

Chapter 1. Work, Recognition and the Social Bond: Changing Paradigms

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Introduction: The Post-Hegelian Agenda

One of the chief characteristics of ‘post-Hegelian’ thought is that it strives to conceptualise the fundamental features of human life in a way that connects to the major moral and political challenges of the times. The post-Hegelian philosophical impulse could even be said to originate in an apprehension of these challenges and the need to respond to them by way of critical reflection. In the Hegelian jargon, post-Hegelian thought aims at the ‘universal’—or has its eye on ‘totality’—in seeking to provide a framework for understanding not only those essential features of the human life form in general, but the contemporary condition of this life form in its essential aspects. Without the latter, the philosopher’s concern with universality and totality remains abstract; only with it, does philosophical criticism become concrete. At its best, philosophy on the post-Hegelian view is not just the perspicuous self-expression of thought, but of its time in thought.

A crucial implication of the post-Hegelian conception of philosophy is that however we conceive the fundamental features of human life, we must conceive them as socially and historically indexed. Of course, many answers have been given to the question of what distinguishes the human life form from the life form of other animals: consciousness, thought, knowledge, reason, freedom and so forth. ‘Reason’, or perhaps ‘freedom’, was Hegel’s master concept in this regard, though there is widespread disagreement amongst post-Hegelians about the precise

meaning of these terms. What they do agree on, however, is that human beings are distinctive on account of the kind of relations they have with *each other*, that is, on account of their social relations, and that these relations provide them with a history that also distinguishes them from other animals. Hegel's theory of the 'sociality' of reason and of reason's unfolding in history is well-known—and not without justification taken as central to his philosophy¹—but the broader 'post-Hegelian' point is that the human condition is at its core social and historical irrespective of the detailed specification of the concept of rationality.

However, for the most of the second half of the twentieth century, post-Hegelian thought in the sense we are introducing it here did favour a particular approach to rationality, one that emphasised the link between rationality and language. To the extent that the human being could properly be characterized as the rational animal, on this view, it was in virtue of its self-constitution and self-expression in language. The classical conception of the human being as the animal 'in possession of the *logos*', radicalized by Hegel into the idea of self-determining consciousness, mutated into a conception of the human being as essentially the being capable of *speech* and *action*.² Under the influence of the later Heidegger and the later Wittgenstein, post-Hegelian thought after the Second World War took an unmistakable linguistic turn (and of course was not alone in this respect).³ From Arendt to Gadamer and Habermas, from Ricoeur to Derrida and Rorty, the key post-Hegelian thinkers from the 1950s to the 1980s took it as axiomatic that philosophical self-understanding was to be obtained first and foremost by reflection on language. Furthermore, some of these thinkers went as far as to suggest that the fundamental danger of modern times arose from a kind of reification of the linguistic realm

(Arendt, Habermas), or a ‘forgetfulness’ of the proper human relation to language and consequently an authentic experience of freedom (Heidegger, Derrida, Nancy).

To a certain extent, these post-Hegelian trajectories are powered by their opposition to external, non-Hegelian philosophical paradigms. Most notably, they offer alternative ways out of the Platonic and Cartesian paradigms, with their ahistorical, asocial, and disembodied conceptions of the human-making feature (be it mind, reason or freedom). But these trajectories are also shaped by developments *within* the post-Hegelian tradition. That is to say, the linguistic turn in post-Hegelian thought is a response to *another* way of *carrying out* the post-Hegelian agenda. Specifically, it is a response to a conception of the human condition and the main challenges facing it that has *labour* or productive activity at its core.

The linguistic paradigm of post-Hegelian thought has been so pervasive, and the historical and social transformation of the past sixty years so extensive, that it is now hard to connect with its predecessor paradigm at all. However, two developments suggest that it may be a propitious time for forging such a reconnection.

First, there is the emergence over the past couple of decades of a new paradigm for post-Hegelian thought organized around the concept of *recognition*. Owing largely to the work of Axel Honneth, it has become plausible to suppose, on the one hand, that the social relations that mark the human life form are fundamentally relationships between a recognizing being and a recognized one, and on the other, that the historical unfolding of social relations is fundamentally shaped by *social struggles* for recognition.⁴ Recognition thereby suggests itself as the key for understanding what it is that makes us human in socially and historically conditioned ways. Once

this step is made, *work* as a locus of recognition, misrecognition, the withdrawal of recognition and struggles for recognition immediately enters the agenda for philosophically informed criticism in the post-Hegelian vein.⁵

The second development is a heightened awareness of work as a defining moral, political and social challenge of the times. Critical social theorists are becoming increasingly concerned by the ways in which the organization of work, its availability, its distribution and its quality, can damage processes of individual identity-formation and the character of societies as a whole. It is no longer passé, as it was not so long ago, to characterize the spirit of the times as a spirit of *capitalism*.⁶ It is no longer a source of intellectual embarrassment to speak once again of capitalism as a chief source of psychic and social pathology, and thus a legitimate object of critical philosophical reflection. On the contrary, it is now widely acknowledged that it would be remiss of philosophically informed social criticism not to have something to say about capitalism and the conflicts around labour that define it.

This new intellectual and historical context makes it incumbent upon post-Hegelian thought to reconsider the legacy of the production paradigm and to turn once again to philosophies of labour for tackling its fundamental problems. It is precisely with this goal in mind that the collection of essays presented here has been conceived. We will summarize later on in our introduction how each chapter contributes to this task. But before doing that, we should say a little more about the paradigm shifts that have brought post-Hegelian thought to its current state. As we just indicated, two developments in particular call for brief consideration: first, the transition from a production paradigm to a language paradigm; and second, the shift from the

language paradigm to a recognition paradigm. Only once the basic features of the recognition paradigm are in view will we be able to see the opportunity it presents for renewed reflection on the significance of work. At the same time, the recognition paradigm itself may need to be modified in order to make the most of that opportunity.

From Production to Language

Given the characterization of post-Hegelian thought just laid out, its agenda will be set by mutually reinforcing conceptions of the human-making feature (the universal) and the historically specific needs and challenges of the times (the particular). The question we first want to ask is: how could the post-Hegelian mediation of the universal and the particular, so to speak, come to be dominated by the concept of labour? How did the category of productive activity come to seem suited to this role? ⁷

The centrality of labour from an anthropological point of view, that is to say its significance in defining the kind of being humans are, emerged from a confluence of elements in Enlightenment and Romantic thought. Both sets of elements can be understood as a reaction to overly ‘transcendent’ conceptions of the human, in particular those that depicted the distinctively human rational capacities in the image of a divine, immaterial or supernatural power. If human beings were to be distinguished on account of their rationality, it had to be in a form that was recognizable in this world and that proved itself through its intra-mundane effects. Rather than aiming at the eternal and the immutable, and revealing the eternal and immutable essence of the being in its possession, for the Enlightenment reason finds its vocation in transformations of the

world that make it better accord with human desires and purposes. As the primordial mode of ‘making’ activity, of taking control of its environment and transforming it to meet natural human needs, labour could be seen in its true anthropological, dignity-conferring sense. Modern science and technology were but the most advanced expression of this power of labour, that is to say, of the general capacity to work on and modify nature for humanly determined ends. While of course such an instrumental relation to nature was exactly what the Romantic movement strove to get away from, Romanticism nevertheless embraced the anthropological image of the *self*-making and materially embodied being, which itself required a retrieval of the significance of labour as materially incarnated shaping activity. The work of art, which counter-poses science and technology as the height of human achievement, the purest form of self-expression of the animal ‘possessing the *logos*’, in the Romantic view, is after all a *work*: it is through authentic productive activity that the individual human being realizes his or her inner humanity in his or her own unique way.⁸

The production paradigm thus brought together the Enlightenment image of the human being as the tool-using animal whose practical intelligence is bound up with its immersion in nature and purposive shaping of its environment, and the Romantic image of self-formation through singular acts of creative ‘making’ or production. Both elements feed into the expressivist anthropology of the production paradigm. A third feature of this anthropology is a particular formulation of the idea that human beings are *social* animals. According to it, human sociality is rooted in the relations of material dependence individuals have with each other, both in the sense that they rely on the labour of others for the satisfaction of their material needs, and in the sense that laboring activity itself is a cooperative process, such that individuals must depend on each

other to get a job done well. Human sociality could thus seem to find paradigmatic expression in the *social provision* of labour, or social control over the means of production, on the one hand, and the *social organization* of labour along cooperative lines on the other. Collective control of the labour supply and cooperative relations between individual working subjects could thus appear as the most basic realization of human sociality.

Of course it would take particular historical circumstances to bring this insight fully to view. And this is precisely what the upheavals of industrialization and its aftermath in nineteenth-century Europe seemed to provide. To pioneers of the production paradigm such as Adam Smith, Hegel and Marx, these societies were characterized by enormous increases in the powers of production and of the means for satisfying material needs on the one hand, and on the other by the degraded state of labour, not just on account of its alienating effect on the individual worker, but on account of its corruption as a medium of social cooperation. The seemingly inexorable immiseration of the producing class, in the midst of rapidly expanding productive powers, seemed to distil the social contradictions of the age. But if the agent of production as a whole were to reflect on its powers, and appropriate them in what would be an absolute moment of practical insight, the expressive and cooperative dimensions of labour could be restored, and with them true sociality.⁹ In this way the idea of praxis as revolutionary activity embedded itself in the production paradigm, alongside a notion of the working class as a ‘subject writ large’. Both notions were underwritten by a philosophy of history which at once diagnosed the ills of contemporary society in terms of conflict over possession of the power of production, and grounded the hope of recovery in a rational, collective re-appropriation of this power.

These notions of a subject writ-large and revolutionary praxis, and the philosophy of history they inform, certainly look like relics of a bygone age. To many post-Hegelian thinkers in the post-war period, the association between these notions and the paradigm of production was so close that only a clean break with this paradigm and a shift to a completely new one seemed in order. To be sure, these were not the only reasons for rejecting the paradigm: a growing ambivalence towards the value of technology in the context of its damaging environmental impact; worries about the apparent hegemony of instrumental reason and its dehumanizing effects; doubts about the capacity of a highly specialized division of labour to deliver meaningful work (perhaps even *any* work) on a mass scale; ambivalence towards the value of work more generally in the emerging ‘consumer society’; the rise of progressive social movements pressing for emancipation independently of their ‘class position’; and other considerations all played their role. But the change of paradigm was not just about rejecting the old: it was about embracing something new that could better meet the demands of the post-Hegelian agenda.

Let us briefly consider how language could serve this purpose. Recall that the post-Hegelian agenda calls for mutually reinforcing conceptions of the human-making feature and the historically specific needs and challenges of the times. It is easy to see how language could meet this demand under its first (anthropological) aspect: the idea that human beings are distinctive on account of their use of language is as *prima facie* compelling as the idea that they are distinctive on account of their use of tools. But the link between language use and rationality is even stronger. The idea that powers of linguistic expression are at the root of rational powers in a strict sense, and that it is these powers that truly mark off humans from other animals, could also draw on currents of Enlightenment and Romantic thought, and took many different directions—even

within the post-Hegelian tradition—depending on which of these currents was predominant. One influential formulation, drawing more on Enlightenment elements, emphasized the rule-governed character of language use and the link between linguistic competence and the ability to apply rules. Possession of this ability enables us to grasp concepts, to formulate propositions, to get things ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, that is to say, to show the features characteristic of the ‘animal possessing the *logos*’, the rational animal. Another formulation, drawing more on Romanticism, emphasizes the ‘world-disclosive’ function of language, in virtue of which different possibilities of being in the world, with more or less emotional depth or resonance, open up. On this view it is in capacities such as ‘dwelling’, or ‘thinking’ in a manner that does not instrumentalise or objectify its subject matter, that human beings best display their distinctive ‘possession of the *logos*’. To mention one other influential formulation, it is conversation or dialogue that marks off the human life form from that of other animals, and it is as participants in conversation—listening to the other, taking the perspective of the other into account and being open to correction—that we put our rational capacities to work in the most basic sense. For all their differences, each of these formulations projects an image of the human as first and foremost the ‘language being’. Language is the central anthropological idea.

If the classical idea that human beings were distinctive on account of their rationality could be rehabilitated and modernized by re-interpreting rational capacities as essentially linguistic capacities, something similar could be said of the classical idea that human beings were essentially *social* animals. That is to say, it was first and foremost in virtue of their linguistic nature that human beings had a social nature. For many post-Hegelians, language seemed the paradigm form of intersubjectivity. In acquiring a language one becomes a subject, but language

is always shared, and so subjects are constitutively in relation to other subjects. All language users share a minimal horizon of shared meaning. They are thus dependent on something outside them, on other members of the linguistic community. Furthermore, the act of uncoerced communication presented itself as a model of the social relation in its pure, undistorted form. In engaging in linguistic interaction, in expressing opinions, exchanging views, in sharing a dialogue, one does something together in a deep and arguably paradigmatic sense. At any rate, just as language seemed to offer a more plausible model than labour for understanding the anthropological basis of human rationality, it also seemed a preferable basis for understanding human sociality. For the post-Hegelians who took the linguistic turn, the social realm properly understood was the realm of public, linguistic expression, a shared space of reason-giving, reason-taking and reason-rejecting in which every human being has a stake.

This way of presenting the ‘universality’ of language already points to how it could be mobilized for understanding the ‘particular’ needs and challenges of the times. Time and again, the advanced industrial societies have been characterized by post-Hegelian critics as lacking in ‘public’ spirit, as failing to provide the conditions for genuine participation in a community and the sense of belonging that flows from it.¹⁰ Instead of citizens discussing and deliberating over the terms of their collective life, they leave it to a class of bureaucratic and technocratic experts, retreating into a narrow and experientially flattened private sphere for personal fulfillment. Cultures and traditions which once lived from open linguistic expression and communication across generations are abandoned to market forces and degenerate accordingly. The ethos of openness to the truth and learning from the other embedded in genuine dialogue is replaced by ‘knowingness’, closed horizons, and ethnocentric arrogance. As the scope for effective

communicative, dialogical interaction shrinks, communities become more fragmented, individuals more isolated and spiritually impoverished. While post-Hegelians of the linguistic turn disagreed over the extent of this malaise, and its true causes, there was rough agreement that the particular, broadly speaking ‘spiritual’ needs of the times were of this order, and that a linguistic paradigm of critique was best suited to address them.

From Language to Recognition

The linguistic paradigm continues to hold sway in many areas of contemporary philosophy, particularly those areas that have their roots in the post-Hegelian tradition. However, a new paradigm has emerged in this tradition that challenges the primary focus on language and attempts to fulfill the tradition’s program in a different way. The work of Axel Honneth, articulated around the concept of recognition, is at the heart of this new development.

To understand the motivation behind Honneth’s dissatisfaction with the linguistic paradigm, we should first recall that a key aim of the post-Hegelian program is to tie a theory of the defining features of the human being, mainly through analyses of human sociality (accounts of the sociality of the human being and of the social bond), to a critical diagnosis of the extant historical conditions. This attempt to establish an internal link between the theory of sociality and the critique of contemporary historical conditions leads to the formulation of a number of other significant methodological principles.

The first is a sophisticated, self-reflexive, criterion to ensure methodological consistency. Not only does the “anthropological” moment ground the historical diagnosis, more or less directly,

by providing the conceptual and normative resources necessary to characterise and critique “the present.” Turning things around, as it were, philosophical reflection must also account for its own historical determinacy, that is, its place within the historical moment it critically analyses. Philosophy that defines itself as its own time reflected in thought must be able to show how it fits in its own time. This is the basis for one of the most famous post-Hegelian mottoes: the unity of theory and practice. Since the most fundamental norm is freedom, and philosophical reflection is driven by a critical impulse, “practice” denotes the attempt to realize freedom, in concrete terms, or the search for emancipation in particular social contexts, however the obstacles to freedom are conceived. This then translates into another famous principle: since philosophical reflection has to demonstrate a substantive link to the reality that it critically assesses, the task of “critiquing the present” cannot be performed by measuring social reality against norms that would be developed independent of that reality, as the Kantian tradition is routinely accused of doing. Rather, philosophy must be able to show how the norms underpinning critique can already be found within social reality itself: the movement potentially “transcending” extant social reality must be found in the “immanence” of that reality. On that account, the philosophy of emancipation is therefore doubly related to social forces that potentially carry it out: it relies on these social forces to find indications as to the content and historical direction of emancipation; but it also aims to offer conceptual and normative direction to that real movement.

It was by judging the linguistic paradigm against this set of principles that Honneth found it wanting. Distortions of communication, a withering away of the disclosive powers of language, might well be real, empirical effects of the pathological developments of modern societies. But to explain social pathologies in terms of distortions of communication is to mobilise a kind of

higher-order analysis that is situated at a level external to the one at which these distortions are concretely experienced.¹¹ In other words, the analysis of contemporary pathologies as distortions of communication does not seem to use the right conceptual and normative “grammar,” as Honneth says, to accurately describe the experiences of individuals and groups who would have an interest in emancipation. Similarly, critical analysis in terms of distortions of communication and the corruption of language cannot easily relate back to existing or gestating social and political movements, and for the same reason. What social movements demand is not *prima facie*, or at least not principally, the redemption of the powers of language or a reawakening of public spheres. In brief, when it makes the structures of language the key to its critical diagnosis of the times, post-Hegelian thought appears to rupture the unity of theory and practice.

The concept of recognition is introduced by Honneth to remedy what he thus perceived as a danger of abstraction, and to articulate anew the theoretical and the experiential. Let us first see how recognition theory reformulates the anthropological and social-theoretical sides of post-Hegelian philosophy, before clarifying the link back to critique and the historical situation.

For Honneth, the replacement of social labour by communication as the core concept around which a critical social philosophy (another name for the post-Hegelian project) should be articulated, represented an indisputable theoretical progress. The linguistic paradigm emphasized rightly the dimensions of intersubjective reciprocity and of a shared meaning horizon arising from it, as the fabric that enables the different institutions of society to hold together. But instead of accounting for these dimensions through language, Honneth proposed to interpret them more broadly as developing through a range of practical attitudes taken by social agents toward each

other. Recognition is the generic name for these fundamental practical attitudes. Just like, for the thinkers of the linguistic turn, language provides the common element accounting for the way in which individual perspectives are always somehow attuned to each other, similarly for Honneth, the different kinds of recognitive attitudes, each governed by specific norms, constitute a general moral basis upon which social life and its complexity can grow without being torn apart.

Underneath this shift to recognition, however, the basic anthropological image has changed markedly. The human being is no longer conceptualized primordially as the rational or the self-interpreting animal on account of its unique possession of *logos*. What demarcates the human being more primitively is a radical, constitutive dependency towards its own kind, a dependency whose extent is unknown to the rest of the animal kingdom. Whilst the linguistic paradigm retrieved elements from Enlightenment theories of rationality and the Romantic emphasis on expression, the recognition paradigm self-consciously anchors itself in naturalistic and materialist accounts of the human: on the philosophical side, by recourse to the materialist strands of post-Hegelian philosophy, culminating in twentieth-century philosophical anthropology¹²; and on the side of contemporary human sciences, by recourse to developmental and comparative psychology. What unites these diverse approaches is the idea that the symbolic powers of the human being emerge paradoxically out of the latter's instinctual and organic deficiency. Sociality and culture, including language, can then be understood as serving a compensatory purpose that allows the weakest of species to define its own mode of survival and, in time, to take control of its environment, through individual and collective action. As can be seen, in that model language, as the medium of symbolic capacity, certainly continues to represent a key anthropological trait, but it is no longer the only or indeed the primordial human-

making feature. Instead, radical social dependency, and more broadly, radical organic openness to social and material environments, is the more fundamental anthropological marker, since it is at the root of the human being's essential reliance on processes of "individualisation through socialization." In Honneth's recent words: "recognition precedes cognition both genetically and conceptually."¹³

The change of social ontology and of its underlying anthropological assumptions cannot fail to affect the critical diagnosis of the times. Instead of an attack on the public sphere, the linguistically constituted lifeworld, or the expressive and disclosive powers of language, pathologies of modern society are now viewed as pathologies of recognition. Concretely, this designates forms of social interaction, usually materialised in the structures and practices of particular institutions, which harm one of the fundamental normative expectations of socialized subjects. These are, for example, denials of full civil responsibility, expressed in denials or restrictions of rights, which prevent individuals and groups from considering themselves full-blown members of the community; or negative or indeed invisibilising attitudes towards the specific achievements of a group, which again, prevent the groups' members from enjoying full inclusion in society. Transformations in contemporary capitalism can be critically interpreted from the viewpoint of the false promises of recognition made by new modes of management, or the sheer exclusion from necessary social goods resulting from economic globalization.¹⁴

However, since the recognition model argues that the normative basis of social life is also the condition for the full autonomy of individuals, or, as Honneth says, their "self-realisation," the link between social theory and social experience can be said to be more easily demonstrated than

in previous models. Pathologies of recognition can be shown to be both the products of unjust or unhealthy forms of social interaction and their corresponding institutional realities, *and* to directly affect subjects by obstructing or destroying some of the structural social conditions necessary for the development of their identity. With this twist, Honneth thinks he has made it possible to reestablish the organic link that is supposed to be maintained within post-Hegelianism, between theoretical explanation, critique, and social experience. The claims made by social movements, once the normative validity of their claims has been extracted, can become the guidelines of critical philosophy. They indicate what in a given state of society is seen by its members as intrinsically lacking from their own point of view, and help understand what the basic moral expectations of social members are. The decisive role of such expectations, and action shaped by them, has been demonstrated most palpably, in Honneth's view, by historians of the labour movement such as E.P. Thompson.¹⁵ Conversely, philosophical reflection enriched by scholarship gathered from the social sciences can help systematize and clarify the types of norms appealed to by different "struggles for recognition." In Honneth's mind, recognition thus helps to reconstruct the circle of theory and practice once devised by the labour paradigm, which, for reasons we have said, had become impractical and antiquated.

From Hegel to Institutionalism

As we have already suggested, it is above all to Hegel that we owe both the anthropological idea that the human life form as such is marked by relationships of recognition, and the historical idea that the transition to modernity—the present epoch—is marked by a specific differentiation in the relationships of recognition that bind societies together. This differentiation is both the source

of the grandeur of modernity—its freedom—and its distinctive forms of misery. There are two places where Hegel makes explicit the link he sees between recognition and work: the so-called ‘master-slave’ dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the discussion of civil society in *Philosophy of Right*. If any two texts have a claim to canonical status in the emerging recognition paradigm, it is this pair. It is fitting, then, that following this Introduction we move directly onto a detailed consideration of the master/slave dialectic in chapter two (by Paul Redding) and Hegel’s account of civil society in chapter three (by Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch). Both Redding and Schmidt am Busch offer new interpretations of Hegel’s texts and in their different ways they both demonstrate the continuing relevance of Hegel for understanding the modern world of work.

In proposing that relationships of recognition are constitutive of the human life form, Hegel took himself to be expressing in a more precise form Aristotle’s idea that human beings are rational animals. A central concern of Paul Redding’s essay is to spell out how Hegel forges this link between rationality and recognition, and to bring into relief the contrast between Hegel’s approach and mainstream naturalistic theories of mind and agency, with their roots in Hobbes and Hume. According to the latter approach, which finds its way into orthodox economic as well as much philosophical thought, rationality is the faculty human beings have for ordering ideas, beliefs, and desires, but it is quite distinct from the faculty of desire itself. On this view, only the faculty of appetite or desire has true motivational, causally effective power, implying that the human will itself, insofar as it has such power, is really of the nature of an appetite. But on the view Hegel develops out of Aristotle and Kant, willing is not a question of causing an effect but of giving form or shape to a certain kind of matter: by first identifying the matter of an appetite

as ‘mine’ and as something to be acted upon, the ‘willing’ subject gives it shape and the character of a potentially motivating force. In doing so, the subject finds itself not simply in a causal chain of more or less efficacious appetites and behaviours, but in a ‘space of reasons’ or ‘spirit’ in which the question of the rightness or appropriateness of its self-forming activity can always be asked. This is also a social space in which subjects come to be themselves in and through the recognition of others. It is by recognizing each other as rational animals—animals whose cognitive and intentional life is shaped by and answerable to reasons—that human beings become rational animals in the full sense.

Redding reminds us that while this philosophical anthropology of Hegel’s can fairly be called idealist, it is by no means immaterialist. Self-defining subjects in Hegel’s sense are incarnated, material beings, and recognize each other as such. But then neither is Hegel’s account reductively materialist, since what we recognize in each other as rational animals is the *form* of our material embodiment. Redding then considers how Hegel’s recognitive materialism, as we might call it, at the level of philosophical anthropology leads to a different kind of political theory than Hobbesian reductive materialism. Whereas in the Hobbesian account political society emerges from the struggle over ‘the power to satisfy naturally given appetites’, for Hegel politics has its origins in a struggle over the norms or rules to which acts of will answer. According to Redding’s interpretation, the master/slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is Hegel’s outline of the first stages of this struggle. The dialectic begins with all authority residing in the master’s will. This authority is embedded in institutions and social practices which allow, for example, the master to give orders to the slave. The slave recognizes the master by acting on these orders, which makes him appear as a mere ‘will-less’ instrument of the master’s will. And

yet in taking on this role as instrument, the slave has to engage in rational practical activity. To fulfill the command ‘cook me a fish’, the slave must first *see* a particular object—a cookable fish—and transform it from its raw state. Redding points out that this forces the slave to engage in a practice of concept application, and thus a kind of inferential activity, that enables the slave to reach a higher level of self-consciousness than the master, who is stuck at the more primitive level of relating to objects ‘in terms of the simple sensuous qualities that make them suitable for the satisfaction of simple immediately felt desires’.

Thus it is by *working*, by turning the master’s imperatives into a concrete reality, that the slave starts to get the edge over the master, at least as far as the life of the mind is concerned. To be sure the slave still works *for* the master, and has to suppress his own desires in the course of it, but this very suppression or postponement of impulse also serves to raise the slave further out of his merely natural state. The seeds of self-destruction for the master-slave relation are thus sown. While the slave recognizes himself in the master’s recognition of him as a mere instrument of will, in fulfilling this role through his labour the slave at once negates this self-definition. Under the compulsion of work, the slave learns to see things in conceptually articulated ways, to take distance from immediately given desires, and to recognize his own agency in those material transformations that satisfy the master’s will. Like Gadamer and other illustrious interpreters of the *Phenomenology* before him, Redding notes the crucial point here that the working activity of the slave is *at once* a transformation of objects and a transformation of self: ‘an acquiring of skills and dispositions that become partly definitive *of* one’s character and identity, and so an *objective* source of one’s sense of self’. This triangulation of self, object and other is thus both a presupposition of the master-slave relation (it is only through the mediation of objects that the

slave serves the master's purposes) and incompatible with it (because it undermines the will-less status of the slave and the authoritative status of the master). The need to keep this triangulation in view, both for an adequate philosophical anthropology and a proper understanding of work, will be a recurrent theme throughout the chapters of this book.

As Redding points out in the concluding section of his chapter, one of the central lessons of the master/slave dialectic is the importance of work in coming to recognize ourselves in something more than objects of gratification or consumption (the unsustainable standpoint of the master). Hegel saw that modern capitalist economies endangered this condition both by removing restrictions on the sphere of consumption and by organizing the sphere of work in a way that could make it impossible for rational agents to recognize themselves there. However, it was in the *Philosophy of Right*, not the *Phenomenology*, that Hegel explicitly addressed these concerns about the potentially self-undermining effects of modern civil society. In chapter three, Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch offers an analysis of Hegel's approach in *Philosophy of Right* and puts it forward as a model for how a critical theory of capitalism might proceed today.

Schmidt am Busch's interpretation focuses on the role played by the notions of 'bourgeois honour', 'the corporation', and the 'quest for profit' and 'luxury' in Hegel's account of civil society. Bourgeois honour refers to something like the self-respect an individual derives from being able to support himself and his family by participating in the social process of production, that is, by contributing to the general wealth. 'Bourgeois' is perhaps an unfortunate term for this type of honour, since it is as characteristic of the 'working class' as the 'middle class' (and of course women as well as men). The central point is that, according to this ethos, an honorable

life involves more than just making a living: it means doing so by applying oneself to some socially useful skill. There is dishonor, conversely, in merely providing for oneself without at the same time doing something useful for others. But an honourable life, in this sense, cannot simply be left to individuals in the labour market to secure. Institutions need to be in place that are responsible for training people for socially useful work, for maintaining standards in trades and professions, for insuring workers in the various trades and professions against risks to their livelihood, for protecting their interests relative to other professions, and so forth. Hegel called such institutions ‘corporations’, though as Schmidt am Busch remarks, this is another unfortunate and potentially misleading term for the meaning Hegel intended to convey. Corporations, in Hegel’s sense, are the *socially* necessary conditions of individual ‘bourgeois honour’, since it is through them, as Schmidt am Busch puts it, that individuals ‘*mutually* secure their livelihoods through their work and the maintenance of a social insurance system’. And it is in the context of membership of a corporation that not only bourgeois honour must be understood, but also the ‘quest for profit’ and ‘luxury’ that characterizes civil society. On Schmidt am Busch’s interpretation, Hegel considered there to be a *limited* range of variation in personal income and levels of consumption within a corporate system. But outside it, a ‘*compensatory striving for social recognition*’—in Schmidt am Busch’s provocative formulation—could give rise to *unlimited* personal profit-seeking and an unbounded ‘love of extravagance’. Thus, for Hegel, far from excessive individual wealth and conspicuous consumption being the rightful material consequence of an honourable bourgeois life, they reflect the absence of a material condition of bourgeois honour, namely corporate membership in the sense given above.

In Hegel's account, the opportunity to lead an honourable life according to the principle of bourgeois honour, and to gain social recognition for this achievement through membership of a corporation, are crucial to the ethical basis of civil society, and thus the legitimacy of the modern market economy. Furthermore, the modern market economy will only function properly, Hegel thought, if its 'ethical basis', or condition of legitimacy, is met. Without an ethical basis, civil society would fall apart. As Schmidt am Busch remarks, Hegel's commitment to this view puts him at odds with mainstream (neo-classical) economic thought, but not necessarily to his detriment. Hegel's conception of bourgeois honour, for example, resonates with the significance many people attach to their working lives, which hardly fits with the orthodox economic conception of work as merely irksome activity that rational actors seek to minimize. Hegel also provides an intuitively plausible alternative to orthodox economic explanations of the pursuit of ever-higher personal incomes and levels of consumption. For Hegel, this is not based on some natural desire for more rather than less money (no matter what one earns), or for higher rather than lower levels of personal consumption, in principle without limit. Rather, as Schmidt am Busch explains, it is based on a historically specific set of social circumstances: social recognition of professional activity based on *price* against a background ethos of bourgeois honour and only partially effective economic regulation. If, with the support of empirical analysis, it can be shown that a striving for recognition does stand behind these phenomena, then a 'recognition-theoretic' approach in the Hegelian mould would not only pose a significant challenge to orthodox economic explanations: it would also show that the recognition-theoretic turn in critical theory advanced by Honneth has considerably more relevance for understanding capitalism and diagnosing its ills than critical theorists such as Nancy Fraser maintain.

Schmidt am Busch notes in passing that whilst Honneth's Hegel-inspired recognition-theoretic approach to contemporary capitalism is fundamentally at odds with neo-classical economic theories, it does have affinities with heterodox, 'institutionalist' economics. In chapter four, Craig MacMillan examines the relationship between Honneth's theory of recognition and institutionalism in more detail. As MacMillan shows, institutionalism (at least as conceived by its founding figure, John R. Commons) and recognition theory (as conceived by Honneth) share basic methodological, epistemic, ontological and normative commitments. At the methodological level, both are committed to 'field research' that aims to shed light on the phenomena by way of revealing how they are experienced. This means that, at the epistemic level, phenomenological description plays a crucial knowledge-building role. Both these commitments are opposed to abstract, *a priori* models of theorizing that predominate in orthodox economics, rational-choice social theory, and to a certain extent, liberal (Kant-inspired) models of critical theory. At the ontological level, institutionalism and Honnethian recognition theory are committed to both a certain form of *holism* (in which institutions and social practices, and not just individual actors, have explanatory purport) and a certain form of *normativism* (according to which the *norms* embedded in institutions and practices carry explanatory weight). These commitments are to be contrasted with atomism (according to which individuals are distinct and exclusive loci of agency), on the one hand, and anti-normativism (according to which norms are merely epiphenomenal, without explanatory or motivational purport) on the other. Institutionalism and recognition theory thus seek to replace the image of utility-optimising *homo economicus* with a conception of the human subject as from the start relational (constituted by relations with others) and concerned by and oriented towards norms. Furthermore, they share a normative commitment

to forms of life that have the social conditions in place for individual self-realisation in the widest, most inclusive sense.

Having established the common ground between institutionalism and recognition theory, MacMillan goes on to suggest areas in which they might learn more from each other. The institutionalists stand to gain from the more developed interactionist psychology elaborated by Honneth, but perhaps more interestingly for our purposes, there are lessons Honneth is invited to draw from institutionalist solutions to 'the labour problem' that Hegel and other recognition theorists (amongst others) have grappled with. As we will consider in a little more detail in a moment, Honneth now endorses the kind of response sketched by Hegel and Durkheim to the persistence of unemployment, poverty amongst workers, massive economic inequality, worker disempowerment, and the lack of availability of meaningful, dignified work. The crux of the response is to avoid positing some post-capitalist labour utopia in which work is a source of both enrichment and fulfillment, and to focus instead on the norms that are already in place in the capitalist system, however inadequately from the point of view of workers. The central norm Honneth picks up on is that of the fair and free exchange: if labour is to be divided and distributed according to market principles, then those engaged in it can legitimately expect to enjoy *mutual* benefit from the exchange and to be able to determine *for themselves* the terms of the exchange. Hegel and Durkheim realised that institutions needed to be in place for these conditions to be at least approximately met in the labour market. But Commons went a step further by making concrete proposals about what these institutions should look like. In particular, as MacMillan brings out clearly, these institutions had to ensure *equality of bargaining power* between employers and employees. Strong trade unions were thus required to bargain on the

market with big employers, and the act of collective bargaining itself had to be institutionally endorsed in the law. Only in such a way could the norms of fair and free exchange be met in the market for labour. Later institutionalist economists have shown how worker collectives can also help to secure meaningful, socially recognized work for their members, if also, in a market environment, at the expense of the work experience of other groups.

Critique, Norm and Work

The question of the philosophical standpoint from which to examine what Commons called ‘the labour problem’—roughly speaking, the limited availability of work and the chronic persistence of under-rewarded, insecure, disempowered and spiritually stifling or alienating labour—is central to Honneth’s essay ‘Work and Recognition: A Redefinition’.¹⁶ As we just mentioned, Honneth rejects the well-intentioned but ultimately futile standpoint of the utopian critic, with its appeals to substantive norms of freely associated, self-expressive, non-alienated labour. Honneth argues that this standpoint has been made obsolete by the actual historical development of the division of labour and the market economy more generally. Within the capitalist organization of labour we currently inhabit, it no longer seems reasonable to expect that work will have the self-directed, expressive, ‘holistic’ character that, say, the pre-capitalist craftsman might once have experienced it as having. For this reason, Honneth argues, social struggles over work no longer appeal to such a normative concept of work; and neither, he suggests, should social critics. Rather than adopting the ‘external’ standpoint of the utopian critic, the philosopher/critic should engage in ‘immanent critique’ that draws on internal moral norms that ‘already constitute rational claims within the social exchange of services’. In putting forward this view, Honneth

takes himself to be correcting the overly ambitious (in the sense of ‘merely utopian’) project of grounding critical theory in a normatively substantive ‘critical conception of work’ that he had himself advanced in his earlier essay ‘Work and Instrumental Action’.

According to Honneth’s new position, it is not the act of working itself, but the *exchange* of services, that provides the ‘normative surplus’ for historically effective, immanent critique of the capitalist organization of work. Honneth takes the conceptual shape of such criticism to have been laid out by Hegel and Durkheim. Honneth follows them in supposing that the market-mediated system of production and consumption, the exchange of goods and services that makes up a modern economy, must have an ethical basis that gives it legitimacy in the eyes of the participants. As we have already seen, in undertaking an exchange, the participants at least tacitly commit to an act that will be *mutually* beneficial: if they did not reasonably expect each other to be contributing to each other’s good, there would be no exchange. In other words, *actual* exchanges are premised on a conception of how they *ought* to be, even in cases where the norm and the reality come apart. The norm is ‘counterfactually presupposed’, one might say, in the practice, which itself has a ‘normative surplus’ ready to be drawn on for critique. Since the norm of reciprocal and mutual benefit holds for the exchange of services as much as any other exchange, in exchanging her labour for a wage, the wage labourer is entitled to presume that she will be bringing some benefit to another through the exchange—and so, however directly, helping to satisfy the needs of others—through the activity that also allows her to meet her own needs as an autonomous private citizen. The obligation to meet one’s private needs through the exchange of services comes with a corresponding right to participate in the social system of exchange, that is, to earn a decent living on the basis of socially useful and recognized work

performed in the labour market. In this way, criticism of the capitalist organization of labour on the basis of it failing to provide either a minimum wage or the opportunity to contribute in a recognizable way to the common good, counts as genuinely immanent criticism since it draws on the very norms that lend the modern labour market its legitimacy.

Honneth's essay raises a number of fundamental issues: What is the content and the status of the norms that inform the contemporary world of work (if indeed, work is properly understood as a norm-shaped sphere at all)? What normative standpoint (or standpoints) does well-directed criticism of contemporary work practices presuppose? How should the critique of work be understood as relating to other forms of rationally grounded social criticism? These issues are taken up in the chapters that follow by Emmanuel Renault, Jean-Philippe Deranty and Nicholas Smith. While Renault, Deranty and Smith are sympathetic to the recognition-theoretic approach to work outlined by Honneth, and see themselves as building on it, they share a concern that Honneth's redefinition of the relation between work and recognition unduly weakens the resources available for the criticism of the modern organization of work, that it does so by restricting the content and scope of the norms that are applicable to work, and that it does this by passing over the normative purport of working *activity*. If Renault, Deranty and Smith are right, Honneth has been too quick to abandon the critical conception of work announced in his early essay 'Work and Instrumental Action'. In their different ways, they each argue that a retrieval of that conception will help keep the plurality of norms applicable to work in view, and that it will contribute to the critical task of keeping the morally charged experience of working people themselves in focus.

An important first step toward reaching this goal is to appreciate the range of obstacles that lie in the way of it. Renault draws attention to a number of these, arising on the one hand from developments in the lifeworld, and on the other from the prevalence of political theories that are ill-equipped for the task at hand. Regarding the former, Renault notes the decline of the workers' movement (and the corresponding rise of neo-liberal, anti-regulation ideology) that has tended to mute the public and political expression of concerns over work, and the persistence of long-term unemployment that has tended to choke the social articulation of negative aspects of work (as people feel grateful for having any secure work at all). These, and other factors identified by Renault, contribute to the invisibility of work from the perspective of the lifeworld; but this is matched and compounded by theoretical perspectives that are blind to the political significance of work. Whereas the critique of alienation, and with that the critique of alienating work, was once a primary matter for political theory, nowadays democracy and justice provide its basic, and in many cases exclusive, normative orientation. With just one or two exceptions, theories of democracy ignore problems of the organization of work and theories of justice deal with work merely insofar as it is a matter of individual choice and contractual obligation. Within this constellation, Renault argues, the task of making work visible again from a political point of view has become paramount.

Renault then spells out an agenda for meeting this challenge. The first thing to be done is to develop a conception of work that is rich enough to encompass all the different kinds of normative considerations that bear on work. The norms of justice and democracy certainly have application here (feelings of injustice obviously arise from working activity and the skills of self-rule needed by citizens of a democracy can hardly be divorced from the work they do), but the

norms of autonomy and health, Renault argues, are just as important. That is, the moral and political rights and wrongs of work are partly a matter of the autonomy it allows and its effect on the working person's health. A critical conception of work, of the kind once proposed by Honneth, must be encompassing and differentiated enough to show how work can fall short in all of its measures. Renault is open to the possibility that these measures could be theoretically unpacked in terms of recognition, at least for work under the aspect of employment, but he warns against the danger of normative reductionism this move threatens. One reason why the focus on recognition as proposed by Honneth might lead to a normatively truncated conception of work, Renault suggests, is that it deflects attention from the act of working and the norms that bear on it. While in Renault's view there are norms of recognition that apply to working activity, they are distinct from those that feature in Honneth's account, and they do not exhaust the normative content of the act of working, which also has to do with the 'encounter with the real'. And finally, any adequate account of the political significance of work must have something to say about the social relations of domination that permeate working activity. For this purpose, Renault suggests that Christophe Dejours' psychodynamic approach to work might prove more fruitful than Honneth's recognition theory.

The relative merits of Honneth's and Dejours' approaches to work, and the possibility of bringing them together in a unified framework, is explored in more detail in Deranty's chapter. Like Renault, Deranty wants to rehabilitate Honneth's early critical conception of work, with its focus on the normative content of working activity, by way of Dejours' psychodynamics of work. And he does so for the same reason as that indicated by Renault: the normative presuppositions of the labour market, and the recognition of achievement or social contribution,

do not provide a substantial enough basis for the kind of thoroughgoing critique of work that is called for today. Deranty questions the motivation behind Honneth's move away from a critical conception of work (a conception that locates the normative content of work in working activity itself rather than contribution to the division of labour or participation in the labour market) on two counts. First, it is based on a faulty assumption that the decline of craftsmanship as a model of work means that the norms of autonomous expression and cooperation no longer have application to modern working activity. The mistake here, Deranty suggests, is to suppose that the norms of expression and cooperation can only be interpreted 'maximally', that is, as an ideal or perfect state of autarchic, communicatively coordinated (rather than market-mediated) production. This maximalist—or we might say 'perfectionist'—conception ignores the possibility of a 'minimalist' account that conceives autonomy and cooperation in work as minimal conditions of healthy psychic functioning. Not only does Dejours provide us with such a minimalist account, Deranty argues, but Honneth himself has developed a general theory of norms as the inter-subjective conditions of self-realisation which is minimalist in a similar sense. The second reason Deranty gives for thinking that Honneth's abandonment of his commitment to a critical conception of work is unwarranted is that it is based on the unnecessary requirement that the normative content of work be universalisable. While it is true that individual workers will want different things from work, will take to some kinds of working activity more than others, and will be able to cope in more or less satisfactory ways with suffering experienced at work, it is nevertheless possible to identify thresholds beyond which restrictions of autonomy and blocks on cooperation just cannot be psychically or physically tolerated. This, at any rate, is what Dejours' clinical practice and research seems to demonstrate.

Smith adds further arguments in his chapter for retaining something like the critical conception of work once advanced by Honneth. He begins by reflecting on the criteria to be satisfied by a normative model of work in a historical context marked by distinctive kinds of social anxiety around work. He then distinguishes three normative models of work on the basis of the core norms they posit as most apposite for normative criticism with practical or emancipatory intent: an instrumental model that takes the core normativity of work to consist in means-ends rationality; an expressive model in which the core norms of work are conceived as expressions of values or meanings that are internal to working practices themselves; and a recognition model for which the norm of mutual recognition is decisive. Each model admits of internal variation, and each has its own strengths and weaknesses. The expressive model in particular, Smith argues, has a range of conceptual resources available to it which adherents of both the instrumentalist and recognition models have not been sufficiently appreciated. Furthermore, it is especially well-equipped to frame normative criticism of work in the context of the contemporary malaise around work, an important element of which is anxiety concerning the quality of work and its effect on the subjectivity of the worker.

The Subject at Work

In the third and fourth parts of the book, the question of contemporary work is approached from a psychological perspective, through the psychodynamics of work; a sociological perspective, through the historical and qualitative sociology of work undertaken at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt; and what might be called a critical economic perspective, targeting some basic assumptions of orthodox economics that also find their way into mainstream liberal

political theory. In each case, the disciplinary focus produces results with broad theoretical significance, which a contemporary philosophy of labour must take into consideration and include in its analysis.

In “From Psychopathology To Psychodynamics Of Work,” Christophe Dejours presents a brief historical reconstruction and synthesis of the main traits characterising the method of clinical intervention in workplaces he has developed over the last thirty years with his collaborators at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers in Paris.¹⁷ Dejours’ primary interest is practical and clinical, the analysis of individual and organisational issues arising in real workplaces, and the ways to resolve them in consultation with workers and management. One might wonder how to reconcile this practically oriented mode of analysing work with the different modes and aims of philosophy and the theoretical social sciences. In fact, the psychodynamics of work has much to offer for a renewal of philosophical and general social-scientific reflection on issues of work and labour. It is as though the psychodynamics of work, which matured thanks to a many-sided opening of clinical practice onto theoretical disciplines, has developed such a rich and detailed analysis of work that it is now in a position to pay back its theoretical indebtedness, as it presents a number of propositions that significantly renew the general reflection on work, its impact on subjects, its role in modern society and therefore the place it should have in contemporary politics.¹⁸

The psychodynamics of work arose out of dissatisfaction with the main premises underpinning the “psychopathology of work” that developed in France in the 1950s in response to pathologies of Fordist work.¹⁹ Two key orientations of the emerging psychopathology of work in particular

became problematic. Their questioning led to the theoretical reversal out of which grew the new discipline.

The first key question arose as a result of a fundamental discovery made by ergonomic research: that there is always a gap between the prescribed aspects of the working activity, the way the engineers and managers define the task (in terms of procedures and outputs), and the reality of the activity. Real work, even the apparently most mechanical or simple kind of work, always involves some creative intervention by the worker, simply because it is impossible for the organisation of work to foresee and pre-empt all the obstacles that get in the way of the realisation of the task. The reality of work, as a result, resides in the bridging of this gap. The irreducible kernel of all work, underneath and indeed before all its other possible dimensions, is *working*, that is, the bodily and intelligent (problem-solving) engagement by a human subject in the realisation of a productive task.

A second key challenge derived directly from this discovery. The insistence on the workers' subjective engagement in the task, as the fundamental condition of any productive work, entails a rejection of approaches that reduce work to one of its dimensions, notably its objective dimension (the organisation of work) or its systemic dimension (the social division of labour). Historically, this was the main reason for Dejours' departure from a psychopathological approach which overemphasised the rigidity of Taylorian work and defined its research programme as the search for the symptoms of work-related mental illness. More broadly, the focus on subjective experience and workers' practical, creative engagement also meant a rejection of ergonomic approaches defining the "human factor" only in negative terms or

organisational theories insisting only on power relations. This hermeneutic approach to work clearly echoes other approaches in other areas of the social sciences. As Dejours himself notes, the focus on the subjective moment of work strongly evokes the basic methodological impetus of interpretive sociological theories. In recent years, another theoretical ally was discovered in Honneth's ethics of recognition, which is also characterised by its commitment to maintaining the importance of the experiential dimension in the analysis of social phenomena. These overlaps show the plausibility of, and indicate productive avenues for, sustained reciprocal dialogue between the psychodynamics of work, whose initial object is at first specific (individual working experience and organisational malfunctions), and other approaches in philosophy and the social sciences whose objects are less precisely defined (theories of action, theories of the social, theories of embodied cognition, and so on).

The psychodynamics of work thus developed as an original discipline which aimed to circumvent the abstractions of other social and human sciences in their study of work. A thick model of the subject, constructed notably by borrowing and adapting key insights from Freud's metapsychology, helps to substantiate and articulate the thesis of an intimate link between subjective identity and working activity. On the other side, the "objective," technical and pragmatic moments of work are upheld, notably through important borrowings from ergonomics and the history and theory of techniques. The result is a highly original and richly delineated model of work, which establishes, against the general disdain for this object in contemporary research, the central place of work for subjective identity, in the life of contemporary societies, and consequently in politics. Today the psychodynamics of work provides a unique, indispensable reference to renew in a sustained way the study of labour, between philosophy and

the social sciences. At a simple level, there is much to be learnt from the key notions and arguments it has elaborated: the deep roots work throws into subjective identity, shaping the individual's intelligence and relationships to others; the deontic underpinnings of cooperation; the specificity and multidimensionality of recognition in work, and so on. On a different level, though, the question arises whether the conclusions reached in the study of work do not in fact entail more general lessons: the methodological primacy of experience; the difficulties in gaining access to the reality of social experience, and the necessity to define the real negatively, as a challenge to constituted knowledge; the complexity of the mediations linking individual to social experience; the affective and bodily roots of rationality; the capacity of well functioning work collectives to present an image of democratic communication and to cultivate democratic capacities; the hidden political centrality of work; and so on.

Within this now well established paradigm, Pascale Molinier's research has thrown open a number of important new directions. She explores the ways in which the psychodynamics of work is to be refined and extended by integrating the key dimensions of gender identity and gender relations.²⁰ In the paper published here, Molinier shows how the conceptualisation of care is transformed once it is approached from a psychodynamic perspective. Her empirical work with nurses and assistant nurses challenges many of the assumptions about care, and makes a number of theoretical propositions with general significance.

By taking as a fundamental starting point the subject facing a material task, the psychodynamic approach unpacks three interrelated aspects generally overlooked by other forms of analysis: the way subjectivity is challenged in its very identity; the material ways to resolve the task; and the

cooperation with others necessary to do so. All work, the psychodynamics of work argues, involves work upon oneself, in the world, and with others. As soon as these three interrelated dimensions are unveiled in care work, many assumptions about it have to be revised.

First, care appears as a form of work in the strict sense of the term. That is, all the technical, skill-based aspects of the activities involved in care suddenly appear as primordial elements. In other words, the person providing care must be assumed to mobilise the same kind of involved intelligence as in other forms of work. As Molinier writes, “*care defines jointly certain activities and the intelligence that is mobilised in their accomplishment.*” (...). This first point, that care is a form of work, entails, however, significant transformations in the basic understanding of the concept. Most importantly, the redefinition of care as care work immediately dispels naturalizing definitions that anchor it in affective capacities that would be inherent in one of the two sexes. Observing the work of nurses, one sees all the subjective work, the technical know-how and the effort of cooperation that must be put in for proper care to be provided.

Such observation, however, also shows the reasons why care work is mostly invisible, indeed why care is mostly not considered a form of work, for which the providers ought to receive symbolic and material reward. Molinier distinguishes four main reasons inherent in the work of care that explain its invisibility. Given the importance of issues of care in contemporary social and political philosophy, this renewed approach to care is highly significant. Furthermore Molinier’s analysis seems to offer further support for the claim that the psychodynamic analysis in fact uncovers features of subjectivity and social life that have significance well beyond its initial, narrow focus.

The first reason for the invisibility of care work, Molinier argues, is that it becomes apparent only when it is not well performed. One could object that this is true of most work. In a famous passage in *Being and Time*, Heidegger had already drawn attention to the fact that the working tool appears as such only when it no longer functions.²¹ The same could also be said of the performance of work. What distinguishes care work from other work in this respect becomes apparent once we shift the focus to the engagement of the worker in the work tasks. Care work involves not just the use of the proper technical know-how but also, on top of it, the second-order skills, as we might call them, that make the first-order use of skills “inconspicuous” or “discreet”: to perform a task of care well is not only to perform the task but also to efface the traces of effort and endeavour that led to that performance. Care that is too obviously performed as work fails to be received and count as care. It is in this precise sense that the affective and skill-based dimensions of care are intimately linked.

As the “inconspicuousness” of the skills involved in care represent an inherent obstacle to the full recognition of their technical nature and difficulty, it also directly impacts on the recognition of the persons involved in these tasks. The tendency to think of care work in naturalized terms, that is, as professions and tasks reserved for women because of alleged natural feminine abilities, stems not just from general cultural (and ideological) representations, but also from a difficulty present in the tasks of care themselves. The discreteness demanded by care does care workers a disservice, we might say. Inconspicuous skills are not perceived and represented spontaneously in terms of competence but in terms of female qualities.

Another dimension of care work contributing to its invisibility relates to the very object that care work touches, namely the raw, bodily vulnerability of the other. Care work puts the working subject face to face with sexuality, the body in all its manifestations, sickness and death, and this both from an objective perspective (the other's body, sexuality, sickness and death), and a subjective perspective (one's own body and sexuality). One must therefore speak here of a taboo in the precise sense of the term, to characterize that aspect of care work that is difficult, if not impossible, to speak of publicly, let alone have socially recognized. Care work is inconspicuous also because it touches too many unsavoury aspects in everyone for it to be fully acknowledged. The ways in which the nurses deal with this specific difficulty of their work teach great lessons about the importance of the working collective both for the well-being of each individual worker and the very effectiveness of work. Through discursive techniques (constant collective narrativisation, humour, self-deprecation, discreet revelation, and so on), the most difficult aspects of the job can be symbolized and brought under some degree of control.

By contrast, other defence strategies compound the invisibility of care work. These are defence strategies articulated around "virile" values, which can be defined precisely as the rejection and repression of vulnerability and dependence. Such virile collective defence strategies have been well identified by Dejours in other difficult professions, such as the building and chemical industries.²² The defining importance of vulnerability in these diametrically opposed coping strategies means that care is not just one type of work amongst others. Care workers, by facing directly the challenge of bodily vulnerability and "twisted embodiment" (human sexuality), deal with an aspect of humanity that is constitutive, in the precise sense that it is constitutively difficult to assume. Consequently, the invisibility that their work suffers points to very general

features of individual and social life. It is a universally observable feature of human societies that the hierarchy established amongst social functions (from the slaves to the priests and king) directly parallels the level of engagement with materiality, where bodily materiality is usually the lowest level. The study of care work reveals aspects of human agency and work that have broad anthropological value. In terms of contemporary politics, this means that debates around hospital reform, the status of nursing professions, the medical world, are not just issues concerning a few sectors amongst others in society, but reveal something very general about society as a whole, namely, as Molinier puts it, about the implicit “civilisational” underpinning of contemporary social orders. We might say that social orders can be characterized in terms of the ways in which they organize and recognize care work, that is, both the necessity of care and the work involved in it.

Work and the Changing Face of Capitalism

The psychodynamics of work emphasises the importance of the moment where the individual agent faces the difficulty of realising the material task. Recognition takes on a specific meaning when it is attached to the concrete realization of the task, within a culture of work and a work collective.

Another strand of contemporary research has drawn attention to another aspect of contemporary work, and the central significance of demands of recognition in relation to it. Combining a historical perspective, qualitative methods of inquiry and a philosophically informed model of socialization, sociologists of work at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research have investigated

transformations in the cultural and normative representations surrounding work in the wake of the great shift in economic structures witnessed in the last decades. How have expectations of recognition by workers, and the corresponding demands put on them, evolved with the transformation of capitalist societies in recent decades, and more specifically the rise of ‘post-Fordist’ and ‘post-Taylorian’ models of economic and work organisation? This is the question they have sought to answer in their recent work, in close connection to Axel Honneth’s own philosophical reflections.²³

Part four of the book contains two exemplary cases of this kind of philosophically informed sociological inquiry, from two of the leading sociologists in the Frankfurt School mould: Stefan Voswinkel and Gabriele Wagner.²⁴ In his contribution, Voswinkel brings out the tensions lodged at the heart of the recognition models underpinning the previous (Fordist) and current (post-Fordist) modes of economic organisation. The Fordist model, he argues, continued to rely on values and norms of the old work ethic. Accordingly, one’s social recognition derives from one’s work. If we look at it carefully, however, the link between recognition and work was not as straightforward as it seemed. It wasn’t the work itself which provided recognition, but rather the wealth, power or social position attached to it. As a result, those forms of work that were low on the social scale provided only minimal or no recognition, even though the individuals engaged in it would have been doing a lot of work, notably those engaged in “dirty work.” As a result, as Voswinkel sums up, in this older regime “recognition must be based on work but only some types of work find recognition.” This explains the shape of many struggles for recognition during the Fordist era: many struggles for recognition were triggered by dissensions over the evaluation of particular work activities, to claim higher material and symbolic value for them.

One key feature of the social logic underpinning recognition, however, provided a powerful avenue for positive valuation for workers involved in forms of work without prestige, that is, for the majority of them. As Voswinkel shows, in reference to Mead, the concept of recognition itself is ambivalent: on the one hand, recognition, as a condition of subjective identity, provides the basis for individual self-realisation, or what we could call subjective creativity, the possibility to shape one's own self. On the other hand, this makes subjective identity structurally reliant upon social expectations and norms. By making subjective creativity possible, recognition also imposes boundaries on it. This tension delivers two interrelated yet separate meanings of recognition: inasmuch as it is based on the fulfillment of social expectations by the individual, recognition is in the form of *appreciation*. Recognition here arises within social exchange and reciprocity: the self is socially recompensed for engaging in an exchange of service and counter-service to others (*Leistung/Gegenleistung*). But recognition awarded to the creativity of the subject, that is, his or her ability to stand out in his or her singularity, is in the form of *admiration*, and is no longer tied, by definition, to social reciprocity. The self is recompensed precisely for its ability to stand out, to "win" the social competition, in one way or another. By contrast, for the majority of workers in the old Fordist model, engaged in forms of work that remained Taylorian in their operation, recognition in the shape of appreciation could offer strong rewards for the sacrifices demanded by the work ethic. Indeed, a significant part of the rights and institutions set up during that time, both within firms (different forms of leave and benefits) and in the broader social-political context (the different institutions of welfare), could be interpreted as institutionalisations of appreciation.

With the massive upheavals that have shaken the internal organization of firms and the broader social-economic contexts since the crisis of Fordism in the late 1970s, recognition as appreciation and the institutions and rights that entrenched it, have come under increasing pressure. In the German sociology of work, an important article by Baethge in 1991, which outlined the most salient features of the new world of work and labour, offered key indications for much of the subsequent sociological research in this area.²⁵ Like the previous one, the post-Fordist work ethic contains its own ambivalence, well captured by the central motto of the “subjectification of work.” On the one hand, the subjectification of work denotes the rejection of Taylorian alienation, the demand by workers to be able to realise themselves in work. On the other hand, though, this normative demand has also become, in new management methods and work organizations, a prescription to which workers have to conform: increasingly, the self of the worker is to identify with the work, the firm, the brand; subjective capacities become the new source of productivity; individuals are to assume increased responsibility for the economic viability and profitability of their activity within the firm; and so on.

What happens to recognition in this new context? Because the normative ideal has become that of subjective self-expression and self-realisation, the old ethic of self-sacrifice, of doing one’s job for the others (the company or society) no longer holds much value. Recognition as appreciation is significantly undermined. This is reflected in the demise, both material and symbolic, of the institutions of the welfare state, but also, at the subjective level, in the difficulty of getting recognition for the everyday, “normal” jobs one does. Instead of mere appreciation, recognition as admiration becomes the prevalent mode, one that inevitably brings its own tensions. Voswinkel highlights a number of these paradoxical traits of the new mode of

recognition through work. In particular, since recognition is now owed not just to service, but outstanding service, success and the measure of success become paramount features of the new model. This leads to a culture of constant evaluation and self-presentation, which can develop obvious pathological traits. The qualitative sociology of work is thus in a position to point to social and psychological effects of recognition that far extend the world of work. It also helps to understand new forms of the “struggle for recognition,” as recognition has changed its meaning. Two particularly significant such forms are those of “exit” and “voice”: the retreat outside of the mainstream economic structure; or the attempt to assert an original interpretation of one’s own activity.

Gabriele Wagner’s study develops along the same lines as Voswinkel’s. Her specific focus concerns the subjective impact of new structures of work upon workers and the scope for autonomous interpretations of work norms in the new firm environments. This concern with the subjective dimension within the world of economic organization however is maintained for the purpose of sociological inquiry. One of the key aims of Wagner’s essay is to make a substantial point of social theory. She seeks to show, through the qualitative analysis of an empirical case, that it is crucial to include the subjective perspective as one of the important structural factors explaining social change, in this case, organizational change. The point is to show that systemic constraints (notably changes in the structure of markets) do not produce forms of social integration and frames for the formation of subjective identity in any direct and straight forward way. Between system integration and social integration, there comes the whole layer of subjects’ interpretations of, and attempt at negotiation around, the basic norms, values and principles underpinning organisational structures. In particular, reciprocal expectations, their negotiations

and interpretations, between employer and employees regulate the world of the firm. These expectations can be described in the form of a specific order of recognition. As Wagner writes, “recognition relationships are an essential hinge between system and social integration and are likewise a central component of the company’s social order.”

Borrowing from Voswinkel the key distinction between recognition as appreciation and recognition as admiration, Wagner unveils, through the example of two middle-management workers in a chemical company, the pitfalls of recognition demands that result from the demise of the old order and the introduction of new forms of organization. The destabilizing experiences of disqualification and disempowerment made by the two individuals interviewed, both of whom used to be successful researchers and team leaders, reveal salient features of the new world of work. Their company has undergone a typical organisational change: significant staff cuts; devolution of financial responsibility to all units in the firm; competition between units; systematic orientation to financial results as the measure of success; market logic applied to all activities, including scientific research; full submission to the client and the shareholder. In this new set up, recognition only goes to economic performance. This entails that the duties of care and loyalty associated with reciprocal expectations in the old recognitive regime have gone by the way side.

For the two employees, this mode of operation creates hitherto unknown difficulties to adapt subjectively to the demands of work. The marketisation process in the firm’s internal functioning and the subjectification of work create “traps of recognition.” On the one hand, the strict orientation to market acceptance as the sole criterion for success, the use of outsourced services,

and the increased demand put on workers to become responsible for more aspects of the work process, disqualifies an older form of “recognition as admiration”, which was based on expertise. Reputation established over time and underpinned by the acknowledgement of competence becomes meaningless when the only criterion that matters is economic performance. Expertise is diluted and can be outsourced. Indeed, in this particular example, scientific competence gets in the way of recognition as it tends to make the economic logic compete and in some instances give way to other standards. Crucially, the definition of “quality work” differs greatly depending on which perspective is favoured, the economic or the scientific one. One way to deal with the withdrawal of the old style of recognition is for the workers to appeal to the other form of recognition, appreciation. This is an interesting twist of the new recognition regime, that workers who previously would have appealed to their right for admiration suddenly demand to be recognised for their sacrifice and loyalty, that is, demand appreciation. The first trap of recognition in the current regime is the difficulty to justify a claim for recognition as admiration, whilst the basis for recognition as appreciation has collapsed.

On the other hand, the search for admiration which these two workers cannot abandon contains its own trap. A great imbalance is opened between on the one hand the lack of control of the workers on the conditions ensuring market success, and on the other the total responsibility for success that is put on them. In the previous order, when success was not defined solely in commercial terms, the gap was not so great. Most importantly, expertise could prove itself in quality work and the respect of professional standards defined by a specific work culture. But market success is out of the hands of the competent. According to Wagner, this great gap between control and responsibility largely explains the absence of a struggle for recognition. The

workers keen on recognition as admiration cannot run the risk of questioning the rules of the game: this would be direct evidence against their deservedness. A kind of voluntary servitude results in which they adapt themselves to rules and norms that take control and recognition away from them.

The chapters by Voswinkel and Wagner provide insight into the ways in which recent mutations of capitalism have altered the experience of work and the social bonds that develop in and through that experience. They concern the world of work as it is, illuminated by contrast to the way it was. They are not, directly at least, concerned with the *justification* of the transition from one mode of capitalism to another, or with how the changing meaning of work could feature in such justifications. This issue is, however, taken up in the final two chapters of the book, where the ethical significance of work, understood as its role in constituting a good life, is reasserted as an apt object of practical, public reasoning in face of the denials of neo-classical economics and liberal political theory.

As Dale Tweedie points out in his chapter, it is hard to make sense of the idea that the act of working may be a constitutive feature of a flourishing life—the kind of life people ought to have a chance to lead—so long as work is conceived as sheer ‘disutility’ or a mere ‘opportunity cost’: that is, as something to be avoided (all things being equal). Yet this is how work typically is modeled in orthodox economic analysis. Furthermore, the ethically destructive consequences of working—the damage it can do to the life of a worker beyond the brute pain of exertion or the cost of missed leisure opportunity—is also hidden from view in mainstream economic modeling. Tweedie draws attention to various motivations behind the thin, ethically neutral conception of

work at play in these models, such as their alleged scientific objectivity and their indifference to the unknowable world of inner experience and the value individuals subjectively attach to their work. However, this phenomenologically and ethically pared down conception is obtained at a high price: blindness to the ways in which the quality of work, the satisfactions it brings and the sufferings it causes, feed back into the sphere of economic analysis. We need substantive conceptions of work of the kind developed by Dejours and Richard Sennett, Tweedie argues, to appreciate the economic consequences of the changing nature of working activity and the ethical validity of the economic policies behind those changes. Furthermore, this is an insight not completely lost on the orthodox economic tradition. If contemporary neo-classical economists were to go back to one of the founders of their discipline, Alfred Marshall, they would find the germ of a substantive conception of work which—not unlike the conceptions advanced by Dejours and Sennett—emphasizes the importance of the activity of working in the development of human capacities and the role of such development in a flourishing human life.

The thrust of Tweedie's argument, then, is to save orthodox economic theory from itself by retrieving an ethically substantive notion of work. Russell Keat follows a similar strategy in regard to liberal political theory. Liberalism is rightly committed to the promotion of individual liberty by enforcing basic rights, rejecting paternalism and enabling individuals to pursue their own conception of the good. But in addition to their commitment to these sound political principles, liberals typically endorse a principle of state neutrality, which puts a prohibition on state action guided by any conception of the good. On this influential view, a legitimate liberal state is neutral in relation to conceptions of the good and must exclude them from its practical deliberations. Like many communitarian critics of liberalism, Keat wants to reject this principle

of state neutrality without throwing out the liberal commitment to individual liberty. In this way he follows a familiar strategy for saving liberalism from itself. But the reasons he gives for rejecting the principle of state neutrality are new and bear directly on our theme: the inescapably ethical character of the sphere of production and of the nature of the choice between economic policies that favour one mode of production or work organization over another.

Following Peter Hall and David Soskice, Keat begins by distinguishing two models of capitalism that do in fact represent real alternatives for organizing the world of work and shaping economic policy. These are the 'Liberal' market economies, with their 'impatient' pattern of share ownership, top-down mode of internal governance, and competitive inter-firm relationships, in contrast to 'Coordinated' market economies, with their 'patient' capital, more consensual styles of management, and cooperative relationships between firms. Keat then draws attention to the *ethical* differences between these forms of market economy. That is, they make it possible, or easier, for individuals to realise certain conceptions of the good through their work, and they make it impossible, or more difficult, for individuals to realise other conceptions. As examples, Keat mentions the intrinsic satisfaction that comes from skillful, autonomous working activity. This good, as well as the goods of developing industry specific skills and engaging in collaborative relations with workers in other firms, are easier for individuals to realise in Coordinated market economies than in Liberal ones. The Coordinated economies also make it easier for individuals to realise a conception of the good in which they are able to develop trade- or industry-specific skills and their recognition by one's peers. The Liberal market economies, by contrast, make it easier for individuals to measure the success of their careers, and the goods they realised through them, in financial terms. Another telling example is relationships of trust:

the institutional arrangements of the Liberal market economies make it harder for individuals to realise this good in their work, and for this reason individuals whose conception of the good includes the enjoyment of such relationships are institutionally disadvantaged by them.

Such considerations support Keat's thesis that market economies are by no means neutral with respect to the good: they favour the realisation of some conceptions of the good through working activity and disfavour others. Since the institutional shape of a market economy is in part determined by a state's laws and policies, the deliberations by which a state arrives at those laws and policies are not neutral with respect to the good either. Of course this conclusion does not tell us *which* conception of the good a given state should favour. But by dispelling the myth of state neutrality, it invites us to think again about the ethical significance of work and to develop a conception of working activity that is commensurate with this challenge.

¹ See, for example, T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

² See, in particular, H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958.

³ Notable discussions (and instantiations) of this trend include H. -G. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976; J. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978; R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979; C. Taylor, *Philosophical Papers 1 Human Agency and Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985; J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 1987; P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, trans. K. Blamey and J. B. Thompson, Evanston, Ill, Northwestern University Press,

1991; G. Markus, *Language and Production: A Critique of the Paradigms*, Dordrecht, Boston, D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1986.

⁴ See, for example, A. Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. J. Anderson, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1994.

⁵ See A. Honneth, “Work and Instrumental Action: On the Normative Basis of Critical Theory,” in A. Honneth, *The Fragmented World of the Social*, New York, SUNY Press, 1995; and A. Honneth, “Work and Recognition: A Redefinition,” in H. -C. Schmidt am Busch and C. Zurn eds., *The Philosophy of Recognition. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Plymouth, Lexington Books, 2010.

⁶ See L. Boltanski and E. Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, London, Verso, 2005.

⁷ We cannot hope to give this question the complex answer it deserves here. The best account of the matter remains G. Markus, *Language and Production*.

⁸ See C. Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975.

⁹ See G. Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, London, Merlin, 1971.

¹⁰ See, for example, Arendt, *The Human Condition*; R. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, London, Penguin, 2002; A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, second edition, London, Duckworth, 1984; and of course much communitarian criticism of liberalism.

¹¹ See in particular the following articles: “Moral Consciousness and Class Domination,” in *Disrespect. The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2007, pp. 80-96; “The Social Dynamics of Disrespect: On the Location of Critical Theory Today,” in *Disrespect*, pp. 63-80.

¹² Crucial in this respect is Honneth’s first book, written with Hans Joas: *Social Action and Human Nature*, trans. R. Meyer, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

¹³ Honneth, *Reification, A New Look at an Old Idea*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.

¹⁴ See in particular, Honneth, “Recognition as Ideology,” in eds. B. van den Brink and D. Owen, *Recognition and Power. Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 323-348.

¹⁵ *The Making of the English Working Class*, London, Gollancz, 1965.

¹⁶ See Honneth, ‘Work and Recognition: a Redefinition’, in H. -C. Schmidt am Busch and C. Zurn eds., op cit.

¹⁷ Other texts by C. Dejours that can be found in English are: “Subjectivity, Work, and Action,” in eds. J.-P. Deranty et al. *Recognition, Work, Politics: New Directions in French Critical Theory*, Leiden, Brill, 2007, p. 71-87; “The Centrality of Work,” *Critical Horizons*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2010.

¹⁸ See J. -P. Deranty, “Work and the precarisation of existence,” *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2008, pp. 443-463.

¹⁹ The key reference here is Louis Le Guillant, *Quelle psychiatrie pour notre temps?*, Toulouse, Eres, 1984.

²⁰ *L’énigme de la femme active. Egoïsme, sexe et compassion*, Paris, Payot, 2001; *Les enjeux psychiques du travail. Introduction à la psychodynamique du travail*, Paris, Payot, 2008.

²¹ *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, Oxford, Blackwell, 1962.

²² C. Dejours, *Travail, usure mentale. Essai de psychopathologie du travail*, Paris, Bayard, 2008 (4th edition).

²³ See in particular the essays collected in the volume edited by A. Honneth, *Befreiung aus der Mündigkeit*, Frankfurt/M., Campus, 2002, which documents the key directions of this research programme, and in which the essay by Voswinkel translated here first appeared in German.

²⁴ Other key contributors to this research program include Kai Dröge, Ursula Holtgrewe, Hermann Kocyba and Sighard Neckel. It is a matter of much regret that we have not been able to include work by these authors in this volume as well.

²⁵ M. Baethge, "Arbeit, Vergesellschaftung, Identität - Zur zunehmenden normativen Subjektivierung der Arbeit," *Soziale Welt*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 1991, pp. 6-19.