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**UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME IN A POST-WORK WORLD:
TRANSHUMANISM AND THE FUTURE OF HUMAN FLOURISHING**

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Abstract: The new technological era is leading us into a post-work paradigm, the consequences of which are unforeseeable. The downturn in the labor industry due to technological accelerationism often causes uncertainty and anxiety about how to manage mass job losses, but for every problem identified, there are alternatives. UBI is a policy proposal that would provide all citizens with a basic income, regardless of their employment status or financial status. The idea behind UBI is to provide a safety net for individuals and families, ensuring that everyone has access to the basic necessities of life, regardless of their economic background. This perspective frames UBI as a fundamental human right, offering an innovative and equitable solution to the challenges posed by the post-work era crisis. I will look at the origins of this idea and the ways that different transhumanist figures (such as C.H. Anthony, J. Hughes, and N. S. Anderson)—those who want to use technology to enhance and prolong human life—have proposed solutions. The goal of the transhumanist viewpoint is to improve humanity's future by creating and applying current and future emerging technologies that help people transcend their physical, mental, and emotional constraints. The paper makes the case that improving humanity's future is a shared objective between transhumanism and universal basic income. UBI might shield people who feel left behind by the modern era's quick technical advancements, while transhumanism might give people the means and flexibility to pursue fulfillment and self-actualization. Transhumanism and UBI together have the potential to build a more just and affluent society

Keywords: UBI, transhumanism, economy, society, post-work.

VENITUL DE BAZĂ UNIVERSAL ÎNTR-O LUME POST-MUNCĂ: TRANSMANISMUL ȘI VIITORUL PROSPERITĂȚII UMANE

Rezumat: Noua eră tehnologică ne conduce către o paradigmă post-muncă, ale cărei consecințe sunt imprevizibile. Declinul din industria muncii cauzat de accelerarea tehnologică provoacă adesea incertitudine și anxietate cu privire la modul de gestionare a pierderilor masive de locuri de muncă, însă pentru fiecare problemă identificată există alternative. UBI este o propunere politică care ar oferi tuturor cetățenilor un venit de bază, indiferent de statutul lor profesional sau financiar. Ideea din spatele UBI este de a oferi o plasă de siguranță persoanelor și familiilor, asigurând accesul tuturor la necesitățile de bază ale vieții, indiferent de situația lor economică. Această perspectivă încadrează UBI drept un drept fundamental al omului, oferind o soluție inovatoare și echitabilă la provocările generate de criza de după era muncii. Voi analiza originile acestei idei și modul în care diferite personalități transumaniste (precum C.H. Anthony, J. Hughes și N. S. Anderson)—cei care doresc să utilizeze tehnologia pentru a îmbunătăți și prelungi viața umană—au propus soluții. Scopul punctului de vedere transumanist este de a îmbunătăți viitorul omenirii prin crearea și aplicarea tehnologiilor emergente actuale și viitoare care îi ajută pe oameni să își depășească constrângerile fizice, mentale și emoționale. Lucrarea susține că îmbunătățirea viitorului umanității este un obiectiv comun al transumanismului și al venitului de bază universal. UBI ar putea proteja persoanele care se simt lăsate în urmă de progresele tehnice rapide din era modernă, în timp ce transumanismul ar putea oferi oamenilor mijloacele și flexibilitatea de a urmări împlinirea și autorealizarea. Transumanismul și UBI au împreună potențialul de a construi o societate mai echitabilă și mai bogată.

Cuvinte-cheie: UBI, transumanism, economie, societate, post-muncă.

1. Introduction into the general framework

The nature of humanity's future consistently occupies our thoughts. Among what we regard as the most accelerationist and leftist "propaganda," some of the primary subjects include transhumanism and Universal Basic Income. The intriguing aspect of this phenomenon is that, despite transhumanism encompassing both radical right-wing accelerationism and leftist ideologies, the intersection of social politics and transhumanism typically occurs around the concept of universal basic income. While both aim to enhance humanity and improve human life, the question arises: are their efforts truly radical or pragmatically feasible as we reassess their impact? In order to determine whether or not the universal basic income that leftists and transhumanists advocate could be a practical solution for improving human life and whether it would cause an economic catastrophe, I started this study out of curiosity rather than judgment. At the end of the line, between these so-called radical philosophies, we have enough discourse around UBI to be able to actually figure out empirically what would happen, or at least, simulate a conclusion based on the multiple studies that have been done so far on the topic in different cultures, backgrounds, economies, etc. I would also like to start this article mentioning that there is a portion that I translated to english and also commented on texts from a previous article about UBI written in romanian 2 years ago (in 2022) and I have furthered my research and wanted to make it accessible to a broader range of students.

To clarify my thesis, I would like to elaborate first on the theoretical grounds in which we operate, stopping at some considerable works that have influenced this article and still stand as inspiration for the future, and then move on to an empirical viewpoint that shall clear how UBI has proved itself until now in the recent experiments. Through the whole article, I would like to stop and define critical terms for the paper and explain the point of view I am coming

from considering all the definitions I've encountered so far, trying not to take away from the purpose of the concepts used and to also close some eventual criticism that would come afterwards if the words were to be described in a different context. Overall, this approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of UBI and its potential impact on society. By addressing key terms and perspectives, the article aims to offer a well-rounded analysis that can contribute to the ongoing debate surrounding universal basic income.

To clear everything up a bit, I shall refer to the term transhumanism in a weak sense¹, a non-ideological and a more open sense, malleable, as a way to see human enhancement and life improvement with no boundaries, be they economical, social, religious or cultural. Drawing inspiration from Stefan Lorenz Sorgner's writings, this perspective allows for an inclusive exploration of emerging trends without undue politicization. One of the first definitions of transhumanism would also be a good place to start: "The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself—not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way—but in its entirety, as humanity. We need a name for this new belief. Perhaps transhumanism will serve: man remaining man but transcending himself by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature".²

Subsequently, a more detailed exploration of a specific current within this umbrella term will be undertaken, acknowledging that it represents a part rather than the entirety of the concept.

Additionally, when I refer to Universal Basic Income, I mean this as the concept that implies the state provides a sum of money to every major citizen regardless of status, race, ethnicity, job, income or any other aspect. The Universal Basic Income is a concept that cannot easily be found in history, but I will choose as a point of reference the American Revolution of 1775, in which Thomas Paine observed the American farmer's society.

He "dispossessed more than half of the inhabitants of each nation of their natural heritage without providing them, as should have been done, compensation for that loss and thereby created a species of poverty and misery that did not exist before"³.

In the wake of this action it obviously created a wave of poverty to which it responded with the most trivial form of a universal income fund, namely it offered a sum of between £10 and £15 to each person (depending on how old they were).⁴

2. Theoretical approaches

Getting over some of the most fundamental definitions and moving in the more theoretical realm, I would like to stop over two of the main theoreticians of the left in today's society, which are Nick Srnicek and Aaron Bastani. Starting with the latter, his biggest work so far, which is: "Fully automated communism: a manifesto" stops at many of the issues we can find in today's society and at many of the things we can discuss in a post-work era. When I refer to post-work, I mean the theory that mentions how we are going to pass the neoliberal condition that makes us define ourselves through our job, basically *recognizing that the work-centered society is no longer tenable*".⁵

To be very specific and short, post-work society is a socio-economic paradigm in which the conventional necessity for human labor is markedly diminished or entirely eradicated as a result of technological innovations such as automation, artificial intelligence, and robotics. In such a society, work—especially wage labor and employment driven by economic necessity—becomes far less fundamental to individual lives. Instead, individuals' fundamental needs are satisfied through alternate institutions that do not depend on extensive employment. So, when it comes to a post-work society, I think we must establish there have to be levels; we cannot jump into a completely moneyless society after so many centuries, so what is within the realm of possibility is a more equitable system implemented through methods such as UBI. Now that we have cleared up the concept I will be using, I would like to mention that Bastani's work compliments not only this view on the necessity of post-work previously mentioned but also the idea of a UBI and also something else that he mentions more explicitly as UBS (universal basic services)⁶. The main idea of the book is that if we embrace automation,

there will be a work crisis (a lot of jobs disappearing), and we will move more and more towards a more equitable system that is not solely based on social status, as that will become irrelevant.

Bastani argues that in order to address the impending work crisis due to automation, society must shift towards a system that values individuals based on their contributions rather than their social status. This transition will require the implementation of universal basic services in addition to a universal basic income.

Nick Srnicek, especially through his co-authored publication *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (with Alex Williams), provides valuable insights pertinent to a discourse on Universal Basic Income (UBI). Srnicek and Williams examine the future of labor, automation, and a post-work world, which directly relates to arguments of Universal Basic Income (UBI). Similar to Bastani, Srnicek and Williams assert that automation and technological progress will probably diminish the need for human labor, steering society towards a post-work era. They contend that heightened automation will precipitate a significant shift of the labor market, resulting in a reduction of conventional employment opportunities. From this perspective, UBI is regarded as an essential measure to alleviate the economic and social repercussions of job loss and underemployment.² Srnicek emphasizes that in the absence of Universal Basic Income or analogous initiatives, the upheaval induced by technology may intensify inequality and social unrest. But to continue on this topic, we can also argue that these authors focus a lot on the topic of depersonalization at work and a need for a reform. In a post-work world, Universal Basic Income would guarantee everybody the ability to sustain a fundamental quality of living, irrespective of their employment status. Srnicek considers this crucial for diminishing reliance on wage labor and facilitating greater autonomy for individuals to participate in artistic, social, or civic endeavors instead of being compelled to accept unsatisfying or unstable employment. And stopping at the idea that UBI might be a radical idea, the authors comment the following: “While a universal basic income may appear economically reformist, its political implications are therefore significant. It transforms precarity, it recognizes social labor, it makes

class power easier to mobilize, and it extends the space in which to experiment with how we organize communities and families. It is a redistribution mechanism that transforms production relations. It is an economic mechanism that changes the politics of work”.^{8 2}

We might wonder whether this automation has an end, and if so, if it would be the end of capitalism and neo-liberalism. When it comes to Srnicek and Williams, they promote complete automation, implying UBI should only serve as a step in a bigger, much larger transformative process of how we see the world. Srnicek’s critique of neoliberal capitalism is based on the premise that money is increasingly concentrated within a small few while the mass of individuals experiences escalating precarity: “We then turn to the various symptoms of this crisis as they are manifested not only in unemployment figures but also in increased precarity, jobless recoveries, growing slums and expanding urban marginality. All around us, we can see the effects of this shift bubbling up in new social conflicts and problems. Finally, we look at the various ways in which capitalism’s tendency to produce surplus populations has been managed by the state. Today, the crisis of work threatens to overrun these traditional tools of control, laying the social conditions for the shift to a post-work world”.¹⁰

Universal Basic Income could serve as a mechanism for economic redistribution, guaranteeing that the wealth produced by automation and technological advancements is distributed more equally. Srnicek contends that society should have access to improved productivity and technological advancement rather than allowing businesses or a wealthy elite to monopolize its benefits. In conclusion, addressing the pervasive inequities and inequalities stemming from work is paramount, underscoring the pressing need to dismantle the current system and pursue transformative solutions. In order to do that, we need to promote technological evolution and automatization to be able to live in what Bastani calls “luxury communism”.

3. Empirical evidence

Now that we have broadly defined the terms, I would like to look more into the conclusive studies we have conducted on the UBI hypothesis in the past years. There have been over 160 studies conducted so far.¹¹ The overall results of them show no conclusive thoughts whatsoever if you were to search the media. The scientific studies that were conducted show us some very clear directions that we should consider.

Firstly, the main idea of the Universal Basic Income is obviously to improve the poverty rate, minimizing it as much as possible. Even the people who say it would not be fair to have special programs that privilege the poor would be obliged to understand that UBI means a privilege for all. I often like to present this concept as simplistically as possible to all the people I know with the following analogy that I read in an article by a Missouri PhD student¹², but with a more complex explanation than the one he gave in his article: Consider a game of Monopoly in which each participant's starting amount is different. While some players start with a sizable amount of wealth, others have very little or none at all. Those who start the game with more money have a substantial advantage as the game progresses, acquiring more properties, collecting more rents and accumulating even more wealth. In contrast, people who started with less money struggle to sustain themselves, facing ongoing financial hardship and game restrictions. If we introduce a universal base income, this means that each player, regardless of their previous wealth or level of achievement in the game, receives a fixed amount of money at the start of each round. As a result, even participants who had little or no money to begin with now have a guaranteed income that allows them to participate fully, make tactical decisions and have an equal chance of success. UBI serves as a safety net, ensuring that everyone has access to at least a minimum level of financial security and the means to meet their basic needs.

Possible labor market effects is a challenge often brought up in the discussions about setting a UBI. UBI could discourage people from working, as they would receive a guaranteed income regardless of whether they are employed or not. This could lead to lower labor force

participation, which would be bad for the economy. In addition, UBI could cause inflation because it increases demand for goods and services without increasing supply. However, we also have a counterargument to this risk. Who will work? What impact does this model have on the unemployment rate? The solution can be found in a recent study. In December 2018, Finland ended a two-year basic income experiment that tried to counter the unemployment trap. The country's social welfare office sent €560 a month to 2,000 randomly selected unemployed people of working age. They did not receive this benefit if they got a job, nor did it affect their other benefits (such as access to the unemployed health care system). The first-year results found that recipients were happier and healthier than those who were classically unemployed, but that the basic income had little impact on their unemployment status.¹³ Overall, in most cross-studies about multiple UBI implementation grounds, the percentages vary around the work, increasing or decreasing by not more than 4-5%. These may seem like huge differences, but they are not if we were to consider we have been conducting studies all over the globe under different economic, cultural and social backgrounds. What this actually proves to us is that humans are capable of more flexibility, and not less work, based on whether or not they have their basic needs met.

Speaking of basic needs, another important and possibly the most conclusive evidence we have so far of UBI working is that people are happier and healthier. No matter where the study is conducted, we can notice things such as people going for dental care more, going to different doctors to get check-ups, spending more time with their family, and worrying less.

4. Transhumanist approaches

There are many transhumanist theories that try to solve the problem of implementing a universal basic income. In the following, I will reproduce some of their ideas on the problem in question. One possible theory comes from Gennady Stolyarov II (writer and leader of two transhumanist parties), who proposes some form of blockchain usage in favor of creating a fair UBI.¹⁴ A so-called LifeCoin would then

be a possible solution in terms of monetary distribution, which should respect the following principles: It should be easily accessible to all adults over the age of 18 connected to the network. Thus, a wallet should be developed that supports LifeCoin, which is distinguished by the currency platform. This should be accepted by all businesses that provide shelter (banks, landlords, etc.), food, clothing and medical care. Thus, a network payment system should be developed that accepts LifeCoin and is linked to users' wallets. It must be transparent and provide incentives for service providers to accept LifeCoins as currency; therefore, existing traditional fee structures for money exchange need to be changed. It must also be exchangeable to other currencies at the owner's discretion. Consequently, LifeCoin needs to be recognized on a significant number of exchanges.

This approach is definitely not the first one we shall consider. I have previously mentioned and elaborated on the criticism and praise that we can bring to such an innovative solution. John Eden for instance also criticized such an approach due to the volatility of the blockchain, saying that: "The problem is that any economic system with a fixed or variable amount of tokens can and will experience inflation and deflation. To me, this basic economic fact cannot be neutralized in any way by blockchain. The implication of this is that the token designed for UBI needs to be created in partnership with some pretty careful economists so that a method of adjusting the token's value relative to the wider economy is built into the token's infrastructure. After all, you don't want to create LifeCoin only to see inflation destroy its primary purpose—namely, giving the most vulnerable members of society the ability to live a decent life".¹⁵

That might be an option, but it's certainly not the first that comes to mind when we imagine a UBI; the first thought that usually comes to mind is the redistribution of taxes and consequently their increase. Solutions such as taxing corporations that benefit the most from automation and technological advances, using environmental taxes to fund UBI, incentivizing sustainable practices, targeting extreme wealth accumulation. Such solutions are already being worked on. In the United States, transhumanists are developing a proposal that could be

implemented globally, namely simplifying and clarifying the distribution and redistribution of taxes.

The vice secretary of a transhumanist party proposes such an initiative involving, summatively¹⁶: the reduction of military expenses, especially in cases of offense and not defense. Removing barriers to technological innovation and technology-based economic growth to generate increased tax revenues and growing surpluses without a significant increase in tax expenditures from current levels. Eliminating the current burdensome federal contracting system, instead, all federal agencies should have the authority to purchase goods and equipment and solicit projects from any entity capable of meeting an urgent need at a reasonable cost. All payments made by federal agencies for non-tenured labor should be determined on a case-by-case basis, and exclusive and preferential contracts for certain entities should be prohibited. Digitize as many federal services and functions as possible to reduce the expense and waste caused by paper documentation, physical lines and outdated information technology systems. In section XXXVI¹⁷ [Adopted by vote of members May 7-13, 2017] The Transhumanist Party of the United States favors the elimination of taxation and income tax in general. Instead, it proposes a flat tax, calculated as a percentage of sales tax, applicable only to transactions with businesses whose combined national revenues exceed a predetermined threshold. This tax should be included in the product prices of these big companies, as it would have no impact on the efficiency of transactions. Transactions involving salaries, rewards, gifts, donations, exchanges, offers of employment and inheritances should not be taxed, nor transactions between individuals or small businesses for which a tax system would be costly to implement. In addition, all land and property taxes should be abolished.

Broadly speaking, what this plan aims for is flexibility that favors the future society and opposes any resistance to the technological age. This would require a reduction in working time, an increase in automation, and a simplification of the taxation and tax allocation models.¹⁸

These are just some of the viable models that could be implemented and functional in the near future, and transhumanism

could play an important role in the development of this topic. Scientists and technology experts have begun to explore the possibilities of UBI and have discovered numerous advantages, such as reducing financial stress and inequality, as well as increasing individual freedom and autonomy. Also, UBI could be an important solution to respond to the crisis caused by automation and artificial intelligence¹⁹, which manage to replace a growing number of jobs.

5. Conclusions

The development of the post-work paradigm, fueled by technological advancements such as automation and artificial intelligence, poses both significant difficulties and opportunities for society. As traditional labor structures become increasingly outmoded, the implementation of Universal Basic Income (UBI) emerges as an essential solution to these changes. By giving a guaranteed income to all individuals, UBI creates a safety net that can minimize the economic and social implications of automation while also encouraging a more fair society.

Transhumanism, with its emphasis on technologically increasing human capacities, is consistent with UBI's goals of providing avenues to greater individual autonomy and fulfillment. UBI with transhumanist ideals form a potent mix that can help manage the uncertainties of a post-work society. They give individuals both the ability to protect themselves from the disruptive effects of technological progress as well as the potential to prosper in new, more creative and meaningful ways.

While there are legitimate worries about UBI implementation, such as potential labor market consequences and economic volatility, the excellent results of pilot programs indicate that these issues can be solved with proper planning and teamwork. Blockchain-based distribution systems, such as LifeCoin, and tax redistribution models are examples of new approaches to making UBI a reality.

Finally, by accepting UBI and transhumanist developments, society can move toward a future in which financial security, personal freedom, and technological progress coexist, resulting in a more just

and affluent world for all. The path to this future is not without challenges, but the potential benefits make it a worthwhile pursuit.

Notes

1. Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, *On Transhumanism, translator's introduction* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press): X-XI.
2. Nick Bostrom, 1975, *A History on Transhumanist Thought*, apud. Huxley.
3. L'école Des Hautes Etudes En Sciences Sociales-Thomas Piketty Home Page. "Thomas Paine. Agrarian Justice. Digital Edition," pp. 9-10.
4. Also mentioned by me in a romanian article written in 2022
5. David Frayne, "Towards a Post-Work Society," *ROAR Magazine* no. 2.
6. Aaron Bastani, 2019, *Fully Automated Luxury Communism: A Manifesto* (London: Verso): 213.
7. Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, 2015, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (London: Verso): 117-122.
8. *Idem*: 123
9. The authors argue that UBI has the potential to address systemic issues of inequality and empower individuals to pursue meaningful work without the fear of financial instability. They believe that implementing UBI could lead to a fundamental shift in societal structures and power dynamics.
10. *Idem*: 86
11. *Which you can read more about on the Stanford Income Lab page*: <https://basicincome.stanford.edu/experiments-map/> Accessed September 2024
12. Yanu Endar Prasetyo, "A Jobless Future: Why We Need a Universal Basic Income?", 2024. accessed September 2024. <http://indobig.net/a-jobless-future-why-we-need-a-universal-basic-income/>.
13. Kansanelakelaitos Kela, "Results of Finland's Basic Income Experiment: Small Employment Effects, Better Perceived Economic Security, and Mental Wellbeing." *The Social Insurance Institution of Finland*, 2023. accessed May 2023.
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14. Sallak Nicole Anderson, "Blockchains Instead of Beggars: Could

Cryptocurrencies Unleash Universal Basic Income?" *Transhumanist Party*, 2019. accessed September 2024. <https://transhumanist-party.org/2019/01/06/blockchains-instead-of-beggars/>.

15. Idem

16. C. H. Anthony, "Proposal by C. H. Antony on a U.S. Transhumanist Party Working Group on Universal Basic Income (UBI) Implementation," 2023. accessed March 2023. <https://transhumanist-party.org/2018/05/31/ubi-working-group-proposal/>.

17. Idem

18. These examples are also taken from the article written in romanian in 2022, for more details and a more in-depth perspective, you can also look into that one.

19. Idea also found in: James J. Hughes, "A Strategic Opening for a Basic Income Guarantee in the Global Crisis Being Created by AI, Robots, Desktop Manufacturing, and Biomedicine," *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 24 (1)/2024, 45-61.

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