

The Idea of a Welfare State in a Future Scenario of Great Scarcity

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There are different scenarios for our future. For a philosopher it is interesting to work with normative notions related to drastic versions of possible worlds. I therefore choose to reflect on a normative notion of a welfare state within a setting of hardship and scarcity; broadly speaking, of a global ecological crisis including a reduced material standard of living, widespread unemployment, and demographic tensions. I will not discuss the probability of this scenario. Nor will I take part in the discussion of the desirability and feasibility of a welfare state in our present situation. I will merely pursue a few reflections on a normative notion of a welfare state within such a gloomy scenario.

The frame for my normative reflections is furthermore a political culture in which the idea of a welfare state is conceived of as desirable and a political situation in which this idea is already established, but in which the functioning of the welfare state is becoming increasingly problematic. Basically, my question is the following: *What kind of normative idea of a welfare state is most suitable for a possible future of increasing hardship, scarcity and tension?*

I will first recap some major arguments against the idea of a welfare state. I will subsequently look into some general arguments in favor of a welfare state, including arguments against the “paternalism objection” raised (by Jürgen Habermas and others) against the welfare state. Then I will describe some politico-cultural and demographic conditions for a future welfare state. Finally, I will try to give a few suggestions for an answer to the question of what can possibly be defended, under conditions of extreme economic hardship, of the notion of a welfare state as a social system of solidarity.

Major arguments against the idea of a welfare state

(i) A really radical criticism of the idea of a welfare state is the one that argues against the very idea of public property. It claims that all property is by definition private property. Consequently a welfare state that redistributes economic values is morally rejectable. Charity and private welfare are all right, public welfare is not.ⁱ

This argument presupposes an ontological primacy of the individual in relation to society.

But this presupposition is certainly not indisputable. There are well-known counterarguments, from an Aristotelian notion of unavoidable socialization to a Burkean notion of historical situatedness, and further to a Hegelian notion of identity-building through social recognition. To me these counterarguments, partly conceptual partly empirical, seem quite convincing.ⁱⁱ I fail to see how we could have a notion of a person that is not intrinsically mediated by intersubjectivity in terms of tradition and communality. I therefore also fail to see how values, including economic values, can be said to be purely individual and not at all co-determined, and thereby rightly co-possessed by intersubjective factors, including a democratically elected government. In this connection I therefore do not feel any intellectual urge to pursue these arguments, but rather find it sufficient just to refer to these discussions.ⁱⁱⁱ

Consequently I see no reason to reject the idea of a welfare state on the basis of an ontological individualism arguing in favor of a purely private notion of property (economic value). If these individualists come up with better arguments, I shall certainly consider them carefully, but for the time being I think it is fair to conclude that these supposedly radical arguments for a moral rejection of the idea of a welfare state are unconvincing.^{iv}

(ii) There are arguments questioning the notion of just distribution. They are of various kinds. One line of argumentation questions the relationship between the distribution of money and the individual gain of well-being: an equal share of money does not guarantee an equal amount of happiness. People's way of life, their expectations, and their subjective and objective needs are all very different. There is a well-known gap between exchange value in terms of money and value of use in terms of experienced and obtained well-being. If the goal of a welfare state is equal happiness for everybody, this goal can therefore not be reached by any attempt at a just redistribution of economic resources.^v

This argument is fair enough. It implies, I assume, that the idea of a welfare state should not operate with happiness as its goal, but rather with the more modest and more realistic goal of trying to avoid some basic forms of unhappiness.^{vi} My assumption is here that it is easier to reach a consensus as to what counts as unhappiness than as to what counts as happiness, and also that it is easier to reach a consensus on the obligation to help unhappy people than to reach a consensus on the desirability of trying to make people more happy. My assumption is also that it is easier to diminish some basic forms of unhappiness by economic redistribution than it is to obtain happiness by a redistribution of money. Finally, I also think that at least in some cases of unhappiness the amount of money necessary to improve the situation decisively is within realistic limits whereas this is probably less the case for some aspirations of happiness.

These are certainly subtle problems. For one thing I here assume that it is possible to reach an enlightened consensus concerning some notion of "objective needs," thinking in terms of things like emergency rations and medical first aid in emergencies. The precondition is that of a discursive interpretation of needs, undertaken by those concerned. In other words, I employ a notion of "intersubjectively recognizable needs," realized through discursive interpretation, as opposed to subjective needs. I imagine that such "objective needs" concern the avoidance of some basic physiological states like hunger and (curable) pain. Furthermore I assume that the question as to the extension of this notion of "objective needs" has to be decided by an open and enlightened discussion based on the traditions and the material resources in each society. If the question of need interpretation is left to certain traditions or professions, we can easily be overruled by entrenched power instead of being led by reason (Fraser 1989).

Even though there will probably be a general consensus about paradigmatic cases of possible and desirable welfare interventions, and of paradigmatic cases where such interventions either are undesirable or impossible or both, there will most likely be various borderline cases

which will be discussed intensively and which to some extent will have to be decided not by substantial consensus, but by a procedural consensus as to ways of reaching a decision, e.g., through some kind of voting.

At this point I will not enter these substantial discussions.^{vii} My point so far has just been to pay attention to the arguments for a careful examination of the ambitions inherent in any idea of a welfare state: there are decisive arguments in favor of some modesty as to the very conceptual possibility of talking about a more equal or just need satisfaction by means of public redistribution of economic resources. The notions of equality and of justice, as well as the notion of welfare, have to be used with great care in talking about questions of need satisfaction.

But once this is taken into account, and once the policy of welfare has been permanently regulated by democratic elections and by free and enlightened public discussion, I see no decisive argument, along these lines of argumentation, against the idea of a welfare state, in a “minimalist” and modest sense.

(iii) In the current political debate, one of the most frequent counterarguments against the idea of a welfare state is the one that repudiates what is regarded as collective coercion of individual freedom. This argument takes different forms, more or less crude or refined.

A sound version of this argument is the one that emphasizes a general conflict of values: we cannot maximize all values at the same time. We cannot maximize publicly organized welfare and personal freedom at the same time. So there is a question as to where and how the best interplay might be understood and realized.

There are certainly different notions of freedom and of welfare, as well as other relevant normative notions; and consequently different solutions should be discussed. But again it is fair to indicate some necessary restrictions for a possible and perhaps desirable idea of a welfare state. If, for instance, a member of a society has a right to medical treatment for an injury caused by riding a motorbike, it is fair to say that each member of this society also has an obligation to drive lawfully and carefully. And if the society has an obligation to give free medical treatment in these cases, it also has the right to impose laws and regulations and even to moralize: a driver should have a driver’s license, he should see to it that the motorbike is technically in good shape, he should wear a helmet, he should not drive drunk, he should drive according to the laws and do so carefully! Already in a trivial case such as this one, there is some tension between individual freedom and collective arrangements. And in other cases this tension is even more acute. For instance, if a foreign citizen who practices hang-glidering without insurance has an accident, should a welfare state rescue him and provide him with hospital treatment free of charge? And also, if society pays for your higher education, are you then equally free to emigrate as you would have been if you had paid for it all with your own money?

The point I am making is simply this. To the extent that we have public welfare, there are restrictions on one’s personal behavior, not only the restrictions imposed by laws and regulations, but also restrictions due to a functional need for a certain minimum of behavioral solidarity, a need which on the level of the individual takes the form of moral obligations and possibly of normative sanctions.

There will always be those who do not behave. The question is one of degree, of the number of misbehavers, and of the seriousness of their misbehavior. And the normative point is that of the legitimacy of public sanctions in these cases.

A welfare state thus requires enlightened and moral citizens. Not all kinds of irrational and egotistical behavior can be tolerated. A functioning welfare state presupposes a political culture with enlightened participants who are able and willing to conduct their lives in accordance with internalized constraints. This, I think, is a point that should not be blurred.

This means that a functioning welfare state has to be a welfare society. It presupposes some degree of political culture and social morality. Isolated welfare arrangements in a politically immature society could thus easily turn out to be inefficient and even counterproductive. This is no criticism of the idea of a welfare state; it is merely a criticism of naive proponents, and naive opponents, who overlook these broader requirements.^{viii}

This counterargument (against the welfare state) can be recast in libertarian terms: the freedom of the individual against state intervention. But there are also other arguments that lead to a similar critical attitude toward the welfare state, namely arguments that are based on the conception of a person as socialized through communication (which is essentially different from the notion of a pre-social individual) and arguments that are further elaborated into an analysis of the tension between communicative interactions on the one hand and instrumental and strategic actions on the other (Habermas 1981, 1984, 1987). The critical question in this perspective is whether the welfare state, through its scientifically trained professions, represents a threat to the autonomy of communicatively socialized persons. This is a debate about the danger of “therapeutization” and “clientization,” through “objectivating” professions.^{ix} In Habermas it is a discussion of the tension between bureaucracy and social integration, a discussion which is extended to the relationship between “system” and “lifeworld” (state and market versus culture in terms of socio-cultural reproduction), and to the tendency of a “colonization” of the lifeworld by the system.^x In this perspective Habermas sees an inherent danger for “paternalism” in the welfare state. We shall return to this argument in the next section.

(iv) The politically most powerful arguments working against the current welfare state are probably the economic ones: the welfare state costs too much. And furthermore, it is administratively too costly and complicated. Some arrangements are unfair at the outset, some arrangements are misused by clients, and some clients do not get the support they are entitled to (because of a lack of insight). Politically, an equalizing welfare state is time-consuming, absorbing too much of the time and attention of politicians who try to maintain some degree of high-level equality between various groups and interests and to counterbalance the various formal and informal interest groups. This contributes to an over-burdening of the political system, leaving less time and attention for long-term concerns. And one of the essential long-term questions is exactly that of the long-term feasibility of a welfare state in the light of increasing economic demands, demographic pressures, and ecological problems.

The idea of a welfare state therefore has to be seriously reconsidered, not only on the basis of the conceptual and normative counterarguments mentioned earlier (i-iii), but also, and especially, on the basis of the various economic, political, administrative, demographic, and ecological reasons briefly indicated above (iv).

In a long-term perspective an idea of a possible welfare state will probably have to address a situation with reduced economic resources, with less costly political and administrative arrangements, and with decisive demographic and ecological changes worldwide. Such a realistic readjustment is also in accordance with the request for greater modesty on behalf of the very notion of a welfare state (especially referred to under (ii) above).

Needless to say, there are various possible scenarios for the future along these lines. And these various scenarios are more or less optimistic or pessimistic. However, these uncertainties taken into account, it is clearly decisive whether we choose to adopt a global or a local perspective, and whether we choose to adopt a short-term or a long-term perspective. For the sake of realism, I opt for a global perspective, and also for a relatively long-term perspective, since the present demographic situation does give us some clues as to what we can expect in terms of a global population at least a generation from now.

General arguments in favor of a welfare state

So far I have mentioned some counterarguments and present problems. What are the arguments in favor of the idea of a welfare state?^{xi}

At this point I would like to recall the earlier argumentation against the view that property (economic value) is essentially private property: a person is always a person socialized within a community, with its traditions, its codes of meaning, its norms, and its notion of personal identity. Our language, our knowledge, our institutions, and the material structures surrounding us are all part of this shared heritage, within which our personal contributions are shaped. There is no private property of language, of knowledge, or of cultural values at large — all of this can be shared without being diminished, and it can only be appropriated by personal efforts, not by being bought. In a deep sense, socio-culturally and bio-ecologically, we belong to the world and the environment. In this perspective of communal togetherness it is foolish to insist on individual rights to counteract basic principles of socio-cultural and bio-ecological reproduction. It behooves us to act in such a way that our acts can also be performed by other people within a world and an environment that are culturally and ecologically sustainable in the long run. If not, we are asking for a metaphysical uniqueness on behalf of our own person, which is philosophically silly and politically unreasonable.

Any functional society requires socio-cultural, bio-ecological, and institutional reproduction and renewal, including an appropriate creativity and criticism. Historically this can take place in various ways. But in modern differentiated societies there will be an interplay between various sociological institutions, such as the state, the market and tradition, each with its own specific task and way of functioning. Only within such a modern society does the idea of a welfare state make any sense, and even here only viewed in the light of specific values and material conditions. But what values and what material conditions is it important to take into consideration? I will return shortly to the question of the relevant material conditions. Here I will delineate values at four levels:

(a) Any society must secure its own reproduction, within given ecological frames, i.e. bio-ecological reproduction, socio-cultural reproduction, and institutional reproduction. This implies for one thing that the appropriate number of children must be born (not too many, not too few), that they must be fed and taken care of, that they must be socialized into this society, and that they must acquire necessary skills. This was part of the overall traditional activities in ancient societies, without differentiations in specific institutions. In a modern society there is a differentiation of educational institutions. But all depending on the status of family and tradition, there might also be a demand for public interventions to secure these functionally necessary forms of reproduction. This might include family planning, care for the pregnant, care for the newly born, an infrastructure suitable for children and families with children, pre-school institutions, and an educational system all the way up.

To the extent that these (and other) functionally necessary types of reproduction are not attended to adequately by informal traditional institutions, they can, in a modern society, either be left to the market or be taken over by the state. To the extent that there is conclusive empirical evidence that the market does not adequately attend to these functional demands, the only resort is to rely on public intervention, in the final instance through the state.

There is a legitimate discussion as to the role in modern societies of informal institutions such as the family. And there is a legitimate discussion as to the possible role of market

mechanisms, for instance, for the improvement of higher education. But to my knowledge there is de facto no good alternative to state intervention as the institution with final responsibility for trying to regulate a sufficiently good interplay between these various reproductive tasks. Or rather, the final *intellectual* institution has to be politics in terms of enlightened discussion among competent participants within the public sphere, and the final *operative* institution has to be politics in terms of legal and administrative arrangements. However, my claim is not one of naive optimism on behalf of the possibility (and desirability) of extended state intervention. My point is to recall the societal need for reproductive sustainability and to indicate the interrelationship between rational criticism and the attempt to act politically (in various ways).

Whether such political interventions should be seen as part of a welfare state is a matter of definition. My argument is that all functional modern states have to take care of these reproductive tasks, for functional reasons, i.e., in order to be sustainable. It is not a question of any additional values; it is a question of societal survival. To the extent that all modern (i.e. institutionally differentiated) societies do require some state intervention in order to take care of these reproductive requirements, then all modern states are welfare states in this respect. That might sound somewhat exaggerated. However, in the first place, it is questionable whether all modern states are sustainable in this sense, i.e., whether they really are functional in the long run. It might turn out that few are, some of those calling themselves welfare states included. Secondly, this is just the first level of values. We shall now turn to the other three.

(b) Economic security in cases of disease and unemployment is traditionally one of the main ingredients of a welfare state. However, the normative argumentation in favor of such arrangements can be of various kinds. Also here we might have some functionalist argumentation, arguing in terms of societal needs for a healthy population and for a general satisfaction in the population, thus avoiding social unrest. (Cf. the Bismarckian program of social welfare.) However, here we might also have an argumentation in terms of collective insurance, underlining the general interest of sharing expenses in case of unpredicted accidents among members of the community. The normative justification is then basically the same as the one in favor of private insurance, but with the difference that the arrangement is made compulsory for all members of that society. (Again there is a crucial difference between cases where this decision is made by democratic vote and where it is made by autocratic decision.) This insurance type of argument is basically a utilitarian argument: given unpredictability and equal risks it is in the interest of each individual to take part in a collective system of insurance (thus avoiding an unreasonable “insurance price” for severely disabled and diseased persons). In the switch from so-called private collective insurance to public collective insurance, all that is needed are arguments in favor of an arrangement that includes everybody: with a collective arrangement, one avoids an unpleasant pondering each time an uninsured emergency case is brought into a hospital (or in considering whether one should take the unpleasant job of bringing the crushed but uninsured body to the clinic). One also avoids the problems of insuring the children of uninsured parents. And one avoids the unpleasant daily encounters with uninsured sick and injured people, begging or robbing in the streets. (Or one avoids the unpleasant knowledge that they have been sent out of town to some quiet place, in the case that one lives in a society with much law and order and no social welfare.) And finally, we avoid the unpleasant problem of how those who are severely ill could afford to be insured on the insurance market.

But there is also a justification of social welfare for the ill and unemployed which does not refer to utilitarian arguments about personal risks. There is a normative argumentation on behalf of solidarity, pure and simple, without any second thought about one’s own potential risk or benefit. It simply says that everybody in this society should have a certain minimal degree of

care, also those who lose their jobs, are the victims of accidents, or are disabled or ill.

This brings us to the third level of normative justification for welfare interventions.

(c) At this level we do not have the paradigm of functional justification, as in (a), nor the paradigm of justification through collective insurance, as in (b), but a justification of public welfare responsibility based on solidarity.

In any concrete case, these different paradigms might very well interfere simultaneously and in various ways. But it is worthwhile keeping them apart, for the sake of analytic clarity. Some cases might lend themselves predominantly to one of these paradigms. The support of reproductive tasks might be a matter of solidarity. It is hardly a matter of insurance, or at least only in an indirect sense. It is definitely a matter of functional need. Health insurance, and also support in case of unemployment, might somehow be seen as functional in a certain sense (and to a certain degree), and it might clearly be seen as a matter of mutual interest (as insurance), though it could also be seen as a matter of solidarity.

Public support of old and retired people has again another normative foundation. In such cases arguments can go both ways in terms of functional reproduction. In one perspective, the older generation has an important function for overall socio-cultural mediation to the younger generation. But in given situations it can also be argued the other way round, that is, in favor of the view that economically unproductive older people represent a burden, which society for functional reasons could as well have gotten rid of. The argument from insurance would then be close at hand, although in this case the point of insurance is not to get compensation for an accident of some kind, but on the contrary to obtain economical support because one is lucky enough to live a long life. But basically the spontaneous argumentation would probably rather be one based on solidarity. Every human being should have a right to live and should have some minimal economic support. Those who do not have such support should get it, and they should get it from the community to which they belong. This, then, would be the same argument as the one we have for helping privately uninsured people to get medical treatment.

At this point it is essential to stress one aspect of the argument from solidarity: each person has dignity, not only physiological needs. Therefore, the aid that is needed should not be given in a humiliating way. Such aid is not charity, but communal sharing through a general welfare arrangement. And it should be predictable, not susceptible to the whims of charitable individuals. Welfare should be predictable and non-humiliating. This is a crucial component of the normative notion of communal solidarity.

(d) There is a fourth kind of normative arguments in favor of welfare politics. These are arguments which view the welfare state as a means of moderating the power and prestige of market economy and market ideology. Social welfare is seen as a possible means to counteract the dominance of the market.^{xiii} The aim is a more egalitarian access for all groups in a society to social resources and to political power. These arguments are in this sense not merely functionalistic within a given socio-economic frame, as in (a). Nor are they arguments just for mutual security, as in (b). They are related to the arguments from social solidarity mentioned in (c), but deserve to be classified separately since their aim is mainly to bring about political changes.

I will add a few comments to these four arguments in favor of the welfare state (a-d).

Argument (a), on the functional necessity of biological and socio-cultural reproduction, could possibly be seen as a utilitarian argument. Welfare arrangements in this respect are positive to the extent that they contribute to useful consequences, namely to societal survival. This is an argument which resembles a main argument in favor of ecological sustainability.^{xiii}

Argument (b), on the desirability of “collective insurance” in cases of involuntary unemployment and disease, could easily be analyzed as a utilitarian argument. In extreme cases it is possible to interpret the argument as one of “social functionality” (“social sustainability”). Furthermore, in some societies, this argument could primarily be understood as an argument from solidarity (which leads to our next argument, [c]).

Argument (c) is one of pure solidarity, without reference to utility or societal sustainability. “We should take care of those of our people who are in need of our help.” (If argument (b) could be called a “pragmatic” argument according to Habermas's recent terminology,^{xiv} we could call this argument an “ethical” argument, i.e. one that is related to the question of our identity, of “who we are and who we want to be.”)

Argument (d) is a complex one. It has to do with political influence and hence with power. But it is also related to the question as to what kind of society and what kind of civilized life we want to have. What are the social conditions for the realization of liberal rights and for the rights of discursive participation? To the extent that public arrangements are required in order to secure a satisfactory access to resources of various kinds, to the same extent we can surely say that this argument is fairly strong, and especially strong for the fulfillment of those forms of life that are required in a political culture with rational and autonomous citizens. This means that some of the arguments against special welfare arrangements, presumably leading to clientization and alienation, will have to be carefully examined against this argument *in favor of* a politically mature welfare culture, exactly in order to *promote* a higher degree of these participatory virtues. To the extent that these arguments in favor of a mature welfare culture can be empirically supported, to the same extent is this not only an argument in favor of some value, but is an argument related to the notion of moral agents and hence to the realm of well-entrenched moral obligations (i.e. deontological arguments, not utilitarian ones).

I will now briefly present a special argument in favor of the welfare state, viz. a counterargument against the “paternalism objection” raised by Habermas (and others) against the welfare state. My argument goes as follows:

Even if the term agent, in political and legal theory, is *paradigmatically* conceived of in terms of *autonomous persons* — and rightly so (since such agents are essential for political and legal institutions) — it is also necessary to consider the moral and legal status of cases such as the various stages of the human fetus, or of cases of nearly brain-dead or severely brain-damaged individuals. These members of *Homo Sapiens* are far from the paradigmatic case of autonomous persons, but still they apparently have some moral and even legal standing.^{xv} And in any welfare state there are *gradual transitions* from the paradigm cases of autonomous persons to the cases of mere “moral subjects.”^{xvi} A huge number of those taken care of by the welfare states are not paradigmatic persons: in various ways (permanently or temporarily) they belong to these other (“transitory”) cases of the human species.

How can we go about these cases, when “those affected” for one reason or another cannot participate in discussions concerning their own needs (and identity)? When it comes to these cases, we can extend the well-known practice of “advocatory representation,” which is currently used for minors. We can extend this practice to consider the gradual stages of their physiological and psychological capabilities. The nature of these discourses will increasingly be less that of self-understanding and participation and more that of discursively achieved decisions (scientifically enlightened but fallible) concerning such questions. In this way we have to give an answer to the value question on their behalf. What is a “good life,” for them?^{xvii}

At this stage, questions concerning living conditions, including the distribution of scarce

resources, are not to be avoided. The importance of social rights is hence to be emphasized:^{xviii} liberal rights and participatory rights make sense and are decisive for autonomous persons, free and equal (Habermas 1992:155-157); social rights are all that matter for those affected who are merely moral subjects (and not moral agents or discussants).^{xix}

The main point is the following: in these cases we have *less participatory self-determination* and more “*paternalistic*” *agreements or decisions based on discursive interpretations of available and relevant knowledge*. In short, the discursive element remains untouched, but the participatory and consensual aspects are weakened by the introduction of the various forms of advocacy representation.^{xx} Since many of the “moral subjects” we have to consider in any modern welfare state can never be autonomous persons (as moral agents or moral discussants), it does not make sense (in the same sense) if we choose to call these agreements or decisions (concerning their needs and well-being) “paternalistic” in an unqualified pejorative sense. *The term paternalism, in this sense, is a term that paradigmatically belongs to the realm of autonomous persons*. We therefore have to distinguish between *various kinds of paternalism*, some being *legitimate* others *not*. This is a point worth making, not only in a moral or a legal perspective; it is also relevant for political theory: to the extent that social politics aims at a protection of the interests of “moral subjects” — beings who are only potentially “moral agents” (or “moral discussants”), or beings who are not even potentially anything but “moral subjects” — it is inadequate to call this an act of illegitimate paternalism. In this perspective it is inappropriate to talk in unqualified and negative terms about “*sozialstaatlicher Paternalismus*” (Habermas 1992:490, 493-516, esp. 503-505). Hence, for a wide range of cases in any modern welfare state, “welfare-state paternalism” might very well turn out to be *legitimate* and even *advisable*.

Politico-cultural and demographic conditions for a future welfare state

The idea of a welfare state presupposes a modern, differentiated society. It presupposes some material basis, both economically and ecologically, a basis which determines the level of possible expenditures. And it presupposes peace and order. There are, however, two factors to which I would like to pay special attention, namely the need for a certain *political culture* and the question of *state borders*.

The administrative arrangements of a welfare state can always be abused, either by its clients or by its officials. The actual arrangements can always be in need of critical examination and possible improvement. And the level of support has to be reconsidered constantly, in accordance with the economic situation. Consequently there is a need for a political culture which embraces free democratic elections among political parties, making it possible to peacefully get rid of an undesired government, and there is also a need for a political culture which presupposes well-educated and politically trained citizens who in various ways take part in a mature and enlightened discussion of all issues in connection with the welfare state. This double basis of a political culture is an essential prerequisite for a welfare state.^{xxi}

In one perspective, the actual organization of a welfare state is merely the external administrative aspects of such a comprehensive political culture. Not only formal democracy is required, but also a political culture which embraces rational discussions and the enlightened formation of preferences and values. Not only free citizens are required, but politically mature individuals, individuals who are able to take part in discussions and to act morally, when necessary to restrict their own short-term and narrowly egotistic desires according to recognized

long-term needs and basic values.

In each concrete case, these ideal requirements are certainly only realized to some extent. But their realization can always be improved in some way or another. And it is, in my opinion, quite decisive that these normative conditions are clearly spelled out. If not, the discussion about the welfare state will tend to oscillate between those who mainly think in terms of market behavior and think of human dignity and freedom, human values and aspirations, within this conceptual frame, and those who mainly think in terms of public institutions and who think of human needs and values within this conceptual frame. It is intellectually important to transcend the implicit conceptual restrictions of these two spheres (market and state bureaucracy) and give due attention to the public sphere of argumentation and the personal sphere of post-conventional morality (Habermas 1984, 1987, Vol. I and II, German original 1981). This is intellectually important, but also practically important, since it indicates some of the conditions for a welfare state, conditions that can be examined and improved.

Every real welfare state is a state among other states. There is no world government, nor any world welfare state. Welfare states are individual states. What then of the desirability of a world welfare state? There are normative arguments in favor of the idea of a world government. Are there also arguments in favor of the idea of a world welfare state?

The question is complicated. Since the idea of a welfare state belongs to *modern* societies, any attempt at introducing a global welfare state would automatically represent deep interventions into the social structure of traditionalist societies. What would be the normative arguments for such an intervention? Furthermore, the idea of a welfare state will always be realized in different ways according to economic resources, material needs, and cultural values; these factors are certainly not the same all over. With respect to such factors as climate and natural resources as well as social structure and values, there are great differences from place to place. Would not then the idea of one global welfare state become rather monstrous?^{xxii}

But if we accept that a welfare state is a particular state among other states, this acceptance does have some implications. To put it bluntly: a welfare state is a collective arrangement which somehow blurs the clear-cut boundaries between the community and its members. When citizens receive their education free of charge in a welfare state, a general brain-drain becomes even more of a problem than is the case when each person's education is fully financed by that person's own funds. When all education is paid for by the state, emigration means "getting and leaving." On the other hand, when substantial support is given by a welfare state to unemployed people, massive immigration becomes even more of a problem than when everybody has to take care of themselves. Immigration then means "coming and getting." A welfare state is thus more sensitive both to emigration and immigration than a pure market society. This goes for capital as well as for people.^{xxiii} In order to counterbalance such problems, some kind of restriction on the movements of men and money could be imposed. Briefly and brutally, free movement of people and capital is only compatible with a welfare state when the desire to move is small. If there are major differences in the standard of living between states, and major differences in financial conditions, and thus a clear motivation for men and money to move, there will be a tension between the ideal of a welfare state and the ideal of unrestricted movement. We cannot have it both ways. In a long-term global perspective, with its inherent ecological and demographic trends, this is indeed an unpleasant problem.^{xxiv}

Schematically, the situation of welfare states could thus be illustrated by three extreme cases.

(i) An elimination of all political borders and of all restrictions on the movement of men and money, which would make possible a development toward a global equalization of the

conditions for capital and for people, but on the premises of capitalist competition and thus with increasing differences between rich and poor in former welfare states, including a substantial lowering of the material standard of living for most people. This is the abdication of the welfare state.

(ii) An attempt to get legislation for welfare (and for ecological sustainability) accepted in all countries, equalizing the competition conditions for capital worldwide and leveling the differences in living conditions worldwide. By such steps an attempt is made to promote basic social welfare (and ecological sustainability) on a global scale, thereby counteracting differences which are ethically unacceptable (non-universalizable), and which also are the reasons for extensive movements of capital and of people. This might be seen as the long-term goal, ideal but hard to achieve.

(iii) A fortification of a welfare system within one state or a group of states, secured by political borders, namely against extensive movements of capital and of people across these borders. For those in favor of a welfare society, this is the easier option, but this solution implies both moral and practical problems in defending such borders.

From the point of view of ideal universalizability, the former option (ii) is preferable. From the point of view of political feasibility, the latter (iii) is attractive. One way of trying to mediate between these two options consists in an attempt to create a local welfare society in which the average material standard of living is radically reduced, at the same time as basic welfare arrangements and basic conditions for investments and for work are provided. However, also in this case one will remain dependent on solutions obtained according to option (ii). Hence, the best strategy will be one that tries to combine option (ii) and option (iii).

Such an idea of a universalizable welfare state is the one that will be elaborated in the final section. But before approaching this idea, a few remarks should be added.

In a search for ecologically universalizable forms of life, it is essential that those who are well off are willing to lower their material consumption substantially. For this reason it is vital that the ideal of a welfare state implies a really low level of welfare: this points towards universalizable solutions. Ethically this strengthens the normative idea of a welfare state. It also diminishes the migration problems of men and money for such a welfare state.

If justice means universalizability, then we could argue that a form of life which is not ecologically universalizable is morally unacceptable; it is unjust.^{xxv} Eco-ethically we could argue that the norm of universalizability of need satisfaction implies that everyone should seek a form of life which is ecologically universalizable, i.e. a form of life which is sustainable worldwide and in long term.^{xxvi} But in the attempt to follow this norm of ecological universalizability, we should in each case interpret and adapt the norm discursively relative to morally relevant differences.^{xxvii}

In summing up: among the main conditions of a welfare state there is a need for a deeper *political culture* on the one hand and for *ecological and demographic sustainability* on the other.

In order to substantiate the normative idea of a welfare state under conditions of extreme scarcity and hardship, I will now try to indicate some elements of such a universalizable welfare state.

A normative idea of a welfare state under conditions of extreme hardship

The suggestions that follow are merely meant to represent a few normative reflections on the idea of a welfare state under severe conditions. I do so, freely and speculatively, by choosing to

play with a simple model of minimal welfare state applied to a global situation of great misery.

My thought experiment is a radical one. On the one hand I envisage a pessimistic scenario of widespread starvation and relatively few resources for redistribution and for public services, on the other hand I work with a normative notion of the welfare state which entails not only solidarity, but also a political culture characterized by liberal rights, democratic decision making, and enlightened discussions. Is such an optimistic political model theoretically possible? I do not ask whether people in such situations are likely to act in a selfish way, as individuals and as groups, or whether paternalistic solutions are likely to be tried.^{xxviii} I ask whether under such circumstances a normative notion of the welfare state is in principle possible.^{xxix}

This minimalist notion of the welfare state includes the values of solidarity and of reproductive rationality discussed above, (a) and (c). The utilitarian argument of collective insurance, as in (b), will have to be adapted to the situation, and the argument of equality, as in (d), will have to be strongly moderated for the sake of optimal survival: the model I have in mind implies economic differences, and it does not guarantee that everybody will make it.^{xxx}

I will briefly elaborate this idea of a low-cost welfare state. This I will do by discussing a fairly simple idea, using for the sake of the argument some stipulated economic numbers. These numbers are open for changes within reasonable limits and are therefore not decisive for my main argument.

To be sufficiently radical at the outset, I will start with the old idea of a society where every adult person (say, from the age of 18) automatically gets a certain sum of money each month, enough to survive but not to live well on.^{xxxi} This sum is given regularly to everybody, absolutely everybody. Simultaneously we eliminate absolutely all other redistributive transactions.

It should be added that so far we focus on that part of the welfare state that is related to redistribution. In this thought experiment we keep in principle the classical, universal welfare system for health care and child care, including the education of children and of youth. Social help for persons in crisis is here included in the health care system. However, in accordance with the main argument concerning the distributive aspects of the welfare state, we do include, in this part of our thought experiment, the possibility (and probability) of a major lowering of the material expenditures also in these fields.

For the sake of the argument we might, e.g. for a Scandinavian country with a cold climate and high prices, stipulate a sum of six thousand dollars a year, and possibly half of that sum for each child under the age of 18. But this is just a stipulated sum, in need of various adjustments.

For the state this is a lot of money. But consider what is gained. Firstly, this is a very simple administrative system. All the administrative work for redistribution is reduced to this one system, which can be taken care of by computers and post offices. Thereby we cut public spending quite drastically, especially as regards salary costs. Secondly, this is a system that cannot be misunderstood, nor misused — which is an administrative as well as a moral advantage. Thirdly, this rough and automatic system liberates politicians for more meaningful tasks.

In short, this system avoids some of the major disadvantages of the traditional system. But what about the costs?

From this total sum we can deduct all the present public costs of redistribution: payments to pensioners, the unemployed, the ill, students, those performing military service, women on maternity leave, etc. This would also be the case for the redistribution of economic resources to weak sectors and regions.^{xxxii} All this together could reduce real expenditures substantially.

This system also implies that all public salaries can be reduced accordingly, since everybody starts with such a universal subsistence grant. That would reduce public expenditures even more.

For private business this implies that labor would become cheaper. Each employee is already paid for, on a basic level. And there are no social expenses for the employers (except for the expenses of a simple health system); they too are included in the subsistence grant.

But from where should the state get this money? Firstly, it has to be shown that this system would be more expensive than the present system. Depending on the level of the subsistence grant and on the total cost of all earlier welfare payments, it might actually be the other way round. This arrangement could turn out to be cheaper for the state than the present system, though realistically it might also be more expensive.^{xxxiii} Secondly, the method of obtaining public resources could remain the same as today (as in the Scandinavian welfare states), though preferably with less tax on income, since a system with a subsistence grant will be in need of substantial rewards for work. People should be motivated to work, not to be satisfied with the meager support from the welfare state. Furthermore, taxation of capital should not be prohibitive (which would lead to capital emigration), since reinvestment in productive activities is imperative.

However, when the subsistence grant drops toward the level of survival, those who are able to work would probably try to do so, thus creating assets that gradually will be to the benefit of the whole society and thus permit general support for the welfare state. If one is willing to go really low the motivation for working should not be a major problem. This, I assume, is a crucial point.

This system implies that everybody knows what to expect. The material basis is predictable. After some time there will probably be a double market, one for people on the subsistence grant only, and another for those who have additional income. The political price for this welfare system is therefore both more inequality and a lowering of the average material standard of living.

The first point, increased inequality, is inherent in this system which implies a free labor market on the top of an equal share to absolutely everybody, young and old, employed and unemployed alike. The second point, the lowering of the average material standard of living, is required in order to meet the economic requirements of affordable public costs and the ecological requirements of reduced consumption — recall my assumption that (prior to this arrangement) the material situation has already become quite severe.

It is hard to say how high, or how low, we can go. We might say: as high as economically and ecologically possible, whatever that might be in each case, and as low as necessary.^{xxxiv}

I will not play further with this simple model of a welfare state within the frame of a severe future. I leave it in the hands of people with economic and sociological competence and in the hands of those who find the idea of a welfare state attractive even in times of scarcity and hardship — or perhaps precisely then, for the sake of solidarity. However, for those who are negative at the outset, even toward this case as a thought experiment, I could add a final reminder. This idea of a universal subsistence grant has right away three important advantages: (i) it is universal. (ii) it excludes some important kinds of moral misuse, and (iii) it presupposes a lowering of the material standard of living in accordance with what society can afford. And finally, (iv) it is conceived of as a solution in a situation with permanent and extended unemployment, i.e. of a structural unemployment which will hardly leave any family untouched. These presuppositions taken for granted, our thought experiment might possibly already in a near future seem more reasonable and attractive than some other arrangements (both selective and

high-level welfare arrangements and a society without any real welfare system).

I started by taking a few counterarguments into account. I argued in favor of an idea of a welfare state along four lines: functionalistic arguments, utilitarian arguments, arguments from solidarity, and arguments in favor of political equality. I pointed out some conditions for a welfare state: its situatedness in modern differentiated societies, with a need for a deeper political culture in addition to basic economic resources, and its dependence on ecological and demographic sustainability. And I tried to delineate a simple system that is consistent with these material conditions and normative requirements in a long-term global perspective of severity. In short, I have tried to reflect normatively on the idea of a welfare state, by thinking unpleasant thoughts in a perspective of future hardship, seen from the viewpoint of a culture favorable to social solidarity.

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NOTES:

ⁱ Cf, the individualistic notion of property, from Locke to Nozick.

A clear-cut case is Tibor R. Machan, cf. e.g. 1984, § 11-17, 74-106. His position is a declared libertarianism based on Lockean arguments: property rights are individual rights, based on the work of the individual. The individual appropriates that part of the available resources on which his work has an effect. Therefore, the state has no right to tax him in order to redistribute his property to people who have less, and a welfare state is thus morally rejectable.

There are various well-known objections to such a Lockean position. (To start with: it is an open question whether Locke can be said to hold a purely work related notion of property rights, cf. Shrader-Frechette 1993.) To what extent are natural resources available in this sense today? How can inherited private property be justified on these Lockean premises? What about the numerous cases of joint work, by many individuals (perhaps carried out over several generations), on the same objects? How should the initial normative position be rationally justified once it is questioned?

There are more refined versions of this libertarian position, such as the Nozickean notion of a legitimate procedural acquisition of property by the individual, making property private property and undercutting any idea of public property to be redistributed by a welfare state (Nozick 1974). But again, in a modern skeptical society, with many competing normative positions, which arguments could rationally force us to accept just this initial normative position?

These *libertarian* conceptions of private property (as individual rights) are opposed to the *utilitarian* defense of private property; but both oppose the welfare state.

There are various versions of utilitarianism, although all of them share a weakness in the area of justice. Some forms of utilitarian argumentation can be used in favor of a welfare state, others work against the idea of a welfare state. Utilitarian arguments, in terms of market economy alone, could eventually oppose some versions of the idea of a welfare state.

At this stage I would restrict myself to the following claim: any normative political theory that operates with rational and educated individuals as a basic notion disregards the necessity of socialization, i.e., the necessarily socio-historical element in the formation of human capacities. That is, the internal relationship between a person and his community is neglected. In this sense the very notion of a self-sufficient individual is an inadequate abstraction.

Since there are good reasons for not accepting this (de)ontological premise (of an abstract individualism), I do not find it necessary to dwell upon these (abstract individualistic) arguments against the idea of a welfare state.

ⁱⁱ I might even quote Thomas Hobbes, a founding father of socio-political individualism, who claims that in such theories Man is considered as “sprung out of the earth, and suddenly, like mushrooms, come to full maturity, without all kind of engagement to one another” (Hobbes 1839-1840).

ⁱⁱⁱ In this context the sociological tradition, from Durkheim to Habermas, represents a major medicine.

^{iv} I would especially refer to the ongoing discussion between communitarians and liberals on the questions of “ontological” and “anthropological” individualism on the one hand and “political” and “legal” individualism on the other. Cf. e.g. Wellmer 1993, pp. 20 ff. To my mind, in talking about “ontological” and “anthropological” individualism, the communitarians have the upper hand, but it is more tricky when we talk about rights and about moral or political agents.

^v Cf. e.g. Dworkin 1981.

Some of the problems are illustrated by the following example: a mother and a father want to distribute their wealth fairly to their three children, but one is blind, one has an incurable passion for expensive French wine, and the third has no special needs or passions. What then is a just share? By giving each child the same amount of money, one notion of justice (fairness) is taken into account, but not a notion

of justice (fairness) that aims at an equal satisfaction of needs. If this latter notion of justice (that of equal need satisfaction) is applied, the parents should give more to the blind child than to the others. But should they also give more to the one who remains utterly unhappy if he cannot drink his expensive French wine? How much more should they in that case give to their blind child, or even to their wine-drinking child? How could they ever reach a just answer to that question? And also: how could economic compensation ever do justice to the blind? Without following this discussion further I might just point out that the conceptual problems of equality and justice become even more acute when the time dimension is added. If one person lives carefully and saves his money and another person lives carelessly and spends all he has at once, there will soon be inequality between the two. If there were a responsibility to secure an equal standing for the two throughout life, would it then be just to transfer new economic resources to the one who wasted his money and not the other: That is counterintuitive from the perspective of justice in terms of personal responsibility. On the other hand, could the community in this case rightly urge the careless person to change his form of life, in order to secure an equal and fair material standard throughout his life: We would then get a clash between the value of equal welfare and the value of personal freedom.

In short, the idea of equality in terms of exchange value is in principle problematic.

^{vi} This minimal version of the welfare state is in accordance with the classical Rawlsian notion of justice: changes leading to greater differences in wealth are only justifiable if they simultaneously improve the situation for those who are worst off (Rawls 1971).

^{vii} As to the discussion of human dignity related to the welfare state and the importance of paid work, cf. Gerald Doppelt's criticism in Doppelt 1984, of the presupposed "social paradigm of human agency" in Robert Nozick and in Carol Gould and Mihailo Markovic, and in John Rawls.

^{viii} Cf. the recent political criticism of importing single welfare arrangements into a society like the United States, which does not share the general culture of a welfare state (e.g. the criticism made by the former Secretary of Health and Home Services, Louis Sullivan, concerning welfare support for single mothers). Quite a few North American scholars have joined this crusade, without, it seems to me, knowing very much about the complex historical and social conditions that make the welfare a state a functioning system (as in the Scandinavian countries).

^{ix} Cf. Habermas 1987 II:363. See also I. Illich and H. Skjervheim. Among the catchwords are professional objectivism, clientization, and "therapeutocracy."

^x On the Habermasian thesis of an "internal colonization" of the lifeworld by the "system," that is, by the market and the state, cf. Habermas 1987, Vol. II, Ch. viii, subch. 2). The Habermasian distinction between lifeworld and system is relevant and interesting, both theoretically and politically, but hardly unproblematic; see e.g. McCarthy and Fraser 1985. In a time of resignation and privatization, I am afraid that this distinction could be used politically to blur the difference in political role between state and market (since both are seen as equally detrimental for the lifeworld). What could then be neglected is the political primacy of the political (so to speak). For one thing, if insights acquired through practical discourse should be implemented institutionally, the positive interplay of *public debate* and *political institutions*, including *state institutions*, is crucial. For interesting elaborations of these problems, cf. Habermas 1992.

Concerning theoretical tensions related to the welfare state, cf. also Habermas's discussions in 1985.

The question of whether the different modern states and political systems are "instrumental" rather than "communicative" is not to be decided by *a priori* generalizations. Careful empirical and conceptual analyses are required, and the answers might therefore differ from state to state (for instance in France,

Germany, Norway and the United States), and also differ with the various activities of the political systems in each state (for instance universities, railways, churches, parliaments, research councils, courts, hospitals, museums, schools, and ministries of finance).

^{xi} Cf. an orderly discussion of this question in Goodin 1988:19-54.

^{xii} Social welfare may be seen as a necessary means to this end, but clearly not a sufficient one. For one thing, participatory democracy and good and socially unbiased education are also required, as well as the influence both from social movements and from political and professional organizations (which to a certain extent is the setting of the Scandinavian welfare states). As to the aim of socio-political equality, or of diminishing “social distance,” cf. Øyen 1974.

^{xiii} We are here talking about preconditions for sustainable societies. Hence it is somewhat awkward to talk in utilitarian terms. The term “utility” is for the most part used about that which is useful for something that is, in the final analysis, good *per se*. Sustainability can best be seen as such an aim *per se*. Hence, asking about the “utility of life” is like asking about the “time on the sun”; i.e. this term is a category mistake, mixing the standard with that which is measured by the standard.

^{xiv} Cf. e.g. Habermas 1992:138 ff., but also in earlier writings.

^{xv} The depth and extension of such moral and legal problems are steadily growing, since technological and scientific development makes us increasingly able to prolong life and to intervene in the life process in these cases.

^{xvi} I would suggest that we make the following distinctions: there are those who are able to act morally and immorally; in the world known to us these *moral agents* are all humans—but not all members of *Homo Sapiens* are “moral agents,” a fetus for instance, is not. There are those who are able to take part in moral discourse; in the world known to us these *moral discussants* are all humans—but not all members of *Homo Sapiens* are “moral discussants.” an infant, for instance, is not. The tricky interrelationships between moral agents and moral discussants are discussed in universal pragmatics and in theories of socialization and of modernization, but we shall not enter into these discussions here. But evidently we need a category for those who are neither moral agents nor moral discussants, but who can still be morally harmed—a paradigm case is that of unnecessary infliction of pain on sentient beings who are not able to act morally, nor to discuss moral questions. The beings who only belong to this category we could, for the lack of a better name, call *moral subjects*.

^{xvii} In this sense “ethical” questions (in the Habermasian sense) have to be settled; we cannot get away, for instance, by referring to a possible future consensus among moral discussants. The discussion on optimal reforms for mentally retarded people (for instance: should they live in institutions or in private flats?) represents a typical case. This case is very different from discussions on anti-smoking laws, where those affected in principle are discursively available—the issue being more the “weakness of the will” than their inability to participate in the discussion or to learn from it (eventually some time in the future).

^{xviii} Habermas focuses on *Freiheitsrechte* and *Teilnahmerechte*, not on *Teilhaberechte*, cf. Habermas 1992:157.

^{xix} To what extent is a moral discussant conceivable without, being a moral subject (having a bio-body)? Cf. Skirbekk, 1994.

^{xx} Even though some diluted version of “hypothetic consensus” (or “anticipatory consensus”) could be discussed in connection to non-present moral agents and discussants, this becomes increasingly meaningless as we move toward the more and more “remote” cases of (mere) “moral subjects.”

^{xxi} Cf. the normative notion of political culture elaborated in Skirbekk 1991.

^{xxii} In this perspective, for instance, there are certainly major differences between, say, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Sweden. Even if we could argue that some form and some degree of a welfare state are both functional and desirable in any modern state, could that possibly lead us to the conclusion that these three countries really ought to be included in one and the same global welfare state? Probably not. Our normative arguments can hardly take us further than to a rejection of more extreme cases of deficient welfare arrangements in modern states: there will always be cases for which there is no clear normative conclusion, to the effect that the decision is left to voting or to tradition.

Perhaps the plurality of welfare arrangements may provide a relief for social dissidents? Some discontent Swedes can go to the US, or to Saudi Arabia; some discontent Americans can go to Saudi Arabia, or to Sweden; and some discontent Saudis can either go to Sweden or to the US. On the other hand, those who do go to the US, or to Sweden, or to Saudi Arabia, should know where they are going.

^{xxiii} On migration of capital and people in the welfare state: “Imagine for a moment that the proposal for a universal grant were enacted in a single city.... What would happen? Two movements are likely: first, one would expect a dramatic migration of people from outside the city into the city; second, one would expect a dramatic migration of capital (and of high-paid managers and capitalists) out of the political jurisdiction of the city’s taxation authority” (Wright 1986).

^{xxiv} The situation can be illustrated by the following example. The population of a small welfare state like Norway is less than a third of that of Shanghai, which again is approximately 1% of the population of mainland China. Whatever immigration Norway permitted from China, it would hardly matter for the overall demographic development of that country. From World War II to the nineties, the Chinese population has nearly tripled, from approx. 450,000 to approx. 1.2 billion. However, the present population of China (of nearly 1.2 billion) would have been more than 200,000,000 higher if the Chinese government had not during the last twenty years pursued its family planning policy aiming at one child per family. (According to *China Daily* Feb. 7, 1991.) A population of 200,000,000 is close to the population of the US, or to that of England, France, Italy, and Spain together. This example indicates that it is primarily “at home” and not through migration that effective measures can most successfully be taken.

^{xxv} Cf. the discussion in Habermas (and others) on the norm of “universalizable need satisfaction,” discussed in the chapter “Rationality and Contextuality” in Skirbekk 1993a.

^{xxvi} There is an important difference between anthropocentric sustainability and the notion of ethical gradualism. According to the latter we should also take the “social rights” of non-human moral subjects into account, including their “instrumental” (indirect) values, such as habitat. These social rights should be supported by legal and economic institutions. Cf. Skirbekk, 1994:79-126.

^{xxvii} One critical perspective in this respect is the eventuality of an insufficiency of vital resources for the survival of everybody: how could we, in such a critical situation, discursively reach a consensus about how to select the survivors and how to select those who are not to survive? As far as demography is concerned, it could provocatively be claimed that the human population is already too large everywhere and that it should be substantially decreased everywhere. However, in some cases consumption is the main immediate problem, rather than population growth. We could therefore say:

where consumption is ecologically too high, it should be reduced: where population growth is too high, it should be reduced. Any step that leads to a larger population or to higher consumption should be avoided.

^{xxviii} Time is here an important factor: a slow process of deterioration would probably permit learning and adaption in a way which a fast breakdown would not.

^{xxix} If people were convinced that under such miserable conditions a normative notion of the welfare state is inconceivable, this conviction itself could prevent them from trying to improve the situation.

^{xxx} See below. I assume that once a universal subsistence grant is received (e.g. each month), there is nothing more to get, no more money for redistribution and no further assistance from social institutions (except hospitals and educational institutions).

^{xxxi} Cf. the critical debate of similar ideas put forward by van der Veen and Van Parijs (1986). However, the idea I am playing with is very different from the proposal made by van der Veen and Van Parijs. For one thing: (1) They presuppose some abundance. I presuppose scarcity and envisage a low standard of living. (2) They aim for “communism” in the sense of equal grants to everybody regardless of their personal work relationship. I allow for a universal survival grant but also for inequality through differentiated income for work. In short, they present an enthusiastic utopia for the present situation, whereas I reflect in defensive terms on a possible future with scarcity within a declining welfare state. In the words of Alec Nove (op. cit. 1986, p. 678), my position is “share-scarcity, ecologically-oriented market socialism, with a universal grant ensuring tolerable subsistence levels for all, plus material and other incentives for work.” Cf. also Ferry 1995, and Van Parijs 1995.

^{xxxii} For an equalizing welfare state like Norway, the costs of supporting various regions and sectors directly or indirectly are considerable. For example, at present the state guarantees a basic income for farmers, subsidizes electric energy and has favorable laws of tax deduction for industry. In countries with subsidies to farming or fishery, the subsistence grant could contribute to the same effect. If we have a family of four (two parents and two children) on a farm that has been inherited and which is unmortgaged, the starting salary under this system would be \$18,000 (6,000 for each of the parents and 3,000 for each of the children), which under conditions of scarcity and hardship could make farming attractive most places.

^{xxxiii} Cf. Przeworski (1986), where he tries to calculate the rate of taxation in relation to the level of the grant. He assumes the universal grant to be one-half of the average present income, and concludes tentatively with a tax increase in the vicinity of 20 percent of the GDP for OECD countries, and with aggregate income reduced by more than 5 percent.

^{xxxiv} By low level, I am thinking in terms of sufficient clothing to keep warm, enough food of a simple kind (like potatoes and milk, or rice and tea, plus vitamins), about seven square meters of living space per person, and satisfactory sanitation. This certainly does not provide for any luxury, but within the more gloomy scenarios, even this low level would be attractive for many people. For quite a few, it is attractive already today.

An illustration: in Shanghai, three to four square meters per person for housing is usual, and in winter, the indoor temperature is often below ten degrees Celsius owing to a prohibition against indoor heating. Shanghai is an attractive place in China, a place that many more people would like to move to and which few people would like to leave. Life expectancy at birth in Shanghai in 1991 was 75.5 years, compared to a life expectancy in New York City of about 73 for whites and 70 for non-whites. (These statistics are from 1980, the last year for which data were available in the spring of 1991, according to

The New York Times, 14 April 1991, p. 1) China's health-care network, which costs much less money than the US system (38 dollars per person, compared to 2,100 dollars) emphasizes prevention of disease, including sanitation, inoculation of children, and prenatal care. (Infant mortality the first day is 10.9 for each 10,000 in Shanghai, compared to 13.3 in New York City, and 97 in India. *The New York Times*, 14 April 1991, p. 1.) In China resources are not used for advanced equipment and expensive terminal treatment.