

Editor's Note

Worlds of Inequalities and the Anthropic Principle in Social Policy

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The world we live in is not one world, it is in fact a great many number of worlds, with life-changing and life-altering differences all the way for different groups of people that are living in these great many different worlds.

Equality is a notion, more equality is needed, a great much more of it is utterly needed and called for. However, absolute equality—that of Maoist quality and proportion—is yet another horrible dystopia.

However, the *current* state of myriads of worlds of inequalities, indeed super inequalities, has its ways, on us; it feeds on our lives, and tears apart (and makes impossible) dignity, love, care, and respect for one another. The way a society is supposed to act, work, and live together in a responsible and meaningful, i.e., human (dignified) way, has become a utopia itself—for *the ones* that are *not* benefiting from the current arrangements and institutions, practices and inequalities, and inclusions and exclusions.

And this holds, not just in terms of money, access to health care and education, housing and living conditions, food security, physical security, loneliness, being loved and cared and respected—some by many, many by a few, and ever-more forgotten ones by none.

Mother Teresa on numerous occasions noted that the greatest poverty is loneliness, and nothing is worse than to know, and feel, that no one loves us (AZ Quotes, 2022). So, where are the social policy scientists that talk about the most worrisome of all the worries, loneliness and despair of not being cared for, not having someone to share our thoughts, feelings, worries, and love? Where are the social policy scientists that care and help to provide for these people, and help prevent their problems to begin with—or at least after the fact, loneliness, hunger, despair, freezing temperatures, violent weather phenomena, violent aggression, and criminal neglect have torn apart their chances of having and living decent lives, in decent and dignified human conditions?

It is time to bring in the *anthropic principle* into the realm of social policy-making and social policy strategy-making, and of course normative social policy theory-making and normative social policy practice. This is a concept that originated in

biology and physics. Not for the first time, now, I have put to use a physics method or concept in social policy science (cf. Aspalter, 2023). Therefore, here is the “translation” of the *anthropic principle* (cf. esp. Zimmerman Jones, 2017; as well as Wallace, 1904; and also Collins & Hawking, 1973; Hawking & Mlodinow, 2012), the one that fits and is especially engineered for social policy science:

The *anthropic social policy principle* is referring to the believe that if we take *human dignity and decency* (i.e. true well-being) as a given condition of *society*, social policy scientists may use this as a starting point, and eternal reference point, to derive expected properties of *Normative Social Policy* so as to leading to the extinction and prevention of poverty, poverty-creating inequality, and human suffering and despair of all kinds.

This, and only this, perhaps in the long run will enable us to refocus social policy, and here we mean a social policy that manages the misshapes and embodied conundrums of our times with regard to the way we run (let others run, the elites, the governing and material elites) our society, our economy, and our financing/lending and price setting institutions (inflation and demographic changes are never *fully* considered or *fully* factored in by social insurance systems, but yet these rob every member, every decent hardworking member, of the fruits of their labor and lifetime work).

We do not have to reboot social policy institutions altogether, just a major reshuffle of choices employed will do. More than 95 percent of things are not done right:

- (1) social insurance is (if one looks at it with a *fresh* look) an economically depressing and personal lifetime income and wealth preventing/depressing force, a societal fertility depressing force, a family-institution-busting force; and
- (2) asset- and means-tested benefits, services, and public housing provision, too, are cementing and spreading poverty just like a virus, one that not only creates havoc everywhere but one that is stealthy and has already won over the sympathy and reflectionless support of the very most of experts, professionals, and scientists alike.

However, the good news is that the right solutions are there, already applied and tested by the test of time and in multiple contexts (e.g. cultures etc.). Provident fund systems do actually help people and protect them (provide “security”) from inflation and life-time or old-age poverty. In addition, a strong system of smart universal benefits and services, and including, of course, universal basic income, is also absolutely needed to prevent poverty, once and for all (and, yes, this is possible).

Into the mix, not taxing the poor and the near poor (including no social security taxation, whatsoever) is inescapably needed for the society to arrive at a better

place (development with dignity and decency for all). Also, of course, essential is fully taxing the super-super rich, with, for example, a one-time (one in a lifetime) marginal net-wealth tax (of recent/past wealth, i.e., going a bit backward in time) of 78, 88, or 98 percent for all net-wealth of over US\$/Euro100 or 50 million per person; plus perhaps another tax on income of the super-rich (e.g., 50–60 percent of marginal income of above USD/Euro 1 million per year per person, *with no deductions, with no exceptions*; cf. Aspalter, 2023).

Even though we, right now, and for thousands of years already (cf. Nietzsche, 1887), are living in many different, as different as can be, separate worlds—in countless worlds of inequalities, and countless dimensions of inequalities therein—the aim of the social policy must be *one world* and *one social policy*, employing a romantic and utopian (perhaps) perspective that these *many* worlds of inequalities may one day be a thing of the past.

This *special issue* has opened intellectual and scientific space alike for scientists, super-established ones, and new promising stars of the future to employ their *savoir faire* (know-how) in the hope (and sure knowledge) that this will bring us a bit closer to a better world, a better tomorrow for all people in all (also all forgotten/neglected) corners of the world; at least to a better understanding of what that may be.

At last, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues from all corners of the world to hurry and write up and contribute to this wonderful, super meaningful *special issue*, and, of course, to the grandmaster of humanitarian thought and truth who enabled all this, my life-time mentor and dear friend Brij Mohan!

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