that age differences are likely to affect attitudes and hence the bargaining position of wife and husband.

Sixth, empirical studies (Steil 1997, 48–50) show that the majority of men and women, including double-career couples, continue to view the husband as primary responsible for the financial security of the family. Women's wages are seen as secondary wages, even when she earns the same or more than her husband. As a consequence, a wife is not entitled to see her career as primary, and to exempt herself from household work.

Finally, many men and women find it convenient and attractive to stick to the existing gender division of labour. It is a habit and it is easier, as past generations give examples how a household balance between labour and care can be found and as many elements in the organisation of society encourage such a division of labour. Looking for more egalitarian household organisations requires much more thoughts and negotiations by the couple and is therefore a more difficult route to go. Furthermore, as Ferber and Young (1997) argue, resistance to change is all the greater because men have a stake in preserving the traditions and the status quo within the family, as many see little to gain by doing a larger share of the household work. Empirical evidence (Steil 1997) also suggests that if the wife's paid work increases, her share of the care and household work does not decrease proportionally. Furthermore, husbands do not perform more household work when their labour market commitments decrease. Steil (1997, 52–53) cites studies showing that even if a husband is unemployed, he does less household work than a wife working 40 hours on the labour market. She concludes that there is growing evidence that the allocation of domestic responsibilities is more a matter of internalised gender expectations than conscious choice.

Bringing these seven elements together, makes us conclude that *from a household point of view, and in the short run*, it could be a rational choice for husband and wife to introduce gender specific labour specialisation. At the moment they want to or have to decide that one of the partners works less or withdraws from the labour market, the choice is often rather obvious, and the framework and context in which this choice is made might strongly influence this choice. In other words, gender related structures and constraints convert this choice from an individual autonomous choice under perfect information into a collective decision under socially constructed constraints with imperfect information and asymmetrical risks.

Note that this explanation makes it possible to avoid the black box argument of 'false consciousness'. The explanation I offer here is perfectly compatible with rational adults who are self-reflective. However, they don't maximise their own welfare independent of others, but instead some kind of two step collective decision process takes place. In the first stage it is decided that one of the partners should work less or withdraw from the labour market, while in the second stage it is decided which partner this should be.

I argued that it is possible to formulate an alternative account of how the gender division of labour actually happens. Moreover, feminists also argue that the

current gender division of labour is not desirable. What is the exact argumentation behind the claim that the current gender division of labour is unjust?

First, gender roles and the gender division of labour affect both men and women differently, and it is argued that women tend to lose and men tend to gain with this division. This does not mean that there are no gender roles imposed on men. On the contrary, they exist as well, and there are indications that men deviating from their gender roles are penalised. For example, a recent study by Albrecht, Edin, Sundström and Vroman (1999) suggest that the significant negative effect on subsequent wages after career interruption is stronger for men than for women. As the authors suggest, employers assume a correlation between men's leave-taking behaviour and their degree of career commitment, and penalise those men who take a significant parental leave. For women, this is different. Due to financial incentives and tradition, almost all women take parental leave, so this can not signal anything to the employers. Hence, we can expect that if all fathers would take a significant parental leave, then this aspect of their gender role would change and we might see that men would be treated in the same way as women now.

Although gender roles affect men as well, feminists argue that gender roles are generally advantaging men, and disadvantaging women. The socio-economic studies cited earlier confirm that specialisation in unpaid work increases the financial risk and might worsen women's bargaining position at home. Furthermore, over the last century, women have organised themselves to change gender roles. We hardly see any men who argue that gender roles play at their disadvantage. If men would have felt systematically disadvantaged or constrained by the expectations gender roles put on them, they would long have organised themselves to fight against it. The fact that in society men hardly ask a change of the gender roles, is a serious indication that they know they have more to gain than to lose with the current gender division of labour.

Another indication why gender roles are at the disadvantage of women is that people who are not doing a substantial part of household work, or bear no responsibility for it, tend to underestimate this work. The results of a project in Iceland and occasional evidence from the media suggest that men taking parental leave or becoming househusband are surprised to see how demanding household work is, and start valuing the work much more once they (had to) do it for a while by themselves. Sticking to traditional gender roles will probably imply that household work will continue to be underestimated by men who don't do a substantial part of it.

Second, one has to recognise the importance of gender differences in power, or as Nussbaum (1999a, 286–287) calls them, gender hierarchies. In general, we can define gender differences in power as a general tendency in society that men have more power than women. As men occupy most of the powerful or influential jobs (politicians, bankers, religious leaders, publishers, investors, directors, professors, media makers,...), they can claim more resources, influence public policy, determine public agenda setting and set social norms. Those men are typically also better integrated in networks of other men who can provide them with information, jobs and rare and cheap services and goods. Women are more likely to

have less command over money, resources, (influential) jobs, networks of powerful people, etcetera. Women are also much more likely to bear either the day-to-day responsibility or at least the final responsibility for dependents. Some examples, like the earlier mentioned division of labour in heterosexual couples, give some indication how these gender power differences have some small seeds from the very beginning of life, and are confirmed and intensified in an accumulating way through life. Gender roles and the gender division of labour are two of those factors[2] that help men gain their power, and prevent women from getting an equal distribution of power.[3]

Some authors, like Mill (1869) and Okin (1989; 1995) also discuss the role that the unequal division of labour within families has on public justice. They argue that families have to form the moral characters of children, and prepare them to be just democratic citizens. However, "families in which females are unequal to males serve those goals badly; for they raise males who are used to a feudal hierarchy within the household and who will therefore have a difficult time tolerating political equality outside the household. A more equal division of power between males and females, by contrast, better serves these larger human interests." (Nussbaum 1999a, 272)

Research on the division of labour in lesbian couples is very revealing on how gender roles influence the division of labour. Empirical research shows that lesbian couples are far more egalitarian than heterosexual couples (Dunne 1998a; 1998b). This can be explained because the division of labour in those couples is less guided by gender roles. Moreover, in the public sphere the male gender role of fully committed employees is not expected from those women, so that both mothers can combine paid work with family commitments.

4.2 Basic Income: More Real Freedom to Choose—or Less?

Advocates of a basic income want to enlarge the opportunities to choose for everybody, so that a *real choice* between paid and unpaid labour would become possible (Van Parijs 1995). I argued earlier that the concept of free and autonomous choice is difficult to hold in our current gender-structured society. Trying to understand how certain choices are made, can be crucial for our moral claims regarding choices. In its most general formulation, we can say that the constraints on choices for men and women are different and group-dependent. These constraints can be investments in earnings-generating education, discrimination, gender roles, social norms, labour market organisation, other institutional arrangements and moral believes.

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[2] Other factors could be gender discrimination and male violence against women.

[3] Conceptualising men as a collective might be easily misinterpreted here. I should stress that I use "men" here not to refer to ontological characteristics of men, but to social and statistical (and thus changeable) facts. It is possible to find exceptions for any of the claims I make, but this doesn't change the fact that from a statistical point of view, one can see that the male distribution of a certain characteristic dominates the female distribution (e.g. both on average as well as for every percentile of the distribution, men earn more than women, but this does not imply that one particular woman cannot earn more than one particular man).

Next to the discussion of the gender division of labour, another example might illustrate the direction this critique takes. It has been claimed that a lot of professions are so demanding, that they require from the employee to be exempted from care- and household work. Women who have a demanding career often still bear household responsibilities, while many men working at the same level, have supporting wives (Okin 1995, 137–138). In case a couple has children, the popular claim is that "You can not have it all" or that "You can not have two careers in one family". In liberal environments, those claims are almost always followed by the addition that it does not have to be the husband who is pursuing his career while his wife is doing the household management. It is easy to see that such a claim is what Okin (1989) calls a false gender neutral claim. Given gender roles, historical patterns and tradition, it is possible for a man to find a wife who will support his career by exempting him from childcare and household management. However, given the same gender roles, historical patterns and traditions, there is hardly any chance for an ambitious woman to find a man who will support her career and become a houseman. In this example, two constraints affect woman differently than men. First, the supply of male partners willing to sign for the household role is very limited, while this is not the case for female partners. Second, the labour market is arranged around the assumption that for many jobs, one is child-care and family commitments free, which in our gender structured society limits women more than men. Or, as Kymlicka (1990, 249) puts it: "Even if this economic vulnerability [from the current gender division of labour] were removed, by guaranteeing an annual income to everyone, there is still the injustice that women are presented with a choice between family and career that men do not face."

At this point, the distinction between internal and external conditions for autonomy can be helpful (Nussbaum, 1999a, 296). Internal conditions are related to being able to bargain, plan your life, reflect about the consequences of actions, etc. External conditions are related to the option set one has. If an individual's choices are to be made in reduced circumstances in comparison with other individuals, then the external conditions for autonomy are not fulfilled. Real free choice requires fostering internal autonomy through thoughtful and careful education and raising of children, and public support for external conditions of autonomy by trying to enlarge the option set for all individuals, especially those with limited options. The feminist critique on basic income can thus be summarised that the gender-related character of some of those internal and external conditions is not recognised.

4.3 Women's Diversity and Spill-Over Effects

It is clear that some women want to stay at home. In a liberal state, nobody can force them to work on the labour market and bring their children to day-care. And that is definitely a good thing, as for some women, doing housework and care labour is their best option, taking actual preferences, conditions and constraints into account. If a basic income would be introduced, for some women the best

option will shift from working outside the house (probably in bad circumstances, doing low-paid, boring work), to working at home.

Crucial to the feminist concerns regarding basic income is women's diversity, and the spill-over effects the choices of one group of women have on the other. The different effects described in sections 2 and 3 will affect some groups of women differently from other groups. To summarise, low-skilled women with low labour-market attachment will definitely gain from a basic income. High skilled women with strong labour market attachment will lose from the reinforcement of gender roles and statistical discrimination. For other groups of women, some effects are offsetting others, so that the total effect is ambiguous.[4]

Hence, we face a dilemma. If we want to fully and unconditionally respect choices women make in the given gender-structured society, we see that some of those women are putting their own future well-being at risk, and at the same time worsen the constraints on other women's choices. We can not simply assume that all housewives have a 'false consciousness' and therefore we can not impose a paternalistic social policy. However, neither can we pretend to live in a society where no gender-related preference formation mechanisms and gender-related constraints on choices exist—in other words, the pure liberal concept of autonomous fully informed choices is not helping us either. The question seems therefore how to maximise the individual capacity of real choice, while at the same time step by step abolishing the gender- and other groups-related constraints individuals face when making those choices.

5. Conclusion: Will a Basic Income Do Justice to Women?

In this paper, I have discussed a wide range of effects of a basic income from a gender perspective. At the same time, I have tried to lay out the argumentation behind the opposition of some feminists against basic income. If we balance pros and cons, is it possible to answer the question whether a basic income will do justice to women?

If a basic income is implemented without any other social policy changes, there will be both positive and negative effects. The positive effects will be the recognition of unpaid work and care labour as valuable contributions to life, the increased flexibility of choice between different kinds of labour (home or on the labour market) and the financial support for single parents and housewives. Women without earnings might experience an improvement of their intra-household bargaining position. Moreover, a basic income can solve the injustices that currently exist between the fiscal treatment for unemployed women versus women taking parental leave versus housewives—problems which can not be solved by introducing a housewives' wage. Finally, a basic income is an individual right—which might be positive for women, but only if this is supplemented with a credit split system or a policy to equalise men's and women's earnings.

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[4] I elaborate on the importance of the diversity of women in Robeyns (forthcoming).

The negative effects of a basic income implementation can be summarised as follows. Given the current gender-structured society, it seems like a basic income will lead to a reinforcement of traditional gender roles. This will in the first place have a negative effect on the women withdrawing from the labour market, as they will experience a depreciation of their human capital, they will lose the non-pecuniary advantages of paid labour, they might experience a worsening of their bargaining position at home, and run higher well-being risks in the case of divorce. There will also be a direct negative effect on women working on the labour market. Even if for *some* women the traditional gender roles would be real autonomous choices and if they could be protected for the higher risks they run, then still *other* women can bear negative consequences through spill-over effects like statistical discrimination and the reinforcement of gender roles expectations and gender hierarchies. I also argued that the gender division of labour leads to injustices for all women, both on individual as well as on aggregated levels, because it fuels the current gender differences in power.

If it is true that a basic income will stimulate the traditional gender division of labour, as suggested by the limited empirical evidence we have, then these effects will be unambiguously negative. However, if a basic income would not lead to a reinforcement of traditional gender roles, we are still left with the fact that a basic income does not challenge gender roles and the current gender division of labour—the main source of gender injustice, as argued in this paper.

Therefore, to do real and full justice to women, a basic income should be supplemented with other social policy measures that liberate women (and at the same time men) from gender role expectations.[5] The basic income proposal is the only welfare state transformation that has all the positive effects I described above. I therefore believe it is a good strategy to go for, *if* the proposal is supplemented with measures to counter its negative effects. In other words, *real freedom for all* does not only boil down to a basic income for all, but also the transformation of certain cultural and social patterns, like gender roles and gender hierarchies, which are now constraining individuals in their freedom.

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[5] I describe some of those social policy measures in Robeyns (forthcoming).

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