The Human Condition

BY HANNAH ARENDT

Second Edition

Introduction by
Margaret Canovan

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ness of the prelates and heads of the Church," teach people to be good and not "to resist evil"—with the result that "wicked rulers do as much evil as they please."[88]

We chose the admittedly extreme example of doing good works, extreme because this activity is not even at home in the realm of privacy, in order to indicate that the historical judgments of political communities, by which each determined which of the activities of the *vita activa* should be shown in public and which be hidden in privacy, may have their correspondence in the nature of these activities themselves. By raising this question, I do not intend to attempt an exhaustive analysis of the activities of the *vita activa*, whose articulations have been curiously neglected by a tradition which considered it chiefly from the standpoint of the *vita contemplativa*, but to try to determine with some measure of assurance their political significance.

88. *Discourses*, Book III, ch. 1.

CHAPTER III

Labor

In the following chapter, Karl Marx will be criticized. This is unfortunate at a time when so many writers who once made their living by explicit or tacit borrowing from the great wealth of Marxian ideas and insights have decided to become professional anti-Marxists, in the process of which one of them even discovered that Karl Marx himself was unable to make a living, forgetting for the moment the generations of authors whom he has "supported." In this difficulty, I may recall a statement Benjamin Constant made when he felt compelled to attack Rousseau: "J'éviterai certes de me joindre aux détracteurs d'un grand homme. Quand le hasard fait qu'en apparence je me rencontre avec eux sur un seul point, je suis en défiance de moi-même; et pour me consoler de paraître un instant de leur avis . . . j'ai besoin de désavouer et de flétrir, autant qu'il est en moi, ces prétendus auxiliaires." ("Certainly, I shall avoid the company of detractors of a great man. If I happen to agree with them on a single point I grow suspicious of myself; and in order to console myself for having seemed to be of their opinion . . . I feel I must disavow and keep these false friends away from me as much as I can.")[1]

II

"THE LABOUR OF OUR BODY AND THE WORK OF OUR HANDS"[2]

The distinction between labor and work which I propose is unusual. The phenomenal evidence in its favor is too striking to be

1. See "De la liberté des anciens comparée a celle des modernes" (1819), reprinted in *Cours de politique constitutionnelle* (1872), II, 549.

2. Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, sec. 26.

ignored, and yet historically it is a fact that apart from a few scattered remarks, which moreover were never developed even in the theories of their authors, there is hardly anything in either the premodern tradition of political thought or in the large body of modern labor theories to support it. Against this scarcity of historical evidence, however, stands one very articulate and obstinate testimony, namely, the simple fact that every European language, ancient and modern, contains two etymologically unrelated words for what we have to come to think of as the same activity, and retains them in the face of their persistent synonymous usage.[3]

Thus, Locke's distinction between working hands and a laboring body is somewhat reminiscent of the ancient Greek distinction between the *cheirotechnēs*, the craftsman, to whom the German *Handwerker* corresponds, and those who, like "slaves and tame animals with their bodies minister to the necessities of life,"[4] or in the Greek idiom, *tō sōmati ergazesthai*, work with their bodies (yet even here, labor and work are already treated as identical, since the word used is not *ponein* [labor] but *ergazesthai* [work]). Only in one respect, which, however, is linguistically the most important one, did ancient and modern usage of the two words as synonyms fail altogether, namely in the formation of a corresponding noun. Here again we find complete unanimity; the word "labor," understood as a noun, never designates the finished product, the result of laboring, but remains a verbal noun to be classed with the gerund, whereas the product itself is invariably derived from the word for work, even when current usage has followed the

3. Thus, the Greek language distinguishes between *ponein* and *ergazesthai*, the Latin between *laborare* and *facere* or *fabricari*, which have the same etymological root, the French between *travailler* and *ouvrer*, the German between *arbeiten* and *werken*. In all these cases, only the equivalents for "labor" have an unequivocal connotation of pain and trouble. The German *Arbeit* applied originally only to farm labor executed by serfs and not to the work of the craftsman, which was called *Werk*. The French *travailler* replaced the older *labourer* and is derived from *tripalium*, a kind of torture. See Grimm, *Wörterbuch*, pp. 1854 ff., and Lucien Fèbre, "Travail: évolution d'un mot et d'une idée," *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique*, Vol. XLI, No. 1 (1948).

4. Aristotle *Politics* 1254b25.

actual modern development so closely that the verb form of the word "work" has become rather obsolete.[5]

The reason why this distinction should have been overlooked in ancient times and its significance remained unexplored seems obvious enough. Contempt for laboring, originally arising out of a passionate striving for freedom from necessity and a no less passionate impatience with every effort that left no trace, no monument, no great work worthy of remembrance, spread with the increasing demands of *polis* life upon the time of the citizens and its insistence on their abstention (*skholē*) from all but political activities, until it covered everything that demanded an effort. Earlier political custom, prior to the full development of the city-state, merely distinguished between slaves, vanquished enemies (*dmōes* or *douloi*), who were carried off to the victor's household with other loot where as household inmates (*oiketai* or *familiares*) they slaved for their own and their master's life, and the *dēmiourgoi*, the workmen of the people at large, who moved freely outside the private realm and within the public.[6] A later time even changed the name for these artisans, whom Solon had still described as sons of Athena and Hephaestus, and called them *banausoi*, that is, men whose chief interest is their craft and not the market place. It is only from the late fifth century onward that the *polis* began to classify occupations according to the amount of effort required, so that Aristotle called those occupations the meanest "in which the

5. This is the case for the French *ouvrer* and the German *werken*. In both languages, as distinguished from the current English usage of the word "labor," the words *travailler* and *arbeiten* have almost lost the original significance of pain and trouble; Grimm (*op. cit.*) had already noted this development in the middle of the last century: "Während in älterer Sprache die Bedeutung von *molestia* und schwerer Arbeit vorherrschte, die von *opus*, *opera*, zurücktrat, tritt umgekehrt in der heutigen diese vor und jene erscheint seltener." It is also interesting that the nouns "work," *œuvre*, *Werk*, show an increasing tendency to be used for works of art in all three languages.

6. See J.-P. Vernant, "Travail et nature dans la Grèce ancienne" (*Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique*, LII, No. 1 [January-March, 1955]): "Le terme [*dēmiourgoi*], chez Homère et Hésiode, ne qualifie pas à l'origine l'artisan en tant que tel, comme 'ouvrier': il définit toutes les activités qui s'exercent en dehors du cadre de l'*oikos*, en faveur d'un public, *dēmos:* les artisans—charpentiers et forgerons—mais non moins qu'eux les devins, les hérault, les aèdes."

and this enslavement was inherent in the conditions of human life. Because men were dominated by the necessities of life, they could win their freedom only through the domination of those whom they subjected to necessity by force. The slave's degradation was a blow of fate and a fate worse than death, because it carried with it a metamorphosis of man into something akin to a tame animal.[10] A change in a slave's status, therefore, such as manumission by his master or a change in general political circumstance that elevated certain occupations to public relevance, automatically entailed a change in the slave's "nature."[11]

The institution of slavery in antiquity, though not in later times, was not a device for cheap labor or an instrument of exploitation for profit but rather the attempt to exclude labor from the conditions of man's life. What men share with all other forms of animal life was not considered to be human. (This, incidentally, was also the reason for the much misunderstood Greek theory of the non-human nature of the slave. Aristotle, who argued this theory so explicitly, and then, on his deathbed, freed his slaves, may not have been so inconsistent as moderns are inclined to think. He denied not the slave's capacity to be human, but only the use of the word "men" for members of the species man-kind as long as they are totally subject to necessity.)[12] And it is true that the use of the word "animal" in the concept of *animal laborans*, as distinguished from the very questionable use of the same word in the term *animal rationale*, is fully justified. The *animal laborans* is indeed only one, at best the highest, of the animal species which populate the earth.

10. It is in this sense that Euripides calls all slaves "bad": they see everything from the viewpoint of the stomach (*Supplementum Euripideum*, ed. Arnim, frag. 49, no. 2).

11. Thus Aristotle recommended that slaves who were intrusted with "free occupations" (*ta eleuthera tōn ergōn*) be treated with more dignity and not like slaves. When, on the other hand, in the first centuries of the Roman Empire certain public functions which always had been performed by public slaves rose in esteem and relevance, these *servi publici*—who actually performed the tasks of civil servants—were permitted to wear the toga and to marry free women.

12. The two qualities that the slave, according to Aristotle, lacks—and it is because of these defects that he is not human—are the faculty to deliberate and decide (*to bouleutikon*) and to foresee and to choose (*proairesis*). This, of course, is but a more explicit way of saying that the slave is subject to necessity.

It is not surprising that the distinction between labor and work was ignored in classical antiquity. The differentiation between the private household and the public political realm, between the household inmate who was a slave and the household head who was a citizen, between activities which should be hidden in privacy and those which were worth being seen, heard, and remembered, overshadowed and predetermined all other distinctions until only one criterion was left: is the greater amount of time and effort spent in private or in public? is the occupation motivated by *cura privati negotii* or *cura rei publicae*, care for private or for public business?[13] With the rise of political theory, the philosophers overruled even these distinctions, which had at least distinguished between activities, by opposing contemplation to all kinds of activity alike. With them, even political activity was leveled to the rank of necessity, which henceforth became the common denominator of all articulations within the *vita activa*. Nor can we reasonably expect any help from Christian political thought, which accepted the philosophers' distinction, refined it, and, religion being for the many and philosophy only for the few, gave it general validity, binding for all men.

It is surprising at first glance, however, that the modern age—with its reversal of all traditions, the traditional rank of action and contemplation no less than the traditional hierarchy within the *vita activa* itself, with its glorification of labor as the source of all values and its elevation of the *animal laborans* to the position traditionally held by the *animal rationale*—should not have brought forth a single theory in which *animal laborans* and *homo faber*, "the labour of our body and the work of our hands," are clearly distinguished. Instead, we find first the distinction between productive and unproductive labor, then somewhat later the differentiation between skilled and unskilled work, and, finally, outranking both because seemingly of more elementary significance, the division of all activities into manual and intellectual labor. Of the three, however, only the distinction between productive and unproductive labor goes to the heart of the matter, and it is no accident that the two greatest theorists in the field, Adam Smith and Karl Marx, based the whole structure of their argument upon it. The very

13. Cicero *De re publica* v. 2.

reason for the elevation of labor in the modern age was its "productivity," and the seemingly blasphemous notion of Marx that labor (and not God) created man or that labor (and not reason) distinguished man from the other animals was only the most radical and consistent formulation of something upon which the whole modern age was agreed.[14]

Moreover, both Smith and Marx were in agreement with modern public opinion when they despised unproductive labor as parasitical, actually a kind of perversion of labor, as though nothing were worthy of this name which did not enrich the world. Marx certainly shared Smith's contempt for the "menial servants" who like "idle guests . . . leave nothing behind them in return for their consumption."[15] Yet it was precisely these menial servants, these household inmates, *oiketai* or *familiares*, laboring for sheer subsistence and needed for effortless consumption rather than for production, whom all ages prior to the modern had in mind when they identified the laboring condition with slavery. What they left behind them in return for their consumption was nothing more or less than their masters' freedom or, in modern language, their masters' potential productivity.

14. "The creation of man through human labor" was one of the most persistent ideas of Marx since his youth. It can be found in many variations in the *Jugendschriften* (where in the "Kritik der Hegelschen Dialektik" he credits Hegel with it). (See *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part I, Vol. 5 [Berlin, 1932], pp. 156 and 167.) That Marx actually meant to replace the traditional definition of man as an *animal rationale* by defining him as an *animal laborans* is manifest in the context. The theory is strengthened by a sentence from the *Deutsche Ideologie* which was later deleted: "Der erste geschichtliche Akt dieser Individuen, wodurch sie sich von den Tieren unterscheiden, ist nicht, dass sie denken, sondern, dass sie anfangen ihre Lebensmittel zu produzieren" (*ibid.*, p. 568). Similar formulations occur in the "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte" (*ibid.*, p. 125), and in "Die heilige Familie" (*ibid.*, p. 189). Engels used similar formulations many times, for instance in the Preface of 1884 to *Ursprung der Familie* or in the newspaper article of 1876, "Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man" (see Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* [London, 1950], Vol. II).

It seems that Hume, and not Marx, was the first to insist that labor distinguishes man from animal (Adriano Tilgher, *Homo faber* [1929]; English ed.: *Work: What It Has Meant to Men through the Ages* [1930]). As labor does not play any significant role in Hume's philosophy, this is of historical interest only; to him, this characteristic did not make human life more productive, but only harsher and more painful than animal life. It is, however, interesting in this context to note with what care Hume repeatedly insisted that neither thinking nor reasoning distinguishes man from animal and that the behavior of beasts demonstrates that they are capable of both.

15. *Wealth of Nations* (Everyman's ed.), II, 302.

In other words, the distinction between productive and unproductive labor contains, albeit in a prejudicial manner, the more fundamental distinction between work and labor.[16] It is indeed the mark of all laboring that it leaves nothing behind, that the result of its effort is almost as quickly consumed as the effort is spent. And yet this effort, despite its futility, is born of a great urgency and motivated by a more powerful drive than anything else, because life itself depends upon it. The modern age in general and Karl Marx in particular, overwhelmed, as it were, by the unprecedented actual productivity of Western mankind, had an almost irresistible tendency to look upon all labor as work and to speak of the *animal laborans* in terms much more fitting for *homo faber*, hoping all the time that only one more step was needed to eliminate labor and necessity altogether.[17]

No doubt the actual historical development that brought labor out of hiding and into the public realm, where it could be organized

16. The distinction between productive and unproductive labor is due to the physiocrats, who distinguished between producing, property-owning, and sterile classes. Since they held that the original source of all productivity lies in the natural forces of the earth, their standard for productivity was related to the creation of new objects and not to the needs and wants of men. Thus, the Marquis de Mirabeau, father of the famous orator, calls sterile "la classe d'ouvriers dont les travaux, quoique nécessaires aux besoins des hommes et utiles à la société, ne sont pas néanmoins productifs" and illustrates his distinction between sterile and productive work by comparing it to the difference between cutting a stone and producing it (see Jean Dautry, "La notion de travail chez Saint-Simon et Fourier," *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique*, Vol. LII, No. 1 [January–March, 1955]).

17. This hope accompanied Marx from beginning to end. We find it already in the *Deutsche Ideologie:* "Es handelt sich nicht darum die Arbeit zu befreien, sondern sie aufzuheben" (*Gesamtausgabe*, Part I, Vol. 3, p. 185) and many decades later in the third volume of *Das Kapital*, ch. 48: "Das Reich der Freiheit beginnt in der Tat erst da, wo das Arbeiten . . . aufhört" (*Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part II [Zürich, 1933], p. 873).

and "divided,"[18] constituted a powerful argument in the development of these theories. Yet an even more significant fact in this respect, already sensed by the classical economists and clearly discovered and articulated by Karl Marx, is that the laboring activity itself, regardless of historical circumstances and independent of its location in the private or the public realm, possesses indeed a "productivity" of its own, no matter how futile and non-durable its products may be. This productivity does not lie in any of labor's products but in the human "power," whose strength is not exhausted when it has produced the means of its own subsistence and survival but is capable of producing a "surplus," that is, more than is necessary for its own "reproduction." It is because not labor itself but the surplus of human "labor *power*" (*Arbeits*kraft) explains labor's productivity that Marx's introduction of this term, as Engels rightly remarked, constituted the most original and revolutionary element of his whole system.[19] Unlike the productivity of work, which adds new objects to the human artifice, the productivity of labor power produces objects only incidentally and is primarily concerned with the means of its own reproduction; since its power is not exhausted when its own reproduction has been secured, it can be used for the reproduction of more than one life process, but it never "produces" anything but life.[20] Through violent oppression in a slave society or exploitation in the capitalist society of Marx's own time, it can be channeled in such a way that the labor of some suffices for the life of all.

From this purely social viewpoint, which is the viewpoint of the whole modern age but which received its most coherent and great-

18. In his Introduction to the second book of the *Wealth of Nations* (Everyman's ed., I, 241 ff.), Adam Smith emphasizes that productivity is due to the division of labor rather than to labor itself.

19. See Engels' Introduction to Marx's "Wage, Labour and Capital" (in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* [London, 1950], I, 384), where Marx had introduced the new term with a certain emphasis.

20. Marx stressed always, and especially in his youth, that the chief function of labor was the "production of life" and therefore saw labor together with procreation (see *Deutsche Ideologie*, p. 19; also "Wage, Labour and Capital," p. 77).

est expression in Marx's work, all laboring is "productive," and the earlier distinction between the performance of "menial tasks" that leave no trace and the production of things durable enough to be accumulated loses its validity. The social viewpoint is identical, as we saw before, with an interpretation that takes nothing into account but the life process of mankind, and within its frame of reference all things become objects of consumption. Within a completely "socialized mankind," whose sole purpose would be the entertaining of the life process—and this is the unfortunately quite unutopian ideal that guides Marx's theories[21]—the distinction between labor and work would have completely disappeared; all work would have become labor because all things would be understood, not in their worldly, objective quality, but as results of living labor power and functions of the life process.[22]

It is interesting to note that the distinctions between skilled and unskilled and between intellectual and manual work play no role in either classical political economy or in Marx's work. Compared

21. The terms *vergesellschafteter Mensch* or *gesellschaftliche Menschheit* were frequently used by Marx to indicate the goal of socialism (see, for instance, the third volume of *Das Kapital*, p. 873, and the tenth of the "Theses on Feuerbach": "The standpoint of the old materialism is 'civil' society; the standpoint of the new is *human* society, or socialized humanity" [*Selected Works*, II, 367]). It consisted in the elimination of the gap between the individual and social existence of man, so that man "in his most individual being would be at the same time a social being [a *Gemeinwesen*]" (*Jugendschriften*, p. 113). Marx frequently calls this social nature of man his *Gattungswesen*, his being a member of the species, and the famous Marxian "self-alienation" is first of all man's alienation from being a *Gattungswesen* (*ibid.*, p. 89: "Eine unmittelbare Konsequenz davon, dass der Mensch dem Produkt seiner Arbeit, seiner Lebenstätigkeit, seinem Gattungswesen entfremdet ist, ist die Entfremdung des Menschen von *dem* Menschen"). The ideal society is a state of affairs where all human activities derive as naturally from human "nature" as the secretion of wax by bees for making the honeycomb; to live and to labor for life will have become one and the same, and life will no longer "begin for [the laborer] where [the activity of laboring] ceases" ("Wage, Labour and Capital," p. 77).

22. Marx's original charge against capitalist society was not merely its transformation of all objects into commodities, but that "the laborer behaves toward the product of his labor as to an alien object" ("dass der Arbeiter zum Produkt seiner Arbeit als einem fremden Gegenstand sich verhält" [*Jugendschriften*, p. 83])—in other words, that the things of the world, once they have been produced by men, are to an extent independent of, "alien" to, human life.

work) is paid, and in these cases "the very wage is a pledge of slavery."[26]

The distinction between manual and intellectual work, though its origin can be traced back to the Middle Ages,[27] is modern and has two quite different causes, both of which, however, are equally characteristic of the general climate of the modern age. Since under modern conditions every occupation had to prove its "usefulness" for society at large, and since the usefulness of the intellectual occupations had become more than doubtful because of the modern glorification of labor, it was only natural that intellectuals, too, should desire to be counted among the working population. At the same time, however, and only in seeming contradiction to this development, the need and esteem of this society for certain "intellectual" performances rose to a degree unprecedented in our history except in the centuries of the decline of the Roman Empire. It may be well to remember in this context that throughout ancient history the "intellectual" services of the scribes, whether they served the needs of the public or the private realm, were performed by slaves and rated accordingly. Only the bureaucratization of the Roman Empire and the concomitant social and political rise of the Emperors brought a re-evaluation of "intellectual" services.[28] In so

26. The Romans deemed the difference between *opus* and *operae* to be so decisive that they had two different forms of contract, the *locatio operis* and the *locatio operarum*, of which the latter played an insignificant role because most laboring was done by slaves (see Edgar Loening, in *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften* [1890], I, 742 ff.).

27. The *opera liberalia* were identified with intellectual or rather spiritual work in the Middle Ages (see Otto Neurath, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Opera Servilia," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Vol. XLI [1915], No. 2).

28. H. Wallon describes this process under the rule of Diocletian: "... les fonctions jadis serviles se trouvèrent anoblies, élevées au premier rang de l'État. Cette haute considération qui de l'empereur se répandait sur les premiers serviteurs du palais, sur les plus hauts dignitaires de l'empire, descendait à tous les degrés des fonctions publiques ... ; le service public devint un office public." "Les charges les plus serviles, ... les noms que nous avons cités aux fonctions de l'esclavage, sont revêtus de l'éclat qui rejaillit de la personne du prince" (*Histoire de l'esclavage dans l'antiquité* [1847], III, 126 and 131). Before this elevation of the services, the scribes had been classified with the watchmen of public buildings or even with the men who led the prize fighters down to the arena

far as the intellectual is indeed not a "worker"—who like all other workers, from the humblest craftsman to the greatest artist, is engaged in adding one more, if possible durable, thing to the human artifice—he resembles perhaps nobody so much as Adam Smith's "menial servant," although his function is less to keep the life process intact and provide for its regeneration than to care for the upkeep of the various gigantic bureaucratic machines whose processes consume their services and devour their products as quickly and mercilessly as the biological life process itself.[29]

12

THE THING-CHARACTER OF THE WORLD

The contempt for labor in ancient theory and its glorification in modern theory both take their bearing from the subjective attitude or activity of the laborer, mistrusting his painful effort or praising his productivity. The subjectivity of the approach may be more obvious in the distinction between easy and hard work, but we saw that at least in the case of Marx—who, as the greatest of modern labor theorists, necessarily provides a kind of touchstone in these discussions—labor's productivity is measured and gauged against the requirements of the life process for its own reproduction; it resides in the potential surplus inherent in human labor power, not in the quality or character of the things it produces. Similarly, Greek opinion, which ranked painters higher than sculptors, certainly did not rest upon a higher regard for paintings.[30] It seems

(*ibid.*, p. 171). It seems noteworthy that the elevation of the "intellectuals" coincided with the establishment of a bureaucracy.

29. "The labour of some of the most respectable orders in the society is, like that of menial servants, unproductive of any value," says Adam Smith and ranks among them "the whole army and navy," the "servants of the public," and the liberal professions, such as "churchmen, lawyers, physicians, men of letters of all kinds." Their work, "like the declamation of the actors, the harangue of the orator, or the tune of the musician ... perishes in the very instant of its production" (*op. cit.*, I, 295–96). Obviously, Smith would not have had any difficulty classifying our "white-collar jobs."

30. On the contrary, it is doubtful whether any painting was ever as much admired as Phidias' statue of Zeus at Olympia, whose magical power was cred-

that the distinction between labor and work, which our theorists have so obstinately neglected and our languages so stubbornly preserved, indeed becomes merely a difference in degree if the worldly character of the produced thing—its location, function, and length of stay in the world—is not taken into account. The distinction between a bread, whose "life expectancy" in the world is hardly more than a day, and a table, which may easily survive generations of men, is certainly much more obvious and decisive than the difference between a baker and a carpenter.

The curious discrepancy between language and theory which we noted at the outset therefore turns out to be a discrepancy between the world-oriented, "objective" language we speak and the man-oriented, subjective theories we use in our attempts at understanding. It is language, and the fundamental human experiences underlying it, rather than theory, that teaches us that the things of the world, among which the *vita activa* spends itself, are of a very different nature and produced by quite different kinds of activities. Viewed as part of the world, the products of work—and not the products of labor—guarantee the permanence and durability without which a world would not be possible at all. It is within this world of durable things that we find the consumer goods through which life assures the means of its own survival. Needed by our bodies and produced by its laboring, but without stability of their own, these things for incessant consumption appear and disappear in an environment of things that are not consumed but used, and to which, as we use them, we become used and accustomed. As such, they give rise to the familiarity of the world, its customs and habits of intercourse between men and things as well as between men and men. What consumer goods are for the life of man, use objects are for his world. From them, consumer goods derive their thing-character; and language, which does not permit the laboring activity to form anything so solid and non-verbal as a noun, hints at the strong probability that we would not even know what a thing is without having before us "the work of our hands."

Distinguished from both, consumer goods and use objects, there

ited to make one forget all trouble and sorrow; whoever had not seen it had lived in vain, etc.

are finally the "products" of action and speech, which together constitute the fabric of human relationships and affairs. Left to themselves, they lack not only the tangibility of other things, but are even less durable and more futile than what we produce for consumption. Their reality depends entirely upon human plurality, upon the constant presence of others who can see and hear and therefore testify to their existence. Acting and speaking are still outward manifestations of human life, which knows only one activity that, though related to the exterior world in many ways, is not necessarily manifest in it and needs neither to be seen nor heard nor used nor consumed in order to be real: the activity of thought.

Viewed, however, in their worldliness, action, speech, and thought have much more in common than any one of them has with work or labor. They themselves do not "produce," bring forth anything, they are as futile as life itself. In order to become worldly things, that is, deeds and facts and events and patterns of thoughts or ideas, they must first be seen, heard, and remembered and then transformed, reified as it were, into things—into sayings of poetry, the written page or the printed book, into paintings or sculpture, into all sorts of records, documents, and monuments. The whole factual world of human affairs depends for its reality and its continued existence, first, upon the presence of others who have seen and heard and will remember, and, second, on the transformation of the intangible into the tangibility of things. Without remembrance and without the reification which remembrance needs for its own fulfilment and which makes it, indeed, as the Greeks held, the mother of all arts, the living activities of action, speech, and thought would lose their reality at the end of each process and disappear as though they never had been. The materialization they have to undergo in order to remain in the world at all is paid for in that always the "dead letter" replaces something which grew out of and for a fleeting moment indeed existed as the "living spirit." They must pay this price because they themselves are of an entirely unworldly nature and therefore need the help of an activity of an altogether different nature; they depend for their reality and materialization upon the same workmanship that builds the other things in the human artifice.

The reality and reliability of the human world rest primarily on

the fact that we are surrounded by things more permanent than the activity by which they were produced, and potentially even more permanent than the lives of their authors. Human life, in so far as it is world-building, is engaged in a constant process of reification, and the degree of worldliness of produced things, which all together form the human artifice, depends upon their greater or lesser permanence in the world itself.

13

LABOR AND LIFE

The least durable of tangible things are those needed for the life process itself. Their consumption barely survives the act of their production; in the words of Locke, all those "good things" which are "really useful to the life of man," to the "necessity of subsisting," are "generally of short duration, such as—if they are not consumed by use—will decay and perish by themselves."[31] After a brief stay in the world, they return into the natural process which yielded them either through absorption into the life process of the human animal or through decay; in their man-made shape, through which they acquired their ephemeral place in the world of man-made things, they disappear more quickly than any other part of the world. Considered in their worldliness, they are the least worldly and at the same time the most natural of all things. Although they are man-made, they come and go, are produced and consumed, in accordance with the ever-recurrent cyclical movement of nature. Cyclical, too, is the movement of the living organism, the human body not excluded, as long as it can withstand the process that permeates its being and makes it alive. Life is a process that everywhere uses up durability, wears it down, makes it disappear, until eventually dead matter, the result of small, single, cyclical, life processes, returns into the over-all gigantic circle of nature herself, where no beginning and no end exist and where all natural things swing in changeless, deathless repetition.

Nature and the cyclical movement into which she forces all living things know neither birth nor death as we understand them. The birth and death of human beings are not simple natural occurrences, but are related to a world into which single individuals, unique, unexchangeable, and unrepeatable entities, appear and from which they depart. Birth and death presuppose a world which is not in constant movement, but whose durability and relative permanence makes appearance and disappearance possible, which existed before any one individual appeared into it and will survive his eventual departure. Without a world into which men are born and from which they die, there would be nothing but changeless eternal recurrence, the deathless everlastingness of the human as of all other animal species. A philosophy of life that does not arrive, as did Nietzsche, at the affirmation of "eternal recurrence" (*ewige Wiederkehr*) as the highest principle of all being, simply does not know what it is talking about.

The word "life," however, has an altogether different meaning if it is related to the world and meant to designate the time interval between birth and death. Limited by a beginning and an end, that is, by the two supreme events of appearance and disappearance within the world, it follows a strictly linear movement whose very motion nevertheless is driven by the motor of biological life which man shares with other living things and which forever retains the cyclical movement of nature. The chief characteristic of this specifically human life, whose appearance and disappearance constitute worldly events, is that it is itself always full of events which ultimately can be told as a story, establish a biography; it is of this life, *bios* as distinguished from mere *zōē*, that Aristotle said that it "somehow is a kind of *praxis*."[32] For action and speech, which, as we saw before, belonged close together in the Greek understanding of politics, are indeed the two activities whose end result will always be a story with enough coherence to be told, no matter how accidental or haphazard the single events and their causation may appear to be.

It is only within the human world that nature's cyclical movement manifests itself as growth and decay. Like birth and death, they, too, are not natural occurrences, properly speaking; they have no place in the unceasing, indefatigable cycle in which the whole household of nature swings perpetually. Only when they enter the man-made world can nature's processes be characterized

31. Locke, *op. cit.*, sec. 46.

32. *Politics* 1254a7.

by growth and decay; only if we consider nature's products, this tree or this dog, as individual things, thereby already removing them from their "natural" surroundings and putting them into our world, do they begin to grow and to decay. While nature manifests itself in human existence through the circular movement of our bodily functions, she makes her presence felt in the man-made world through the constant threat of overgrowing or decaying it. The common characteristic of both, the biological process in man and the process of growth and decay in the world, is that they are part of the cyclical movement of nature and therefore endlessly repetitive; all human activities which arise out of the necessity to cope with them are bound to the recurring cycles of nature and have in themselves no beginning and no end, properly speaking; unlike *working*, whose end has come when the object is finished, ready to be added to the common world of things, *laboring* always moves in the same circle, which is prescribed by the biological process of the living organism and the end of its "toil and trouble" comes only with the death of this organism.[33]

When Marx defined labor as "man's metabolism with nature,"

33. In the earlier literature on labor up to the last third of the nineteenth century, it was not uncommon to insist on the connection between labor and the cyclical movement of the life process. Thus, Schulze-Delitzsch, in a lecture *Die Arbeit* (Leipzig, 1863), begins with a description of the cycle of desire-effort-satisfaction—"Beim letzten Bissen fängt schon die Verdauung an." However, in the huge post-Marxian literature on the labor problem, the only author who emphasizes and theorizes about this most elementary aspect of the laboring activity is Pierre Naville, whose *La vie de travail et ses problèmes* (1954) is one of the most interesting and perhaps the most original recent contribution. Discussing the particular traits of the workday as distinguished from other measurement of labor time, he says as follows: "Le trait principal est son caractère cyclique ou rythmique. Ce caractère est lié à la fois à l'esprit naturel et cosmologique de la journée . . . et au caractère des fonctions physiologiques de l'être humain, qu'il a en commun avec les espèces animales supérieures. . . . Il est évident que le travail devait être de prime abord lié à des rythmes et fonctions naturels." From this follows the cyclical character in the expenditure and reproduction of labor power that determines the time unit of the workday. Naville's most important insight is that the time character of human life, inasmuch as it is not merely part of the life of the species, stands in stark contrast to the cyclical time character of the workday. "Les limites naturelles supérieures de la vie . . . ne sont pas dictées, comme celle de la journée, par la nécessité et la possibilité de se reproduire, mais au contraire, par l'impossibilité de se renouveler,

in whose process "nature's material [is] adapted by a change of form to the wants of man," so that "labour has incorporated itself with its subject," he indicated clearly that he was "speaking physiologically" and that labor and consumption are but two stages of the ever-recurring cycle of biological life.[34] This cycle needs to be sustained through consumption, and the activity which provides the means of consumption is laboring.[35] Whatever labor produces is meant to be fed into the human life process almost immediately, and this consumption, regenerating the life process, produces—or rather, reproduces—new "labor power," needed for the further sustenance of the body.[36] From the viewpoint of the exigencies of

sinon à l'échelle de l'espèce. Le cycle s'accomplit en une fois, et ne se renouvelle pas" (pp. 19–24).

34. *Capital* (Modern Library ed.), p. 201. This formula is frequent in Marx's work and always repeated almost *verbatim:* Labor is the eternal natural necessity to effect the metabolism between man and nature. (See, for instance, *Das Kapital*, Vol. I, Part 1, ch. 1, sec. 2, and Part 3, ch. 5. The standard English translation, Modern Library ed., pp. 50, 205, falls short of Marx's precision.) We find almost the same formulation in Vol. III of *Das Kapital*, p. 872. Obviously, when Marx speaks as he frequently does of the "life process of society," he is not thinking in metaphors.

35. Marx called labor "productive consumption" (*Capital* [Modern Library ed.], p. 204) and never lost sight of its being a physiological condition.

36. Marx's whole theory hinges on the early insight that the laborer first of all reproduces his own life by producing his means of subsistence. In his early writings he thought "that men begin to distinguish themselves from animals when they begin to produce their means of subsistence" (*Deutsche Ideologie*, p. 10). This indeed is the very content of the definition of man as *animal laborans*. It is all the more noteworthy that in other passages Marx is not satisfied with this definition because it does not distinguish man sharply enough from animals. "A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement" (*Capital* [Modern Library ed.], p. 198). Obviously, Marx no longer speaks of labor, but of work—with which he is not concerned; and the best proof of this is that the apparently all-important element of "imagination" plays no role whatsoever in his labor theory. In the third volume of *Das Kapital* he repeats that surplus labor beyond immediate needs serves the "progressive extension of the reproduction process" (pp. 872, 278). Despite occasional hesi-

the life process itself, the "necessity of subsisting," as Locke put it, laboring and consuming follow each other so closely that they almost constitute one and the same movement, which is hardly ended when it must be started all over again. The "necessity of subsisting" rules over both labor and consumption, and labor, when it incorporates, "gathers," and bodily "mixes with" the things provided by nature,[37] does actively what the body does even more intimately when it consumes its nourishment. Both are devouring processes that seize and destroy matter, and the "work" done by labor upon its material is only the preparation for its eventual destruction.

This destructive, devouring aspect of the laboring activity, to be sure, is visible only from the standpoint of the world and in distinction from work, which does not prepare matter for incorporation but changes it into material in order to work upon it and use the finished product. From the viewpoint of nature, it is work rather than labor that is destructive, since the work process takes matter out of nature's hands without giving it back to her in the swift course of the natural metabolism of the living body.

Equally bound up with the recurring cycles of natural movements, but not quite so urgently imposed upon man by "the condition of human life" itself,[38] is the second task of laboring—its constant, unending fight against the processes of growth and decay through which nature forever invades the human artifice, threatening the durability of the world and its fitness for human use. The protection and preservation of the world against natural processes are among the toils which need the monotonous performance of daily repeated chores. This laboring fight, as distinguished from the essentially peaceful fulfilment in which labor obeys the orders of immediate bodily needs, although it may be even less "productive" than man's direct metabolism with nature, has a much closer connection with the world, which it defends against

tations, Marx remained convinced that "Milton produced *Paradise Lost* for the same reason a silk worm produces silk" (*Theories of Surplus Value* [London, 1951], p. 186).

37. Locke, *op. cit.*, secs. 46, 26, and 27, respectively.

38. *Ibid.*, sec. 34.

nature. In old tales and mythological stories it has often assumed the grandeur of heroic fights against overwhelming odds, as in the account of Hercules, whose cleaning of the Augean stables is among the twelve heroic "labors." A similar connotation of heroic deeds requiring great strength and courage and performed in a fighting spirit is manifest in the medieval use of the word: labor, *travail*, *arebeit*. However, the daily fight in which the human body is engaged to keep the world clean and prevent its decay bears little resemblance to heroic deeds; the endurance it needs to repair every day anew the waste of yesterday is not courage, and what makes the effort painful is not danger but its relentless repetition. The Herculean "labors" share with all great deeds that they are unique; but unfortunately it is only the mythological Augean stable that will remain clean once the effort is made and the task achieved.

14

LABOR AND FERTILITY

The sudden, spectacular rise of labor from the lowest, most despised position to the highest rank, as the most esteemed of all human activities, began when Locke discovered that labor is the source of all property. It followed its course when Adam Smith asserted that labor was the source of all wealth and found its climax in Marx's "system of labor,"[39] where labor became the source of all productivity and the expression of the very humanity of man. Of the three, however, only Marx was interested in labor as such; Locke was concerned with the institution of private property as the root of society and Smith wished to explain and to secure the unhampered progress of a limitless accumulation of wealth. But all three, though Marx with greatest force and consistency, held that labor was considered to be the supreme world-building capacity of man, and since labor actually is the most natural and least worldly of man's activities, each of them, and again none more than Marx, found himself in the grip of certain genuine contradictions. It seems to lie in the very nature of this matter that

39. The expression is Karl Dunkmann's (*Soziologie der Arbeit* [1933], p. 71), who rightly remarks that the title of Marx's great work is a misnomer and should better have been called *System der Arbeit*.

the most obvious solution of these contradictions, or rather the most obvious reason why these great authors should have remained unaware of them is their equation of work with labor, so that labor is endowed by them with certain faculties which only work possesses. This equation always leads into patent absurdities, though they usually are not so neatly manifest as in the following sentence of Veblen: "The lasting evidence of productive labor is its material product—commonly some article of consumption,"[40] where the "lasting evidence" with which he begins, because he needs it for the alleged productivity of labor, is immediately destroyed by the "consumption" of the product with which he ends, forced, as it were, by the factual evidence of the phenomenon itself.

Thus Locke, in order to save labor from its manifest disgrace of producing only "things of short duration," had to introduce money —a "lasting thing which men may keep without spoiling"—a kind of *deus ex machina* without which the laboring body, in its obedience to the life process, could never have become the origin of anything so permanent and lasting as property, because there are no "durable things" to be kept to survive the activity of the laboring process. And even Marx, who actually defined man as an *animal laborans*, had to admit that productivity of labor, properly speaking, begins only with reification (*Vergegenständlichung*), with "the erection of an objective world of things" (*Erzeugung einer gegenständlichen Welt*).[41] But the effort of labor never frees the labor-

40. The curious formulation occurs in Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1917), p. 44.

41. The term *vergegenständlichen* occurs not very frequently in Marx, but always in a crucial context. Cf. *Jugendschriften*, p. 88: "Das praktische Erzeugen einer gegenständlichen Welt, die Bearbeitung der unorganischen Natur ist die Bewährung des Menschen als eines bewussten Gattungswesens. . . . [Das Tier] produziert unter der Herrschaft des unmittelbaren Bedürfnisses, während der Mensch selbst frei vom physischen Bedürfnis produziert und erst wahrhaft produziert in der Freiheit von demselben." Here, as in the passage from *Capital* quoted in note 36, Marx obviously introduces an altogether different concept of labor, that is, speaks about work and fabrication. The same reification is mentioned in *Das Kapital* (Vol. I, Part 3, ch. 5), though somewhat equivocally: "[Die Arbeit] ist vergegenständlicht und der Gegenstand ist verarbeitet." The play on words with the term *Gegenstand* obscures what actually happens in the process: through reification, a new thing has been produced, but the "object" that this process transformed into a thing is, from the viewpoint of the process,

ing animal from repeating it all over again and remains therefore an "eternal necessity imposed by nature."[42] When Marx insists that the labor "process comes to its end in the product,"[43] he forgets his own definition of this process as the "metabolism between man and nature" into which the product is immediately "incorporated," consumed, and annihilated by the body's life process.

Since neither Locke nor Smith is concerned with labor as such, they can afford to admit certain distinctions which actually would amount to a distinction in principle between labor and work, if it were not for an interpretation that treats of the genuine traits of laboring as merely irrelevant. Thus, Smith calls "unproductive labor" all activities connected with consumption, as though this were a negligible and accidental trait of something whose true nature was to be productive. The very contempt with which he describes how "menial tasks and services generally perish in the instant of their performance and seldom leave any trace or value behind them"[44] is much more closely related to premodern opinion on this matter than to its modern glorification. Smith and Locke were still quite aware of the fact that not every kind of labor "puts the difference of value on everything"[45] and that there exists a kind of activity which adds nothing "to the value of the materials which [it] works upon."[46] To be sure, labor, too, joins to nature something of man's own, but the proportion between what nature gives—the "good things"—and what man adds is the very opposite in the products of labor and the products of work. The "good things" for consumption never lose their naturalness altogether, and the grain never quite disappears in the bread as the tree has disappeared in the table. Thus, Locke, although he paid little attention to his own distinction between "the labour of our body and the work of our

only material and not a thing. (The Engish translation, Modern Library ed., p. 201, misses the meaning of the German text and therefore escapes the equivocality.)

42. This is a recurrent formulation in Marx's works. See, for instance, *Das Kapital*, Vol. I (Modern Library ed., p. 50) and Vol. III, pp. 873–74.

43. "Des Prozess erlischt im Produkt" (*Das Kapital*, Vol. I, Part 3, ch. 5).

44. Adam Smith, *op. cit.*, I, 295.

45. Locke, *op. cit.*, sec. 40.

46. Adam Smith, *op. cit.*, I, 294.

hands," had to acknowledge the distinction between things "of short duration" and those "lasting" long enough "that men might keep them without spoiling."[47] The difficulty for Smith and Locke was the same; their "products" had to stay long enough in the world of tangible things to become "valuable," whereby it is immaterial whether value is defined by Locke as something which can be kept and becomes property or by Smith as something which lasts long enough to be exchangeable for something else.

These certainly are minor points if compared with the fundamental contradiction which runs like a red thread through the whole of Marx's thought, and is present no less in the third volume of *Capital* than in the writings of the young Marx. Marx's attitude toward labor, and that is toward the very center of his thought, has never ceased to be equivocal.[48] While it was an "eternal necessity imposed by nature" and the most human and productive of man's activities, the revolution, according to Marx, has not the task of emancipating the laboring classes but of emancipating man from labor; only when labor is abolished can the "realm of freedom" supplant the "realm of necessity." For "the realm of freedom begins only where labor determined through want and external utility ceases," where "the rule of immediate physical needs" ends.[49] Such fundamental and flagrant contradictions rarely occur

47. *Op. cit.*, secs. 46 and 47.

48. Jules Vuillemin's *L'être et le travail* (1949) is a good example of what happens if one tries to resolve the central contradictions and equivocalities of Marx's thoughts. This is possible only if one abandons the phenomenal evidence altogether and begins to treat Marx's concepts as though they constituted in themselves a complicated jigsaw puzzle of abstractions. Thus, labor "springs apparently from necessity" but "actually realizes the work of liberty and affirms our power"; in labor "necessity expresses [for man] a hidden freedom" (pp. 15, 16). Against these attempts at a sophisticated vulgarization, one may remember Marx's own sovereign attitude toward his work as Kautsky reports it in the following anecdote: Kautsky asked Marx in 1881 if he did not contemplate an edition of his complete works, whereupon Marx replied: "These works must first be written" (Kautsky, *Aus der Frühzeit des Marxmismus* [1935], p. 53).

49. *Das Kapital*, III, 873. In the *Deutsche Ideologie* Marx states that "die kommunistische Revolution . . . die Arbeit beseitigt" (p. 59), after having stated some pages earlier (p. 10) that only through labor does man distinguish himself from animals.

in second-rate writers; in the work of the great authors they lead into the very center of their work. In the case of Marx, whose loyalty and integrity in describing phenomena as they presented themselves to his view cannot be doubted, the important discrepancies in his work, noted by all Marx scholars, can neither be blamed upon the difference "between the scientific point of view of the historian and the moral point of view of the prophet"[50] nor on a dialectical movement which needs the negative, or evil, to produce the positive, or good. The fact remains that in all stages of his work he defines man as an *animal laborans* and then leads him into a society in which this greatest and most human power is no longer necessary. We are left with the rather distressing alternative between productive slavery and unproductive freedom.

Thus, the question arises why Locke and all his successors, their own insights notwithstanding, clung so obstinately to labor as the origin of property, of wealth, of all values and, finally, of the very humanity of man. Or, to put it another way, what were the experiences inherent in the laboring activity that proved of such great importance to the modern age?

Historically, political theorists from the seventeenth century onward were confronted with a hitherto unheard-of process of growing wealth, growing property, growing acquisition. In the attempt to account for this steady growth, their attention was naturally drawn to the phenomenon of a progressing process itself, so that, for reasons we shall have to discuss later,[51] the concept of process became the very key term of the new age as well as the sciences, historical and natural, developed by it. From its beginning, this process, because of its apparent endlessness, was understood as a natural process and more specifically in the image of the life process itself. The crudest superstition of the modern age—that "money begets money"—as well as its sharpest political insight—that power generates power—owes its plausibility to the underlying metaphor of the natural fertility of life. Of all human activities, only labor, and neither action nor work, is unending,

50. The formulation is Edmund Wilson's in *To the Finland Station* (Anchor ed., 1953), but this criticism is familiar in Marxian literature.

51. See ch. vi, § 42, below.

progressing automatically in accordance with life itself and outside the range of wilful decisions or humanly meaningful purposes.

Perhaps nothing indicates more clearly the level of Marx's thought and the faithfulness of his descriptions to phenomenal reality than that he based his whole theory on the understanding of laboring and begetting as two modes of the same fertile life process. Labor was to him the "reproduction of one's own life" which assured the survival of the individual, and begetting was the production "of foreign life" which assured the survival of the species.[52] This insight is chronologically the never-forgotten origin of his theory, which he then elaborated by substituting for "abstract labor" the labor power of a living organism and by understanding labor's surplus as that amount of labor power still extant after the means for the laborer's own reproduction have been produced. With it, he sounded a depth of experience reached by none of his predecessors—to whom he otherwise owed almost all his decisive inspirations—and none of his successors. He squared his theory, the theory of the modern age, with the oldest and most persistent insights into the nature of labor, which, according to the Hebrew as well as the classical tradition, was as intimately bound up with life as giving birth. By the same token, the true meaning of labor's newly discovered productivity becomes manifest only in Marx's work, where it rests on the equation of productivity with fertility, so that the famous development of mankind's "productive forces" into a society of an abundance of "good things" actually obeys no other law and is subject to no other necessity than the aboriginal command, "Be ye fruitful and multiply," in which it is as though the voice of nature herself speaks to us.

The fertility of the human metabolism with nature, growing out of the natural redundancy of labor power, still partakes of the superabundance we see everywhere in nature's household. The "blessing or the joy" of labor is the human way to experience the sheer bliss of being alive which we share with all living creatures, and it is even the only way men, too, can remain and swing contentedly in nature's prescribed cycle, toiling and resting, laboring and consuming, with the same happy and purposeless regularity with which day and night and life and death follow each other.

52. *Deutsche Ideologie*, p. 17.

The reward of toil and trouble lies in nature's fertility, in the quiet confidence that he who in "toil and trouble" has done his part, remains a part of nature in the future of his children and his children's children. The Old Testament, which, unlike classical antiquity, held life to be sacred and therefore neither death nor labor to be an evil (and least of all an argument against life),[53] shows in the stories of the patriarchs how unconcerned about death their lives were, how they needed neither an individual, earthly immortality nor an assurance of the eternity of their souls, how death came to them in the familiar shape of night and quiet and eternal rest "in a good old age and full of years."

The blessing of life as a whole, inherent in labor, can never be found in work and should not be mistaken for the inevitably brief spell of relief and joy which follows accomplishment and attends achievement. The blessing of labor is that effort and gratification follow each other as closely as producing and consuming the means

53. Nowhere in the Old Testament is death "the wage of sin." Nor did the curse by which man was expelled from paradise punish him with labor and birth; it only made labor harsh and birth full of sorrow. According to Genesis, man (*adam*) had been created to take care and watch over the soil (*adamah*), as even his name, the masculine form of "soil," indicates (see Gen. 2:5, 15). "And *Adam* was not to till *adamah* . . . and He, God, created Adam of the dust of *adamah*. . . . He, God, took Adam and put him into the garden of Eden to till and to watch it" (I follow the translation of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Die Schrift* [Berlin, n.d.]). The word for "tilling" which later became the word for laboring in Hebrew, *leawod*, has the connotation of "to serve." The curse (3:17–19) does not mention this word, but the meaning is clear: the service for which man was created now became servitude. The current popular misunderstanding of the curse is due to an unconscious interpretation of the Old Testament in the light of Greek thinking. The misunderstanding is usually avoided by Catholic writers. See, for instance, Jacques Leclercq, *Leçons de droit naturel*, Vol. IV, Part 2, "Travail, Propriété," (1946), p. 31: "La peine du travail est le résultat du péché original. . . . L'homme non déchu eût travaillé dans la joie, mais il eût travaillé"; or J. Chr. Nattermann, *Die moderne Arbeit, soziologisch und theologisch betrachtet* (1953), p. 9. It is interesting in this context to compare the curse of the Old Testament with the seemingly similar explanation of the harshness of labor in Hesiod. Hesiod reports that the gods, in order to punish man, hid life from him (see n. 8) so that he had to search for it, while before, he apparently did not have to do anything but pluck the fruits of the earth from fields and trees. Here the curse consists not only in the harshness of labor but in labor itself.

of subsistence, so that happiness is a concomitant of the process itself, just as pleasure is a concomitant of the functioning of a healthy body. The "happiness of the greatest number," into which we have generalized and vulgarized the felicity with which earthly life has always been blessed, conceptualized into an "ideal" the fundamental reality of a laboring humanity. The right to the pursuit of this happiness is indeed as undeniable as the right to life; it is even identical with it. But it has nothing in common with good fortune, which is rare and never lasts and cannot be pursued, because fortune depends on luck and what chance gives and takes, although most people in their "pursuit of happiness" run after good fortune and make themselves unhappy even when it befalls them, because they want to keep and enjoy luck as though it were an inexhaustible abundance of "good things." There is no lasting happiness outside the prescribed cycle of painful exhaustion and pleasurable regeneration, and whatever throws this cycle out of balance —poverty and misery where exhaustion is followed by wretchedness instead of regeneration, or great riches and an entirely effortless life where boredom takes the place of exhaustion and where the mills of necessity, of consumption and digestion, grind an impotent human body mercilessly and barrenly to death—ruins the elemental happiness that comes from being alive.

The force of life is fertility. The living organism is not exhausted when it has provided for its own reproduction, and its "surplus" lies in its potential multiplication. Marx's consistent naturalism discovered "labor power" as the specifically human mode of the life force which is as capable of creating a "surplus" as nature herself. Since he was almost exclusively interested in this process itself, the process of the "productive forces of society," in whose life, as in the life of every animal species, production and consumption always strike a balance, the question of a separate existence of worldly things, whose durability will survive and withstand the devouring processes of life, does not occur to him at all. From the viewpoint of the life of the species, all activities indeed find their common denominator in laboring, and the only distinguishing criterion left is the abundance or scarcity of the goods to be fed into the life process. When every thing has become an object for consumption, the fact that labor's surplus does not

change the nature, the "short duration," of the products themselves loses all importance, and this loss is manifest in Marx's work in the contempt with which he treats the belabored distinctions of his predecessors between productive and unproductive, or skilled and unskilled labor.

The reason why Marx's predecessors were not able to rid themselves of these distinctions, which essentially are equivalent to the more fundamental distinction between work and labor, was not that they were less "scientific" but that they were still writing on the assumption of private property, or at least individual appropriation of national wealth. For the establishment of property, mere abundance can never be enough; labor's products do not become more durable by their abundance and cannot be "heaped up" and stored away to become part of a man's property; on the contrary, they are only too likely to disappear in the process of appropriation or to "perish uselessly" if they are not consumed "before they spoil."

15

THE PRIVACY OF PROPERTY AND WEALTH

At first glance it must seem strange indeed that a theory which so conclusively ended in the abolition of all property should have taken its departure from the theoretical establishment of private property. This strangeness, however, is somewhat mitigated if we remember the sharply polemical aspect of the modern age's concern with property, whose rights were asserted explicitly against the common realm and against the state. Since no political theory prior to socialism and communism had proposed to establish an entirely propertyless society, and no government prior to the twentieth century had shown serious inclinations to expropriate its citizens, the content of the new theory could not possibly be prompted by the need to protect property rights against possible intrusion of government administration. The point is that then, unlike now when all property theories are obviously on the defensive, the economists were not on the defensive at all but on the contrary openly hostile to the whole sphere of government, which

at best was considered a "necessary evil" and a "reflection on human nature,"[54] at worst a parasite on the otherwise healthy life of society.[55] What the modern age so heatedly defended was never property as such but the unhampered pursuit of more property or of appropriation; as against all organs that stood for the "dead" permanence of a common world, it fought its battles in the name of life, the life of society.

There is no doubt that, as the natural process of life is located in the body, there is no more immediately life-bound activity than laboring. Locke could neither remain satisfied with the traditional explanation of labor, according to which it is the natural and inevitable consequence of poverty and never a means of its abolition, nor with the traditional explanation of the origin of property through acquisition, conquest, or an original division of the common world.[56] What he actually was concerned with was appropria-

54. The writers of the modern age are all agreed that the "good" and "productive" side of human nature is reflected in society, while its wickedness makes government necessary. As Thomas Paine stated it: "Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affections, the latter negatively by restraining our vices. . . . Society in every state is a blessing, but government, even in the best state, a necessary evil" (*Common Sense*, 1776). Or Madison: "But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external or internal controls would be necessary" (*The Federalist* [Modern Library ed.], p. 337).

55. This was the opinion of Adam Smith, for instance, who was very indignant about "the public extravagance of government": "The whole, or almost the whole public revenue, is in most countries employed in maintaining unproductive hands" (*op. cit.*, I, 306).

56. No doubt, "before 1690 no one understood that a man had a natural right to property created by his labour; after 1690 the idea came to be an axiom of social science" (Richard Schlatter, *Private Property: The History of an Idea* [1951], p. 156). The concept of labor and property was even mutually exclusive, whereas labor and poverty (*ponos* and *penia*, *Arbeit* and *Armut*) belonged together in the sense that the activity corresponding to the status of poverty was laboring. Plato, therefore, who held that laboring slaves were "bad" because they were not masters of the animal part within them, said almost the same about the status of poverty. The poor man is "not master of himself" (*penēs ōn kai heautou mē kratōn* [*Seventh Letter* 351A]). None of the classical writers ever thought of labor as a possible source of wealth. According to Cicero—and he probably only sums

tion and what he had to find was a world-appropriating activity whose privacy at the same time must be beyond doubt and dispute.

Nothing, to be sure, is more private than the bodily functions of the life process, its fertility not excluded, and it is quite noteworthy that the few instances where even a "socialized mankind" respects and imposes strict privacy concern precisely such "activities" as are imposed by the life process itself. Of these, labor, because it is an activity and not merely a function, is the least private, so to speak, the only one we feel need not be hidden; yet it is still close enough to the life process to make plausible the argument for the privacy of appropriation as distinguished from the very different argument for the privacy of property.[57] Locke founded private property on the most privately owned thing there is, "the property [of man] in his own person," that is, in his own body.[58] "The labour of our body and the work of our hands" become one and the same, because both are the "means" to "appropriate" what "God . . . hath given . . . to men in common." And these means, body and hands and mouth, are the natural appropriators because they do not "belong to mankind in common" but are given to each man for his private use.[59]

Just as Marx had to introduce a natural force, the "labor power" of the body, to account for labor's productivity and a progressing process of growing wealth, Locke, albeit less explicitly, had to trace property to a natural origin of appropriation in order to force open those stable, worldly boundaries that "enclose" each person's privately owned share of the world "from the common."[60] What Marx still had in common with Locke was that he wished to see the process of growing wealth as a natural process, automatically following its own laws and beyond wilful decisions and purposes. If any human activity was to be involved in the process at all, it could only be a bodily "activity" whose natural functioning could not be checked even if one wanted to do so. To check these "activi-

up contemporary opinion—property comes about either through ancient conquest or victory or legal division (*aut vetere occupatione aut victoria aut lege* [*De officiis* i. 21]).

57. See § 8 above.

58. *Op. cit.*, sec. 26.

59. *Ibid.*, sec. 25.

60. *Ibid.*, sec. 31.

ties" is indeed to destroy nature, and for the whole modern age, whether it holds fast to the institution of private property or considers it to be an impediment to the growth of wealth, a check or control of the process of wealth was equivalent to an attempt to destroy the very life of society.

The development of the modern age and the rise of society, where the most private of all human activities, laboring, has become public and been permitted to establish its own common realm, may make it doubtful whether the very existence of property as a privately held place within the world can withstand the relentless process of growing wealth. But it is true, nevertheless, that the very privacy of one's holdings, that is, their complete independence "from the common," could not be better guaranteed than by the transformation of property into appropriation or by an interpretation of the "enclosure from the common" which sees it as the result, the "product," of bodily activity. In this aspect, the body becomes indeed the quintessence of all property because it is the only thing one could not share even if one wanted to. Nothing, in fact, is less common and less communicable, and therefore more securely shielded against the visibility and audibility of the public realm, than what goes on within the confines of the body, its pleasures and its pains, its laboring and consuming. Nothing, by the same token, ejects one more radically from the world than exclusive concentration upon the body's life, a concentration forced upon man in slavery or in the extremity of unbearable pain. Whoever wishes, for whatever reason, to make human existence entirely "private," independent of the world and aware only of its own being alive, must rest his arguments on these experiences; and since the relentless drudgery of slave labor is not "natural" but man-made and in contradiction to the natural fertility of the *animal laborans*, whose strength is not exhausted and whose time is not consumed when it has reproduced his own life, the "natural" experience underlying the Stoic as well as the Epicurean independence of the world is not labor or slavery but pain. The happiness achieved in isolation from the world and enjoyed within the confines of one's own private existence can never be anything but the famous "absence of pain," a definition on which all variations of consistent sensualism must agree. Hedonism, the doctrine that

only bodily sensations are real, is but the most radical form of a non-political, totally private way of life, the true fulfilment of Epicurus' *lathe biōsas kai mē politeuesthai* ("live in hiding and do not care about the world").

Normally, absence of pain is no more than the bodily condition for experiencing the world; only if the body is not irritated and, through irritation, thrown back upon itself, can our bodily senses function normally, receive what is given to them. Absence of pain is usually "felt" only in the short intermediate stage between pain and non-pain, and the sensation which corresponds to the sensualists' concept of happiness is release from pain rather than its absence. The intensity of this sensation is beyond doubt; it is, indeed, matched only by the sensation of pain itself.[61] The mental effort required by philosophies which for various reasons wish to "liberate" man from the world is always an act of imagination in which the mere absence of pain is experienced and actualized into a feeling of being released from it.[62]

61. It seems to me that certain types of mild and rather frequent drug addictions, which usually are blamed upon the habit-forming properties of drugs, might perhaps be due to the desire to repeat the once experienced pleasure of relief from pain with its intense feeling of euphoria. The phenomenon itself was well known in antiquity, whereas in modern literature I found the only support for my assumption in Isak Dinesen's "Converse at Night in Copenhagen" (*Last Tales* [1957], pp. 338 ff.), where she counts "cessation from pain" among the "three kinds of perfect happiness." Plato already argues against those who "when drawn away from pain firmly believe that they have reached the goal of . . . pleasure" (*Republic* 585A), but concedes that these "mixed pleasures" which follow pain or privation are more intense than the pure pleasures, such as smelling an exquisite aroma or contemplating geometrical figures. Curiously enough, it was the hedonists who confused the issue and did not want to admit that the pleasure of release from pain is greater in intensity than "pure pleasure," let alone mere absence of pain. Thus Cicero accused Epicurus of having confused mere absence of pain with the pleasure of release from it (see V. Brochard, *Études de philosophie ancienne et de philosophie moderne* [1912], pp. 252 ff.). And Lucretius exclaimed: "Do you not see that nature is clamouring for two things only, a body free from pain, a mind released from worry . . . ?" (*The Nature of the Universe* [Penguin ed.], p. 60).

62. Brochard (*op. cit.*) gives an excellent summary of the philosophers of late antiquity, especially of Epicurus. The way to unshaken sensual happiness lies in the soul's capacity "to escape into a happier world which it creates, so that

In any event, pain and the concomitant experience of release from pain are the only sense experiences that are so independent from the world that they do not contain the experience of any worldly object. The pain caused by a sword or the tickling caused by a feather indeed tells me nothing whatsoever of the quality or even the worldly existence of a sword or a feather.[63] Only an irresistible distrust in the capacity of human senses for an adequate experience of the world—and this distrust is the origin of all specifically modern philosophy—can explain the strange and even

with the help of imagination it can always persuade the body to experience the same pleasure which it once has known" (pp. 278 and 294 ff.).

63. It is characteristic of all theories that argue against the world-giving capacity of the senses that they remove vision from its position as the highest and most noble of the senses and substitute touch or taste, which are indeed the most private senses, that is, those in which the body primarily senses itself while perceiving an object. All thinkers who deny the reality of the outer world would have agreed with Lucretius, who said: "For touch and nothing but touch (by all that men call holy) is the essence of all our bodily sensations" (*op. cit.*, p. 72). This, however, is not enough; touch or taste in a non-irritated body still give too much of the reality of the world: when I eat a dish of strawberries, I taste strawberries and not the taste itself, or, to take an example from Galileo, when "I pass a hand, first over a marble statue, then over a living man," I am aware of marble and a living body, and not primarily of my own hand that touches them. Galileo, therefore, when he wishes to demonstrate that the secondary qualities, such as colors, tastes, odors, are "nothing else than mere names [having] their residence solely in the sensitive body," has to give up his own example and introduce the sensation of being tickled by a feather, whereupon he concludes: "Of precisely a similar and not greater existence do I believe these various qualities to be possessed, which are attributed to natural bodies, such as tastes, odours, colours and others" (*Il Saggiatore*, in *Opere*, IV, 333 ff.; translation quoted from E. A. Burtt, *Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science* [1932]).

This argument can base itself only upon sense experiences in which the body is clearly thrown back upon itself and therefore, as it were, ejected from the world in which it normally moves. The stronger the inner bodily sensation, the more plausible becomes the argument. Descartes in the same line of argument says as follows: "The motion merely of a sword cutting a part of our skin causes pain but does not on that account make us aware of the motion or the figure of the sword. And it is certain that this sensation of pain is not less different from the motion that causes it . . . than are the sensation we have of colour, sound, odour, or taste" (*Principles*, Part 4; translated by Haldane and Ross, *Philosophical Works* [1911]).

absurd choice that uses phenomena which, like pain or tickling, obviously prevent our senses' functioning normally, as examples of all sense experience, and can derive from them the subjectivity of "secondary" and even "primary" qualities. If we had no other sense perceptions than these in which the body senses itself, the reality of the outer world would not only be open to doubt, we would not even possess any notion of a world at all.

The only activity which corresponds strictly to the experience of worldlessness, or rather to the loss of world that occurs in pain, is laboring, where the human body, its activity notwithstanding, is also thrown back upon itself, concentrates upon nothing but its own being alive, and remains imprisoned in its metabolism with nature without ever transcending or freeing itself from the recurring cycle of its own functioning. We mentioned before the twofold pain connected with the life process for which language has but one word and which according to the Bible was imposed upon the life of man together, the painful effort involved in the reproduction of one's own life and the life of the species. If this painful effort of living and fertility were the true origin of property, then the privacy of this property would be indeed as worldless as the unequaled privacy of having a body and of experiencing pain.

This privacy, however, while it is essentially the privacy of appropriation, is by no means what Locke, whose concepts were still essentially those of the premodern tradition, understood by private property. No matter what its origin, this property was to him still an "enclosure from the common," that is, primarily a place in the world where that which is private can be hidden and protected against the public realm. As such, it remained in contact with the common world even at a time when growing wealth and appropriation began to threaten the common world with extinction. Property does not strengthen but rather mitigates the unrelatedness to the world of the laboring process, because of its own worldly security. By the same token, the process character of laboring, the relentlessness with which labor is urged and driven by the life process itself, is checked by the acquisition of property. In a society of property-owners, as distinguished from a society of la-

borers or jobholders, it is still the world, and neither natural abundance nor the sheer necessity of life, which stands at the center of human care and worry.

The matter becomes altogether different if the leading interest is no longer property but the growth of wealth and the process of accumulation as such. This process can be as infinite as the life process of the species, and its very infinity is constantly challenged and interrupted by the inconvenient fact that private individuals do not live forever and have no infinite time before them. Only if the life of society as a whole, instead of the limited lives of individual men, is considered to be the gigantic subject of the accumulation process can this process go on in full freedom and at full speed, unhampered by limitations imposed by the individual life-span and individually held property. Only when man no longer acts as an individual, concerned only with his own survival, but as a "member of the species," a *Gattungswesen* as Marx used to say, only when the reproduction of individual life is absorbed into the life process of man-kind, can the collective life process of a "socialized mankind" follow its own "necessity," that is, its automatic course of fertility in the twofold sense of multiplication of lives and the increasing abundance of goods needed by them.

The coincidence of Marx's labor philosophy with the evolution and development theories of the nineteenth century—the natural evolution of a single life process from the lowest forms of organic life to the emergence of the human animal and the historical development of a life process of mankind as a whole—is striking and was early observed by Engels, who called Marx "the Darwin of history." What all these theories in the various sciences—economics, history, biology, geology—have in common is the concept of process, which was virtually unknown prior to the modern age. Since the discovery of processes by the natural sciences had coincided with the discovery of introspection in philosophy, it is only natural that the biological process within ourselves should eventually become the very model of the new concept; within the framework of experiences given to introspection, we know of no other process but the life process within our bodies, and the only activity into which we can translate it and which corresponds to it is labor.

Hence, it may seem almost inevitable that the equation of productivity with fertility in the labor philosophy of the modern age should have been succeeded by the different varieties of life philosophy which rest on the same equation.[64] The difference between the earlier labor theories and the later life philosophies is chiefly that the latter have lost sight of the only activity necessary to sustain the life process. Yet even this loss seems to correspond to the factual historical development which made labor more effortless than ever before and therefore even more similar to the automatically functioning life process. If at the turn of the century (with Nietzsche and Bergson) life and not labor was proclaimed to be "the creator of all values," this glorification of the sheer dynamism of the life process excluded that minimum of initiative present even in those activities which, like laboring and begetting, are urged upon man by necessity.

However, neither the enormous increase in fertility nor the socialization of the process, that is, the substitution of society or collective man-kind for individual men as its subject, can eliminate the character of strict and even cruel privacy from the experience of bodily processes in which life manifests itself, or from the activity of laboring itself. Neither abundance of goods nor the shortening of the time actually spent in laboring are likely to result in the establishment of a common world, and the expropriated *animal laborans* becomes no less private because he has been deprived of a private place of his own to hide and be protected from the common realm. Marx predicted correctly, though with an unjustified glee, "the withering away" of the public realm under conditions of unhampered development of the "productive forces of society," and he was equally right, that is, consistent with his conception of man as an *animal laborans*, when he foresaw that "socialized men" would

64. This connection was dimly perceived by Bergson's pupils in France (see esp. Édouard Berth, *Les méfaits des intellectuels* [1914], ch. 1, and Georges Sorel, *D'Aristote à Marx* [1935]). In the same school belongs the work of the Italian scholar Adriano Tilgher (*op. cit.*) who emphasizes that the idea of labor is central and constitutes the key to the new concept and image of life (English ed., p. 55). The school of Bergson, like its master, idealizes labor by equating it with work and fabrication. Yet the similarity between the motor of biological life and Bergson's *élan vital* is striking.

spend their freedom from laboring in those strictly private and essentially worldless activities that we now call "hobbies."[65]

16

THE INSTRUMENTS OF WORK AND THE DIVISION OF LABOR

Unfortunately, it seems to be in the nature of the conditions of life as it has been given to man that the only possible advantage of the fertility of human labor power lies in its ability to procure the necessities of life for more than one man or one family. Labor's products, the products of man's metabolism with nature, do not stay in the world long enough to become a part of it, and the laboring activity itself, concentrated exclusively on life and its maintenance, is oblivious of the world to the point of worldlessness. The *animal laborans*, driven by the needs of its body, does not use this body freely as *homo faber* uses his hands, his primordial tools, which is why Plato suggested that laborers and slaves were not only subject to necessity and incapable of freedom but also unable to rule the "animal" part within them.[66] A mass society of laborers, such as Marx had in mind when he spoke of "socialized mankind," consists of worldless specimens of the species mankind, whether they are household slaves, driven into their predicament by the violence of others, or free, performing their functions willingly.

This worldlessness of the *animal laborans*, to be sure, is entirely different from the active flight from the publicity of the world which we found inherent in the activity of "good works." The *animal laborans* does not flee the world but is ejected from it in so far as he is imprisoned in the privacy of his own body, caught in the

65. In communist or socialist society, all professions would, as it were, become hobbies: there would be no painters but only people who among other things spend their time also on painting; people, that is, who "do this today and that tomorrow, who hunt in the morning, go fishing in the afternoon, raise cattle in the evening, are critics after dinner, as they see fit, without for that matter ever becoming hunters, fisherman, shepherds or critics" (*Deutsche Ideologie*, pp. 22 and 373).

66. *Republic* 590C.

fulfilment of needs in which nobody can share and which nobody can fully communicate. The fact that slavery and banishment into the household was, by and large, the social condition of all laborers prior to the modern age is primarily due to the human condition itself; life, which for all other animal species is the very essence of their being, becomes a burden to man because of his innate "repugnance to futility."[67] This burden is all the heavier since none of the so-called "loftier desires" has the same urgency, is actually forced upon man by necessity, as the elementary needs of life. Slavery became the social condition of the laboring classes because it was felt that it was the natural condition of life itself. *Omnis vita servitium est.*[68]

The burden of biological life, weighing down and consuming the specifically human life-span between birth and death, can be eliminated only by the use of servants, and the chief function of ancient slaves was rather to carry the burden of consumption in the household than to produce for society at large.[69] The reason why slave labor could play such an enormous role in ancient societies and why its wastefulness and unproductivity were not discovered is that the ancient city-state was primarily a "consumption center," unlike medieval cities which were chiefly production centers.[70] The price for the elimination of life's burden from the shoulders of all citizens was enormous and by no means consisted only in the violent injustice of forcing one part of humanity into the darkness of pain and necessity. Since this darkness is natural, inherent in the human condition—only the act of violence, when one group of men tries to rid itself of the shackles binding all of us to pain and necessity, is man-made—the price for absolute freedom from necessity

67. Veblen, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

68. Seneca *De tranquillitate animae* ii. 3.

69. See the excellent analysis in Winston Ashley, *The Theory of Natural Slavery, according to Aristotle and St. Thomas* (Dissertation, University of Notre Dame [1941], ch. 5), who rightly emphasizes: "It would be wholly to miss Aristotle's argument, therefore, to believe that he considered slaves as universally necessary merely as productive tools. He emphasizes rather their necessity for consumption."

70. Max Weber, "Agrarverhältnisse im Altertum," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (1924), p. 13.

is, in a sense, life itself, or rather the substitution of vicarious life for real life. Under the conditions of slavery, the great of the earth could even use their senses vicariously, could "see and hear through their slaves," as the Greek idiom used by Herodotus expressed it.[71]

On its most elementary level the "toil and trouble" of obtaining and the pleasures of "incorporating" the necessities of life are so closely bound together in the biological life cycle, whose recurrent rhythm conditions human life in its unique and unilinear movement, that the perfect elimination of the pain and effort of labor would not only rob biological life of its most natural pleasures but deprive the specifically human life of its very liveliness and vitality. The human condition is such that pain and effort are not just symptoms which can be removed without changing life itself; they are rather the modes in which life itself, together with the necessity to which it is bound, makes itself felt. For mortals, the "easy life of the gods" would be a lifeless life.

For our trust in the reality of life and in the reality of the world is not the same. The latter derives primarily from the permanence and durability of the world, which is far superior to that of mortal life. If one knew that the world would come to an end with or soon after his own death, it would lose all its reality, as it did for the early Christians as long as they were convinced of the immediate fulfilment of their eschatological expectations. Trust in the reality of life, on the contrary, depends almost exclusively on the intensity with which life is felt, on the impact with which it makes itself felt. This intensity is so great and its force so elementary that wherever it prevails, in bliss or sorrow, it blacks out all other worldly reality. That the life of the rich loses in vitality, in closeness to the "good things" of nature, what it gains in refinement, in sensitivity to the beautiful things in the world, has often been noted. The fact is that the human capacity for life in the world always implies an

71. Herodotus i. 113 for instance: *eide te dia toutōn*, and *passim*. A similar expression occurs in Plinius, *Naturalis historia* xxix. 19: *alienis pedibus ambulamus; alienis oculis agnoscimus; aliena memoria salutamus; aliena vivimus opera* (quoted from R. H. Barrow, *Slavery in the Roman Empire* [1928], p. 26). "We walk with alien feet; we see with alien eyes; we recognize and greet people with an alien memory; we live from alien labor."

ability to transcend and to be alienated from the processes of life itself, while vitality and liveliness can be conserved only to the extent that men are willing to take the burden, the toil and trouble of life, upon themselves.

It is true that the enormous improvement in our labor tools—the mute robots with which *homo faber* has come to the help of the *animal laborans*, as distinguished from the human, speaking instruments (the *instrumentum vocale*, as the slaves in ancient households were called) whom the man of action had to rule and oppress when he wanted to liberate the *animal laborans* from its bondage—has made the twofold labor of life, the effort of its sustenance and the pain of giving birth, easier and less painful than it has ever been. This, of course, has not eliminated compulsion from the laboring activity or the condition of being subject to need and necessity from human life. But, in distinction from slave society, where the "curse" of necessity remained a vivid reality because the life of a slave testified daily to the fact that "life is slavery," this condition is no longer fully manifest and its lack of appearance has made it much more difficult to notice and remember. The danger here is obvious. Man cannot be free if he does not know that he is subject to necessity, because his freedom is always won in his never wholly successful attempts to liberate himself from necessity. And while it may be true that his strongest impulse toward this liberation comes from his "repugnance to futility," it is also likely that the impulse may grow weaker as this "futility" appears easier, as it requires less effort. For it is still probable that the enormous changes of the industrial revolution behind us and the even greater changes of the atomic revolution before us will remain changes of the world, and not changes in the basic condition of human life on earth.

Tools and instruments which can ease the effort of labor considerably are themselves not a product of labor but of work; they do not belong in the process of consumption but are part and parcel of the world of use objects. Their role, no matter how great it may be in the labor of any given civilization, can never attain the fundamental importance of tools for all kinds of work. No work can be produced without tools, and the birth of *homo faber* and the coming into being of a man-made world of things are actually coeval with the discovery of tools and instruments. From the

standpoint of labor, tools strengthen and multiply human strength to the point of almost replacing it, as in all cases where natural forces, such as tame animals or water power or electricity, and not mere material things, are brought under a human master. By the same token, they increase the natural fertility of the *animal laborans* and provide an abundance of consumer goods. But all these changes are of a quantitative order, whereas the very quality of fabricated things, from the simplest use object to the masterwork of art, depends intimately on the existence of adequate instruments.

Moreover, the limitations of instruments in the easing of life's labor—the simple fact that the services of one servant can never be fully replaced by a hundred gadgets in the kitchen and half a dozen robots in the cellar—are of a fundamental nature. A curious and unexpected testimony to this is that it could be predicted thousands of years before the fabulous modern development of tools and machines had taken place. In a half-fanciful, half-ironical mood, Aristotle once imagined what has long since become a reality, namely that "every tool could perform its own work when ordered . . . like the statues of Daedalus or the tripods of Hephaestus, which, says the poet, 'of their own accord entered the assembly of the gods.' " Then, "the shuttle would weave and the plectrum touch the lyre without a hand to guide them." This, he goes on to say, would indeed mean that the craftsman would no longer need human assistants, but it would not mean that household slaves could be dispensed with. For slaves are not instruments of making things or of production, but of living, which constantly consumes their services.[72] The process of making a thing is limited and the function of the instrument comes to a predictable, controllable end with the finished product; the process of life that requires laboring is an endless activity and the only "instrument" equal to it would have to be a *perpetuum mobile*, that is, the *instrumentum vocale* which is as alive and "active" as the living organism which it serves. It is precisely because from "the instruments of the household nothing else results except the use of the possession itself" that they cannot be replaced by tools and instruments of workmanship "from which results something more than the mere use of the instrument."[73]

72. Aristotle *Politics* 1253b30–1254a18.

73. Winston Ashley, *op. cit.*, ch. 5.

While tools and instruments, designed to produce more and something altogether different from their mere use, are of secondary importance for laboring, the same is not true for the other great principle in the human labor process, the division of labor. Division of labor indeed grows directly out of the laboring process and should not be mistaken for the apparently similar principle of specialization which prevails in working processes and with which it is usually equated. Specialization of work and division of labor have in common only the general principle of organization, which itself has nothing to do with either work or labor but owes its origin to the strictly political sphere of life, to the fact of man's capacity to act and to act together and in concert. Only within the framework of political organization, where men not merely live, but act, together, can specialization of work and division of labor take place.

Yet, while specialization of work is essentially guided by the finished product itself, whose nature it is to require different skills which then are pooled and organized together, division of labor, on the contrary, presupposes the qualitative equivalence of all single activities for which no special skill is required, and these activities have no end in themselves, but actually represent only certain amounts of labor power which are added together in a purely quantitative way. Division of labor is based on the fact that two men can put their labor power together and "behave toward each other as though they were one."[74] This one-ness is the exact opposite of co-operation, it indicates the unity of the species with regard to which every single member is the same and exchangeable. (The formation of a labor collective where the laborers are socially organized in accordance with this principle of common and divisible labor power is the very opposite of the various workmen's organizations, from the old guilds and corporations to certain types of modern trade unions, whose members are bound together by the skills and specializations that distinguish them from others.) Since

74. See Viktor von Weizsäcker, "Zum Begriff der Arbeit," in *Festschrift für Alfred Weber* (1948), p. 739. The essay is noteworthy for certain scattered observations, but on the whole unfortunately useless, since Weizsäcker further obscures the concept of labor by the rather gratuitous assumption that the sick human being has to "perform labor" in order to get well.

none of the activities into which the process is divided has an end in itself, their "natural" end is exactly the same as in the case of "undivided" labor: either the simple reproduction of the means of subsistence, that is, the capacity for consumption of the laborers, or the exhaustion of human labor power. Neither of these two limitations, however, is final; exhaustion is part of the individual's, not of the collective's, life process, and the subject of the laboring process under the conditions of division of labor is a collective labor force, not individual labor power. The inexhaustibility of this labor force corresponds exactly to the deathlessness of the species, whose life process as a whole is also not interrupted by the individual births and deaths of its members.

More serious, it seems, is the limitation imposed by the capacity to consume, which remains bound to the individual even when a collective labor force has replaced individual labor power. The progress of accumulation of wealth may be limitless in a "socialized mankind" which has rid itself of the limitations of individual property and overcome the limitation of individual appropriation by dissolving all stable wealth, the possession of "heaped up" and "stored away" things, into money to spend and consume. We already live in a society where wealth is reckoned in terms of earning and spending power, which are only modifications of the twofold metabolism of the human body. The problem therefore is how to attune individual consumption to an unlimited accumulation of wealth.

Since mankind as a whole is still very far from having reached the limit of abundance, the mode in which society may overcome this natural limitation of its own fertility can be perceived only tentatively and on a national scale. There, the solution seems to be simple enough. It consists in treating all use objects as though they were consumer goods, so that a chair or a table is now consumed as rapidly as a dress and a dress used up almost as quickly as food. This mode of intercourse with the things of the world, moreover, is perfectly adequate to the way they are produced. The industrial revolution has replaced all workmanship with labor, and the result has been that the things of the modern world have become labor products whose natural fate is to be consumed, instead of work products which are there to be used. Just as tools and instruments,

though originating from work, were always employed in labor processes as well, so the division of labor, entirely appropriate and attuned to the laboring process, has become one of the chief characteristics of modern work processes, that is, of the fabrication and production of use objects. Division of labor rather than increased mechanization has replaced the rigorous specialization formerly required for all workmanship. Workmanship is required only for the design and fabrication of models before they go into mass production, which also depends on tools and machinery. But mass production would, in addition, be altogether impossible without the replacement of workmen and specialization with laborers and the division of labor.

Tools and instruments ease pain and effort and thereby change the modes in which the urgent necessity inherent in labor once was manifest to all. They do not change the necessity itself; they only serve to hide it from our senses. Something similar is true of labor's products, which do not become more durable through abundance. The case is altogether different in the corresponding modern transformation of the work process by the introduction of the principle of division of labor. Here the very nature of work is changed and the production process, although it by no means produces objects for consumption, assumes the character of labor. Although machines have forced us into an infinitely quicker rhythm of repetition than the cycle of natural processes prescribed—and this specifically modern acceleration is only too apt to make us disregard the repetitive character of all laboring—the repetition and the endlessness of the process itself put the unmistakable mark of laboring upon it. This is even more evident in the use objects produced by these techniques of laboring. Their very abundance transforms them into consumer goods. The endlessness of the laboring process is guaranteed by the ever-recurrent needs of consumption; the endlessness of production can be assured only if its products lose their use character and become more and more objects of consumption, or if, to put it in another way, the rate of use is so tremendously accelerated that the objective difference between use and consumption, between the relative durability of use objects and the swift coming and going of consumer goods, dwindles to insignificance.

In our need for more and more rapid replacement of the worldly

things around us, we can no longer afford to use them, to respect and preserve their inherent durability; we must consume, devour, as it were, our houses and furniture and cars as though they were the "good things" of nature which spoil uselessly if they are not drawn swiftly into the never-ending cycle of man's metabolism with nature. It is as though we had forced open the distinguishing boundaries which protected the world, the human artifice, from nature, the biological process which goes on in its very midst as well as the natural cyclical processes which surround it, delivering and abandoning to them the always threatened stability of a human world.

The ideals of *homo faber*, the fabricator of the world, which are permanence, stability, and durability, have been sacrificed to abundance, the ideal of the *animal laborans*. We live in a laborers' society because only laboring, with its inherent fertility, is likely to bring about abundance; and we have changed work into laboring, broken it up into its minute particles until it has lent itself to division where the common denominator of the simplest performance is reached in order to eliminate from the path of human labor power —which is part of nature and perhaps even the most powerful of all natural forces—the obstacle of the "unnatural" and purely worldly stability of the human artifice.

17

A CONSUMERS' SOCIETY

It is frequently said that we live in a consumers' society, and since, as we saw, labor and consumption are but two stages of the same process, imposed upon man by the necessity of life, this is only another way of saying that we live in a society of laborers. This society did not come about through the emancipation of the laboring classes but by the emancipation of the laboring activity itself, which preceded by centuries the political emancipation of laborers. The point is not that for the first time in history laborers were admitted and given equal rights in the public realm, but that we have almost succeeded in leveling all human activities to the common denominator of securing the necessities of life and providing for their abundance. Whatever we do, we are supposed to do for the

sake of "making a living"; such is the verdict of society, and the number of people, especially in the professions who might challenge it, has decreased rapidly. The only exception society is willing to grant is the artist, who, strictly speaking, is the only "worker" left in a laboring society. The same trend to level down all serious activities to the status of making a living is manifest in present-day labor theories, which almost unanimously define labor as the opposite of play. As a result, all serious activities, irrespective of their fruits, are called labor, and every activity which is not necessary either for the life of the individual or for the life process of society is subsumed under playfulness.[75] In these theories,

75. Although this labor-play category appears at first glance to be so general as to be meaningless, it is characteristic in another respect: the real opposite underlying it is the opposition of necessity and freedom, and it is indeed remarkable to see how plausible it is for modern thinking to consider playfulness to be the source of freedom. Aside from this generalization, the modern idealizations of labor may be said to fall roughly into the following categories: (1) Labor is a means to attain a higher end. This is generally the Catholic position, which has the great merit of not being able to escape from reality altogether, so that the intimate connections between labor and life and between labor and pain are usually at least mentioned. One outstanding representative is Jacques Leclercq of Louvain, especially his discussion of labor and property in *Leçons de droit naturel* (1946), Vol. IV, Part 2. (2) Labor is an act of shaping in which "a given structure is transformed into another, higher structure." This is the central thesis of the famous work by Otto Lipmann, *Grundriss der Arbeitswissenschaft* (1926). (3) Labor in a laboring society is pure pleasure or "can be made fully as satisfying as leisure-time activities" (see Glen W. Cleeton, *Making Work Human* [1949]). This position is taken today by Corrado Gini in his *Ecconomica Lavorista* (1954), who considers the United States to be a "laboring society" (*società lavorista*) where "labor is a pleasure and where all men want to labor." (For a summary of his position in German see *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, CIX [1953] and CX [1954].) This theory, incidentally, is less new than it seems. It was first formulated by F. Nitti ("Le travail humain et ses lois," *Revue internationale de sociologie* [1895]), who even then maintained that the "idea that labor is painful is a psychological rather than a physiological fact," so that pain will disappear in a society where everybody works. (4) Labor, finally, is man's confirmation of himself against nature, which is brought under his domination through labor. This is the assumption which underlies—explicitly or implicitly—the new, especially French trend of a humanism of labor. Its best-known representative is Georges Friedmann.

After all these theories and academic discussions, it is rather refreshing to learn that a large majority of workers, if asked "why does man work?" answer

which by echoing the current estimate of a laboring society on the theoretical level sharpen it and drive it into its inherent extreme, not even the "work" of the artist is left; it is dissolved into play and has lost its worldly meaning. The playfulness of the artist is felt to fulfil the same function in the laboring life process of society as the playing of tennis or the pursuit of a hobby fulfils in the life of the individual. The emancipation of labor has not resulted in an equality of this activity with the other activities of the *vita activa*, but in its almost undisputed predominance. From the standpoint of "making a living," every activity unconnected with labor becomes a "hobby."[76]

In order to dispel the plausibility of this self-interpretation of modern man, it may be well to remember that all civilizations prior to our own would rather have agreed with Plato that the "art of earning money" (*technē mistharnētikē*) is entirely unconnected with the actual content even of such arts as medicine, navigation, or architecture, which were attended by monetary rewards. It was in order to explain this monetary reward, which obviously is of an altogether different nature from health, the object of medicine, or the erection of buildings, the object of architecture, that Plato introduced one more art to accompany them all. This additional art is by no means understood as the element of labor in the otherwise free arts, but, on the contrary, the one art through which the "artist," the professional worker, as we would say, keeps himself free from the necessity to labor.[77] This art is in the same category

simply "in order to be able to live" or "to make money" (see Helmut Schelsky, *Arbeiterjugend Gestern und Heute* [1955], whose publications are remarkably free of prejudices and idealizations).

76. The role of the hobby in modern labor society is quite striking and may be the root of experience in the labor-play theories. What is especially noteworthy in this context is that Marx, who had no inkling of this development, expected that in his utopian, laborless society all activities would be performed in a manner which very closely resembles the manner of hobby activities.

77. *Republic* 346. Therefore, "the art of acquisition wards off poverty as medicine wards off disease" (*Gorgias* 478). Since payment for their services was voluntary (Loening, *op. cit.*), the liberal professions must indeed have attained a remarkable perfection in the "art of making money."

with the art required of the master of a household who must know how to exert authority and use violence in his rule over slaves. Its aim is to remain free from having "to make a living," and the aims of the other arts are even farther removed from this elementary necessity.

The emancipation of labor and the concomitant emancipation of the laboring classes from oppression and exploitation certainly meant progress in the direction of non-violence. It is much less certain that it was also progress in the direction of freedom. No man-exerted violence, except the violence used in torture, can match the natural force with which necessity itself compels. It is for this reason that the Greeks derived their word for torture from *necessity*, calling it *anagkai*, and not from *bia*, used for violence as exerted by man over man, just as this is the reason for the historical fact that throughout occidental antiquity torture, the "necessity no man can withstand," could be applied only to slaves, who were subject to necessity anyhow.[78] It was the arts of violence, the arts of war, piracy, and ultimately absolute rule, which brought the defeated into the services of the victors and thereby held necessity in abeyance for the longer period of recorded history.[79] The modern age, much more markedly than Christianity, has brought about —together with its glorification of labor—a tremendous degradation in the estimation of these arts and a less great but not less important actual decrease in the use of the instruments of violence in

78. The current modern explanation of this custom which was characteristic of the whole of Greek and Latin antiquity—that its origin is to be found in "the belief that the slave is unable to tell the truth except on the rack" (Barrow, *op. cit.*, p. 31)—is quite erroneous. The belief, on the contrary, is that nobody can invent a lie under torture: "On croyait recueillir la voix même de la nature dans les cris de la douleur. Plus la douleur pénétrait avant, plus intime et plus vrai sembla être ce témoignage de la chair et du sang" (Wallon, *op. cit.*, I, 325). Ancient psychology was much more aware than we are of the element of freedom, of free invention, in telling lies. The "necessities" of torture were supposed to destroy this freedom and therefore could not be applied to free citizens.

79. The older of the Greek words for slaves, *douloi* and *dmōes*, still signify the defeated enemy. About wars and the sale of prisoners of war as the chief source of slavery in antiquity, see W. L. Westermann, "Sklaverei," in Pauly-Wissowa.

human affairs generally.[80] The elevation of labor and the necessity inherent in the laboring metabolism with nature appear to be intimately connected with the downgrading of all activities which either spring directly from violence, as the use of force in human relations, or harbor an element of violence within themselves, which, as we shall see, is the case for all workmanship. It is as though the growing elimination of violence throughout the modern age almost automatically opened the doors for the re-entry of necessity on its most elementary level. What already happened once in our history, in the centuries of the declining Roman Empire, may be happening again. Even then, labor became an occupation of the free classes, "only to bring to them the obligations of the servile classes."[81]

The danger that the modern age's emancipation of labor will not only fail to usher in an age of freedom for all but will result, on the contrary, in forcing all mankind for the first time under the yoke of necessity, was already clearly perceived by Marx when he insisted that the aim of a revolution could not possibly be the already-accomplished emancipation of the laboring classes, but must consist in the emancipation of man from labor. At first glance, this aim seems utopian, and the only strictly utopian element in Marx's

80. Today, because of the new developments of instruments of war and destruction, we are likely to overlook this rather important trend in the modern age. As a matter of fact, the nineteenth century was one of the most peaceful centuries in history.

81. Wallon, *op. cit.*, III, 265. Wallon shows brilliantly how the late Stoic generalization that all men are slaves rested on the development of the Roman Empire, where the old freedom was gradually abolished by the imperial government, so that eventually nobody was free and everybody had his master. The turning point is when first Caligula and then Trajan consented to being called *dominus*, a word formerly used only for the master of the household. The so-called slave morality of late antiquity and its assumption that no real difference existed between the life of a slave and that of a free man had a very realistic background. Now the slave could indeed tell his master: Nobody is free, everybody has a master. In the words of Wallon: "Les condamnés aux mines ont pour confrères, à un moindre degré de peine, les condamnés aux moulins, aux boulangeries, aux relais publics, à tout autre travail faisant l'objet d'une corporation particulière" (p. 216). "C'est le droit de l'esclavage qui gouverne maintenant le citoyen; et nous avons retrouvé toute la législation propre aux esclaves dans les règlements qui concernent sa personne, sa famille ou ses biens" (pp. 219–20).

teachings.[82] Emancipation from labor, in Marx's own terms, is emancipation from necessity, and this would ultimately mean emancipation from consumption as well, that is, from the metabolism with nature which is the very condition of human life.[83] Yet the developments of the last decade, and especially the possibilities opened up through the further development of automation, give us reason to wonder whether the utopia of yesterday will not turn into the reality of tomorrow, so that eventually only the effort of consumption will be left of "the toil and trouble" inherent in the biological cycle to whose motor human life is bound.

However, not even this utopia could change the essential worldly futility of the life process. The two stages through which the ever-recurrent cycle of biological life must pass, the stages of labor and consumption, may change their proportion even to the point where nearly all human "labor power" is spent in consuming, with the concomitant serious social problem of leisure, that is, essentially the problem of how to provide enough opportunity for daily exhaustion to keep the capacity for consumption intact.[84]

82. The classless and stateless society of Marx is not utopian. Quite apart from the fact that modern developments have an unmistakable tendency to do away with class distinctions in society and to replace government by that "administration of things" which according to Engels was to be the hallmark of socialist society, these ideals in Marx himself were obviously conceived in accordance with Athenian democracy, except that in communist society the privileges of the free citizens were to be extended to all.

83. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that Simone Weil's *La condition ouvrière* (1951) is the only book in the huge literature on the labor question which deals with the problem without prejudice and sentimentality. She chose as the motto for her diary, relating from day to day her experiences in a factory, the line from Homer: *poll' aekadzomenē, kraterē d'epikeiset' anagkē* ("much against your own will, since necessity lies more mightily upon you"), and concludes that the hope for an eventual liberation from labor and necessity is the only utopian element of Marxism and at the same time the actual motor of all Marx-inspired revolutionary labor movements. It is the "opium of the people" which Marx had believed religion to be.

84. This leisure, needless to say, is not at all the same, as current opinion has it, as the *skholē* of antiquity, which was not a phenomenon of consumption, "conspicuous" or not, and did not come about through the emergence of "spare time" saved from laboring, but was on the contrary a conscious "abstention from" all activities connected with mere being alive, the consuming activity no less than the laboring. The touchstone of this *skholē*, as distinguished from the

Painless and effortless consumption would not change but would only increase the devouring character of biological life until a mankind altogether "liberated" from the shackles of pain and effort would be free to "consume" the whole world and to reproduce daily all things it wished to consume. How many things would appear and disappear daily and hourly in the life process of such a society would at best be immaterial for the world, if the world and its thing-character could withstand the reckless dynamism of a wholly motorized life process at all. The danger of future automation is less the much deplored mechanization and artificialization of natural life than that, its artificiality notwithstanding, all human productivity would be sucked into an enormously intensified life process and would follow automatically, without pain or effort, its ever-recurrent natural cycle. The rhythm of machines would magnify and intensify the natural rhythm of life enormously, but it would not change, only make more deadly, life's chief character with respect to the world, which is to wear down durability.

It is a long way from the gradual decrease of working hours, which has progressed steadily for nearly a century, to this utopia. The progress, moreover, has been rather overrated, because it was measured against the quite exceptionally inhuman conditions of exploitation prevailing during the early stages of capitalism. If we think in somewhat longer periods, the total yearly amount of individual free time enjoyed at present appears less an achievement of modernity than a belated approximation to normality.[85] In this as

modern ideal of leisure, is the well-known and frequently described frugality of Greek life in the classical period. Thus, it is characteristic that the maritime trade, which more than anything else was responsible for wealth in Athens, was felt to be suspect, so that Plato, following Hesiod, recommended the foundation of new city-states far away from the sea.

85. During the Middle Ages, it is estimated that one hardly worked more than half of the days of the year. Official holidays numbered 141 days (see Levasseur, *op. cit.*, p. 329; see also Liesse, *Le Travail* [1899], p. 253, for the number of working days in France before the Revolution). The monstrous extension of the working day is characteristic of the beginning of the industrial revolution, when the laborers had to compete with newly introduced machines. Before that, the length of the working day amounted to eleven or twelve hours in fifteenth-century England and to ten hours in the seventeenth (see H. Herkner, "Arbeitszeit," in *Handwörterbuch für die Staatswissenschaft* [1923], I, 889 ff.). In

in other respects, the specter of a true consumers' society is more alarming as an ideal of present-day society than as an already existing reality. The ideal is not new; it was clearly indicated in the unquestioned assumption of classical political economy that the ultimate goal of the *vita activa* is growing wealth, abundance, and the "happiness of the greatest number." And what else, finally, is this ideal of modern society but the age-old dream of the poor and destitute, which can have a charm of its own so long as it is a dream, but turns into a fool's paradise as soon as it is realized.

The hope that inspired Marx and the best men of the various workers' movements—that free time eventually will emancipate men from necessity and make the *animal laborans* productive—rests on the illusion of a mechanistic philosophy which assumes that labor power, like any other energy, can never be lost, so that if it is not spent and exhausted in the drudgery of life it will automatically nourish other, "higher," activities. The guiding model of this hope in Marx was doubtless the Athens of Pericles which, in the future, with the help of the vastly increased productivity of human labor, would need no slaves to sustain itself but would become a reality for all. A hundred years after Marx we know the fallacy of this reasoning; the spare time of the *animal laborans* is never spent in anything but consumption, and the more time left to him, the greedier and more craving his appetites. That these appetites become more sophisticated, so that consumption is no longer restricted to the necessities but, on the contrary, mainly concentrates on the superfluities of life, does not change the character of this society, but harbors the grave danger that eventually no object of the world will be safe from consumption and annihilation through consumption.

The rather uncomfortable truth of the matter is that the triumph

brief, "les travailleurs ont connu, pendant la première moitié du 19e siècle, des conditions d'existences pires que celles subies auparavant par les plus infortunés" (Édouard Dolléans, *Histoire du travail en France* [1953]). The extent of progress achieved in our time is generally overrated, since we measure it against a very "dark age" indeed. It may, for instance, be that the life expectancy of the most highly civilized countries today corresponds only to the life expectancy in certain centuries of antiquity. We do not know, of course, but a reflection upon the age of death in the biographies of famous people invites this suspicion.

the modern world has achieved over necessity is due to the emancipation of labor, that is, to the fact that the *animal laborans* was permitted to occupy the public realm; and yet, as long as the *animal laborans* remains in possession of it, there can be no true public realm, but only private activities displayed in the open. The outcome is what is euphemistically called mass culture, and its deep-rooted trouble is a universal unhappiness, due on one side to the troubled balance between laboring and consumption and, on the other, to the persistent demands of the *animal laborans* to obtain a happiness which can be achieved only where life's processes of exhaustion and regeneration, of pain and release from pain, strike a perfect balance. The universal demand for happiness and the widespread unhappiness in our society (and these are but two sides of the same coin) are among the most persuasive signs that we have begun to live in a labor society which lacks enough laboring to keep it contented. For only the *animal laborans*, and neither the craftsman nor the man of action, has ever demanded to be "happy" or thought that mortal men could be happy.

One of the obvious danger signs that we may be on our way to bring into existence the ideal of the *animal laborans* is the extent to which our whole economy has become a waste economy, in which things must be almost as quickly devoured and discarded as they have appeared in the world, if the process itself is not to come to a sudden catastrophic end. But if the ideal were already in existence and we were truly nothing but members of a consumers' society, we would no longer live in a world at all but simply be driven by a process in whose ever-recurring cycles things appear and disappear, manifest themselves and vanish, never to last long enough to surround the life process in their midst.

The world, the man-made home erected on earth and made of the material which earthly nature delivers into human hands, consists not of things that are consumed but of things that are used. If nature and the earth generally constitute the condition of human *life*, then the world and the things of the world constitute the condition under which this specifically human life can be at home on earth. Nature seen through the eyes of the *animal laborans* is the great provider of all "good things," which belong equally to all her children, who "take [them] out of [her] hands" and "mix with"

them in labor and consumption.[86] The same nature seen through the eyes of *homo faber*, the builder of the world, "furnishes only the almost worthless materials as in themselves," whose whole value lies in the work performed upon them.[87] Without taking things out of nature's hands and consuming them, and without defending himself against the natural processes of growth and decay, the *animal laborans* could never survive. But without being at home in the midst of things whose durability makes them fit for use and for erecting a world whose very permanence stands in direct contrast to life, this life would never be human.

The easier that life has become in a consumers' or laborers' society, the more difficult it will be to remain aware of the urges of necessity by which it is driven, even when pain and effort, the outward manifestations of necessity, are hardly noticeable at all. The danger is that such a society, dazzled by the abundance of its growing fertility and caught in the smooth functioning of a never-ending process, would no longer be able to recognize its own futility—the futility of a life which "does not fix or realize itself in any permanent subject which endures after [its] labour is past."[88]

86. Locke, *op. cit.*, sec. 28.

87. *Ibid.*, sec. 43.

88. Adam Smith, *op. cit.*, I, 295.