

Work and Need, Particular and Universal

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Work and need animate Hegel's thought. They appear in his early study of liberal political philosophy in Tübingen and his encounter with eighteenth-century Scottish political economy in Bern. These resulted in the lost manuscript on James Stuart's *Principles of Political Economy* and in the Jena *Realphilosophie* lectures on the philosophy of spirit. Work and need are pivotal in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) and the *Philosophy of Right* (1821) and are key supports for the development of his logic and his speculative philosophy more generally. The early reception of Hegel tended to treat his analysis of work and need superficially, to dismiss it, or to take it on often silently without acknowledging or analysing its significance. In the twentieth century, the intervention of Georg Lukács (1975, also 1978, 1980) and the meticulous scholarly work of Paul Chamley (1963, 1965a), Norbert Waszek (1988) along with many others, have made clear the importance of work, need and political economy in Hegel's thought (see Plant 1977, 1980; Dickey 1987; Waszek 1988; Schmidt am Busch 2002; Renault 2016).

Perceptive commentators such as Domenico Losurdo (2004) have emphasized that work is not one theme among others but ultimately grounds Hegel's insistence that a properly scientific philosophy involves the 'strenuous effort of the concept' (*PS*, §58, *translation modified*). Hegel's thought developed out of his engagement with political economy, alongside his engagement with ancient and modern philosophy. This helps to clarify some of the reasons why his logic has in turn been so valuable for comprehending the capitalist political economy (Uchida 1988; Moseley and Smith 2015). Foundational elements of Hegel's logic, such as plasticity and the relation between the particular and the universal, develop out of Hegel's conception of work and need. The present chapter takes up Hegel's logic, and specifically the concept of plasticity and the interplay between the particular and the universal. The goal is to demonstrate the importance of his analysis of work and need in the development of his logic,

and moreover the importance of Hegel's logic for his analysis of work and need. Beyond this, I seek to demonstrate the importance of his logic for any thinking of the future of work and need.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section documents Hegel's account of the changeability or 'plasticity' of work and need, and beyond this the plasticity of the worker and the human animal as such. These themes develop in his engagement with eighteenth-century Scottish political economy and ground both his political economy and his logic. The second section turns to the transition Hegel sketches from simple immediate labour to what he calls 'universal labour', which turns on the mediation of the activity of each particular individual worker by the work of others, and further, the connection between the needs of each and the needs of all. Together, the plasticity of work and need, the interplay between particular and universal labour, and between particular and universal need, are vitally important aspects of Hegel's conception of work and need.

The plasticity of work and need

Work, for Hegel, is the transformation or 'mediation' of an object by a subject. In this process the object is given form; at the same time this forming forms and transforms the worker. Work, in short, is change. The history of work clearly demonstrates the radically variable nature of what work is and what appears as work (see, for example, Applebaum 1992; Thomas 1999; Komlosy 2018). The results of work and its imprint on the social and physical environment are of course palpably concrete, as is the experience of grindingly hard work. Work at the same time is fundamentally malleable, transformative and in transformation. Work is both hard and hardening; at the same time it is constantly subject to loosening, variation and change.

Catherine Malabou's book *The Future of Hegel* advances a powerful interpretive reading of Hegel by elaborating from his work the motif of 'plasticity'. For Malabou, plasticity refers to the united but distinct capacities of forming and being formed, the capacities of producing and receiving form (1996: 9). This is a crucial dynamic in, for example, the contemporary neurosciences, in which the concept of neuroplasticity expresses the capacity of the brain to form and, in its repeated action of forming, to be formed (Malabou 2004, 2009). Malabou ingeniously develops Hegel's thinking of plasticity; an active forming that is formed and constantly transformed in its activity. Malabou's considerations on the future of Hegel open themselves concretely to elaboration regarding the

nature and indeed the future of work. Further, it should be stressed that the origin and pivot of Hegel's thinking of plasticity is *work*. Beyond the development of the theme of plasticity from his aesthetics and philosophy of spirit to his logic, the primary activity and meaning of the forming of subject and object is work.

Hegel learned from the world and from James Steuart the importance of grasping the historical transformations of work and also the importance of the rise of new needs. Desires do not have the objectivity of either the worker or the tool and are forever arising and vanishing. This led Hegel to emphasize the enduring form of the worker and the instruments of production and the passing nature of consumption and enjoyment: 'The *tool* lasts while the immediate enjoyments pass away and are forgotten' (*SL*, 663).

Work stands between subject and object and must be constantly repeated. Work also mediates between the subjects who work together, and between those who work and those who consume. Hegel therefore advances his classic definition of work, as activity that puts off the immediacy of enjoyment in order to transform matter into something more useful. In a situation in which desire is manifest immediately in consumption:

Desire has reserved to itself the pure negating of the object and thereby its unalloyed feeling of self. But that is the reason why this satisfaction is itself only a fleeting one, for it lacks the side of objectivity and permanence. Work, on the other hand, is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off. (*PS*, §195)

For Hegel, work has an intimate but complex relationship with need, and work in the modern world brings an increasingly complex chain of mediations between the worker and the object of work. Political economy proper comes onto the scene in light of the mediation of need by work and the interconnection of the work of each with the needs of all. Hegel situates political economy within what he calls 'the system of needs' (*OPR*, §§189–208) which concerns itself with 'the mediation of need and the satisfaction of the individual through his work and through the work and satisfaction of the needs of all the others' (*OPR*, §188).

While Hegel may seem to support an undifferentiated or static sense of universal human need when he stresses that 'there are certain universal needs, such as food, drink, clothing, etc.' (*OPR*, §189A), at the same time he stresses the plastic nature of need. From the eighteenth-century Scottish political economists and from his contemporaries (on this relation see Oz-Salzberger 1995; Waszek 1988) Hegel developed the recognition that human beings have more than simply material needs. James Steuart had explicitly emphasized the multiplication of needs as a concrete strategy for inducing rural populations

to enter the cycle of capitalist production (see Steuart 1767: 31–36). Adam Ferguson had stressed that human needs go beyond the merely animal and develop in relation to the needs of other people. For Ferguson, desire is imitative and human beings learn from the desires of other people (see Ferguson 1767: 13 *et passim*). This is a crucial theme in Hegel's own account of desire and the transformation of desire. In Hegel this multiplication of needs is far from politically neutral: 'A need is therefore created not so much by those who immediately experience it, but by those who hope to make a profit from its creation' (*OPR*, §191A).

In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel defines work as 'the mediation whereby appropriate and *particularized* means are acquired and prepared for similar *particularized* needs' (*OPR*, §196; translation modified). In many ways this definition is quite conventional, following the Aristotelian idea of purposive action or *poiesis* as intentional forming of matter. It is also more or less consistent with the way Marx presents work 'first of all' as a process of mediating the relation to nature in order to make nature more amenable to human needs. On this conception, work is a process by which a human being 'acts on external nature and changes it', such that in working the human being 'sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body, his arms, legs, head and hands, in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs' (Marx 1976: 283).

Hegel emphasizes the diversity of the objects and processes of work in the satisfaction of diverse needs: 'Through work the raw material directly supplied by nature is specifically adapted to these numerous ends by all sorts of diverse processes' (*OPR*, §196). This is a thoroughly materialist conception of work in the sense that it stresses the concrete and diverse nature of needs and the concrete and diverse processes of work to satisfy needs.

This conception of work is also materialist in the emphasis it places on concrete human labour in the constitution of value. Here Hegel takes up the labour theory of property from John Locke, who had presented the value of commodities in terms of the labour that is added to or 'mixed' with the products of nature (Locke 1690: §27). For Hegel the value of goods arises from a social relation to the work of others. Further, in consuming the products of others one has a complex and mediated relation to the work of others:

This formative change confers value on means and gives them their utility, and hence human beings in what they consume are mainly concerned with the products of human beings. It is the products of human effort which human beings consume. (*OPR*, §196)

In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel very briefly sketches ‘the universal and objective aspect in work’ and ‘the process of *abstraction* which effects the subdivision of needs and means’ (OPR, §198). He takes this to involve a historical transformation from work done for the satisfaction of one’s own needs to work done in order to produce goods for others. Abstraction and universality enter the world of work, for Hegel, with the division of labour and the capitalist market. Such a vision of an original state of working for oneself, which is superseded later by working for others, is of course historically false. It reflects Hegel’s uncritical absorption of a political economy that fails entirely to understand the complexity, sociality and socially coordinated nature of pre-capitalist forms of production. Such a conception rests on an idea of original isolation, which only notices the forms of interconnection that develop after pre-capitalist social bonds have been destroyed by the forcible institution of capitalist relations of production.

Still, Hegel is very attentive to the new social bonds between people that develop under the capital-relation. He therefore takes up from eighteenth-century political economy the notion of an integrative mechanism that unites in spite of the appearance of diversity and separation. This notion was well established in the political economists he read, for example in Mandeville’s (1714) image of the ‘grumbling hive’ of bees that nevertheless produces a positive outcome, Ferguson’s idea of effects which are ‘the result of human action, but not the execution of any human design’ (1767: 119), Stuart’s idea that modern society is a complex integrated mechanism akin to a watch (1767: 249–250) and Smith’s idea that capitalist society is coordinated by a mysterious integrative ‘invisible hand’ (1776: 32). At his most optimistic or rather naive, Hegel therefore follows this line of thinking and leaps from potentiality to actuality, marvelling at the idea that ‘subjective self-seeking turns into a contribution to the satisfaction of the needs of everyone else’ (OPR, §199). He claims that this is a necessity of cooperation, for the reason that:

the complex interdependence of each on all, now presents itself to each individual as the *universal permanent resources* which give each the opportunity, by the exercise of his education and skill, to draw a share from it and be assured of his livelihood, while what he thus earns by means of his work maintains and increases the general resources. (OPR, §199)

Whether everyone’s needs are satisfied by the work of others is of course far from necessary or automatic. The realities of capitalist production have made it patently clear that fully socialized production can coexist perfectly well with

individualized appropriation. Whether or not needs will be satisfied turns on the question of distribution, and results not from economic laws but from class struggle. Hegel's optimism regarding the prospect that massive increases in productive capacity would lead to the satisfaction of the needs of all leads him at moments such as this to underplay the massive human costs of capitalist production. This is perhaps peculiar given that, as we will see, elsewhere he recognizes this very clearly. It is for this reason that at key moments Hegel is quite rightly criticized by Marx (1844: 386) and others for overemphasizing the positive aspect of work in satisfying needs and forming subjects, at the expense of the negative side, in which a few live off the work of the many; and in which work for the overwhelming majority is degrading, deforming and precarious.

In spite of these fatal defects in his own ability to systematically comprehend the realities of work, Hegel draws out from eighteenth-century political economy the incredibly important theme of the interconnected nature of work. He formalizes this in terms of a passing over from the particular to the universal in work. Such a passing over is equally a pivotal theme in his logic. In his political economy this movement between the particular and the universal is sometimes assumed to arise, as has been seen, from trade or the market. Just as often, it appears in changes in the nature of work and in the interconnections produced when working with and for others. While much in Hegel remains mysterious about how this actually functions, and its political consequences are very rarely rigorously considered, it is to his great credit that he emphasized so clearly how the work of any individual rests on the work of others and how the work of others enables and transforms each and all, while also providing radical opportunities for satisfying the ever-expanding needs of each and all.

Particular and universal labour

Hegel sketches a historical trajectory in which 'individual labour' is transformed over time into what he calls 'universal labour' (*JPS*, 119). In individual labour, which Hegel associates with peasant labour, the central productive agent is nature, and thus the soil, seasons and weather govern the rhythms and life of those working on the land. Hegel shows a keen awareness of the historical processes, which he learned from his reading of Hume, Ferguson, Steuart and others, of the 'improvement' of land that unfolded from the late medieval period in England (see Wood 2002).

Hegel is equally aware of the accompanying process of the vastly increasing productivity of labour that took place with the rise of cooperative work, first in agriculture and later in manufactories and then industrial factories. With the increasing productivity of labour, the central productive agent is no longer unimproved land, nor simple unimproved work. As the productivity of labour increases the nature of work changes, and Hegel observed this transformation, even if he was not able to draw out all of the consequences that follow from it. In short, with the application and development of new productive capacities, work is no longer simple, individual or 'concrete' labour but rather, in his terms, work passes over into the abstract and the universal (*JPS*, 164).

In this process, new skills and techniques are adopted across the social whole and new relations with others develop. This is why he maintains that 'labor is of all and for all, and enjoyment is enjoyment by all. Each serves the other and provides help. Only here does the individual have existence, as individual' (*JPS*, 120). These ideas of interconnection in work are refined in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in what is probably the most precise condensation of Hegel's philosophy of work:

What the individual does is the universal skillfulness [*allgemeine Geschicklichkeit*] and ethos of all. In his actuality, he is entangled with the doings of all insofar as this content completely isolates itself. The individual's *work* for his needs is a satisfaction of the needs of others as much as it is of his own needs, and the satisfaction of his own needs is something he attains only through the work of others. Just as the singular individual in his *singular* labor already *without awareness* performs a *universal* work [*allgemeine Arbeit*], he also achieves the universal as his *consciously known* object. The whole becomes, *as the whole*, his own work, for which he sacrifices himself and through which he gets himself back. (*PS*, §351; translation modified)

In work, then, one loses immediate natural existence and gains access to the whole. This break from immediacy is why, in the *Phenomenology*, work is 'desire held in check' (*PS*, §195). Moreover, at this point Hegel adds a crucial expression, omitted in Miller's translation but restored by Pinkard: 'Work cultivates and educates' (*PS*, §195, *translation modified*). This process of cultivation and education involves undoing natural immediate subjective existence. To learn how to work in abstract universal labour requires not doing what comes naturally but rather involves actively building habits that incorporate the skills and capacities that have been developed by others. Learning and transformation of individuals becomes something dispersed across the social whole, as individuals learn a range of physical, technical and social skills, along with great refinements of language

and affect which in many forms of work today have become directly productive forces in their own right. Today, the capacity and desire to be constantly formed and transformed is a key aspect of the most privileged forms of work, just as a willingness to submit oneself to degrading and deforming work is a key feature of less privileged work. Hegel is clear about this much:

Labor is not an *instinct*, but a rationality that makes itself universal in the people, and is therefore opposed to the singularity of the individual, which must be conquered; and laboring is precisely for this reason not *as an instinct* but in the mode of the spirit, because it *has become something other than the subjective activity of the single agent*; it is a universal routine, and it becomes the skill of the single through this process of learning; through its process of othering itself it returns to itself. (FPS, 246)

This circle of externalization and return, which is for Hegel also the nature of spirit, is here used to characterize the material ‘externalization’ (*Entäußerung*) of self in work, a theme that was importantly drawn out by Lukács (1975). This movement goes both ways, with the individual using universal skills and at the same time creating them at work. Further, abstract universal labour involves not only universal skilfulness but also an individualization in which the universal skill of the age is particularized in each individual person. This is a movement from the particular to the universal, but also a movement back from the universal to the particular. In a fragment of 1803 Hegel writes, in relation to the creativity of the artist:

Those who are called *geniuses* have acquired a certain type of special skill, by which they make the universal shapes of the people into their work just as others do other things. What they produce is not their discovery, but a discovery by the people *as a whole*. It is the *finding* that the people has found its essence. What belongs to the artist as *this man here* is his formal activity, his particular skill in this mode of exposition, and it is precisely to this that he has been educated in the universal skill. (RR, 255)

Hegel immediately continues with examples of work and of revolution; both of which, he stresses, are fundamentally collective even though the final result might be concretely particularized in what appears to be the work of one single individual. He offers the example of the collective construction of a stone arch, in which one person places the last stone to complete the collective work, and the situation in which, ‘when laborers are digging for a spring, the one who happens to take out the last clod has the same work to do as the rest – and for him the spring gushes forth’ (RR, 255). Work today clearly expands beyond the

digging of springs. While it would be preposterous to suggest that much could be grasped about work today and in the future with Hegel alone, two things remain: first, the plastic nature of work and need; second, the constant interplay between the particular and the universal.

In the Jena lectures, Hegel is clear that the universality of skill does not mean that all become the same or that all participate equally in this universality. Individual capacities to take up the universal, in the absence of universal rights to protection from the vagaries of contingency, result in the singularity of life circumstances. In this context Hegel is very clear about the brutality of the capital-relation:

In the individual's skill is the possibility of sustaining his existence. This is subject to all the tangled and complex contingency in the whole. Thus a vast number of people are condemned to a labor that is totally stupefying, unhealthy and unsafe – in workshops, factories and mines, etc. – shrinking their skills. And entire branches of industry, which supported a large class of people, go dry all at once because of fashion or a fall in prices due to inventions in other countries, etc. – and this huge population is thrown into helpless poverty. (*JPS*, 139–140)

This constant interchange, in work, between the particular and the universal, is perhaps the best example of the substitutive movement that summarizes the movement of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*: “I” that is “We” and “We” that is “I” (*PS*, §177). Hegel is clear about the concrete actuality of this leap and its enormous social importance. The substitution of the particular for the universal and the universal for the particular is not a logical or speculative abstraction, but one of the basic realities of social and economic cooperation.

Along with its many costs, a society of work departs from any immediacy of instinctual work. Indeed, modern management is premised precisely on such a transformation and denaturalization of the worker. The Taylor system of so-called scientific management, for example, which is palpable today in its generality, is premised on the idea that the manager is a ‘teacher’ whose purpose is to eradicate instinctual and conventional ‘rules of thumb’, in short, to transform and socialize the worker (Taylor 1911). Ideas of cultivation and transformation of the worker in order to construct less instinctual and more productive forms of action are at the heart of what is known as ‘human capital theory’ and in numerous variants of this in programmes for ‘social investment’ and ‘employability’. All of these share the common idea of the improvability of each and all, and offer targeted intervention in order to bring out and expand the capacities of each individual. This logic of improvement is staple fare of educational programmes at every

level and is relentless and never-ending. It seems that one can never stamp out human instinct enough, and that the wilfulness and intransigence of subjects is always a problem for capital. It is not enough to simply throw more human meat under the juggernaut wheels of industry, but in order to get the most out of each and all, it is necessary for capital to forever transform and make human capacities more useful.

While contemporary capitalism involves massive programmes for the transformation of work and the worker, it should be noted that at the same time the capital-relation equally rests on the direct pillaging of what seems to be unmodified nature. This involves the uncompensated extraction of wealth from the land and seas with catastrophic ecological consequences. A process of exploiting what Jason Moore (2015) calls 'cheap nature' remains a key premise of capitalist expansion. Extraction also involves the capture and utilization of the affective capacities of sociability, communication and care, those forms of human social intercourse, which as Marx (1867: 647) notes, developed over thousands of centuries before capitalism and continue to develop outside of capitalist intervention. Notably, those parts of humanity that seem to display only these natural capacities of being human, while they are in fact the result of the plasticity of humans, who have developed over millennia, are today derided as if they were 'unskilled' workers. At the height of human development, then, the vast majority of human beings are claimed to have no particular or distinguishing skills by those who use them and enjoy their labour.

While Hegel's historical portrayal of changes in work is seriously limited, the systematic painfulness of work is not thought through, and the assumption that each benefits equally from the work of all is outright false, his effort to think work is important because of the emphasis that he places on both the plasticity of work and the increasingly mediated, relational and social nature of work and need. For Hegel the human being is fully social, which does not in any way reduce the person to their social situation or erase differences in the possibilities for action. Sociality is for Hegel radically enabling: 'The single individual is incomplete Spirit' (*PS*, §28). This basic sociality, which only increases with modern interconnectivity, is both a result of the rise of 'civil society' and the reality of modern interconnected economies.

This interconnection was further elaborated in Marx's account of the 'increase in the productive power of the individual, by means of cooperation, by the creation of a new productive power, which is intrinsically a collective one' (Marx 1867: 443). In his own discussion of what he also calls the '*systems of needs*' in the *Grundrisse*, Marx speaks of the 'pulling away of the natural ground

from the foundation of every industry' and the expansion of luxury; and further the pitting of luxury against necessity in 'antithetical form' with the development of capitalism (Marx 1857–1858: 528). He goes on to outline the development of a 'general productive power' and of the 'general powers of the human head', 'the power of knowledge, objectified' and a 'general social knowledge' (Marx 1857–1858: 705–706). It is only in light of this well-developed theme, which far exceeds the boundaries of his own thought as an individual, that Marx then speaks of 'the general intellect' and 'the powers of social production' (Marx 1857–1858: 706).

The future of work and need

While work and need have always been sites of political struggle, there are signs today that work and need are returning to the centre stage of politics (see Jones 2017). At the most basic, Hegel's idealism emphasizes the way that the future of work and need will be, in important ways, produced by the ideas that people have about them. More specifically, Hegel's discussions of work and need, even when they need radical revision, and his logic as such, hold great relevance for any thoughtful consideration of the future of work and need and of any progressive political programme that might be developed. This can be seen with particular clarity in relation to these themes that have been outlined here, of the plasticity of work and need and the interplay between the particular and the universal.

Often analysis of work and need, and political positions that follow from such analyses, are advanced either as if work and need are purely particular to individuals, or alternatively as if there were tendencies that govern changes of work or need in general and as a whole. In a crucial transition in the categories of his logic, Hegel stresses that 'in Being, everything is immediate; in Essence, by contrast, everything is relational' (*EI*, §111A, translation modified). Following this, we should stress that if there is an immediacy to the being of work and need, the essence of work is determined in relation to other instances of work, and the essence of the need of each is determined by the needs of others.

Hegel places considerable emphasis throughout his work on difference, the multiple and the relation to what is other (Haas 2000). This is philosophically important in the construction of a differential or relational ontology in which the differences and subsequent relations between elements are of more significance

than elements in their isolation. What Hegel called 'the understanding' remains with difference, which is already a great achievement: 'The activity of separating is the force and labor of the understanding, the most astonishing and the greatest of all the powers' (*PS*, §32; translation modified). For reason, however, the question is no longer the particular or the universal, in opposition to one another; more so it is the construction of a concept that maintains within it both the particular *and* the universal (*EI*, §163; *SL*, 546). A particular which is only reflected in its distinction from all other particulars is a category of the understanding; at the same time a universal that does not include all of the particulars of which it is composed is nothing but an 'abstract universal'. The demand of Hegel's logic is to think *both* particularity and universality together, in a way that does not erase either (Hyppolite 1946: 238). The promise of such a logic, when it comes to work and need, is to account for the place of both the particular and the universal, and their relation, in the concrete context of work and need.

For all the importance of his ontology, Hegel's philosophy is perhaps most productive in the opening it offers to what can be called a differential political economy, which starts out from the fact of difference and the multiple, and seeks to grasp the relation between the elements of which the economy is composed. It rejects both unmediated particularism and abstract universalism. One of the many reasons why this is important is because of the simultaneously particularizing and universalizing aspects of the capital-relation. At once, the capital-relation bears universal pressures: 'Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the Prophets!' (Marx 1867: 742). But at the same time, accumulation only takes place in relation to the concrete particularities of each and all. What must be stressed is that difference and the multiple are not aberrant defects of a process of general transformation of 'levelling' of differences effected by capital. Rather the relation between particularities, indeed difference as such, is one of the most fundamental and least understood dynamics of the capital-relation. In short, the logic of capital is the logic of difference and the multiple; the logic of capital unites particularity and universality.

Without a clear recognition of difference and multiplicity, the dynamics of exclusion and restriction of movement under capital appear anomalous. Of course capital knocks down walls and breaks through barriers; but it is just as active in building walls. Passage through these material, legal and political barriers is then only available to those who can pay. Capitalist economics of course reflects the universalization of a particular interest, the interest of capital; but at the same time capitalist economics is even more subtly a science of the

unequal, a science of differential access, of differential capacities, differential rewards and differential rates of profit. In these ways the world of finance purifies the logic of capital, in which arbitrage effects the pure logic of difference in which the existence of positive terms and indeed the world is incidental to trade on differences (Jones 2016).

Many of the challenges to thinking the future of work are political and ideological; but many are logical and turn on the challenge of thinking difference and the multiple. For many, following the logic of the understanding, work is pure particularity, a matter of honing individual capacities and fitting the individual to the particular job to which their knowledge, skills and abilities are most suited. This is the logic that will help to endlessly foster 'employability' and offer ways of adjusting each and all to the brave new world of work. For others, equally following the logic of the understanding, a generalized process of change is underway in which 'work' as such is undergoing a relatively homogeneous transformation. The 'future of work', it is then imagined, involves a generalized process of automation, precarity and so forth (see Srnicek and Williams 2015).

Pure particularism simply ignores any analysis of general tendencies, or more accurately, surreptitiously flips from decontextualized particulars to implied accounts of the whole. Equally, accounts of the future of work that rest on ideas of undifferentiated universal movements obscure the logic of difference at play within the logic of the capital-relation. Indeed, the differentiating tendencies of valuation under capital mean that the most likely future of work and need, absent direct political intervention, is the rise of ever-sharper divisions. What this means is that there will be, on the one hand, a violently exclusionary guild who take themselves to be the height of human civilization, while on the other hand the remainder of humanity will be reduced to servile human sludge, to be adjusted and forever 'improved', that is, to be made more useful in their service to others.

Of course, gradations within the class of those who work for capital are important, and will become even more so. Capital has already instituted an estate of often highly skilled and refined functionaries, who are rewarded very handsomely for ensuring the extortion of work from the rest. They are differentiated in principle and in fact by a way of life, travel, culture, education and entertainment that is far from rudimentary or 'basic'. Distributing these often costly pleasures to the professional managerial class more than repays its costs. For the rest, the daily struggle is one of maintaining the basics or the constant struggle to escape the estate into which one is thrown.

One major proposal, sometimes but not always arising from generalized predictions regarding the future of work, is a universal basic income. This is an income or grant that is paid to all citizens of a certain age, paid universally and unconditionally, that is, not in relation to work or any other social contribution (see, for example, Standing 2017; Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017). While advocates claim many benefits, there are obvious criticisms of such proposals. Economists tend to focus on issues such as what level is sustainable, the problem of inflation and questions such as national boundaries; others emphasize how a universal basic income can be used by employers to drive down wages and by landlords to increase rents. While these are all important considerations, the themes that have been drawn from Hegel in this chapter raise fundamental philosophical obstacles to the idea of a universal basic income.

The first obstacle turns on the specific conception of the universal involved in proposals for a universal basic income. While traditionally, welfare benefits and transfer payments are designed to provide a guaranteed minimum income targeted to the particularities of need, a universal basic income provides exactly the same payment to each citizen. Advocates stress that this equality of payment is what makes the universal basic income inherently egalitarian. Following Hegel's analysis of the particular and the universal, though, it should be clear that this appearance of egalitarianism is rather thin; a universal that does not take account of each particular is not a universal but rather an 'abstract universal'. Any universal basic income, then, that does not include within it a structural account of differences of circumstance and need will fall radically short of universality. If the goal is genuinely to address massive and accelerating inequalities of income and wealth and provide social participation, what is required is not a universal basic income but instead thoughtfully targeted intervention and social provision of access to resources that takes into account the situation and needs of each and all. As was noted in the nineteenth century, equality in the genuine sense is possible only in light of a recognition of the reality of the differences of capacity and the differences of need (Proudhon 1840; Marx 1875).

The second and even deeper obstacle for a universal basic income turns on the nature of human need as such. Any particular level of basic income involves profound judgements about what would sufficiently satisfy human needs. Many prominent advocates of a universal basic income propose that such an income should be very modest, providing for only the basic prospects of survival. Guy Standing, for example, stresses that a basic income 'means an amount that

would enable someone to survive *in extremis*, in the society in which they live' (Standing 2017: 3). For Standing, this involves neither 'participation in society', an expression he dismisses as 'both unnecessary and too vague'; nor 'basic economic security', which he considers 'neither feasible nor desirable' (Standing 2017: 3–4). There is little to distinguish such versions of a universal basic income from 'poor laws' designed to keep the working population alive, but only just; or from the proposals by, for instance Milton Friedman, 'to set, as it were, a floor under the standard of life of every person in the community' (1962: 191).

Nearly three centuries ago, Montesquieu demanded that the state 'owes all the citizens an assured sustenance, nourishment, suitable clothing, and a kind of life which is not contrary to health' (1748: 455). While he is deeply indebted to Montesquieu in many ways, and makes almost precisely this same demand (OPR, §189A), for Hegel the question of need does not end here. For Hegel the human being is at once a finite mortal animal but is at the same time much more than this. With his contemporaries such as Friedrich Schiller (1795), and on this point in continuity with important philosophers today (see, for example, Badiou 2006: 507–514), Hegel emphasized that human beings are more than animals. We have basic physical needs, but are also social animals whose desires and horizons are not fixed but constantly expand to include things that are far from necessary. This follows from Hegel's emphasis on the importance of the escape from the 'state of nature'; but is also anchored in crucially important ways in the motif of the multiplicity and multiplication of wants that was so important for eighteenth-century Scottish political economists such as Ferguson and Steuart, in the idea that need and desire are not fixed but are plastic, social and relational.

What is important here in relation to questions of work and need is that human beings rightly demand much more than subsistence. The demand for the right to social participation, for Hegel, involves the very real and concrete nature of demands to satisfy the 'spiritual' nature of the human being. Need is plastic, social and relational; work is plastic, social and relational. The work one does rests on the work of others and in turn creates profound possibilities for others; the work of each and all creates the possibility for the satisfaction of the needs of self and others, but does not in any way guarantee this. To think that it does implies at best blind faith and at worst a theodicy that serves to justify massive unnecessary suffering. Nothing in nature directly grounds that expansion of needs. Rather, needs are expressed in real concrete political demands. These demands can never be only for survival, but involve the demand to be and to be counted as fully human, which means to be fully a part of the situation in

which one works and lives. So, beyond all of the criticism that can be made of Hegel's account of work and need, there remains a deep sense in his political economy, as in his logic, of human dignity, the dignity of forever becoming what it is possible for a human being to become. This, ultimately, is a dignity that far exceeds the barbarism to which capitalism seeks to reduce us all.

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