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Universal Basic Income and its Compatibility with Amartya Sen's Capability Approach

A Renda Básica Universal e a sua compatibilidade com a 'capability approach' de Amartya Sen

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ABSTRACT: Parijs advocates for a basic income as a means of achieving a society that upholds individual rights and allows people to pursue their interests. For him, a just society has an enforced structure of rights; this structure is such that each person owns herself and permits each person to have the greatest possible opportunity to do whatever she wants. Conversely, Sen aims to enhance human life by expanding capabilities and promoting development through policy and political changes. For him, development has two aspects. Firstly, it pertains to evaluating improvements in human lives as an explicit development objective and employing human achievements as crucial indicators of progress. Secondly, the agency aspect focuses on what human beings can do to attain these improvements. In this article, we explore whether these theories share common ground and could be reconciled. Initially, we analyze Parijs' theory to understand the concept of basic income. Then, we study Sen's theory, focusing on functionings and capabilities. Subsequently, we inspect whether guaranteeing a income expands freedom. Ultimately, we conclude that the basic income is compatible with the capability approach but should not be implemented by itself. The analysis employs the deductive approach method and the indirect documentary research technique.

KEYWORDS: Basic Income. Capabilities. Functionings. Capability Approach.



RESUMO: Parijs apregoa que a renda básica universal seria um meio de alcançar uma sociedade que defende os direitos individuais e permite que as pessoas sigam seus interesses. Para ele, uma sociedade justa tem uma estrutura de direitos que é imposta, essa estrutura é tal que cada pessoa é dona de si mesma e permite que cada pessoa tenha a maior oportunidade possível de fazer o que quiser. Por outro lado, Sen visa melhorar a vida humana ao expandir as *capabilities* e ao promover o desenvolvimento por meio de políticas e mudanças políticas. Para ele, o desenvolvimento tem dois aspectos. Em primeiro lugar, refere-se a avaliar melhorias nas vidas humanas como um objetivo explícito de desenvolvimento e usar as realizações humanas como indicadores cruciais de progresso. Em segundo lugar, o aspecto da *agency* se concentra no que os seres humanos podem fazer para alcançar essas melhorias. Neste artigo, exploramos se essas teorias têm pontos em comum e se poderiam ser conciliadas. Inicialmente, analisa-se a teoria de Parijs para entender o conceito de renda básica. Em seguida, estuda-se a teoria de Sen, concentrando-se em *capabilities* e *functionings*. Posteriormente, verifica-se se garantir uma renda amplia a liberdade. Finalmente, conclui-se que a renda básica é compatível com a abordagem de capacidades, mas não deve ser implementada por si só. A análise emprega o método de abordagem dedutiva e a técnica de pesquisa documental indireta.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Renda Básica. Capabilities. Functionings. Capability Approach.

1 INTRODUCTION

Even though the contemporary social structures are characterized, for example, by scientific breakthroughs, globalism, and easiness of access to communications, these very same structures feature some deficiencies, such as the growth of poverty, illiteracy, famine, social discrimination, and environmental imbalance. The inequalities make it laborious to balance human, social, and environmental relations between countries and within societies. There is a struggle to access the capital, the exercise of freedom, and the resources necessary for a good life.

Concerned by the lack of freedom, Philippe Van Parijs proposes the introduction of an unconditional income as a strategy to carry forward the emancipatory ideal.

A truly free society is 'one in which each person has access to the 'realm of freedom,' thanks to the way in which the benefits of

material progress are distributed among all' (PARIJS, 1994, p. 69). For him, such a society is characterized by reduced work hours, the volume of work and the lack of obligation to earn a living since a portion of our monetary subsistence would be already distributed unconditionally to each member of society. Ultimately, a just society is also characterized by an enforced rights structure. In this structure, each person owns himself or herself and has the greatest possible opportunity to do what he or she wants to do.

On the other hand, Amartya Sen argues that development aims to improve people's lives by expanding their functions and capabilities, that is done by removing obstacles that stand in people's way in life. He approaches human development through an 'evaluative aspect' and an 'agency aspect.' Moreover, he declares that it is acceptable to have inequalities in a system that gives freedom, as some people may choose something over another. For example, someone could choose a lower-paying job instead of a higher-paying one. Furthermore, he argues that we should not accept those inequalities generated by the lack of freedom.

According to Sen, we should not focus on the equality or the inequality of primary goods or resources, as it would be a 'primary goods fetishism.' The equality of resources can be important, but it will depend on the focal point. Choosing it depends on what we are and our roles in society. The task is more challenging when it turns out that the world is complex and complicated, with diverse inequalities and obstacles to freedom.

In this paper, we analyze if the basic income policy, as proposed by Van Parijs, could be compatibilized with the capability approach, defended by Amartya Sen. The hypothesis that we investigate is that the basic income could instigate the creation or the maintenance of functionings or capabilities. However, it should not be the main State policy, as there are complications to the transformation of primary goods to functionings.

Using a deductive methodology and a indirect documentary research, firstly, we present Van Parijs' theory of development,

highlighting what he comprehends as a fair society and what real freedom is in order to analyze his basic income proposal. Further, we present Amartya Sen's idea of development, freedom, capabilities, and functionings. In the final chapter, we compare both theories seeking their compatibility.

2 PHILIPPE VAN PARIJS' THEORY OF DEVELOPMENT

Philippe Van Parijs claims that the idea of justice is centered both on the scarcity of resources and on the lack of altruism and homogeneity within our societies and in our behavior (LAVINAS, 1999, p.1).

Inspired by Thomas Paine on building a welfare model, Van Parijs promotes an unconditional and equal transfer to each individual, no matter his or her social condition, to brew real freedom to all. The idea of equity or impartiality is the backbone of his thinking, as he seeks to assign everyone equal conditions in a competitive market such as capitalism (LAVINAS, 1999, p.2).

As an instrument to loom this freedom, Van Parijs introduces the unconditional income, which is a new modality of social policy – and therefore a new kind of state intervention – ‘based on other ethical standards than those that guided the implementation of welfare traditional states’ (DINIZ, 2007, p. 106).

2.1 Free society and real-freedom

Van Parijs conceives a free society around the ideas of equity, justice, freedom, impartiality, and efficiency, following John Rawls' reasoning. Roberto Gargarella suggests that discussions following up Rawls' ideas hatched two different interpretations: one excessively egalitarian, represented by Robert Nozick; and another insufficiently egalitarian, as displayed by Amartya Sen, Ronald Dworkin, Gerald Cohen, and Richard Arneson (GARGARELLA, 2020, p. 261).

According to Van Parijs, the latter group is called liberal solidarists, whose ideas compare specific conditions of people, what Amartya Sen calls the focal variable. For example, ‘Dworkin is concerned with equal access to resources; Arneson on equal access to the possibilities of well-being; Sen on equal access to the set of capabilities; and Cohen, equal access to advantages’ (MUÑOZ, 2005, p. 166–167).

Van Parijs, himself a libertarian solidarist, focus on equal access to real freedom for each and every member of society (MUÑOZ, 2005, p. 167) as he builds his theory from two standpoints: (1) there are unacceptable inequalities within our capitalist societies, and (2) freedom is a valor of superior importance (VAN PARIJS, 1997, p. 1).

Van Parijs explains that a free society is both a society where its members are formally free, in the sense that there is a ‘well-enforced structure of property rights which includes the ownership of each by herself,’ and a society in which the opportunities are ‘distributed in maximin [...] fashion: some can have more opportunities than others, but only if their having more does not reduce the opportunities of some of those with less’ (VAN PARIJS, 1997, p. 14).

Van Parijs describes that a free society is a society that satisfies the following conditions:

1. There is some well enforced structure of rights (security).
2. This structure is such that each person owns herself (self-ownership).
3. This structure is such that each person has the greatest possible opportunity to do whatever she might want to do (leximin opportunity) (VAN PARIJS, 1997, p. 25).

Further on, the author explains that the leximin opportunity, as stated in condition 3, means that the person with

least opportunities has opportunities that are no smaller than those enjoyed by the person with least opportunities under any other feasible arrangement; in case there exists another feasible arrangement that is just as good for the person with

least opportunities, then the next person up the scale in a free society must have opportunities no smaller than the second person up the scale of opportunities under this arrangement; and so on (VAN PARIJS, 1997, p. 25).

Van Parijs worries about the opportunities of the most unfortunate members of society who have more difficulty living according to their personal life projects. As such, his concept of *leximin* embraces the maximization of the possibilities of those in the worst positions in a given society in a way that the most suitable social arrangements should be searched to diminish the inequalities of opportunities between the citizens.

This idea is closely related to Rawls' difference principle, as he wishes to maximize the real freedom of the one who has less, if not abolish all inequalities of real freedom that do not contribute to increasing the real freedom of the one who, in this respect, is the most disadvantaged (DINIZ, 2007, p. 108). The principle of difference could be the justification for the basic income system as on the primary goods set, and it is possible to encounter the foundations of self-respect necessary to give the person a firm sense of his own worth and confidence in himself for the pursuit of his ends (VAN PARIJS, 1997, p. 177-179).

If we were to admit clashes between the second and the third conditions above described, Van Parijs recognize that a free society should give priority to security over self-ownership, and to self-ownership over *leximin* opportunity. But this priority is of a soft kind (VAN PARIJS, 1997, p. 26).

Concisely, he outlines that a free society is 'characterized by the three conditions and their articulation, is one that *leximins* real freedom or, more roughly still, one that realizes real-freedom-for-all' (VAN PARIJS, 1997, p. 27).

Furthermore, Van Parijs advocates that the highest levels of freedom are achieved by implementing a policy that grants the highest sustainable unconditional income to guarantee the real freedom of all members of a given society (MUÑOZ, 2005, p. 168-169).

On this matter, the Red Argentina de Ingreso Ciudadano encourages this policy to create grounds for people to develop themselves freely, generate conditions to earn their income, and escape any mechanism that engenders dependency (POBLETE, 2020, p. 6).

2.2 Universal basic income

Philippe Van Parijs alleges that real freedom is the primary concern of his theory. As such, it means not only freedom of rights but also freedom of means. Hence, people's income must be prioritized, either freedom to purchase or consume or, most importantly, to choose among the various lives one might wish to lead' (VAN PARIJS, 1997, p. 33).

For him, the best institutional response to 'real-freedom to all' is the Universal Basic Income. It is characterized as an individual regular income paid by a political community to each member of the society, regardless of how much he receives or any other sources of income this person may have (VAN PARIJS; VANDERBORGHT, 2017, p. 4).

The basic income is also defined as

income paid by the State to each full member of society or resident, even if they do not want to work for a fee, regardless of whether they are rich or poor; or in other words, regardless of what the other possible sources of income may be, and regardless of who they live with (RAVENTÓS PAÑELLA; URBIETA, 2020).

Additionally, adopting such a policy would mitigate the circumstances that are the product of the 'natural lottery,' such as material resources and talents. That institutional system that 'unconditionally grants a benefit to all citizens would be responding adequately to egalitarian principles' (GARGARELLA, 1995, p. 326).

Van Parijs explains that some aspects should be observed if a policymaker would create a basic income. Firstly, the income should be

paid in cash rather than in kind (VAN PARIJS, 2006, p. 4). Moreover, it should be 'paid on a regular basis, rather than as a one-off endowment.' This amount is not necessary to be granted monthly, as it requires to be given only on a regular schedule. As such, it could be weekly, monthly, or yearly. This idea rejects the basic endowment argument proposed by Thomas Paine, Bruce Ackermann, and Anne Alstott.

The third characteristic is that a political community should pay the basic income. Even though this entity is usually the government, Van Parijs stresses that it must not necessarily 'be the nation-state, nor does it need to be paid out of redistributive taxations' (VAN PARIJS, 2006, p. 5).

He explains that even though most proposals suggest that the basic income is to be founded and paid by the nation-state, the policy could be under a province or a commune's responsibility. The author even declares that a supra-national political such as the European Union or the United Nations unit, could be responsible for this redistribution (VAN PARIJS, 2006, p. 6). There are some discussions on how the basic income may be established.

While some argue that a specific tax should be created to generate money to ensure the redistribution, others advocate that the basic income could be founded by a land tax or a tax on natural resources. Others defend taxes on speculative capital movements. In Alaska's experiment, this policy was maintained with the return on a diversified investment fund 'which the state built up using the royalties on oil fields' (VAN PARIJS, 2006, p. 6).

As a fourth characteristic, the basic income carries the concept that all citizens, as the right to this policy, would be a part of all the rights and duties associated with full citizenship. The exceptions of who would not receive any money depend on the conception established by the State on 'citizenship.' Some suggest that the criterion should be as broad as possible to avoid exclusions (VAN PARIJS, 2006, p. 7).

The fifth component of basic income is the payment based on an individual basis, in contrast to the payment to each household as a whole or only to its head.

The sixth aspect is the prohibition of analyzing individuals' incomes to guarantee the reception of basic income. The payment is assured at the same level for the rich and poor, irrespective of their income level (VAN PARIJS, 2006, p. 13).

The last basic income attribute is that everyone is entitled to this right. Pérez Muñoz (2005, p. 172) highlights that basic income is both unconditional and universal, unlike other social policies such as unemployment insurance, as verifying any other condition to receive it is unnecessary. It is unnecessary to have contributed to an insurance system or have a specific income level or housing status, for example. Therefore, the basic income corresponds to an income the State of a country provides to all its citizens, without exceptions (POBLETE, 2015, p. 4).

3 AMARTYA SEN'S DEVELOPMENT THEORY

The idea that development sets sight on the improvement of human lives by expanding their capabilities was intensely cultivated by Amartya Sen: '[...] development is about removing the obstacles to what a person can do in life, obstacles such as illiteracy, ill health, lack of access to resources, or lack of civil and political freedoms' (FUKUDA-PARR, 2003, p. 303).

Amartya Sen approaches human development from two points. On the one hand, the 'evaluative aspect' is concerned with 'evaluating improvements in human lives as an explicit development objective and using human achievements as key indicators of progress' (FUKUDA-PARR, 2003, p. 303), contrary to the economic development paradigm. On the other hand, there is the 'agency aspect,' dealing with 'what human beings can do to achieve such improvements, mainly through policy and political changes. The human development approach is commonly associated with the evaluative aspect. The agency aspect is less widely appreciated' (FUKUDA-PARR, 2003, p. 303).

3.1 The capability approach

By the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, Amartya Sen consolidates his role in the economic theory of social choice research, publishing the books *Equality of What? And Commodities and Capabilities*. As such, the Indian economist started to define the concept of human development, called the 'capability approach' (BAGLIERI, 2020, p. 39).

The capability approach is a 'broad normative framework for evaluating and assessing individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social change in society' (ROBEYNS, 2020, p. 93). Many studies use this method to assess distinct aspects of people's well-being, 'such as inequality, poverty, the well-being of an individual or the average well-being of the members of a group' (ROBEYNS, 2020, p. 93). The theory is an alternative evaluative tool for social cost-benefit analysis or as a framework to design and evaluate policies (ROBEYNS, 2020, p. 93).

This ethical-political theory is an open framework utilized in different kinds of analysis:

with different goals, relying on different methodologies, with different corresponding roles for functionings and capabilities. Not all of these are capability *theories*; some are capability *applications*, both empirical as well as theoretical. We can observe that there is a rich diversity of ways in which the capability approach has been used (ROBEYNS, 2020, p. 31),

Even though the capability approach is open, it is possible to identify common ground between the scholars. This theory focuses on 'what people can do and be (their capabilities) and on what they are achieving in terms of beings and doings (their functionings)' (ROBEYNS, 2020, p. 36). Another definition characterizes the capability approach as a theory that considers the human individual in terms of their freedom to lead a life that they value

by cultivating their potential rather than viewing them as solely an economic agent aiming to maximize their economic utility (BAGLIERI, 2015, p. 39).

Another fundamental aspect of the capability approach is its connection to the political and institutional spheres of government and citizenry. Sen emphasizes the importance of democracy and the involvement of public authorities in ‘supporting, through the methods of affirmative action (e.g., an action of a proactive nature), the civil, political and social freedoms that every woman and every man on the planet should enjoy’ (BAGLIERI, 2015, p. 45).

Amartya Sen argues that the objective of development should be the human beings and their prosperity rather than an increase in economic growth (ALKIRE, 2005, p. 117), as stated in the article entitled *The Concept of Development*: ‘the enhancement of living conditions must clearly be an essential — if not the essential — object of the entire economic exercise and that enhancement is an integral part of the concept of development’ (SEN, 1988, p. 11).

As proposed by Amartya Sen, the capability approach understands that ‘the ability and freedom of a person to achieve what he/she values, determines that person’s development as it reveals his/her socio-economic well-being’ (DISHANKA; IKEMOTO, 2018). From this perspective, the development of human capabilities is about ‘removing the obstacles such as illiteracy, ill health, lack of access to resources, or lack of civil and political freedoms to what a person can do in life’ (FUKUDA-PARR, 2003).

As such, he refuses to evaluate the development of a country solely in economic terms. Sen maintains that a higher income does not necessarily means more development, as it confuses having more available resources with well-being (FOLLONI, 2020, p. 110). There is no correlation between freedom and money as patrimonial resources are not essential to experience well-being. Moreover, the degree of need and usefulness of resources someone requires varies from person to person (FOLLONI, 2020, p. 114).

Amartya Sen recommends that the first characteristic to analyze a person's well-being is how he or she 'works' or even 'can work', in opposition to views focused on resources (FOLLONI, 2020, p. 115).

Functionings are intricate combinations of actions and states that pertain to valuable things and conditions that a person can experience or achieve. For instance, functionings range from states such as being healthy and well-nourished to actions such as eating, reading, arguing, and experiencing pleasure. These functionings depend on various factors, including good health, avoiding premature mortality, and experiencing complex emotions such as happiness, self-respect, and active participation in community life (FOLLONI, 2020, p. 115).

Functionings are conceptualized as states and actions that reflect what a person can achieve or not achieve in their life. In this sense, they can be seen as a measure of a person's performance and capabilities (OUTEIRO; OLIVEIRA; NASCIMENTO, 2016, p. 65).

The possibility of transforming goods, things, resources, or rights into functionings varies for everyone. Sometimes, this conversion is quickly and directly done for one person but difficult for another (FOLLONI, 2020, p. 115). Above all, the difficulty in this conversion aspect exists because human beings are naturally diverse. Each one has abilities, talents, easiness, and difficulties, which the policymaker should observe. Moreover, aside from these biological aspects, no one is equal with the same social background or builds up the same preferences and conceptions. For this reason, no theory of distributive equality can make people equal in all these dimensions at the same time (DE VITA, 2008, p. 96).

Aware of this, Sen upholds that human diversity is too important to be ignored, as 'it is a fundamental aspect of our interest in equality' (SEN, 1992), becoming clearer 'how a well-being analysis focused exclusively on financial resources can be misleading' (FOLLONI, 2020, p. 115).

Since having an equal capacity to function in diverse ways is crucial for developing egalitarian or distributive theories, possessing

a greater number of functionings, regardless of whether one profits from them or not, enhances a person's well-being. Therefore, Sen focuses on the study to understand how to promote and offer new functionings to the population.

Related to the idea of functioning, Amartya Sen develops the concept of capabilities, which represents the set of functionings that someone can perform, that is, the ability to perform operations, reflecting his or her opportunity to 'choose among all lifestyles. A person's functioning set represents the various combinations of states and actions he can carry out (DE VITA, 2008, p. 96).

Capability is, thus, a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another. Sen explains that the capability set in the functioning space reflects the person's freedom to choose from possible living (SEN, 1992).

As such, the capability represents the effective freedom that someone has when choosing the different possible functionings (DE VITA, 2008, p. 96), as stated:

Capabilities are a person's real freedoms or opportunities to achieve functionings. Thus, while travelling is a functioning, the real opportunity to travel is the corresponding capability. The distinction between functionings and capabilities is between the realized and the effectively possible, in other words, between achievements, on the one hand, and freedoms or valuable opportunities from which one can choose, on the other (ROBEYNS, 2016).

The main idea of the capability dwells on the possibility 'of the person obtaining well-being, while having some functioning directly contribute to achieve well-being, since the possibility of choice is in itself a valuable part of living' (OUTEIRO; OLIVEIRA; NASCIMENTO, 2020, p. 65).

This capability idea is analogous to the budget concept adopted in economic theories. 'It is the n possible combinations of goods, goods and services that are available to the person, in the same way that a

person's capacity (his capability set) determines the n combinations of functionings' (DE VITA, 2008, p. 97).

3.2 Freedom and its expansion

Amartya Sen's capability approach became a reference for development studies, as he focused on freedom as a central theme to a given social structure.

Freedom is described as 'substantive moral value fundamental to the ordering of a society, as well as characterizing the relationships that people establish among themselves, with others, with institutions, with the environment, and with future generations' (ZAMBAM, 2009, p. 20). From this perspective, the lack of conditions to exercise freedom limits and compromises the very definition of this moral value (ZAMBAM, 2009, p. 21).

Freedom is essential in augmenting human life, as it 'particularly influences the organization and the structuring of people's lives at their different levels of relationship' (ZAMBAM, 2009, p. 24). Amartya Sen explains that the intention to bolster freedom is to allow us to become more complete beings, interacting and cooperating with the world we live in and influencing it. He also states that another reason to expand freedoms is to make our lives more prosperous and unimpeded (SEN, 2000, p. 29).

Accordingly, development requires removing the main sources of unfreedom, such as poverty and tyranny, lack of economic opportunities, negligence of the public services, and intolerance and overactivity of repressive states. Sometimes, the lack of substantial freedom is directly linked with economic poverty (that robs one's freedom to eat, obtain adequate nutrition, or find a remedy to treatable diseases. In other cases, this lack of freedom is linked to the lack of public services and social assistance. Another way is the violation of freedom is a result of the negation of political and civic freedoms by authoritarian regimes (SEN, 2000, p. 14).

In his view, ‘development consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency’ (SEN, 2000, p. XII), which is why the removal of unfreedoms is a constitutive part of the development process.

Sen’s view of freedom involves both the processes that allow ‘freedom of actions and decisions, and the actual opportunities that people have, given their personal and social circumstances. For him, unfreedom ‘can arise either through inadequate processes [...] or through inadequate opportunities that some people have for achieving what they minimally would like to achieve’ (SEN, 2000, p. 17).

Furthermore, considering the differences within a society, a person that acts freely anywhere and enjoys the opportunity to make the options he considers important exercises his freedom. Capabilities are directly related to the social, political, economic, and cultural conditions in which one lives; the reason why an organized social structure needs to offer its members the necessary alternatives to develop their potential and make the best choices to meet their expectations. It is freedom that:

enables a wide range of choice options that take into account social and interpersonal variations and transform primary goods into capabilities, not the other way around, strengthening the dependence on capabilities for access to goods and other human needs and objectives (ZAMBAM, 2009, p. 65).

In conclusion, Sen’s understanding of freedom encompasses not only the removal of obstacles to achieving a goal but also having the full conditions necessary to evaluate alternatives and effectively realize the chosen one. Substantive freedoms, such as having rights, opportunities, and real possibilities to examine, evaluate, decide, and obtain desired outcomes grounded in good reasons, are crucial to this notion of freedom (FOLLONI, 2020, p. 118).

Another far-reaching aspect to understand is that Sen’s approach to development is more embracing than only looking at the

accumulation of wealth and the growth of gross national product and other income-related variables. Without ignoring the importance of economic growth, he looks beyond it:

As Aristotle noted at the very beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (resonating well with the conversation between Maitreyee and Yajnavalkya three thousand miles away), ‘wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else.’

[...]

The usefulness of wealth lies in the things that it allows us to do – the substantive freedoms it helps us to achieve. But this relation is neither exclusive (since there are significant influences on our lives other than wealth) nor uniform (since the impact of wealth on our lives varies with other influences) (SEN, 2000, p. 14).

Sen supports the idea that the ‘resources someone has, or the primary goods that someone holds, may be very imperfect indicators of the freedom that the person really enjoys doing this or be that’ (SEN, 2000, p. 37). Therefore, the primary goods are ‘means for any purpose or useful resources for the search for different conceptions of goods that individuals can have’ (ZAMBAM, 2009, p. 65).

4 COMPATIBILITY EXAMINATION

Resources or primary goods do not directly produce freedom or even enjoyed freedom, as they are a means to achieve a certain goal. Money and income help to achieve objectives in specific contexts but are intrinsically unimportant. Its importance resides in the possibility for individuals to acquire essential goods.

The basic income policy can stimulate the creation of functionings and capabilities, which can boost freedoms. Van Parijs’s freedom ideas could not be achieved by augmenting one’s capital, as

there are variations in an individual's converting factors from money to well-being. Due to external and personal differences, v.g., gender, environmental problems, and health issues, on a non-comprehensive list, the same primary goods or resources may have different freedoms for two people with the same income (OUTEIRO; OLIVEIRA; NASCIMENTO, 2020, p. 665).

To have a free society, it is necessary to expand capabilities so that individuals can make decisions according to their preferences. Hardly can the equalization of income by itself bring a fair society as 'it would be desirable that the subjects have what they want, which may even be a basic income, but as long as they have all the elements both to choose this path and to evaluate the consequences of decisions' (POBLETE et al., 2015, p. 9).

Although individuals must have a certain level of autonomy to obtain and enjoy freedom, allowing them to choose their ideal life choice. It is equally necessary that 'everyone has the conditions, opportunities and real possibilities to examine, evaluate, decide' (MUÑOZ, 2005, p. 170).

Before securing functionings and capabilities for everyone, it would be unavoidable to question and understand what kind of inequality a public policy is addressing. Aware of the inequality, a specific policy is to be created and implemented to increase the functionings established beforehand (OUTEIRO; OLIVEIRA; NASCIMENTO, 2020, p. 66).

Amartya Sen supports the idea and argues that when adopting equality of capacity and functioning as a metric for defining wealth redistribution programs, poverty is defined as the inability to perform basic operations. The relevant criterion is the ability to generate minimally acceptable capabilities. Poverty will be inferred as the difference between the deprivation of the life that people can lead and their freedoms.

Sen's theory differentiates from Rawls' as the focal variable to assert that the fairness of a society is diverse. The first author distrusts

the second's idea of equality of primary goods and Dworkin's equality of resources. In this sense, he would also mistrust Van Parijs' focus on the redistribution of capital by a basic income.

These authors, whom Sen refutes, neglect the unequal ability of individuals to turn these goods into functions in the so-called conception of 'primary goods fetishism' (MUÑOZ, 2005, p. 170). Moreover, Rawls is criticized for considering primary goods as ends, not means. As such, he would not be to support the diversity of humanity. Given this diversification, 'comparisons in the space of primary social goods will fail to note that different people need different amounts and different kinds of goods to reach the same levels of well-being or advantage'. Were everyone the same, 'then an index of primary goods would yield similar freedoms for all' (ROBEYNS, 2005, p. 97).

Sen talks about primary goods and freedom to pursue one's objectives. The relationship between those and well-being can vary with interpersonal and intergroup variations of specific characteristics. And concerning income distribution, well-being, and freedom, Sen states that:

An important and frequently encountered problem arises from concentrating on inequality of incomes as the primary focus of attention in the analysis of inequality. The extent of real inequality of opportunities that people face cannot be readily deduced from the magnitude of inequality of incomes, since what we can or cannot do, can or cannot achieve, do not depend just on our incomes but also on the variety of physical and social characteristics that affect our lives and make us what we are (SEN, 2000, p. 28).

He explains why to assess income inequality itself it will generally be necessary to bring in the effects of other influences on people's lives and well-being:

In general the measurement of inequality has to bring in information regarding other spaces — both (1) for the purpose

of evaluating inequality in these spaces themselves, and (2) for that of assessing income inequality in a broader framework, taking note of the presence of other influences on the objective (in Atkinson's case, social welfare) in terms of which income inequality is to be ultimately assessed (SEN, 2000, p. 28).

Sen brings up another point of the achievement freedom distinction related to the economic theory: the two different interpretations of real-income analysis – ‘the assessment of the benefit that a person receives from a particular bundle of commodities that he or she acquires’ – selection view (SEN, 2000, p. 34).

The resources a person has, or the primary goods that someone holds, may be very imperfect indicators of the freedom that the person really enjoys doing this or be that. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the personal and social characteristics of different people, which can differ greatly, can lead to substantial interpersonal variations in the conversion of resources and primary goods into achievements. For exactly the same reason, interpersonal differences in these personal and social characteristics can make the conversion of resources and primary goods into the freedom to achieve similarly variable (SEN, 2000, p. 38).

Comparisons of resources and primary goods cannot be the basis for comparing freedoms. If we investigate the freedom of choice, we must concentrate on some person's choices. We must not assume that the same conclusions ‘would be obtained by looking at the resources that he or she commands’ (SEN, 200, p. 38).

However, Sen does not deny that deprivation of individual capabilities can be linked with low income. ‘The role of income and wealth – important as it is along with other influences – has to be integrated into a broader and fuller picture of success and deprivation’ (SEN, 200, p. 20).

The creation of a basic income could kindle a specific kind of inequality. However, this policy could hardly solve the problem and

generate more freedom or real freedom, as at least three conversion factors affect how a person can convert the characteristics of the commodity into a functioning. Firstly, personal conversion factors (*e.g.*, metabolism, physical condition, reading skills) exist. The second would be that social conversion factors (*e.g.*, social norms, discriminating practices, gender roles) also play a role. Lastly, environmental conversion factors (*e.g.*, climate, geographical location) are crucial to understanding the conversion issues of transforming goods into individual functioning.

Personal and social characteristics of different people can differ significantly, which could lead to substantial interpersonal variations in converting resources and primary goods into achievements. In this sense, interpersonal differences in these personal and social characteristics can make the conversion of resources and primary goods into the freedom to achieve similarly variable.

5 CONCLUSION

Van Parijs' research focuses on the limited availability of resources and the absence of altruism and uniformity within modern societies. He suggests providing an unconditional and equal transfer to every individual, regardless of social status, to foster true freedom for all. His philosophy is rooted in the principle of fairness and neutrality, as he strives to ensure everyone has equal footing in a competitive market like capitalism.

As Van Parijs's centrality is on people's income to promote freedom of means, as to choose from a range of lifestyles that one may aspire to, as well as the freedom to buy or consume goods and services, the best institutional response to 'real-freedom to all' is the Universal Basic Income.

Amartya Sen's definition of freedom includes eliminating impediments to obtaining a goal and possessing all the conditions required

to assess alternatives and successfully implement the selected alternative that better fits the way that one wants to live. This idea of freedom is fundamental to substantive freedoms, such as the rights, chances, and practical possibilities to consider, assess, decide, and achieve desired ends based on sound justifications.

Implementing a universal basic income may not fully address the development and economic inequality amid societies and promote genuine freedom, as at least three conversion factors impact an individual's ability to translate the attributes of a commodity into actual functioning.

These include personal conversion factors such as metabolism, physical health, and literacy skills and social conversion factors like discriminatory practices, gender roles, and social norms. Additionally, environmental conversion factors such as climate and geographical location also play a significant role in determining the ability to convert goods into individual functioning.

Therefore, although the Universal Basic Income policy is a commendable initiative to reduce socioeconomic inequalities, it could not, by itself, resolve the development and inequality issue at this moment studied.

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