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A THIRD WAY AGAINST POVERTY: ATKINSON'S ROAD TO THE PARTICIPATION INCOME

This article reconstructs the intellectual trajectory that led British economist Anthony B. Atkinson to propose the participation income as a third way between social insurance and basic income in the fight against poverty. Before the 1990s, Atkinson adopted a cautious analytical stance, assessing both approaches without publicly endorsing either, while displaying a preference for the Beveridgean model. We identify three factors that led him to move beyond this opposition in the early 1990s: the normative shift of the Thatcher era, which rendered the unconditionality of transfers politically untenable, the work of Hermione Parker, which introduces for the first time the feasibility of a complementarity between social insurance and basic income, and the new European institutional context emerging from the Maastricht Treaty, which transformed this complementarity from a theoretical option into a structural necessity. The participation income thus highlights a tension, present since the late 1960s, between Atkinson the analytically cautious economist and Atkinson the politically engaged citizen, a tension these three factors finally allowed him to overcome.

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