

Bo Stråth (ed.)

AFTER FULL EMPLOYMENT
European Discourses on
Work and Flexibility



P.I.E.-Peter Lang

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

After full employment : European discourses on work and flexibility /
Bo Stråth (ed.). With contributions by: Laurent Gamet... – Bruxelles ;
Bern ; Berlin ; Frankfurt/M. ; New York ; Oxford ; Wien : PIE Lang,
2000 (Series Work & Society ; No. 25)
ISBN 90-5201-925-8

*CIP available from the British Library, GB
and the Library of Congress, USA.*

ISBN 0-8204-4663-7

Cover: Safran, Brussels

© P.I.E.-Peter Lang s.a.
PRESSES INTERUNIVERSITAIRES EUROPÉENNES
Brussels, 2000
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ISBN 90-5201-925-8
D/2000/5678/16

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CHAPTER 2

The Concept of Work in the Construction of Community¹

BO STRÅTH

Ambiguous Views of Work

[...] The wish to be liberated from labour's 'toil and trouble', is not modern but as old as recorded history. Freedom from labour itself is not new; it once belonged among the most firmly established privileges of the few. In this instance, it seems as though scientific progress and technical developments had been only taken advantage of to achieve something about which all former ages dreamed but which none had been able to realise... However, this is so only in appearance. The modern age has carried with it a theoretical glorification of labour and has resulted in a factual transformation of the whole of society into a labouring society. The fulfilment of the wish, therefore, like the fulfilment of wishes in fairy tales, comes at a moment when it can only be self-defeating. It is a society of labourers which is about to be liberated from the fetters of labour, and this society does no longer know of those other higher and more meaningful activities for the sake of which this freedom would deserve to be won. What we are confronted with is the prospect of a society of labourers without labour, that is, without the only activity left to them. Surely, nothing could be worse (Arendt, 1958: 4-5).

In 1958, Hannah Arendt perceived the possibility of labour being rendered superfluous by scientific progress and technological development. She did so in an era that believed in evolutionary progress towards ever-higher stages of social organisation through political governance, leaving behind the atrocities of the Second World War in a gigantic act of collective Freudian repression. In contrast to the main-

¹ I am grateful for comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this chapter from Willfried Spohn, Barbara MacLennan, Erik Tängerstad, and Noel Whiteside.

stream dreams of that time she saw the terrifying possibilities of accelerating technological progress. Standing at the entrance to the 21st century we see a picture of unemployment which reveals the prophetic power of her observation.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the role of work in the social construction of meaning, community, and cohesion, and, in particular, its theorisation in the economic and social sciences. "Work" is one of the most important constituents in the construction of meaning and community. Work is a key element in demarcations of *us* and *them*. Work signifies diligence, industry, and prosperity, yes, even joy and satisfaction. *Freude durch Arbeit* represents only the extreme and pathological case of the invocation of work, from a time when mass unemployment was seen and experienced as a social scourge. At the same time "work" is replete with negative connotations. Work is tantamount to pain, drudgery, sweat and hardship. Work as exploitation was at the core of the identity that formed the working class. It was something to be emancipated from. "Work", as a mobilising concept in the organisation of society, is thus ambiguous and contradictory². The

² The ambiguity inherent in the concept of work can be traced to the most ancient times. In late antiquity the Cynic philosophers considered *πονός* (*ponos*), i.e. toil, hardship, trouble, strain, as a *means* to virtue. Stoic doctrines coined the words *εργον* (*ergon*), the *product* of individual virtue and quality (i.e. work, *der Werk*, *verket*, *l'œuvre*, *l'opera* in contemporary European languages), and *φιλοπονία*, the love for work. *Ergon* was derived from the Indo-European word stem *uerg* for knitting or weaving. Among the Stoic philosophers Poseidonios returned to Plato's and Aristotle's contemptuous view of work. This negative view was in turn adopted by the Romans and found expression in Cicero's distinction between the free and the noble arts, *artes liberales*, and the unfree, lower, and contemptuous occupations. The practitioners of the *operae liberales*, such as judges and doctors, were remunerated with an *honorarium*, whereas for the *operae illiberales* only wages were granted, *merces*, were appropriate. Here work took on the role of both an instrument and mirror of social hierarchy. See BRUNNER, CONZE and KOSELLECK (eds.), vol. 1, 1979; especially CONZE, 1979, pp. 156-158. See also ARENDT, 1958; MÉDA, 1995, pp. 30-59; and SUPLOT, 1994.

Work also had further meanings. Vergil's maxim *labor omnia vincit* became a topos that would influence the virtues and work ethics of the European nobility. In Latin *labor* - drudgery, hardship, effort, trouble - was ambiguous, containing both *πονός* (toil, hardship) and *ενπονία* (diligence) within *dolor* - pain, suffering. *Labor* connoted a self-appointed activity whereas *dolor* referred to something imposed from the outside. *Labor* acquired the meaning of strenuous and arduous activity, oriented towards achievement, connected to *virtus* and close to the admirable *industria*. Through labour honour, and renown, laurels, particularly military, could be won. The tension and ambiguity in this concept were also present

in the Judeo-Christian tradition. God, who as creator had completed his work, placed Man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and maintain Eden. How this cultivation was going to be executed was not exposed. There was, in any case, no discussion about this task. With the expulsion from Eden and God's curse on the fields (Gen. 3, 16-19), work was introduced: first, woman was condemned to bear children in great hardship and pain, (work, *travail*, and Swedish *värkar* which comes from *verk* and thus has the same origin as work, describes the painful moment in childbirth when the uterine contractions expel the foetus – *femme en travail*). For Man cultivation of the fields was tantamount to toil, sweat, and tears: work was becoming arduous for men too. Labour/work connoted toil and hardship combining the Greek *πονός*. God's decree thus described all work and labour as toils to be executed. This was the view expressed in Hebrew, reflecting a monotheistic world view with a punitive God. The Roman citizen Paulus bridged the gap between this Hebrew and the Greek polytheistic world view by making a place for work as *εργον*.

Work and labour were, despite or exactly because of the inherent toil performed, also a divine service. Work and labour connoted a divine blessing which contradicted the disdain for manual labour. In parallel with the contemptuous view of work, a more appreciative connotation thus emerged: work in the field and artisanal crafts were respected and vices and laziness condemned (2 Thess. 3: 7-12). And, "if any will not work, neither shall he eat", (2 Thess. 3: 10), or "For we hear that there are some among you who walk in idleness, not working at all, mere busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that they work quietly, and eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3: 11-12), also "Remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his wages" (Lucas. 10: 7). In this way the work ordinance decreed that mankind should work for one another, there was no alternative to work, and, thus, "non-working", or, (much later) unemployment, was in principle impossible. The Judeo-Catholic concept of work days and a Sabbath for rest did not aim solely at Sunday leisure, but also at undisturbed contemplation. The limits of work and labour were therefore clear – for all their merits they were not considered worship in the fullest sense of the word.

These different connotations of the concepts of labour and work were reflected in language. In some languages the concept is polysemic and extremely ambivalent. In others, two concepts emerged, such as, in English (labour and work). This is nothing more than the continuation of the ancient pair of concepts, *πονός* (*ponos*) and *εργον* (*ergon*). Labour connotes toil and hardship. Laborious means hard-working, toilsome. Work is the *εργον*. However, work also connotes pains. "Labour" itself comes from the Latin *labor*, meaning the effort required for a toilsome activity. The German *Arbeit* (Swedish *arbete*) comes from medieval High German and means great effort, toil, strain, or trouble. The German *Werk* and the Swedish *verk* are not synonymous with "work" but have a more limited meaning along the lines of *εργον* or the French *œuvre* or Italian *opera*. Further, the English "work" has a meaning which is closer to labour in the sense of the expenditure of energy, striving, the application of effort or exertion than are *Werk* and *verk*.

dimension of conflict here is the precondition for all mobilising language: no conflict, no community.

This chapter will delineate and discuss historically changing patterns of the construction of meaning and community through discourses and rhetoric on work. Views of work have historically always extended beyond mere economic discourses, something that the present rhetoric of flexibility tends to conceal. Indeed, it could be argued that the language of flexibility tries to sever the historically established connection between work and social identity.

Work can be seen as a social phenomenon that takes on essential and primordial proportions to the extent that it defines the very essence of the human being. However, work can also be seen as a cultural construction within which the conceptual formation reflects discursive structures and power relationships. Different concepts of *work* and *non-work*, *employment* and *unemployment*, emerge in various contexts, and these differences must be understood historically and legally as expressions of varying power relationships. It is in this sense – as a cultural construction – that work is discussed in this chapter and throughout the whole book. Of course there is a connection between these two visions of work: the growth of meaning around and about the concept may result in a general belief that work is existential and primordial.

The fact that work is not identical with employment must be emphasised. On the contrary, many other forms of work hold communi-

However, in Swedish *värk*, which means pain, together with *verk*, with the same etymological origin, have the same ambiguity as the English “work”. In English “work” also connotes the product of work, the result of action, or an achievement – in the sense of the musical “opus”. In their derived forms as *ouvrier* and *operaio* the French and Italian concepts also take on new connotations.

The French *travail* and the Spanish *trabajo* transgress the Latin demarcation between *labor* and *dolor* as it is derived from the Latin *trepalium*, which was originally an instrument made of three stakes where big animals, *i.e.* horses and oxen, were fastened to be shod etc. The instrument *à trois pieux* was also a torture device. The medieval meaning of *travail/ trabajo* was thus a state of suffering and pain, of being tortured (*Les grands travaux que Notre-Seigneur a soufferts*, old French/Bossuet) and fatigue (*Les voyages ont leurs travaux comme leurs plaisirs*, Regnard). In the 15th century this concept took on more modern signification in the direction of action, productive activity. With this new meaning also a more positive connotation emerged, expressed by proverbs such as *Le travail est beau et noble* (Vigny) or *Le travail est bon à l'homme* (France), see *Petit Robert: Dictionnaire de la langue française*.

ties together when industries and factory employment collapse. To focus on employment implies a loss of understanding of the importance of work in more general terms.

Two of the most prominent fields for the cultural construction of meaning and community in general terms have been religion and science. In a long-term historical perspective there has been a displacement from religion towards science in this respect. Religion and science have been active elements in the process of the signification of the concept of work³. They do not stand outside or above these processes of social conflict and bargaining, as their spokesmen and practitioners often believe, but are, on the contrary, powerful actors in them. Religious doctrine and scientific theory reflect and express power relationships, shaping ideological statements, moral codes, and rules of conduct. In these processes of signification "work" has been a central concept since antiquity.

Historically two major shifts can be discerned in discourses on work. The first is when Christian discourse was challenged by the conceptual invention of the market during the 18th century. The gradual discursive penetration of market ideology and the subsequent emergence of "organised modernity" (see chapter 1 by Peter Wagner in this volume) meant that many collective institutions were organised around work.

The second shift which marks the fracture of the link between collective institutions and work is ongoing. This has disastrous effects upon social cohesion because *flexibility* is unable to structure collective institutions and social responsibility as has work.

³ The development of meaning within religion and science are by no means uniform processes but occur under continuous strain between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Heterodoxy and orthodoxy interact in more complex patterns than can be described by a chronological division into successive phases. They are not easy to separate since they are influenced by and incorporate ideas from each other. Although one idea may predominate, opposing views are always present (on this see Peter Wagner in chapter 1 of this volume and his reference to Reinhart Koselleck's term "counter concept"). Orthodoxy and heterodoxy in religion and science interact, transforming the whole canon they represent. The degree of credibility and legitimacy in the provided frameworks of interpretation ("theories") varies as well. Interpretive frameworks are continuously contested. They are elements of political controversy when social protests emerge and are integrated.

The Christian View of Work

Max Weber rejected the idea that the New Testament added a new dignity to work. The concept of work never had an intrinsic value according to Weber. However, both he and Werner Conze, in his analysis of the history of the concept *Arbeit*, demonstrated the emergence of a value ethic founded on work and labour in Christian praxis. Christian doctrines such as *laborare ex oratione, ministerium ex fide in Deum* and the Benedictine rule *ora et labora* indicated a decisive transformation of consciousness away from a view of work and labour which had its origin in a division of labour within a social estates order according to which the two highest estates stood above work⁴.

The Christian appreciation of work and labour went hand in hand with a consequent condemnation of inaction. The idea that work could be an instrument of education to be enforced through discipline by the authorities spread. This Christian appreciation of work was intensified by the Reformation, and was accompanied by a trend towards the development of a labouring society in which there was no morally established exemption from work as understood in the double sense of active creation and hardship. Even the elderly and children were not excepted: Christian faith carried a duty to work for all. A complex relationship emerged linking ideas of Christian universalism, duty, and brotherhood, to constructions of national law and identity as rivals demanding the allegiance, obedience and fruits of labour.

However, the appellation "the Christian appreciation of work" invokes a hefty simplification. There has never been – as the term must suggest – one version of "the Christian appreciation of work". The

⁴ The Christian appreciation of work takes worldly-minded forms and can become an ascetic monastic rejection of the world. In both cases this is connected with the idea of earning divine grace. When "work" in various translations of the Bible took on holy connotations it was in the sense of the New Testament rather than the Old. Even before Luther, the toils of peasants and artisans were understood in terms of divine service. Luther never tired of repeating this view. Calvin's understanding of work and labour was similar to Luther's, and added the Puritan doctrine of predestination according to which success in work denoted being one of God's chosen. See BRUNNER, CONZE and KOSELLECK (eds.), 1979, pp. 158-160. Christian discourse referred to broader categories of work including agrarian work. Catholic views on the collective obligation to work involved the provision of aid to those who were unable (through sickness, infancy, and old age) to earn a living. With the emergence of industrial wage-work, and, with it, the concern of Bismark and others responsible for political order keen to develop instruments to prevent social unrest, new categories of dependency were introduced.

connections between Christianity and views of work have evolved and changed over time. Different Christian sects, from heterodoxy to orthodoxy, have brought different doctrinal perspectives to the elaboration of conceptions and attitudes to work and, hence, indeed to *non-work*. Moreover, substantial national as well as Christian differences in views on work emerged. The relationships between such national variations and different religious doctrines and practices have still to be the subject of investigation. Although he does not refer to the role of religion in particular, but, rather, to culture in more general terms, Richard Biernacki's comparative study of the "making of labour" in Germany and Britain from 1640-1914 emphasises a culturally constructed variety (1995). The transition from a feudal-corporatist organisation of work, in which various Christian norms and doctrines were important sources of legitimacy, to a capitalist factory-based manufacture that flourishes on the conception of labour as a commodity, followed very different tracks in specific cultures. Systems of industrial relations similarly drew on diffuse traditions reflecting the different experiences of this transition across Europe. Contrasting approaches emerged in comparable economies as a consequence of different cultural premises.

The community based on work was understood in the pre-capitalist value order as something formed according to the terms of a duty imposed from above. Work was an occupation, not a possession; something you did, not something you had (or did not have). Work was *the* (normal) activity. Non-work was thus not perceived as the reflection of a work shortage, but rather as an evasion of work. Social cohesion and discipline were maintained by preventing this escape. A rather menacing approach on the part of the authorities went hand in hand with the preaching of a gospel of work as a source of pleasure and spiritual insight, even as an act of creation and worship.

Discourses on work, stemming from their historical roots in the ancient world, have had a lasting impact on the construction of social cohesion *von oben*. Labour and work have been instruments that bind societies. Work has been closely linked with community and social cohesion, however, despite the arguments of official ideologies, it has not necessarily been experienced as an instrument of self-realisation. That work was fulsomely praised in the pulpits does not necessarily indicate popular concurrence in the nave and beyond: identification with the vision of work offered could also mean identification with its burden and a concomitant emancipatory goal. The identity of work has always been multifaceted.

The Challenge to the Christian View: The Market and Marx

A challenge to the Christian view of labour and work in Enlightenment thinking was evoked by Marx and Engels in the 1840s. Their challenge was based on the introduction of the concept of the market in the 18th century, which ushered in a new interpretative framework for labour relations.

During the Enlightenment, religion declined and science gained in importance as the source of signification for the concept of work. This shift was demonstrated particularly clearly in the case of discourses on poverty that increasingly argued that the quality of life could be improved through political means, and that the condition of the poor was not an immutable consequence of human fragility and malingering. Poverty, instead, was seen as an attendant element of economic change. There was thus a move away from seeing poverty as an affliction of individual destiny to conceiving of poverty as a social phenomenon. Systems of assistance based on charity alone were rejected. Turgot indeed argued that poverty itself was a product of charity. Such Enlightenment criticism discredited the Church and slowly toppled it from its ascendancy. In its place, the notion that poverty was a societal problem that must be faced politically and collectively emerged.

Non-waged work continued to reflect older notions of social obligation that bind a community of families and households. This type of work became increasingly gender specific and was progressively socially and politically pushed to the margins as a result of the rise to pre-eminence of economic discourse in the analysis of work. Consequently, most theoretical statements about work took for granted the fact that work was a male phenomenon. The association of labour and property also contributed to reinforce the masculine identity of work. A married woman's property became her husband's and, as it was, property ownership endowed the individual with political rights and duties. Only during the 1960s and 1970s did the gender issue emerge allowing a massive emancipation from this masculine assumption. (However, it was an emancipation that soon led to new forms of subordination with the arrival of a flexibility language according to which key words such as "part-time work" had a mainly female labour force in view.)

The idea of the market in its liberal form and in Marx's inversion of this, however, did not bring about a sudden triumph of one interpretative framework over another. On the contrary, overlapping and at the same time competing, supplementary *and* alternative views emerged.

Christian, liberal market-oriented, and Marxist views on labour and work co-existed and merged in complex and contradictory ways during the 19th and 20th centuries, a process overlaid with the further emergence of new utopian (and dystopian) views and the development of collective institutions to regulate and organise this mediation. We now seem to be experiencing the dissolution of this “merger”.

What, then, was the significance of these supplementary and alternative market views? Their most important new component was probably the idea that work and labour can be liberated from their human-divine paradigm and transformed into commodities. Labour and work were no longer simply something you *did*, but also something you *had* (owned), *were* (as a commodity), and *offered* (on the labour market). At the same time, a more expansive view of work and labour emerged: Locke – remaining within the framework of natural law, but breaking with the idea of an unchangeable natural order – argued that labour justified property rights and conferred value upon things in a new and better world. His reasoning is representative of his time:

The labour of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that nature hath provided, and left it in, he has mixed his labour with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property... for it is labour indeed that put the difference of value on every thing... I think it will be but a very modest computation to say, that of the products of the earth useful to the life of man, nine-tenths are the effects of labour... Labour makes the far greatest part of the value of things we enjoy in this world⁵.

The idea of an added value generated by work was one that Marx would later take up and develop. The emancipation of work from its conceptual place at the very lowest level in the hierarchy of human activities was no longer, with such ideas, powered by Christian dogma. “Every thing in the world is purchased by, and our passions are the only causes of, labour”, Hume argued⁶. The definition of labour was elevated to signify the possession of a specific human potential that could be organised for social and political purposes.

In making a distinction between usefully productive labouring individuals and uselessly privileged pleasure-seeking individuals, a new

⁵ John LOCKE, *Two Treatises of Government*, quoted from BRUNNER, CONZE, and KOSELLECK (eds.), 1979, p. 168.

⁶ David HUME, *Essays 2. 1. Works*, Vol. 3, quoted from BRUNNER, CONZE and KOSELLECK (eds.), 1979, p. 168.

economically and morally justified principle of achievement became the gauge. Work was seen as a productive activity measured according to its economic effect. It became an instrument of demarcation between a bourgeois value order, based on diligence and industriousness, and what was considered to be an obsolete value order based on birthright. The appellations "idleness" and "inactivity" took on new proportions and charges of moral worthlessness on account of sloth were dramatically shifted from the lowest to the highest strata of society. It is precisely on this re-evaluation of work, from an instrument for the maintenance of, to an instrument for the change of, the social order that Quesnay and Smith based their *Tableau économique* (1758) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) respectively. In the theoretical construction of a growing economy labour became a means, not only to maintain existence, but also to create expanding capital. Labour was synonymous with economic growth, and economic growth signified material and moral happiness.

There is a tension between persuasive utopian utilitarianism and pragmatic reasoning in Smith's text. There has, furthermore, been a strong tendency among later commentators and disciples to over-emphasise this utopian element. Such was the case when neo-classical thinkers read Smith a hundred years after he wrote. And such is particularly the case when neo-liberal interpreters do so today.

In this utopian view work should be fulfilling and should lead to individual happiness. Only in free markets can this full potential for profit and growth develop. The multiplication and division of labour accelerates the amassing of wealth for rich and poor alike, or so the story went. In this optimistic scenario the connotations of toil, hardship, and poverty that were once synonymous with work more or less disappeared. Utopian ideas of economic rationality transformed work into pleasure. The quest for material and moral happiness through labour had arrived at the highest level of the value hierarchy. Working endeavour was connected to the satisfaction of needs, which, in turn, required the virtues of industriousness and diligence. New concepts, technical proficiency, organisation, and a labouring morale, as well as the classical poles of production and consumption, thus appeared on the topography in which labour was embedded. In an expanding economy happiness and wealth could be distributed to all and poverty would disappear. Through technical innovation the toil in work would be eliminated.

Smith discussed the contradiction between labour and capital and the social problems that follow from this antinomy in a much more

sophisticated way than have the many modern theories that refer to him. Although he was convinced of the commonality of interests of employers and workers and also that the increased supply of commodities in the new labouring society would lead to increased consumption and general prosperity, which would dismantle class barriers in the long run, he never envisaged a process without problems.

The long-term sharing of interests that Smith envisaged for labour and capital cannot be understood in terms of class harmony. Their shared interest was based on a deduction from a theoretical insight: namely, that profits and wages rise together. Quite in contrast to any idea of class harmony, Smith emphasised the dehumanising element in the capitalist division of labour and he urged governments to offset this process of deprivation. He talked about a floor below which wages could not sink according to "common decency". This means that he saw wages, for instance, as a social construction, because a pure supply-demand model would not permit such a floor. Moreover, Smith was aware that agricultural labour offered a much more balanced working identity than wage-work in capitalist manufacturing enterprises. Thus, while he spoke of the need for apprenticeships in the agricultural sector, he was against the idea of extending those ties of service and obedience contained in the concept of apprenticeship to capitalist enterprises – because such ties would restrict the labour market unduly. Here too he envisaged a role for governments. Indeed, Book V of *The Wealth of Nations* on government revenue and expansion outlines the seeds of a liberal social programme. His views on education and training far from endorsed a minimum of state intervention. Thatcher and others of the neo-liberal persuasion were diametrically wrong in this respect when they cheerfully cited Adam Smith in support of minimal state intervention. Smith was indeed more pragmatic than utopian. It was thus not by chance that Marx referred to Smith as the "Luther of political economy" (Marx and Engels, 1932 [1844-1847]: 107-108), for Smith had reoriented the whole economic belief system by showing that development no longer depended on external forces but, rather, on human enterprise and exertion. Marx was also interested in Smith's focus on human labour as both the generator and the regulator of value (Biernacki, 1995: 476-477).

When this focus was rendered ideological through the consecration of the market, the difference between Smith and Marx was emphasised and the connection between their theories was played down. Certainly, Smith used religious metaphors and, irrespective of what he himself may have believed, worked within a Calvinist interpretative framework

according to which the capitalist entrepreneur stood out as a model of thrift and industriousness, a paragon creating work by transforming his savings into productive investments. This dimension of Smith's thought has been taken up in a biased fashion by liberal market readers of his work.

In the wake of this emergence of the market view in political economy new concepts were introduced, according to which expressions connoting human activity in general terms became carriers of a more specific notion of work. Business, in the original sense of being busy, occupation, *occupation*, *occupazione*, *Beschäftigung*, and *sysselsättning*, took on a narrower signification of work, rather than activity in general. Gradually concepts describing new relationships of dependence also evolved through transformations of the meanings of older ideas: employment, *emploi*, *impiego*, *Anstellung*, *anställning*⁷.

With labour as a panacea, forces were released which would revolutionise the whole existing social order, overthrowing an old order based on privileges by birth. Industry's new pre-eminence permitted new possibilities for competition and achievement. In emerging theories about labour and wages, according to which the worker was seen as subject to the laws of supply and demand, the right to labour freely in this way was believed to lead to long-term harmony through competition.

It is also in this context that the concept of unemployment emerged. At this time, however, unemployment was still a theoretical concept: unemployment – as opposed to poverty caused by the “want of work” to use the terminology of the English Poor Laws – was first recognised in Britain in the late 1880s. This concept was a social construct reflecting a prescriptive approach closely aligned with a desire to improve industrial performance in the face of increasing competition for foreign markets. It did not echo a fear of social revolution or a desire to eliminate poverty. Nor can unemployment and industrialisation automatically be aligned since the term *unemployment* only came into use in Britain a full century after the factories appeared. The term unem-

⁷ In Swedish the old concept for strenuous and laborious necessity was *arvode*. In the Middle Ages *arbete* was imported from German and became synonymous with *arvode*. This latter word disappeared with the translation of the Bible into Swedish in the wake of the Reformation. At the end of the 18th century it came back into use, but then in the sense of *honorar*, remuneration for work other than wage-work based on employment. The example is taken from a working paper by Erik Tängerstad at the European University Institute.

ployment, rather, emerged in the context of an accelerating expansion of the manufacturing industry based on large-scale concentrations of wage-labour and capital vulnerable to every downswing in world markets. From Britain the plague of unemployment rapidly spread to other industrialising countries (Topalov, 1994: 13-35). However, from the very beginning the concept was an element of a utopian economic theorisation of society that clearly demarcated the unemployed from the poor and from pauperism. It was a new concept for a new form of society, not yet the fully employed society, but at least the prosperous society.

Market liberalism, free trade, and the co-operation of capital and labour were the keystones of a global system of the division of labour. However, in political practice, the universe of the new economy was to become the nation or the state. Concepts such as political economy and *Volkswirtschaft* reflected this development. Market freedom required rules that could only be made and implemented by the state. The global division of labour was thus gradually subsumed within national competition on world markets. Labour was the primary resource from which 19th-century wealth and power was constructed and was increasingly defined as a “wealth of the nations” rather than in individual or universal terms. Liberal theories fortified national projects. Liberalism thus broke with universalism and joined forces with nationalism⁸. In the previous chapter, Peter Wagner has also referred to this transformation of liberalism as “organised modernity”.

Although the abstractions of “the market” and “the state” presupposed one another, when adopted in ideological structures they often became mutually exclusive models. This was particularly the case in the 19th century, and again during the 1920s and the 1980s. Economic integration, through the emergence of industrial wage labour as a mass phenomenon, led to social disintegration and a growing potential for protest, something that Marx was particularly aware of. The liberal concept of (national) market harmony was confronted with the socialist idea of (universal) class-consciousness in an emerging conflict over the market regulation of labour.

In the Parliament assembled in St. Paul's Church in Frankfurt am Main during the 1848 Revolution, Liberal Democrat Wilhelm Löwe

⁸ A case in point is Weber's inaugural lecture at the University of Freiburg in 1895, where he postulated the ruthless self-assertion of the national *Machtstaat* as the last value of the *Nationalökonomie*.

expounded the liberal-national credo: "If in the past the privileges were holy, so today *Arbeit* is holy; free labour, industriousness and activity [*Tätigkeit* ...] are today the highest honour" (Brunner, Conze and Koselleck (eds.), 1979: 190). *Arbeit* was the cohesive mortar of the newly proclaimed German nation. From such sentiments it was only a small step towards the deification of labour as a modern religion of existential dimensions.

As the guarantor of harmony based on bourgeois virtues like labour, diligence, and industriousness, the nation was conceived as the fulfilment of a new social solidarity and social identity that traversed class boundaries. With this project the liberals – more utopian than Adam Smith had been – effectively signed a contract they could not honour. Instead of a dissolution of classes, class conflict characterised their era. During the same year that Löwe sang the praises of work, Marx and Engels published their manifesto.

Ricardo had already begun to develop and problematise Smith's theory in his analysis of the correlation between profits and wages and supply and demand in labour markets. He not only saw that wages and profits rose together, but also that they could pull one another down. In Britain, Ricardo, Malthus, and John Stuart Mill developed theories keenly responsive to the mood of social criticism, whereas, in France, the development of theory increasingly confirmed a belief in a natural order governed by *laissez-faire*. Marx, in turn, absorbed Ricardo's observations and gave them ideological force and an orientation to political action (Wagner, 1990: 114-117). Thus, Marx's criticism of Smith tackled, in particular, Smith's lack of differentiation between labour and labour power. When Smith (and Malthus and Ricardo) talked about industrial work and capital organisation they were still dealing with a very small sector of the economy. In Smith's time most profit came from trade, not manufacture or agriculture. Unlike Marx's, his analysis considers a mercantile economy. He and other political economists never really clarified the relationship of this mercantile sphere to the main economy. Without explicitly acknowledging their premise, they presumed an infinitely inelastic supply of labour for a small industrial sector. Little wonder then that Marx was to see the element of power in labour much more clearly at a time when industrial wage-work represented a much greater share of the economy.

The sudden rise of the capacity for labour from the lowest most despised of human attributes to the most highly praised began when Locke discovered that labour is the source of all property. Smith continued in this line when he asserted that labour is the source of all

wealth and the notion found its climax in Marx's scheme, according to which labour was to become the source of all productivity and an expression of the very humanity of man. However, of the three, only Marx was interested in labour as such. Locke was interested in private property and Smith in the accumulation of wealth. Since Marx held that labour was the supreme world-building attribute of mankind, and since, at the same time, labour nevertheless entailed subordination and toil, Marx exposed his theory to certain real contradictions. He tried to transcend these contradictions with his equation of productivity and fertility, indeed transferring an ancient sense of the word "labour", in reference to the pain of child birth, in a new way to the idea of work so that the development of man's productive forces is seen to transform society with an abundance of "good things". Marx's consistent naturalism discovered "labour power" as the specifically human manifestation of nature's life forces capable of creating a "surplus" (Arendt, 1958: 101, 106, see footnote 3).

Marx's distinction between labour and labour power had an emancipating effect: labour power, contracted to capital, was once again distinguished from the individual identity of the labourer. In Marx's view the solution to the consequent alienation of the labourer from the fruit of his labours was not the absorption of the personality, the abolition of the individual – as in a slave society – or indeed as accompanies paternalist approaches – but a recognition of mass labour's potential for political leverage.

From this point on, labour assumed new contours as a category of identity. Self-perception as a labouring class, not a nation, dominated. Such a view of labour was of a very different nature than that of the liberal utopia. Labour did not connote wealth and happiness, but rather exploitation. The nation was divided into classes. Confident of victory in the class struggle, the proponents of the new project promised a new harmony based on work without exploitation. This new harmony would not recognise national borders. The old liberal universalist creed was proclaimed in new utopian forms. The class identifying itself with labour, the working class, became, in its self-conception, the vanguard of a utopian quest.

The scope of action of the emerging working class was and remained, however, the state institutions built within the nation in organised modernity. Despite the proud proclamations of the overthrow of national boundaries and the forging of bonds through international labour solidarity, the forum of workers' protest remained the nation and the state. This situation was already obvious the year Marx and

Engels proclaimed proletarian internationalism. One of the triggers of the revolution of 1848 in France was a demand for work from those without employment. The state was invoked as the guarantor of labour and a system of national ateliers was introduced. Whereas the liberal nation/labour connection in Frankfurt am Main in 1848 was one according to which the nation was *guaranteed by* labour, in the same year in Paris – already a national capital unlike any German city – the nation became the *guarantor of* labour. The subject in Frankfurt am Main was the object in Paris, and vice versa⁹. In this respect there was a difference between the merger of liberalism and nationalism and the merger of socialism and nationalism.

The revolutionary attempts of 1848 to organise work through a system of governmental responsibility were soon choked. The idea of state responsibility, however, did not die. The transformation from work as a duty to work as a right was to influence political debate over the next eighty to ninety years. The problem was not the idea of work as a right *per se* but the question of who would be the guarantor of this right. In the emerging debate about this problem, the concept of unemployment moved from the economic and theoretical to the social sphere. Who is responsible? Who is going to pay? These were the new questions on the political agenda. These questions would find a tempo-

⁹ The new government formed in Paris in the February Revolution introduced social reforms overthrowing the *laissez-faire* policy of the July Monarchy. Working-hours were reduced and the *ateliers nationaux* in which the unemployed could find employment were established. The right to a job was proclaimed. These reforms were accompanied by the deterioration of the economic situation. Stock-exchange prices fell and bankruptcies accelerated, as did unemployment. The *ateliers* were originally intended to cater to 10,000 unemployed in search of work but at the end of May 1848 more than 100,000 unemployed were packed into them. In order to reduce the pressure on state finances, new taxes were voted which alienated the agrarian population and the bourgeoisie from the revolution. The *ateliers* lacked the capacity to take care of and sensibly employ the masses who flocked to them. Louis Blanc's idea of the *ateliers* at the core of a system of organised labour in which workers would collaborate in their own autonomous production co-operatives according to their craft qualifications, became an ever more distant utopia. This collapse of the dream produced claims for more radical social reforms. The radicalisation of the language of the poor and unemployed increased fear of chaos and anarchy. The call for social reforms was identified with socialism and the Republic was tantamount to the Red Peril. Memories of 1793 – The Year of the Terror – reappeared and – as Flaubert put it – “the axe of the guillotine was lightening in every syllable of the word Republic”.

rary resolution for some forty years after the traumatic experience of unemployment during the 1930s (see the Introduction).

The long-term implications of the ideological desertion of the Christian discourse on labour, and its replacement with the perception of labour as a commodity, was the emergence of two major points of reference: the state and the market. Despite the obvious connection between Smith and Marx – between the theorist of the market and the theorist of the state, with both belonging to the same Enlightenment framework (with Marx, living in a much more industrialised epoch, refining his concept of the market based on social observation) – it is the differences between their models that were emphasised in the modern rhetoric on work, wealth, and social justice. The market and the state were split, becoming two abstractions instead of one entity. Both abstractions became the object of heated debates, high expectations, and contemptuous refutations. Utopias as well as dystopias were built upon their foundations. While some have taken refuge in one, others have rejected it preferring the alternative. However, although one of the alternatives has often dominated the debate, the other has always been a more or less visible challenger. Utopia has provoked a dialectical dystopia in the contested defence of state or market. In this respect, the shift in beliefs about the political governance of the economy and state responsibility from its theoretical ascendancy in the 1930s to the neo-liberal rhetoric of the 1970s and 1980s does not represent anything new in a long-term historical view. The exceptional case in this bicentennial oscillation was the idea of the political governance of the market, or the “mixed economy” that prevailed during the 1950s and 1960s.

The new element that the flexibility discourse conceals, however, is that labour as a commodity is no longer in as high demand as it was. The labour surplus today is of a different kind than that of the 1930s. During the 1930s a lack of purchasing power destroyed the demand for commodities and services, and, in turn, labour. Today, production and added value are much more a question of capital generation. Less labour is required to produce an increasing abundance of commodities and services. The idea of a market-determined price for labour has taken on new proportions at a time when, as in Arendt’s passage at the beginning of this chapter, capital increasingly *replaces* labour. The old connection between capital investments and work (“employment”) has been torn asunder and turned upside down. Refuge in shorter working-time (“the 35-hour week”) will probably only result in an acceleration of this replacement rather than in the creation of new jobs. This devel-

opment is difficult to reconcile with the market-state axis but rather requires a political response at a level that goes beyond competition between nation-states. The pattern of solidarity and social responsibility within capitalism established in the 1930s (*i.e.* the merger of the market and the state) has broken down after a long process of social bargaining and must be reestablished in truly new forms.

The Masculinisation of Work

One effect of the reaction to the uproar of 1848 was that political discourse tried to steer men of all social backgrounds away from public engagement. Instead, "work" became the extolled focus of social energy and masculinity. This was most apparent in the Marxist approach, according to which militaristic metaphors encouraged mobilisation for the struggle over work in a struggle about how much labour power should be sold rather than its price *per se*. It was a struggle over the intensity of work and the length of the working day. Marxist rhetoric re-politicised that which post-1848 reaction had tried to de-politicise in depictions of work. Marxist re-politicisation meant a struggle within the workplace as opposed to the open economic arena of wage-setting, with wages, in Marx's model, seen as determined in the market by a kind of balancing of market power between capital owners and organised labour. (The liberal commodification and "marketisation" of labour continued in this respect in the Marxist scheme).

The militaristic vocabulary of Marx and Engels is peculiarly conspicuous once this reference is perceived. The forces of the market are "weapons" that "destroy" obsolete structures described as "fortresses and ramparts". The establishment of new relations of production is seen as an enormous "mobilisation". Marx, like Smith one hundred years earlier, identified a global economic system, but according to him this did not present an opportunity for wealth creation, but, rather, represented a threat to be warded off so that an alternative global order could be put in place.

The image of the struggle over work and of the industrial worker as male, strong, protecting, and providing for his wife and family, had clear Darwinian undertones. The "breadwinner" metaphor illustrated a heroic ideology of work and the worker in complex contradiction to the concurrent ideology of exploitation. In Soviet social realist art, the worker and the soldier march hand in hand; with Stachanov as an icon this image would spread far and wide. However, even in representations that did not become so extreme, this view persisted until the

1970s. Although formally equals, women were actually subordinated to men in the self-image of the working class in Western societies. Gender analyses and feminism emerged in the 1970s as proof of increasing tensions in this aspect of class identity.

The masculinisation of "work" had older roots than the reaction to 1848, however. While Adam Smith was opposed to paternalistic apprenticeships in capital enterprises, because, above all, it restricted the labour market; he accepted its place in the agrarian sector – which was, in terms of labour, by far the largest sector of the economy and the one in which women's domestic work contributed as much as the men in the fields. A large proportion of trade in "manufactured goods" (textiles are a good example) was still produced under the domestic "putting out" system, woollen cloths were not factory-produced until the 1830s and linen cloths until the 1890s. Still, Smith never problematised female work in the domestic manufacturing sector, or indeed, in its traditional household form. His was a paternalistic worldview. As has been emphasised, he disregarded any way of working which was not in capitalist enterprises, but did not see the gender implications of his approach. *Theoretically* home working, not only "putting-out" work organised in capitalist enterprises, *could have been* compatible with capitalist expansion, but Smith never took up this idea.

Marx did not say very much more in this respect. He certainly discussed capitalism with much more awareness of other modes of production than did Smith or Ricardo, but his theorisation of the development of capitalism, as a movement out of the domestic sector, never entailed a discussion of the gender implications. Much as the agrarian economy was a domestic economy, a gender-based distribution of work was hardly a theoretical consideration. The exception is Engels, who wrote about capitalism's gender bias and is the founder of much feminist Marxist writing concerning the role of women in the reproduction of labour power for industrial capitalism, and the role of women as the industrial reserve army¹⁰.

Masculinisation – not only of the labour markets, but of the whole social order – did not mean that a gender hierarchy was openly acknowledged, rather it was a veiled or indeed ignored dimension of the class concept. If gender instead of social classes are brought to the forefront in historical analysis, the history of labour market organisa-

¹⁰ For a good review of the vast Anglo-American literature on the theory and history of gender divisions in capitalism published before 1987, see BRADLEY, 1989.

tion in particular and social welfare in general can no longer quite so easily be described in the one-dimensional terms of a struggle for emancipation or for social and political progress against reaction. "Self-evident" economic truths, such as that job markets function gender-neutrally through the logic of supply and demand, become problematic. While industrialisation certainly destroyed gender hierarchies that existed in agrarian society to some degree, new gender hierarchies emerged. "Gendering" was an essential element of the new industrial capitalist order of wage-work itself. Karin Hausen has convincingly argued that job offers in industrial society were not the outcome of the free play of supply and demand but a matter of culturally determined segregation and hierarchy. Employment was a matter of the translation of long established cultural codes conveying basic social convictions about "natural" and "unnatural" conduct into modern market language (Hausen (ed.), 1993: 56; see also Rouette, 1993; and Geyer, 1994). It follows from this conclusion that the market itself emerges as a cultural construction.

Work between Class, the State, and the Market

"Work" as the focus of the image of belonging to a "class" with a specific historical mission – a self-understanding carrying an expectation of an instrumental role in the construction of the future – produced a social energy which it would be difficult to over-estimate in industrialising societies at the close of the 19th century. The concept of class, along with another invention in the wake of the French Revolution, the nation-state, and the concurrent growth of a role for the social and economic sciences, formed the basis of new and sharply contested views of work and labour.

During the last two or three decades of the 19th century the social and the national questions became entangled. Scholarly controversy in the social and economic sciences and its relation to socio-political and economic development, as brilliantly analysed by Wagner, can be seen to reflect a tension within dichotomies like state and market, socialist and liberal. The long-term trend in most national settings when the "social question" arrived on the political agenda was for a shift from *liberisti* towards *statalisti*¹¹. Around 1870 classical economics was the predominant point of departure in debates on society. It was a classical

¹¹ WAGNER, 1990, especially pp. 116-129, 259-261, 271-273. On this point I am also very grateful to Barbara MacLennan for insightful comments and suggestions.

economy based on the theoretical assumption of rationally acting individuals. Individuals and their efforts would ultimately, through the pursuit of self-interest, lead to a common good. This approach was already present in Smith, although – as has been argued above – he was much more modulated on this point than many of his later interpreters choose to admit.

Critical voices argued that economic theories did not describe social reality and were incapable of developing political solutions in the wake of accelerating industrialisation and economic crises after 1873. Political economy became associated with doctrinaire *laissez-faire* and seemed to be too little concerned with social questions and the increasing impetus for state intervention. Calls for state intervention had to do, not only with social questions, but also, to a high degree, with the intensified nation-building of the era. The merger of the national and the social questions had an impact on academic discourse. Particularly after the period of intensified industrialisation and the concomitant organisation of the labour movement in the 1880s and 1890s, political economy in its classical shape displayed obvious difficulties when it came to providing a comprehensive interpretation of the social situation. The non-interventionist state and individualism became issues of critical debate.

Marx published *Capital* in 1867 in partial response to the social and the national questions, as well as to the inadequacies of liberal political economy. Developments in economic theory must also be accredited to the influence of Marx, not only as a source of inspiration for social protest movements, but also theoretically. No one among the contemporary liberal thinkers at the end of the 19th century pretended that there was not an ongoing social struggle. In this respect, Marx's influence went beyond the working class.

A primary question in academic debate was how to integrate Marx's insights. In various academic discourses the merger of the social struggle and the struggle of nations in the world's markets where, so the saying went, "only the fittest survived", was described and interpreted in Darwinian terms. Social Darwinism produced many metaphors, which were also compatible with the masculinisation of work. One connection between the social and the national question was the perception that strong nations required strong and healthy populations. The social question was thus linked to "population politics". The long-term implication of these investigations, as emphasised above in the discussion of 1848, was that the universalism of both the liberal and socialist images of society was absorbed into nationalism.

Carl Menger was one of the liberal economists who was most influential in attempts to respond to the Marxist criticism. His theoretical problem with Marx concerned value theory, which, in its classical form, tried to deduce objective goods value from the calculation of production factors. His solution took the direction of a subject-oriented, rather than objective, value determination. William Stanley Jevons in England, and Léon Walras in France, made similar proposals. Their emerging theory of marginal utility was refined and linked to classical economics by Alfred Marshall and Vilfredo Pareto. *Cum grano salis*, Marshall responded to Marx's criticism by taking his theory on board.

With the theory of marginal utility, the preconditions existed for an internal consolidation of economic discourse. The release from classical theory's objective values, and the translation of the exchange problematic into a theory based on interactions between individuals acting with subjective preferences, set economists on a new track. By the turn of the century the opposition between the market and the idea of state intervention was no longer a significant problem. There was a clear approximation between liberal and socialist thought. In the extension of discussion concerning the emergence of optimum and equilibrium through the interaction of economic forces and the idea of consumer sovereignty, it is not difficult to discern the precursors of Keynesianism, even though the heyday of this theory was to come only half a century later during the 1950s and the 1960s. The role of Keynes was marginal during the 1930s and the force of his ideas lies in the varied posthumous readings of his works. This has allowed Keynesianism to be attached to a range of policy initiatives in different countries which tell us more about the political economies of those countries than about Keynes himself, namely, political economies that can be described in terms of a reconciliation between "state" and "market" in one cohesive *Denkfigur*.

It is also clear, however, that the consolidation of the approximation between liberal and socialist thought at the turn of the century did not necessarily point towards Keynes. The idea of the optimal self-regulation of a market-oriented economy survived under competition from more state-oriented views. Menger's disciple Ludwig von Mises in Vienna in the early 1920s warned against the alliance of the Social Democrats and the Prussian *obrigkeitsstaatliche* bureaucracy. Later, as this extreme warning ceased to make an impression, he argued against the emerging interventionist state, which, through unemployment insurance, destroyed the stabilising effects of the market. Friedrich

Hayek withdrew in the 1930s to orthodox and methodological deduction without social observation as an explicit opponent of Keynes' heresy. In Italy, neo-classical thought under the influence of Joseph Schumpeter successfully challenged the strong position established by the *statalisti* before the First World War (Wagner, 1990: 271-273).

However, mass mobilisation and state *dirigisme* during the First World War and the participation of workers' representatives in war planning opened up new horizons, which remained undecided during the unstable 1920s and became politically realisable during the Great Depression when state intervention became necessary everywhere. As a consequence of the responses to the Great Depression and of the experiences of the Second World War, more Keynesian-oriented economics gained ground during the 1950s and 1960s. Not only the experiences of mass unemployment, but also of increasing state planning and trade union participation in the war contributed to this development. Worker participation, in turn, led to democratisation, and the focus of politics shifted from prevention of social unrest to competition for votes for projects of social reconstruction. This, in turn, was another factor that pointed in the direction of economics being seen as governable by the state.

The purpose of this short survey of the development of economic discourse has been to demonstrate how drawing a straight line from Adam Smith to neo-liberal discourse in the 1980s is historically problematic. Smith never discussed the market in the pure form he is commonly credited with having done. The theoretical dichotomy between market and state as exclusive entities is also historically problematic. Theoretical and ideological differences between liberalism and socialism have overlapped at the level of political and economic debate and practice, borrowing from and influencing one another. Starting with Smith, and accelerating with Marx and the liberal reaction to him, the theoretical construction of the market has not excluded, but rather included the state. It has done so under a constant tension. Current justifications of labour flexibility which use Smith out of context must be disavowed.

However, given this contradictory overlapping and mutual influence, it is true that the construction of utopia around the concepts of work and welfare in Western societies over the last 250 years has oscillated between the market and the state as points of reference. Such constructions have never managed to reach outside or beyond this dichotomy but, instead, have often tried to find a compromise between them. The concept of "the third way" which has emerged repeatedly

over the last hundred years is one expression of this attempt. Keynesian theoretical thinking is another.

Neo-classical analysis has long emphasised unconstrained freedom of choice. Marx devoted his oeuvre to showing that the relationship implicit in these mechanisms was coercion. The theoretical freedom to choose between various employers is very different from consumer choice in the supermarket. There the choice is discretionary, while the potential worker must sign on with an employer or risk impoverishment, *if* he or she can find a job in the first place. Many do not, and for them you cannot begin to speak of choice. Moreover, neo-classical theories emphasising the individual forget that it is not actual human beings that are the material of the production process, but, rather, their capacity to work. The individual's capacity to work is not innate but socially created and sustained. Block is convincing, therefore, when he argues that conventional neo-classical economists operate with implicit instead of explicit assumptions when they analyse the social arrangements that maximise the individual capacity for work. In fact, they treat these social relations as a non-issue, while simultaneously assuming that the unquestioned authority of employers over workers is both natural and necessary. Only recently did labour economists begin to develop explicit arguments about the kinds of social relations that optimise the use of labour in formulations which often depart from neo-classical assumptions (Block, 1990: 75, 79).

The discussion here of the oscillation between state and market demonstrates that economic theories are social constructions, although they operate under primordial assumptions about economic imperatives and the existence of the market as a natural force. While economists purport to be rigorously scientific they cannot avoid the systematic use of metaphors and other literary devices. As a matter of fact, many of our key economic concepts such as inflation and deflation are based on metaphoric analogies with physical processes (Block, 1996: 6).

Work in Politics

Class identity became an instrument for social change, challenging the emerging order under slogans of labour against capital and class against class. These proclamations focused on the struggle over work. Gradually the insight that labour was a commodity subject to market transactions was integrated into the struggle over work. Wage struggle became a key concept in trade union politics. The transformation of the liberal "commodity" view of labour took the market mechanism as its

point of departure, bringing with it the growing understanding that the market mechanism of supply and demand was not just a consequence of blind market forces but something that could be influenced by steps taken by organised labour. The declared purpose of trade unions was thus to regulate labour markets just as the price cartels of capital tried to regulate commodity markets¹².

At the intersection of technological and economic developments, and the complex set of responses to these developments, the nation was increasingly mobilised as an identity category to rival class, which was experienced as an expanding threat. The transmutation of liberal

¹² The intensified conflict over work around 1900 was more complex than a simple dualistic affair between organised labour and organised capital. Intellectuals and philosophers intervened, as did the Churches. Nietzsche was terrified at the *Sinnenleerung* of humanity in the *Zeitalter der Arbeit* through the breath-taking hustle of work which penetrated all of life and burdened every *must* and necessity with regret. Nietzsche unmasked liberal bourgeois values like *Würde der Arbeit* and *Segen der Arbeit* as miserable veils, (*Götzen-Dämmerung* 1889, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* 1882, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* 1873, and *Zur Genealogie der Moral* 1887). He did not note, however, that these values, although transformed, would also be the foundation of the socialist imagined future labour society without exploitation.

More systematically than Nietzsche, Scheler criticised the hypertrophy of both the bourgeois-liberal and the socialist concept of *Arbeit*. He suggested a concept more adjusted to the "natural" hierarchy of human beings against modern atomisation and utilisation in the wake of the principle of division of labour. He insisted on the original meaning of work as *Last* and rejected the idea of work as *Lust*. He objected to the total penetration of social organisation by the power of the restless work devaluing and functionalising of human relations. See SCHELER, 1924, p. 48.

Critiques of the trend towards a totalising role of work in social organisation, resulted in divergent reactions. Late romanticism and *Jugendstil* (*Art Nouveau*) represented a kind of spiritualising flight from the whole problem. Various forms of protest were another approach, as was cultural pessimism (*fin de siècle*), with a sign of resignation a third response.

The totalitarian tendency that emerged in the concept of work also resulted in responses in different directions from Christian Churches, which themselves historically had promoted this development. One was the rejection of work as a "worldly religion". With the encyclical *Rerum novarum* in 1891 the Catholic Church expressed a more positive view. It tried to connect the conditions of modern working life to its social doctrines and to develop a Christian concept of work which reached beyond capitalism and socialism's "worldly religions". Brotherly love, *Nächstenliebe*, and legally guaranteed respect for Man, charity, and humanity were offered as alternatives to the interest and purpose-oriented pitilessness of modern working life.

universalism into a justification for the competition between nations had accelerated from the 1870s on, with the further consequence that liberalism itself was gradually distorted. From the liberal concept of the nation, as something based on labour, and also the 1848 socialist idea of the nation as the guarantor of jobs, the nation around 1900 had taken on much more conservative proportions. The nation was proclaimed to be the structure within which workers' protests could be canalised and mastered. No longer was the nation a vessel for class performance as in 1848, the nation, rather, turned against class. Workers at first tried to respond to this development with proclamations of international solidarity. The almost prophetic vision of Marx and Engels in 1848 seemed, in this respect, much more relevant fifty years later.

However, the workers' transnational ambitions under this revolutionary threat were countered by attempts at integration from the established order. The conservative response to worker protests meant, in the long run, concessionary political practice rather than a crushing of the trade unions. The long-term implication in most Western societies was that the emphasis changed from conflict to compromise and concession and from revolutionary fervour to reformist pragmatism.

The most important instrument in this de-escalation of class conflict was probably labour legislation. Through its regulation of the social conditions of the labour market, views on labour slowly changed from seeing labour as a commodity subject to the laws of supply and demand to seeing the labourer as a human being with "rights and dignity". Labour legislation in itself was an expression of a changing focus from labour as a market commodity to individual emancipation through collective organisation. Even if this development was not universally applauded, it required innovative responses. The precise form and content of labour law varied widely according to political and religious traditions and institutions. "Labour legislation" therefore should be understood in the plural "legislations". Each national discourse developed its own specific labour legislation as well as its own concept of unemployment and view of work¹³.

¹³ A case in point was Bismarck's social legislation in the 1880s. Steinmetz has demonstrated how this legislation was not simply imposed from above to prevent social unrest, but emerged gradually in interactions between local and central levels of regulation. The locus of the greatest intensity of social-policy innovation and experimentation moved back and forth between the local and central levels during the 19th century. From the middle decades of the century until the 1880s the localities

The nation-state set the parameters for the reform of working conditions. In this respect integration through compromise was successful. This was obvious by 1914 at the latest when the labour movements in country after country played down the social conflict and backed their governments in the international arena. At the outbreak of the First World War *socialism* was *nationalised* in almost every country. Italy was the exception that confirmed the rule.

This did not mean that the tensions surrounding labour and its treatment disappeared. The potential for conflict remained even if norms and institutions for conflict regulation emerged. Integration meant concessions, new claims and new concessions, in a continuous process of social bargaining. Bargaining dealt both with the conditions of the labour force and with the question of who was guaranteeing work.

In varying degrees the state emerged as the mediator in the conflict between capital and labour. This was the long-term implication of the liberal-socialist conflict over work, discernible in 1848, which intensified at the end of the 19th century when wage-work in the manufac-

were the most important agencies in social regulation. Starting with the Prussian Industrial Code and Poor Law of the 1840s, central state authorities slowly became more engaged in social regulation. The nation-state only surpassed local governments as the prime source of social-policy innovation during the 1880s. The primacy of national social policy can be traced to the positive social agendas of key officials and bureaucrats, including Bismarck, and the approval of industry. After 1890 the large industrial associations turned sharply against further reforms, which continued, however, at a local level. With the emergence of new workers' parties, proto-corporatist programmes, and scientific social work around the turn of the century, local governments again became the pacemakers of social regulation, STEINMETZ, 1993. The long-term effect of this legislation and regulation was a gradual transformation of the value patterns that prevailed in the labour market. **Changing value patterns influenced regulation; which in turn, influenced the normative order in an interactive process.** Bismarck used a practice established at the local level and a state bureaucracy promoting a rapid industrialisation to consolidate the German Empire. National values were invoked against international forces like Catholicism and Socialism. Social legislation was a weapon against socialism. Bismarck's conservative approach to pacifying labour contained the idea of a state responsibility which later was taken over and developed by the labour movement, in particular in Protestant countries such as Germany and Scandinavia. In this way an alternative to social Catholic doctrines emerged. Despite *Rerum novarum* the framework of the debate and of the integration of social protest was and remained the nation-state. Neither the Catholic Church nor the labour movements ever managed to transgress national barriers in a substantial way.

turing industry increased dramatically. The state found itself an arbiter in a macro-economic field.

This development of the state as mediator was more a European (and Japanese) phenomenon than an American one. In the United States the utopian liberal conception of labour as the source and instrument of social harmony was much more influential. Marxist utopianism and trade union action did not penetrate language and politics to the same degree as they had in Europe. This, in turn, led to a diminished perception of class performance as a social threat requiring political action. The historically different roles of the "state" and "class" in the United States and Europe should not be under-estimated.

In the 1930s nationally established orders experienced severe threats and a new phase of social bargaining commenced, in several cases during and following changes of political regimes. The connection between workers as voters and parliamentary power was emphasised and concessions were made in a more expansive and politically expedient manner. The masses were not merely a threat to the established order, but also the key to political power. Mass consumption and welfare gradually emerged as the goals of a politics based on economic growth through co-operation between labour and capital, with *full employment* as both its means and its end. In the period from the 1930s to the 1960s *nations* were increasingly "*socialised*" with macro-economic rhetoric as the instrument of enshrining a "mixed economy" and "*soziale Marktwirtschaft*". In this development work was a key category: the idea of "full employment" had arrived.

In the post-war decades, when the unshaken belief emerged that full employment could be guaranteed through economic policies, the issue of employment definitively left the sphere of political conflict, where it had been located during the inter-war period, and was elevated as a rhetorical paradigm above political struggle. In constitutions from Malta in the south, to Sweden in the north, the question of work was mentioned in programmatic terms. "Malta is a democratic republic founded on work and on respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual" runs the first paragraph of the first chapter of the constitution of 1964. The Swedish *regeringsform* of 1970 states that it is incumbent on government ("*det allmänna*") to guarantee the right to work, housing, and education. This constitutional undertaking of 1970, *in fact*, was adopted just on the edge of a new era of mass unemployment. What the obligation to guarantee work, established in 1848 for the first time, really meant, and what the precise legal and

normative content of a concept like “the right to work” really was, is unclear¹⁴.

Developments between the 1930s and the 1960s signified the transformation of the liberal market doctrine. This transformation was a continuation, in a more definite way, of a process that had begun in the 19th century. It was a conversion to the view that the preconditions of the labour market were politically shaped and regulated by legislation. Market and state merged into one cohesive heuristic framework. The form that this regulation took, and the role of the state, was the result of historically given power relationships and appropriations of language and symbols in different national settings. At the same time, competition between national economies in international markets encouraged the convergence of these rules.

The aim of full employment, in its various meanings, was born with Keynes. The view of work and the role of the state he established implicitly placed the whole question within the logic of macro-economic regulation, thereby promoting national solutions and professionalising the management of liberalism. Avenues for state intervention and labour market classification permitting retirement and other manpower policies emerged after the war. This development should, however, be juxtaposed with Hayekian constructions of individualism also developing since the 1930s. These broke through in the 1970s (Milton Friedman was a Nobel Prize winner in 1976, Friedrich Hayek himself, together with Gunnar Myrdal, won in 1974) and accelerated in the 1980s. This break-through meant the concomitant breakdown of established systems of labour market analysis and of the separation of state and market.

The collapse of the full employment society revolutionised the preconditions for labour legislation. The convention of social responsibility established in the 1930s broke down and expectations of individual self-sufficiency, rather than social responsibility, were increasingly dominant. Faith in a politically governable economy was decimated and aspirations were again directed to the action of the unfettered market. Views on what a good society would be and how it should be brought into being changed. In the evolving rhetoric since the 1980s concepts such as “labour hoarding”, “outsourcing”, and “down-sizing” (“slimming down”), and individual labour contracts are increasingly

¹⁴ Clarification on this point is the aim of an ongoing research project by Mats Kumlien at Uppsala University.

model. In the new fundamentalist language concepts such as market and flexibility guarantee jobs.

The origin of the erosion of historically developed solidarity and identity ties lies in the processes of marginalisation that have followed the collapse of key industries such as steel and shipbuilding. New ties of solidarity between local work forces and management emerged in the struggle for survival in competition with rival enterprises within the framework of the politics of deindustrialisation (Stråth, 1987). The fittest survived and the weakest were discarded as early-retirees or recipients of redundancy payments ("golden handshakes") within the framework of "social plans".

This development challenged a labour market construct that had been developing since the 19th century in which job security, health plans and working-hours were at the core of a labour legislation that, in turn, supplemented and regulated collective bargaining. It was a labour market in which priority was given to labourers as individuals not commodities. Legislation determined the limits of contracts and paved the way for civil society. In Western Europe, the compromise was a pragmatic "social democratic" merger of the ideas of Smith and Marx that was then dismembered into separate socialist revolutionary (1970s) and liberal (1970s and 1980s) utopian dreams and fundamentalism.

The underlying mechanism of this new belief in the individual is a social Darwinian division of employees/*Mitarbeiter* into the fit and the weak. Flexible casual labourers and the unemployed rise in numbers when conditions that are, in this respect, reminiscent of the era prior to the introduction of labour legislation exist. Work has historically not only connoted community either as a Christian or bourgeois morality propounded from above or class identity; it has also remained a struggle for survival.

The Darwinian element in the flexibility language mediates continuity with the 19th century when a Darwinian metaphor existed not only in the liberal doctrine of harmony through competition but also emerged in a Marxist framework. The decisive difference between Marxist and neo-liberal Darwinian languages is that the former was based on the collective idea of class identity, whereas today's flexibility language claims to have an idea of the free and unbounded individual at its heart.

Visions of work were the foundation of the chiliastic ideas of "the New Man" in Soviet Russia. With socialism as a basis, the emergence

of a new type of man was anticipated: solidaristic instead of egoistic, collective-minded instead of individually oriented. The icon of this New Man was a male muscular manufacturing worker with a powerful faith in future progress.

Today's flexibility has its own liberal counterpart to the Soviet New Man, a figure as strong and as utopian as its predecessor. Regarding this development, see in particular Wagner's and Garsten and Turtinen's chapters 1 and 5 in this volume. The "Flexible Man" is an all-rounder, highly adaptable to new challenges, creative and innovative. He is independent and emancipated from all restraining social bounds. From the self-realisation of the Flexible Man is postulated the emergence of a new and better society, although the tension between adaptability and creativity is not addressed. Thus a critical question arises as to how creative and innovative the remote-controlled Flexible Man really is. Does his ability to roll with changes not make him an achievement-oriented rather than a socially stable character with little political loyalty? Utopian and fundamentalist invocations of the New Man have been historically dangerous and there is no good reason why we should judge the flexible model differently. Moreover, like the Soviet New Man, the Flexible New Man has a clear gender-dimension. The strong male flexible individual has been constructed as the counterpoint to Stachanov. However, to this figure has also been added a flexible woman: typically female part-time work and job-sharing are some of the hallmarks of flexibility.

Collective identities centred around the concept of work, as it evolved at the end of the 19th century when workers tried to find a shared role between the Scylla of individualism and the Charybdis of commodification are now disappearing. This development is underpinned by rather than caused by labour legislation. The result is a social disintegration in which responsibility for social justice is ceasing to be located at the government level where it has resided since the 1930s. The idea that the flexible market should take over the role of governments in this respect is nothing more than a rhetorical trick. Responsibility is increasingly de-personified through a personification of the Market: "the Market requires lower taxes, higher or lower interests, higher dividends, budget and wage restraint", etc. If the Market is not satisfied, it forces a government crisis.

The emergence of market rhetoric in the 1970s can, in one sense, be seen as a movement which fits within the framework of the continuous oscillation over the past two centuries between utopian and dystopian concepts of state and market and between their linguistic and symbolic

poles: equality versus liberty, rigidity versus flexibility, regulation versus deregulation, Marx versus Smith etc. However, to recall earlier historical conditions is not to argue that history repeats itself. The present situation represents in many respects a transformation of a different kind.

One difference is the break-up of the merger between market and state, yes, between Marx and Smith, which was established through the long process of social bargaining about social responsibility that began in the last century. This merger meant that the old market-state dichotomy was transformed into a Cold War discourse emphasising the difference between “free” (*i.e.* state and market democratically mixed) and “planned” economies. The recurrence of the old oscillation between utopian/dystopian state versus market views of labour market organisation must be seen in the context of the end of the Cold War. Its recurrence must also be seen against the background of the breakdown of conventions of responsibility. Thus traditional state responsibility for marginalised individuals has come under considerable pressure from budgetary problems now that neither labour nor capital supply sufficient tax revenues while the cost of financing unemployment increases. This issue of social responsibility is clearly connected to the question of social exclusion discussed in the introductory chapter. The problem of responsibility for those on the margins of working society is exacerbated because it is not an autonomous paternalist employer as of old, but professional management and trade unions who define the working conditions of employees through the processes of collective bargaining. Within this system, casual labourers and the “redundant” lack a common identity basis and interest representation. Whether events in Paris in the winter of 1998, during which organisations of the unemployed invaded and occupied restaurants in order to draw attention to their plight, will signify the start of a new construction of identity and interest representation is an open question.

Marx forecast an outcome in the struggle between capital and labour which does not seem to have been borne out today. Instead of labour ultimately overcoming capital the opposite seems to have occurred, not through a conventional Marxian process of struggle, but simply by the substitution of labour for capital. Marx was not unaware of this possibility, although he preferred to see this development as one with positive consequences. In the *Grundrisse* (1857) he foresaw a reduction of the need for labour in an ideal society taking full advantage of technological innovation. The reduction of the workload to a minimum in society would allow an expansion of artistic and

scientific education to all in society's newly acquired copious spare time. His reading was thus one according to which capital emancipates labour rather than there being an emancipation of capital from labour (Marx, 1974 [1857]: 582-600).

Marx could base the idea of the reduction of workloads to a minimum on a long tradition of utopian thinking. In his *Utopia* Thomas Moore upheld the idea of bettering society through the institution of a six-hour working day; Campanella proclaimed a four-hour day in his utopian novel *Città del sole*; and in Charles Fourier's social utopia only a few people would need to work at one time and in two hours shifts which would counteract the threat of boredom. These prophecies and dreams proved vain during the industrialisation of the 19th century, which instead saw the introduction of more machines and longer working days and an intensified debate over the nature of work. The social question thus arrived on the agenda rather than any social utopia. Refuge was sought in positivistic social science: mechanics, physiology and psychology were put to use in the elaboration of norms and preconditions for industrial production. A science of work was developed: F. W. Taylor's psycho-physiological studies of muscle power and physical exhaustion are only one example of many in a rich field of experimentation and theorisation (Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum, 1998).

Although he foresaw the growth of today's global capitalist networks, Marx could not imagine the extent of accompanying technological developments or the computerisation of production, administration, and financing. For Marx, globalisation was a concept that afforded the creation of labour solidarity against capital ("international solidarity"). International labour would be stronger than international capital. The value added to goods in the productive process is today, for the most part, the result of research and development, not manual work and industrial production. In keeping with this, processes of computerisation and globalisation have fundamentally reformed company structures, employment ties, loyalties, and the preconditions of working discipline. While "old style" capitalism, such as is associated with names like Henry Ford and Charles Taylor, provided opportunities for self-realisation and self-respect through the organisation of labour – despite its obvious capacity to destroy human integrity, as in Marx's concept of alienation/*Entfremdung* – these opportunities are severely eroded today. Capitalism's flexibility has exhausted its former capacity for social integration (Sennett, 1998).

Capital is much more evasive than it was; it traverses politically controlled borders with increasing ease and does not create jobs as it once did. This fact does not offer clear conclusions. Political strategies aiming to prevent the disintegrative effects of flexible capitalism within national frameworks seem to run into problems. A quarter of a century's campaigning against unemployment has not given much ground for optimism about national policy interventions.

It is an open question whether a European level of labour market legislation could reestablish work as an element constitutive of social community, through a redefinition and reregulation of the concept of work and through political control and taxation of the fruits of labour and capital. Another open question that remains is whether work is about to disappear as a category liable to political control, increasingly replaced by the reign of capital free of all political control.

For the first time work seems to have lost its negative connotation of toil, dirt, and sweat, even though the majority of jobs are certainly not ideal. The apparent dilution of the negative connotations of the concept of work has to do, to some extent, with improved technological possibilities to create better working conditions, a process linked with employers' interest in retaining key personnel despite the fact that lifetime employment has become a fragile prospect. More generally relevant to the waning of the negative connotation is the shortage of jobs. The negative connotation of not having a job naturally overshadows the many negative elements of those jobs that still exist. In this way, job descriptions, working-hours and wages are factors to be played off against calculations about the availability of employment: it is in many respects more important to have a job than to question its content. However, those with jobs often do not share this view; they continue to think in terms of seeking improved working conditions and wages. Union solidarity is thus reshaped in the conflict between improving wages and working conditions for those who are employed and renouncing such improvements in the (insecure) hope that new relatively low-paid jobs will reduce unemployment.

In this environment flexibility has emerged as the symbol of a promising solution. Flexibility is the carrier of many expectations and the formula that transforms uncertainty into hope. It is the key concept used to construct social certainty.

In this sense flexibility is a concept of universal proportions. The model to emulate is the United States' labour market, where the concept was coined as a key instrument in the neo-liberal discourses that emerged in the 1980s. This model is the successor to the short-lived

Japanese model of life-long employment and peaceful industrial relations ("consensus"), which was invented in the 1970s in a first attempt to cope with the new situation of mass unemployment. The American flexibility discourse harbours a religious dimension with its emphasis on a self-regulating self-help ethic in civil society as opposed to an image of a society stifled by "nanny-state" regulation and social hand-outs. This identification of a religious tone is supported by Shmuel Eisenstadt's argument that American social and political organisation is typically fundamentalist in comparison to the more pragmatic approaches common in Western Europe (Eisenstadt, 1999).

The extent to which such religious language will lastingly penetrate and change European political structures established over centuries is uncertain. Flexibility discourses in Europe differ from those in the United States; the state plays a much more significant historical role in labour market regulation. The Protestant ethic, historically guaranteed by strong state churches, which skilfully absorbed individual pietism in Northern Europe, or repelled it as in Germany (*Thron-Altar*), and the important influence of the Catholic social doctrine in Southern Europe, in addition to our idea of the long-term merger of state and market in the form of conventions of social responsibility, all point towards a historical onus that indicates that flexibility will have to be compatible with some kind of national or EU state-guaranteed regulation in Europe. This would mean that instead of the market and flexibility bringing the "end of history" and the era of the New Man, flexibility would provoke political intervention.

It follows, then, from this interpretation that we should now be looking towards a new phase of political regulation. However, here a crucial question arises as to the validity of the postulated connection between social disintegration, easy to discern, and political protest, more difficult to perceive. Perhaps the trigger for new government regulation is less likely to be one of social protest than to derive from the erosion of the political control of resources through the increasing evasiveness of capital. The regulatory settlement accompanying the second catalyst would surely be substantially different from any responding directly to social protest.

Some Conclusions

"Work" has been a key element in the construction of community and collective identity over the last two thousand years or more. Work has been conceptually contradictory and contested; it has been an in-

strument for social discipline as well as a target for social emancipation. Religious values have supplemented and competed with theories in economics and the social sciences in order to define work and its role in society. A decisive watershed in the evolution of views of work was the invention of the market in the 17th century.

Smith, Ricardo and other classical thinkers, like J. S. Mill, did not only see the opportunities of the market and the division of labour, but also potential problems. They warned increasingly against the destructive tendencies of capitalism and advocated protective government intervention. Recurring attempts to establish belief in the benefits of a pure market have been rejected. Marx absorbed the warnings of classical economists and developed his theory on the revolutionary explosive force inherent in capitalism. His focus was exploitation, which reduces the ties between man and man to naked interests measured in cash. Thus the immanent trend of capital and the market logic as it arrives at the entrance of the new century was envisaged and formulated by Marx and Engels: the first part of the *Communist Manifesto* is a soberingly concise and perceptive description of a development now fully visible a hundred and fifty years later.

However, the strength of Marx's analysis lies in his radical criticism of the status quo and in his observations as a contemporary historian. As a chiliastic prophet for the coming "Realm of Freedom", in which he took over and inverted liberal utopias, he has shared the fate of other utopian thinkers. His reduction of politics to a mere function of the economy is a disastrous heritage, which, in the 1980s, was assimilated by the neo-liberal rhetoric. Moreover, Marx's idea of labour as the source of all social value creation becomes problematic in light of the expansion of finance capitalism. Class as developed by Marx equally seems problematic today.

Thus, during the last century and a half, through timely concessions and reforms, a revolutionary development was prevented. Free competition in markets was transformed into competition over votes in the political sphere. Factory legislation was not won on the battlefield, but rather through changing coalitions of forces defining the *raison d'État*.

The new element in this long development of theory-building is the accelerating penetrative force of a modern capitalism in which wealth is generated less by production and more by financial manipulations and ever bigger yields are made by ever fewer hands. Increasingly investment concentrates on finance portfolios rather than factories. The connection between investment and employment has thus been severed

and political control within a national framework has become much more difficult.

This new element is veiled by a language of flexibility that aims to establish historical continuity through a biased reading of Smith and through reference to an imagined tradition of liberal civil society. In recourse to concepts like globalism, individualism, flexibility, and deregulation, the language dominating today's popular debates about state and economy demarcates state interventions as unreasonable, restrictive, and outmoded. However, the human dimension and the humanistic pretension of the new language neglect the reality of the power relationships and interests it encompasses.

Labour is replaced by capital and the old connection between investment and employment (not necessarily work) has been broken. Does this development mean that work should be seen as a Malthusian category, as in Marx's *Grundrisse*? Marx saw such a development as something good, while we see it as an evil. Today we observe a trend in this direction that is somewhat different than that which manifested itself during the unemployment crisis of the 1920s and the 1930s. It will always, however, be impossible to judge the strength and long-term direction of trends as we experience them. Only in retrospect are strength and long-term outcomes discernible.

Thus, since the 1970s a steady 10-20% of the active population has not occupied a job. It is extremely difficult to discern what is happening below this surface of 10-20% because statistics and other kinds of information use measures focusing on the way full employment was constructed in an industrial society that used different standards of how to define employment and unemployment as a reference. What are the statistical criteria for being recognised as unemployed or underemployed today? Is enforced part-time employment of fifteen to twenty hours a week considered employment or not? In Spanish employment statistics even less than 15 hours is counted. If 10-20% of the employable population is unemployed, 80-90% is at work. On which terms? We do not know, because statistics are not structured so as to answer this question. How are we to understand the relatively stable balance of 10-20% versus 80-90% over the last quarter of a century? Why has this not moved closer to 50-50, for instance? Do the figures represent any trend; or, rather, do they in fact indicate surprising stability after the collapse of labour markets in the 1970s? Would the pattern be altered if "employment" were to be exchanged for "work"? We do not know because the practices of the statistical, social, and economic sciences

do not aim to cast light upon these issues: again their information has not been structured to answer this kind of question.

At the very beginning of the industrial revolution, the Luddites were mistaken in their desperate battle to oust the newly introduced weaving machinery, which they feared would take away their jobs. Our retrospective knowledge can even prompt us to smile at their despair. Some observers today think that we are in the long run in the same situation that the Luddites once were without knowing it: what we see are temporary difficulties that will disappear in the wake of general economic expansion. Others judge the trend in much more Malthusian terms. Certainly few see a future such as Fourier painted. However, irrespective of the prognosis for the long-term, one thing seems clear: silent marginalisation, rather than social conflict, and the polarisation of better and worse off; in brief, the return of the social question, requires a political redistribution of some kind in order to rescue the excluded of society.

Redistribution will not arrive automatically through the action of the market. Indeed, market and flexibility are not the remedy, but, rather, the catalysts of marginalisation. Neither "globalisation" nor "flexibility" nor "individualisation" offer new explanations or solutions to the social question. The historical novelty is rather the liberation of capital and market forces from almost all controls and their diminishing dependence on a mass labour force. The erosion of a corrective collective opposition, whether originating in the "state" or workers' organisations, is a long-term problem not only for democratic forms of social organisation but also for social cohesion as a whole. There is thus no crisis of the economy but a crisis of the cultural consequences of the economy.

More than fifty years ago Polanyi convincingly, and with lasting validity, unveiled the market myth and described the interactive process wherein economic integration ("the market") results in social disintegration and protest, which in turn requires the political containment of the market through regulation. In response, economic forces adjust to regulation and seek new directions of expansion in as yet unregulated territories, which provokes new protests and new interventions and so on (Polanyi, 1944). Polanyi and Keynes supplement one another in the construction of a model according to which state and market are merged and interact. The decisive difference today is the lack of social protest.

According to this view the crucial question is where a new level of regulation could be established. It is beyond the immediate scope of

this chapter to discuss such a level in detail (we will come back to it in the concluding chapter), but it seems difficult to discern an alternative to the European Union. It seems important that regulation should focus on the shortage of jobs. Of course, wages and other working conditions, the content of the jobs, are still crucial, but bargaining can no longer have a more or less inelastic demand for labour as its point of departure. The question of how to create solidarity means that the concept of the "division of labour" takes on totally new meaning. The answer to this question must be looked for in directions that go beyond concepts like full employment, which only has a ritual function today, and flexibility, which veils power relationships and is so ideologically charged that it signifies both anything and nothing. The problem of the work shortage is greater than can be described by a concept like flexibility or an economic theory about a mathematically derived and constructed reality, or by dreams of the New Man. The job shortage is too serious a problem to be left to theoreticians and the professional speculation of economists. The political and social dimension of the work shortage, as well as its legal, normative and ethical framework, must be addressed much more systematically in theoretical reflection on this problem.

This chapter has been a plea for retaining a long-term historical perspective in developing new theoretical approaches. Smith, stripped of vulgar interpretations, and Marx, not as a theorist of political action but as an analytical contemporary historian, still offer valid points of departure. Another element would be the elucidation of explicit questions about the ethics of responsibility and social solidarity.