THE EXISTENTIALIST NOTION OF ALIENATION

Roland Paulsen, Ph.D.
University of Uppsala, Sweden

Abstract. Since the creation of the Marxian alienation theory, the development of the productive labour and new philosophical insights has made this theory obsolete. In this paper, a concept of alienation, free from essentialism and historicism, will be proposed. This alienation theory starts from the most fundamental source of knowledge to the human existence: our sensuous experience of the material world.

The existentialist notion of alienation focuses on the free intention and defines alienation as the distortion of this intention when the individual praxis are put into a system that makes the consequences of the individual praxis alien to the agent. I argue that work within the frames of modern capitalism by this definition is alienating. This alienation is reinforced by the immaterial, indirect character of the work in an economy where human knowledge becomes the principal force of production and where the physical-sensory faculties of the human being consequently are rendered superfluous. Today's alienation is inherent in the means of production and a complete dealienation therefore seems impossible.

This discussion will help provide a framework to perceive critique against post-Fordist industrial production and how this production, despite an intensified devotion of the worker, in no way has lessened the alienation of work. In a concluding discussion, some assessments will be made on the endeavour to liberate the worker within his work rather than from his work, judging that given the tremendously increased productivity of human labour generated by the process of rationalisation, the latter alternative carries most conviction, i.e. the maximum reduction of work in favour of an activity which is neither alienating, nor governed by necessity.

1. Introduction

Along with the seemingly unrestrained development of capitalism, we discover within the field of social science a widespread aspiration to neutralise the most subversive social theories that sporadically occur through history. *Operationalism,* as Herbert Marcuse termed this trend in the 1960s, is simply the scientific method that equals the theoretical concept with its corresponding set of operations. Owing to an obsessive use of this method, "many of the most seriously troublesome concepts are being 'eliminated' by showing that no adequate account of them in terms of operations or behaviour can be given.[1]

The troublesome concept discussed in this paper is an abstraction of a social phenomenon whose impact upon our everyday life is perhaps greater than ever and consequently more harmful than ever. Even if this phenomenon can also be found within the sphere of consumption, I will here only pay attention to it where its influence is most conspicuous – in the productive work. To get a grip of the tremendous influence on people's lives of the phenomenon treated here, the reader should bear in mind the amount of time spent at work – by those who are forced to it – in our contemporary society.

The concept of alienation is in the present situation used in a more or less habitual manner by sociologists and others, and its significance is rarely pronounced. Alienation is a *formerly* fashionable conception, now deprived of its subversive meaning, primarily by management philosophy which considers alienation to be a terrible phenomenon since, as the management professor Rabindra N. Kanungo puts it, "alienation […] adversely affects [the workers'] quality of work life and *their productivity.*"[2] In this management "theory", alienation is reduced to what could more aptly be termed *uneasiness* – an uneasiness which *in itself* should be controlled.

The purpose of this paper is however not to formulate a critique of positivist social science – even if such a critique may still be relevant, the discussion must not end there – but it is nonetheless written under the impression of a work situation where uneasiness is constantly swept away. The genesis of the "happy proletarian" who has internalised constraints that were once external, has drastically changed the bases upon which many of the past alienation theories were constructed. This paper will critique the Marxian wing that, starting from the assumption of a human essence, imagines the possibility of the worker's liberation *within* his work once private property has been abolished. As I shall argue, the assumption of such an essence seems extremely precarious and likewise the assumption that a reappropriation would guarantee a de-alienation of work. This essay will therefore propose a theory that does not start from human essence or from a focus on property when explaining alienation. What I would like to submit for discussion is a wider notion of alienation: alienation as a result of what Max Weber called a "process of rationalisation". The most alienating elements originated from this rationalisation process that will be discussed here, are partly the division of labour, partly the computerisation of labour.

To render possible an analysis of the latter phenomenon, a philosophy that recognises the human being as a living sensory being, will be needed. I will thus put forward such a philosophy and in doing so level criticism of Jürgen Habermas' communication focused theory since this theory puts the

subject in parenthesis while placing intersubjective communication in the centre of the lifeworld.

The only philosophy to my knowledge that has not fallen prey to essentialism and whose phenomenological basis, unlike the Foucaultian "philosophy of the death of man", accepts and presupposes the human being as a bodily being without considering this body to determine human action, is the existentialist philosophy. The purpose here will not be to give yet another exhaustive account of existentialism, but to discuss its notion of alienation and, through the lens of this concept, analyse and explain the increasingly rationalised production and its consequences to the modern worker – an analysis which should give proof of the notion's possible fruitfulness.

The existentialist notion of alienation is all but uncomplicated – what, for example, is there to be alienated from if we refute every idea of a human essence? Furthermore, is this alienation "existential" in the sense that it is unconditionally bound to the human existence or is it due to some external conditions? If so, which are these conditions, in what way are they alienating and can they be eliminated? To assess if the existentialist notion of alienation will serve as an alternative to the more established alienation theories, these questions will have to be answered.

By way of introduction I will present the essential features of existentialism as brought out by Jean-Paul Sartre. With these as point of departure, I will then discuss the fundaments of the Marxian alienation theory, namely, its materialist historicism and its essentialist ideal of work. Having additionally explained the existentialist approach through this critique, I will discuss exclusively the existentialist notion of alienation as defined by the existentialist social thinker André Gorz. To elucidate Gorz's concept of alienation further, I will then present his macro-sociological model of human activity in modern society. This model is in addition contrasted with Habermas' corresponding model and the focus in this comparison will be on the difference between Habermas' communication-centred notion of the lifeworld and Gorz's experience-centred notion of it.

This discussion will be important to additionally establish, who (or what) is being alienated. The essay is finished by an ideal-typical, quite limited, analysis of the very latest division of labour and its computerisation.

2. The existentialist foundation

A useful starting point could be to reiterate the most important rudiments of the Sartrean existentialism. This will in no meaning be a

repetition of the whole existential philosophy, but a brief discussion of the elements necessary to comprehend Gorz's alienation theory.

2.1. Two types of being

Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, the philosophical foundation of existentialism, is an ontological-phenomenological treatise of human freedom and consciousness. In it, Sartre distinguishes two types of being – Being-for-itself (*pour-soi,* consciousness, nothingness) and Being-in-itself (*en-soi).* The latter (more or less identical with the world of things or objectivity) simply "is", Sartre declares, and has no relation to itself in any conscious changing, becoming or creating. Being-for-itself (the human consciousness) is on the contrary pure individual negativity, a subject constantly involved in its own creation. Following Heidegger, subjectivity and objectivity are supposed by Sartre to be one and not two separate entities between which a certain relation must be analysed as in Plato or Kant.

Being-for-itself should not be confused with the ego or some kind of identity in its ordinary meaning. Phenomenological reflection[3] reveals that there is no "ego" or "I" standing behind conscious experience. The experience of such an ego occurs when "consciousness projects its own spontaneity into the ego-object in order to confer on the ego the creative power which is absolutely necessary to it."[4] Consciousness is however not a determinate thing but a compilation of intentionality. Its only quality is to be free but still bounded to Being-in-itself. This is because:

> all consciousness is consciousness *of* something. This definition of consciousness can be taken in two very distinct senses: either we understand by this that consciousness is constitutive of the being of its object, or it means that consciousness in its inmost nature is a relation to a transcendent being. But the first interpretation of the formula destroys itself: to be conscious *of* something is to be confronted with a concrete and full presence which is *not* consciousness.[5]

Thus, unlike Edmund Husserl, Sartre supposes "the ontological primacy of the in-itself over the for-itself"[6] which in other words simply means that the subjective reality is dependent on the objective reality and *not* the other way around. There is, therefore, a dimension of the for-itself which is in-itself and which exists in the same manner as a thing. Sartre calls this the "facticity" of the for-itself.[7]

2.2. Condemned to freedom

The distinction between the two types of being is important to the comprehension of Gorz's notion of the subject (which is also very influenced by Husserl and Alain Touraine) to which we shall return. In the centre of his theory we find the free consciousness that is neither determined by biological heritage nor by social environment. This very condition is expressed in Sartre's famous idiom "*l'existence précède l'essence*"[8] (existence precedes essence). The human being can never rely on any given essence, in the sense of an inevitable way of acting, not even by assuming an ego. No matter how she acts, she is always freely choosing to act in this certain manner – this is the freedom to which she is, famously, "condemned".[9]

She can however choose to objectify herself by entering into a state of "bad faith"[10] and in doing so manage to act *as if* she was an object and consequently escape the anxiety linked to the individual responsibility born out of freedom.[11] Two kinds of bad faith are discernible. On the one hand we have those who claim to *be* that which the for-itself for the moment is – its facticity. An example of this is when a person behaves as if his work, sex, colour, status etc. were exhaustive of his being, as if he *was* his social role. There is also the attitude which recognises the impossibility of being such a determinate thing, but which chooses instead to be an unpolluted transcendence of one's facticity. Sartre mentions irony as an example of this form of bad faith as well as the attitude claiming that "I am too big for myself" as if one's "true being" was isolated from the social conditions. A concrete example is the prostitute who denies herself being used when selling her body.[12]

This brief presentation of Sartre's existential philosophy gives rise to several questions to which I shall, to the fullest possible extent, try to give some answers as we go along. Some of the most important criticism raised against existentialism is provided by Marcuse in his critical essay *Sartre's Existentialism*. Marcuse questions Sartre's notion of the human freedom which, in his opinion, is stated as an essentially "internal" liberty:

> True, he says, the worker may live in a state of actual enslavement, oppression, and exploitation, but he has freely 'chosen' this state, and he is free to change it at any moment. […] The existentialist proposition thus leads inevitably to the reaffirmation of the old idealistic conception that man is free even in his chains. […] Behind the nihilistic language of Existentialism lurks the ideology of free competition, free initiative, and equal opportunity.

> Everybody can 'transcend' his situation, carry out his own
> project: everybody has his absolutely free choice.[13]

If this is true, as I, to a certain extent, assume it is – external conditions (the facticity) do not affect our *existential liberty*, but are still of decisive importance to the *options* available for our freedom of choice – is then the Marxian form of alienation possible? If so, what is there to be alienated from?

Sartre offers a response to this in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, but here we shall concentrate on Gorz's solution to this political problem of existentialism. Before doing so, we must make an evaluation of the Marxian notion of alienation on the basis of the already mentioned principles of existentialism.

3. The Marxian notion of alienation

The paradox of the Marxian notion of alienation – on the one hand it is the first concept of alienation that stresses the destructivity of wage-labour, on the other hand this very concept has also initiated a further alienation of work – will in this section (and throughout the essay) be explained. To begin with, I will present the Hegelian roots to Marx's essentialism, then we will enter more deeply into Marx's theory of alienation which eventually will be contrasted with the existentialist notion of alienation.

3.1. The Hegelian phenomenology

According to Hegel, state and society are determined by the division of labour and the general interdependence of individual labour in the system of wants. Hegel makes the antagonism between subject (i.e. consciousness) and object into a historical antagonism. The object appears at first as a desire to the human being. When the object (whatever form of matter it might have) becomes man's property, it turns into "the otherness of man" – whenever the human being handles his object of desire, he is dependent on an external power. He must anticipate the caprices of nature, luck, and other proprietors' interests. Once the property is established as an institution, the relationship between consciousness and the objective world is characterized by the total estrangement of consciousness; man is overpowered by things he himself has made. In order to reach history's final goal – the realisation of reason – this estrangement must be overcome. This can only be done by "the establishment of a condition in which the subject knows and possesses itself in all its objects."[14]

To Marx, this account of the role of labour in history, the process of reification and its abolition, is the greatest achievement of the Hegelian philosophy.[15] Hegel describes work as something particularly human. Man's distinctive quality as "thinking consciousness" and his ability to "duplicate himself" is most evident in thought – in self-consciousness. But in work, it also takes a practical form. The animal is driven by its desires (its immediate relation to nature), to directly consume objects present to it in its natural environment. In Hegel:

> work involves a break with the animal, immediate, natural relationship to nature. In work, the object is not immediately consumed and annihilated. Gratification is deferred. The object is preserved, worked upon, formed and transformed. And in this way, a distinctively human relationship to nature is established.[16]

Reason basically separates the human from the animal and this difference is practically expressed in the praxis of human work.

3.2. The Marxian ideal of work

In Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, we rediscover nearly the same reflections on the human and the animal:

> The animal is immediately identical with its life-activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is *its life-activity*. Man makes his life-activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life-activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life-activity directly distinguishes man from animal life-activity.[17]

Whereas the unification of subject and object in Hegel is realised by the Prussian monarchy, to Marx the antagonism between Master and Slave that emanates from the appropriation of the object, remains within the realm of capitalism and can only be overcome in a future communism.[18] In work, man humanises his environment by objectifying himself in his products and, as a consequence, developing a consciousness of himself and reducing the feeling of being confronted by a foreign and hostile world. This positive process of "objectification" (*Vergegenständlichung*) is often derived from the feudal artisan's work in Marxist theory. The fragmentation of the artisan's work into a "general abstract labour" is fundamental to understand the historic necessity of communism. As long as the artisan owned his proper tools and the products of his work, he could preserve a certain sense of dignity, seeing the products of his work as a practical

materialisation of his essence. Only when his products became commodities whose exchange-value he could not control did he fall prey to alienation.

In the reign of capitalism the worker has no control whatsoever over the product of his labour. He is only related to it "as to an alien object" and he himself "becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. With the *increasing value* of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion the *devaluation* of the world of men."[19] This turns also the worker into a commodity – in order to survive he has to sell his labour, i.e., what makes him human. The fact that his labour is external to him, that it is not belonging to him but *forced* upon him results in that:

> man (the worker) no longer feels himself to be freely active
> in any but his animal functions – eating, drinking,
> procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up,
> etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself
> to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes
> human and what is human becomes animal.[20]

Since the worker becomes alienated from his own activity, he thus becomes alienated to his species which in turn means the estrangement of man from man (in its widest meaning).[21] There are close points of similarity between the existentialist conception of alienation and the one put forward by Marx.[22] If we consider work as the for-itself's negation of being-in-itself, we might even look upon it as constituting man's "essence" in the Marxian sense of the word. Marxian determinism, however, is not only limited to this essentialist ideal of the artisan.[23]

3.3. An existentialist critique of the Marxian notion of alienation

As C. Wright Mills states, Marx left the conception of alienation "quite incomplete and brilliantly ambiguous." According to Mills, the Marxian notion of work is quite a rationalist one, into which Marx has "jammed his highest and most noble image of man, and his fiercest indignation about the crippling of man by capitalism."[24] The Marxian judgements upon history should not be imputed to the psychological experience of work and life. The people's attitude to their work is an empirical question and cannot be described exclusively from the relations of production. The same critique against the empirical shortcomings of Marx is also delivered by Gorz who observes that his "theory did not grow out of empirical observation but developed from a critical reflection carried out in reaction to Hegelianism, upon the essence of labour."[25] Furthermore, he agrees with Mills' assertion that "alienation does not necessarily, or even usually, result in revolutionary impulses."[26] Even if the proletariat has nothing and therefore is able to

want everything, the problem to Marx was how the proletarians' vocation as a class would be mirrored and enacted by proletarians individually.[27]

In his *White Collar,* Mills develops his critique of Marx's historicism further while giving us reason to overlook the relevance of Marx's idealised artisan:

> The historical destruction of craftsmanship and of the old office does not enter the consciousness of the modern wage-worker or white-collar employee; much less is their absence felt by him as a crisis […] Only the psychological imagination of the historian makes it possible to write of such comparisons as if they were of psychological import. The craft life would be immediately available as a fact of their consciousness only if in the lifetime of the modern employees they had experienced a shift from the one condition to the other, which they have not; or if they had grasped it as an ideal meaning of work, which they have not.[28]

Historical ideals do not have casual influence on neither alienation nor class consciousness. The proletarian can, instead of recognising the width of what James Davies named the relative deprivation,[29] choose not to engage and flee into what Mills considers to be the most flagrant characteristic of the modern worker: *political indifference.*[30] Marx acknowledged this when analysing the destructive effects of wage-work. Even Adam Smith had drawn attention to the "semi-embeciles" employed by the manufacturers and, in his *Capital*, Marx himself described the "monsters" produced by factories as individuals "incapable of any independent act," "stunted," and "crippled" people governed by "an entirely military discipline."[31] Even if Marx's pessimism concerning the individual diminished somewhat when faced with a new stratum of skilled and polyvalent workers (who later became the protagonists of anarcho-syndicalism) it is a quite frequent element in his later writings. The old Marx therefore put his faith in an economic determinism and left the question of how to engage the individual in a revolution open. The negation of capitalism would, he thought, be realised by the internal dialectics of capitalism (overproduction turning into crisis in cycles until the disenchantment results in revolution) – an event that, as everybody knows, so far has been effectively deferred.

The main part of the existentialist critique of orthodox Marxism is aimed at this determinism and particularly at how the individual consciousness is supposed to be determined by social classes.[32] In the first published philosophical work of Gorz's, *La Morale de l'Histoire*, the main

critique is summarised. Even if history continuously proceeds in one direction, this does not mean that I, as an individual, approve of it. Marx's revolution is however not done behind the backs of the individuals (as in Hegel), but rather through the individuals' conscious initiative. If the individuals cannot recognise their own goals in history's (or the *Geist's*) objective goals, it is hard to see how any negation ever will be realised. The transformation of a factual condition will furthermore only benefit the proletariat if they have carried it out consciously.

Gorz particularly raises objections to the structuralist Marxists who passively await "the 'coincidence' of the objective individuals with their objective reality."[33] This simplistic notion of identity exists only amongst those who chose to see the individuals from "the outside", reduced to the material result and the objective function of their work. If we accept this vulgar view of the human being, then we also exclude every possibility for human alienation to take place. There has to be something human to be alienated from other than that which can always be empirically observed from the outside. To the young Marx this something is the freely creating artisan; to existentialism it is something else.

4. Definition of the existentialist notion of alienation

Gorz, claiming to pursue the humanist philosophy of the young Marx, sees conversely (and not very controversially) the material results of production as an outcome of *human activity* – or more specifically "a 'dialectic reality' that has its specifically human goal and way but is judged (i.e. affirmed or contradicted) from the results it is producing."[34] Human reality is transformation, mastery, and transcendence of the given towards the future. It is when this future, instead of confirming the freedom which produces it, enters into contradiction with it – when it turns against the free activity which engenders it and makes this activity appear as an inert object, as a thing – that we experience alienation.

If we return to the existentialist premises, it seems, as I have already mentioned, contradictory to assume that the subject can be alienated, since alienation in every other definition of the term, always has implied a human essence which is precisely what existentialism denies. "The subject is" as Pietro Chiodi argues "by definition guaranteed *coincidence* with his own being" no matter what – what exactly do existentialism then assume that we are being alienated from?[35]

As Gorz writes in reply to Chiodi's *Sartre and Marxism*, alienation is not a question of the being-for-itself's relation to being-in-itself, but exclusively of whether the for-itself and its freely chosen actions have the same results

as the ones known and intended.[36] The notion of an "internal" freedom is not, as implicitly assumed by Marcuse, an obstacle for a theory of alienation, but rather its absolute condition. As Sartre argues:

> Every philosophy which subordinates the human to something Other than man, whether it be existentialist idealism or Marxism, has as its foundation and consequence a hatred of man: History has proved it in both instances. We have to make a choice: man is either first himself or first Other than himself. If one opts for the second alternative one is quite simply a victim and accomplice of real alienation. But alienation does not exist *unless* man is *first of all action*; it is freedom which founds servitude.[37]

Alienated individuals are not unfree in the sense that they are forced to obey to structural imperatives – their freedom is degraded, constrained and negated by their own accomplishments. There is no fixed *state* of alienation to be in – we *are* not alienated; we produce and reproduce our alienation by our very activity. Only our individual history can *be* alienated insofar as it is the unintended product of intended acts. The experience of alienation is however distinct from the experience of failure. The failure as an individual act is, as Gor calls it, an unpredictable prediction (*imprévisible-prévu*). Unpredictable since matter (the surrounding world, being-in-itself) is opaque, a prediction since this opacity assures us that the unforeseen may always occur. If I unintentionally cut my finger, I do not experience this as a fatality or necessity beyond my control, but as a consequence of *my own* acting, clumsiness, weariness or whatever. Alienation, on the other hand, is a harmful destiny brought to my praxis through the praxis of others. It may be profitable to others, but not necessarily.[38]

The fundamental reason for it, Gorz maintains, is the separation of individuals, and their ignorance of the actions and intentions of others.[39] To illustrate the modern workers' alienation, Gorz gives the example of traffic congestion. Each individual drives with the aim of enhancing his autonomy. He wants to be independent of the fixed timetables, slow pace and discomfort of public transport. The more drivers on the roads, the more likely, however, their aims will be thwarted. The *collective result* of their independent actions is congestion, decreasing vehicle speed, and in the future, a more dangerous and polluted city etc., and since the main aim of the drivers is autonomy, any spontaneous collaboration will probably not occur.[40] Just as the entrepreneurial capitalism was saved from its own collapse by the state's intervention, the traffic must therefore be centrally

regulated. The original freedom of the driver is alienated when the driver is stuck in congestion, and in exchange for a functioning traffic, the driver accepts the cementation of this alienation. The driver is thus alienated from the social product of this and others' actions, while at the same time producing and reproducing the society that produces in him the individual it requires. This seems to be the most apposite metaphor for the alienation of the modern worker. His alienation is regulated and indirectly accepted. The freedom of his praxis retreats into the realm of private consumption, diversion, and extravagance.[41]

The existentialist notion of alienation is considerably wider than the Marxian one in so far as it is neither limited to the sphere of production nor to the capitalist society – it embraces the whole Weberian critique against instrumental reason. As Gorz writes, "the communist revolution cannot, must not end up establishing a communist *system* in place of a capitalist *system*; since whoever says system, says alienation of free praxis by the rigidity and antihuman inertia of structures and processes."[42] This brings us closer to the problem of de-alienation which will be further discussed in the section below.

5. The Dual Society

The underlying causes of a problem appear more distinctly as the solutions to it are gradually narrowed down. It is primarily in the vision of a dealienation process started by the communist revolution that the weaknesses of Marx's alienation theory become obvious. Principally on the basis of Gorz's alternative to communism – the recognition of a dual society constituted by a sphere of heteronomy and a sphere of autonomy – I will here argue in favour of the maximal reduction of alienation through the minimising of necessary labour. In doing so, I will also present the two spheres constituting Gorz's model of human activity.

5.1 The recognition of an alienating system

Following Sartre, Gorz asserts that the only way to overcome alienation completely is through "the victory over rarity."[43] This victory is however far away in the future (if ever to occur) and we must therefore learn to provide ourselves with the *necessities* in the best possible way. Writing in the early 1970s, Gorz had insisted that "work, culture, communication, pleasure, the satisfaction of needs and private life can and should be one thing and one only, the unity of a life."[44] In his *Farewell to the Working Class* this idealism is strongly renounced.

Marx supposed that a similar unity of subjective will and objective function would arise from the full development of the means of production. The communist ideal of human activity – the personalisation of social activity and the socialisation of personal activity – would inevitably be realised by the internal logic of capitalism and technological development. The individual's work would become his "self-activity" (*Selbsttätigkeit)* as a "total individual."[45]

Influenced by Weber whom he uses in his critique of Marx, Gorz considers the effects of the division of labour (like alienation) to be inevitable in a complex society. Even if a smaller cooperation could integrate its reproduction in such a manner that the "total individual" would be realised, "there is a difference in both scale and nature between communal work or life and the social totality,"[46] and a reappropriation cannot alone change this reality. As a structured system, the society remains external to its members. It is not a product of free cooperation, but built upon the individual's adaptation to the jobs, functions, skills, environments, and hierarchies pre-established by society to assure its cohesive functioning. To make functional imperatives appear as personal freedoms, to invent a "socialist morality" will therefore only result in a conformist *denial of the subject*. According to Gorz, "any morality which takes the universal (and the good) as given, deducing from it what individuals must do and be, is bound to be oppressive and dogmatic."[47]

Even if these meta-ethics are highly questionable, there are other reasons to accept a dual system for the supplement of necessities. The prime reason, in my opinion, is that individual existence can never be entirely socialised – an assertion to which we shall return. The second reason is empirical and a simple conclusion of the factual development of the means of production:

> The Marxian utopia by which functional work and personal activity could be made to coincide is ontologically unrealizable *on the scale of large systems*. For, in order to function, the industrial-bureaucratic megamachine requires a subdivision of tasks which, once put into effect is self-perpetuating and *has to be* self-perpetuating by inertia, if the functional capacity of each of its human cogs is to be made reliable and calculable.[48]

Gorz assumes that economic rationalism is not limited to the power distribution in society, but also inherent in the division of labour and the "dead labour" of the machines. These machines are "fixed capital" and whether they are owned by a co-operation or not, would only have marginal

implications for the workers' alienation. The "means of production are not merely neutral mechanical devices. They embody capitalist relations of domination and exercise their command over working people in the form of inflexible technical requirements."[49] Functionalist rationality has made the workers into mere living accessories of the machinery and the immense size of the production machinery excludes every possibility for the Schumpeterian entrepreneur to succeed. As Marcuse argues: "the liberating force of technology – the instrumentalization of things – turns into a fetter of liberation; the instrumentalization of man."[50] Thus, the development of machines is not only a scientific question but also a political one. Until society and technology has been fully adapted to the individual, Gorz proposes the individual's adaptation to the fixed capital and – what is usually associated with his authorship – a maximum reduction of this necessary labour.

5.2 The sphere of heteronomy

The sphere of necessity to which we in the present situation have to acclimatise, Gorz names the *sphere of heteronomy* and he defines it as "the totality of specialized activities which individuals have to accomplish as functions coordinated from outside by a pre-established organization."[51] Heteronomous work (a concept Gorz in his later writings favours over that of "alienation", which he believes has been emptied of all meaning by French structuralism) is in itself worthless unless it is combined with that of a large number of other workers.[52] It is a completely socialised work – it has no use-value at all for the individual worker and cannot be put to any personal, domestic, or private end. This socialisation is, in its turn, absolutely necessary by the quantity and diversity of knowledge required to produce individual products, and for these specialised tasks to coordinate, there is no room for individual improvisation or inventiveness. [53] Heteronomous work is thus per definition (our definition) pure alienation and even if it can be interesting and agreeable, it is still impoverishing for those who are obliged to make it their permanent, full-time occupation.

5.3 The sphere of autonomy

As an opposite pole to the sphere of heteronomy, Gorz puts the *sphere of autonomy*. This sphere is constituted by activities unrelated to any economic goals that are an end in themselves – "activities that make up the fabric of existence and therefore [should] occupy a primordial rather than a subordinate place."[54] In this sphere, the individual can develop himself as a human being. Communication, giving, creating an aesthetic enjoyment, the

production and reproduction of life, tenderness, the realisation of physical, sensuous and intellectual capacities – these are *activities* that have to be autonomous if to be exercised at all. To integrate this autonomy functionally to the reproduction of society can only lead to the *contraction* of the sphere of autonomy. [55] Gorz does not exclude the possibility of autonomous activity to be productive. Yet, this is no matter of course and nothing upon which to build a vision.

5.4 The dynamics between the two spheres of activity

In the beginning of the 1980s, Gorz calculated that by the year 2001, every able-bodied individual in France would be able to work 900 hours a year to guarantee the wealth of that time including the preservation of the organisational structures necessary to the reproduction of the system.[56] In 1997 this prediction is affirmed by Frithjof Bergmann.[57] Still the relative deprivation is and has for a long time been enormous – perhaps bigger than ever. Autonomous activities are endangered and often completely absent in people's life, while heteronomous activities have such a great influence that they have become crucial to our individual identities – a problem that will be discussed later. The relative deprivation seems to grow exponentially. In the era of Fordist production, people no longer demanded commercial goods and services to compensate for functional work, but to afford commercial goods and services.[58] Nowadays we hardly care about what wages we get – as long as we have a job, we are privileged. Among the majority of economists, work is not primarily valued for creating economic wealth – according to the Keynesian science, wealth creates the jobs.

This degeneration of the dominant discourse is fundamentally contradictory since the function of technology is to increase the efficiency of labour and reduce the necessary toil number of working hours. The price of our technology is heteronomous labour – the divorce between work and life, producer and the product, the occupational culture and the culture of everyday life – and this price is only acceptable if technology saves work and time – "a job whose effect and aim are to save work cannot, at the same time, glorify work as the essential source of personal identity and fulfillment."[59]

As the glorification of work only seems to grow stronger, an ever greater part of life will have to be commercialised to "create jobs".[60] These "personal" activities are, however, autonomous since they presuppose a freely acting subject which acts for the act itself, and they are therefore not really threatened by what George Ritzer calls the process of "McDonaldisation" (a model whose main principles are: efficiency,

calculability, predictability and control). [61] This, because *acts* such as sympathy, understanding, affection, love, tenderness, and even sex cannot be performed at will or on demand; they can only be sold as simulations – one cannot love, care, or deeply understand another for any other purpose than the loving, caring, and understanding in itself. One might pretend to love, for example, but the loving would then only be a simulation. The consequence is not a *transformation* of the autonomous activities I would say, but rather a *contraction* of the autonomous sphere for the benefit of the heteronomous sphere.

6. Lifeworld versus lived world

Anyone familiar with sociological theory would associate the essential features of the analysis above – two spheres of society where one is pushed away by the other – with Habermas' lifeworld and system. Before entering any deeper into the differences between the two dualisms, we should observe that both authors believe in the modern project, both of them reject the idea of a de-differentiation of functional and social integration – of heteronomous and autonomous activity – and both believe that the democratisation of the economy cannot be accomplished from within the labour process. What separates them is mainly what they believe is being endangered by the expansion of the system. As Finn Bowring puts it in his comprehensive presentation *André Gorz and the Sartrean Legacy*, "before Habermas, Gorz had already described, in *Farewell to the Working Class*, the differentiation of system and lifeworld, formulating it in terms of the separation of a sphere of heteronomy and a sphere of autonomy."[62] Gorz's analysis was written before, what Bowring calls the "communications theoretic turn" and his existential approach has remained in sharp contrast to Habermas' "linguistic philosophy".

Below follows a discussion of Habermas' notion of the lifeworld and Gorz's autonomous subject. This discussion will additionally explain what is being alienated – suppressed – when the heteronomous sphere expands, and it will also be the fundament to our analysis of computerised work.

6.1. The focus on socialisation

Habermas develops his communication-theory in opposition to the consciousness philosophy that earlier prevailed within Critical Theory and which can easily lead, he assumes, to an extreme epistemological relativism. Instrumental reason is, Habermas argues, not a threat to the solitary subject's knowledge and mastery over the objective world, but rather to the possibility of intersubjective understanding and agreement:

> The rational core of mimetic achievement can be laid open only if we give up the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness – namely a subject that represents objects and toils with them – in favour of the paradigm of linguistic philosophy – namely, that of intersubjective understanding or communication – and puts the cognitive-instrumental aspect of reason in its proper place as a part of a more encompassing *communicative rationality*.[63]

As the reader probably understands, this is in glaring contrast to the person-centred theory of Gorz, and it becomes particularly palpable if we study Habermas' notion of the lifeworld and its lack of a subject. Habermas' system colonisation is not a colonisation of the freedom of individual action, but of the lifeworld. The concept of lifeworld is heavily influenced by Husserl's original definition, but instead of defining the lifeworld as something given in the individual's consciousness in form of structures, Habermas alleges that one must consider the lifeworld as based upon language and culture. His lifeworld can roughly be compared to what is not lived or experienced but still frames communicative actions and interplay; or more precisely: "the stock of self-evidence or unshakeable convictions used by participants for their co-operative communicative interpretation process."[64] There are three different components of the Habermasian lifeworld – culture, society and personality – and the exact structure of these are not conscious to the subject. Nevertheless they determine the conditions for communicative action – "communicative action takes place within a lifeworld that remains at the backs of participants in communication. It is present to them only in the prereflective form of taken-for-granted background assumptions and naively mastered skills."[65]

The issue, for Habermas, is not the contraction of the lifeworld in favour of the system but a process in which:

> systemic mechanisms suppress forms of social consensus-dependent coordination of action cannot be replaced, that is, where the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld is at stake. In these areas the *mediatization* of the lifeworld [the manipulation of actors by the "steering media" of money and power] assumes the form of a *colonization*.[66]

Instead of communicative action ruling a lifeworld superior to the system, the purposive rationality of the system seems to infiltrate the lifeworld – traditions, norms and values. This colonisation merely affects the individual in an indirect manner. Irrespective of whether the logic of

communicative action or the logic of the system prevails, the individual is always subordinated to intersubjective processes.

6.2. The foundation of negativity

Gorz's critique of Habermas is brief but incisive. Despite the dualism between subject and lifeworld, Habermas ignores the original *meaning* that lifeworld relations and activities have for the individuals concerned and correspondingly the *experience* of the hetero-regulation of relations and activities (the colonisation of the lifeworld).[67] Not only does he reduce the lifeworld to the formal recourses of linguistic structures; to serve any "theoretical purpose", Habermas argues, the sociologist must instead of starting from the "perspective of participants", start from a "perspective of narrators". This "methodological objectification" of the lifeworld in turn "has to be worked up for theoretical purposes in such a way as to make possible statements about the reproduction or self-maintenance of communicatively structured lifeworlds."[68]

This Parsons-inspired methodology has of course very little in common with Gorz's approach. In the late 1960s, Gorz criticises, in his *Socialisme Difficile*, the materialist dialectic for not being able to explain its own existence. If the individual is the passive product of history and social structures that cannot be understood by this very individual, how can these fundaments of thought and action be explained by the sociologist?[69] How do we explain the sociologist?[70] These questions also apply to Habermas:

> If the space for communicative action is restricted and its very possibility jeopardized by the destructive inroads of the logic of systems, how can communicative reason fight off the system's infringements upon a life-world which, according to Habermas, 'is in its infrastructure'? Does the crisis of the latter not necessarily entail the crisis of communicative co-operation and understanding? Is social critique, waged in the name and on the basis of communicative reason, not an *external* critique waged by a subject – the sociologist – positioning him/herself outside the society in which socio-cultural life-worlds are breaking down?[71]

Gorz asserts that the social critique would loose its foundation – a rootedness in social reality and practise – if we accept the Habermasian premises. What is at stake is not only, as we shall see, the individual autonomy, but also the autonomy of philosophy. "Philosophy cannot be the pursuit of the True and the Good, nor can it pose the question of the

value of values and the meaning of goals unless the subject is capable of stepping outside the norms and values which govern social behaviour and questioning received truths."[72] This, however, is something the subject is very capable of and certainly does – especially in states of anxiety. There are no traditions or norms that cannot be put into question – "all norms, traditions and convictions can be called into question in a crisis situation, or undermined by doubt (for example after an illness, the death of a close relative, the break up of a relationship or a failure of some kind)."[73]

The subject is also the answer to how to fight off "the system's infringements upon the lifeworld." Gorz is very influenced by Alain Touraine's definition of the subject which, unlike the ego (partly constructed, as we have seen, from the outside by social roles), exists only when it recognises "the non-correspondence between social roles, the self-images lent to me or forced upon me by society and my assertion of myself as a subject creating my existence."[74] The subject can thus be understood as the antithesis to the Habermasian lifeworld. This conflict is characteristic of the early history of modernity in which the subject and rationalism were allies and which is now transformed into the subject's struggle against rationalising models. The subject is completely conditioned by its resistance and furthermore is the only negativity able to realise the not-yet-realised. If sociology, then, "does not take the side of the subject against society, it is fated to be an ideological instrument promoting social integration and socialization"[75] – which indeed is a resigned sort of nihilistic relativism in itself.

6.3. Non-socialisable activities

Just as George H. Mead, Habermas assumes that "identity formation takes place through the medium of linguistic communication." "Individuals," he assumes, "owe their identities as persons exclusively to their identification with, or internalization of, features of collective identity."[76] As mentioned above, this collective identity can always be questioned by the subject. In his justification of the Husserlian lifeworld, Gorz contrasts Habermas' lifeworld with the phenomenological "perception" of the world: whilst norms and traditions can always be put into question, "nothing [not even anxiety] can shake the certainty with which we experience the sensory qualities and the material values ('good', 'agreeable') or countervalues ('sticky', 'stinking') of the world."[77] The rejection of this "naiveté of lived experience" leads to the "naiveté of thought without a subject, a thinking which is opaque to itself."[78] However incomplete and whatever moral concept the existential analysis may lead to, we always have to start from

the subject when explaining or analysing social phenomena.[79] This becomes particularly evident when we consider activities that serve other goals than the mere "symbolic reproduction of the social system." Love, knowledge, care and concern are examples of *activities* that can never be hetero-regulated and that exceed their socially constituted reality by their autonomy and sensibility. These activities – immune to any commercialisation or production at will – are situated *beyond speech*:

> The mother-child relationship or relationships between lovers or friends, therapist and patient, and master and pupil do not consist solely in the transmission of cultural knowledge nor in an act of comprehension or mutual understanding that is conveyed in language. On the contrary these reciprocal relationships are situated as much, if not more, at the level of the unsaid and the unsayable, than at the level of speech.[80]

The affective relations between people are at one level the prerequisite of socialisation, but they can also be its resistance – love, for example, is crucial for the socialisation of the child, but it can also make an individual detach himself from his original group. Socialisation springs from relations that are not socialisable – we love each other as unique individuals and even if love is an activity to be upheld (as Erich Fromm correctly points out)[81] it cannot have another goal than itself. "Socialization through the family in particular is the more successfully achieved if the child receives the impression that his parents make certain demands of him *because they* love *him as he is, unconditionally,* and does not feel that their love is conditional and in the service of some goal (socialization) other than himself."[82]

Autonomy is not a socially acquired, symbolically generated perception and competence – "autonomous individuals are those whose socialisation has been defective, incomplete."[83] We often describe their behaviour as "aberrations", "deviations", "neuroses", "scandals" etc.[84] "To them society, *any* society, seems somewhat contingent, almost accidental, somewhat absurd, certainly *external.*"[85] This does not imply a Rousseauan "human nature", but simply that what is subjective cannot be objectivised. All education is violence, but not violence done to what we are by nature – since no such nature exists. The violence is the obligation to "fit in to a predetermined model, which, no more than any other possible model, does not entirely coincide with our innermost experience."[86]

In the analysis below, I will only consider the worker's *experience* of life and labour. As we shall see, this will help us lay our fingers on a

suppression of the individual which probably would pass unnoticed in a Habermasian analysis.

7. The expansion of the heteronomous sphere

In this section the expansion of the heteronomous sphere will be dealt with– an expansion which, as we shall see, can be considered an immediate consequence of the ideologies (Marxian as well as liberal) that vindicate a liberation *within* work instead of *from* work. To our analysis, the most important metamorphoses of modern work will here be discussed in an ideal-typical but, in no way, exhaustive analysis of the worker's alienation of today. First, I will analyse the industrial worker's alienation in post-Fordist production. Then, I will pay attention to a new dimension of alienation on account of the *immaterial* labour.

7.1. The alienation of the post-Fordist worker

Gorz sees three dimensions in all forms of human labour: (1) the content of work, (2) the organisation of the labour process, and (3) the relation between the producer and the product to be produced. Accordingly, work can only be autonomous if (1) it is fulfilling for the individual performing it; if (2) it is organised by those performing it; and if (3) it consists in the free pursuit of a self-appointed aim. If we want work to be autonomous, "restoring its autonomy in one of these dimensions will not suffice [to make it] free from alienation or (which amounts to the same thing) heteronomy."[87]

The common changes of work, however, only occur in the first and second dimensions. A change in the third dimension would imply that the producer himself chooses what to produce. This ultimate, ontological reason for the Marxian alienation cannot be changed within the frames of modern capitalism; work is always hetero-regulated in one way or the other when the system reaches a certain degree of complexity.[88] To let the worker organise his work on his own and assure him that his work is fulfilling is, on the other hand, simple and, as we shall see, very remunerative. As discussed in the introduction, two trends within social science have facilitated the neglect of the third dimension – the empiricist symptom-focused sociology mentioned in the introduction and the Marxian phalange that sticks to the illusion of a possible unification of autonomy and economic functionality.[89] The changes within the first and second dimensions have still an enormous impact upon the worker's experience of his work (changes in these dimensions have for a long time been advocated by management theory)

and will therefore be discussed here in an ideal-typical assessment of the latest development.

7.2. Computerisation related alienation

In his latest book – *L'immatériel* – Gorz, for once, does not focus his discussion on how to abolish wage-labour. The essential part of the discussion is now devoted to a subject he started paying attention to already in the 1980s. Along with a greater potential than ever for wealth without labour, micro-electronic technology and belonging information technology, have created an unparalleled poverty of the senses. The undermining of the physical-sensory foundations of the individual's experience in favour of mathematical representations of reality, have throughout the industrialisation been a criticised phenomenon – in this section of the paper I will therefore touch upon a critique already expressed by Husserl in his The Crisis of European Sciences. The crisis here is however not limited to the "sciences"; it is also a salient feature in the life of the working individual.

7.2.1. Immaterial labour

While post-Fordist production has increased the intensity of alienation, computerisation has given work an immaterial quality and consequently also affected the experience of heteronomous work. The changeover is aptly described in Sennett's longitudinal study of the Boston bakery. This is his impression of the work at the bakery in the early 1970s:

> The place in one way more resembled Diderot's paper mill than Smith's pin factory, the baking of bread being a balletic exercise which required years of training to get right. Still, the bakery was filled with noise; the smell of yeast, mingled with human sweat in the hot rooms; the bakers' hands were constantly plunged into flour and water; the men used their noses as well as their eyes to judge when the bread was done. Craft pride was strong, but the men said they didn't enjoy their work, and I believed them. The ovens often burned them; the primitive dough beater pulled human muscles […][90]

When Sennett returns, 25 years later, the baking process has been entirely computerised:

> Computerized baking has profoundly changed the balletic physical activities of the shop floor. Now the bakers make no physical contact with the materials or the loaves of bread, monitoring the entire process via on-screen icons

> which depict, for instance, images of bread color derived from data about the temperature and baking time of the ovens; few bakers actually see the loaves of bread they make. Their working screens are organized in the familiar Windows way; in one, icons for many more different kinds of bread appear than had been prepared in the past – Russian, Italian, French loaves all possible by touching the screen. Bread had become a screen representation.[91]

Consequently, the bakers no longer know how to bake bread without their machinery which in turn is a completely alien tool for them and too complicated to be repaired by themselves when out of order. In Sennett's study, the workers feel personally demeaned by the way they work: "operationally everything is so clear; emotionally, so illegible"[92] 10 years before Sennett, Gorz observes exactly the same phenomenon:

> The activity the worker performs is no longer connected to the object to be transformed (he no longer needs to be familiar with the raw materials and the tools used to work them); it is determined uniquely by the nature of the systems used for controlling and regulating the process [...] The activities of a steel roller at Italsider will probably have much in common with those of a worker controlling pasta-shell production, and bear very little resemblance to those of the worker beside him who controls the quality of the sheet metal [...] Occupational identity is no longer related to the product but to the systems of secondary technology applied to production.[93]

7.2.2. Repression of the lived world

Jean Baudrillard's assertion that the Sassurean sign has lost its referential value seems to hold true even for the sphere of production. We no longer sense the signified reality to which the sign refers – the sign has become a reality in itself.[94] Habermas' reduction of the lifeworld can, in this light, be considered as completely in line with the main tendencies in the Western World – the medium is the message.

In Husserl's philosophy, the lifeworld is primarily the "sensible, three-dimensional world we know through our bodies, as certainly and unmistakable as our bodies themselves."[95] The being-for-itself's rootedness in the being-in-itself is in other words the human body. In the immaterial production, this very unification of the two types of being is constantly repressed. The so-called monitor worker (not to mention the "process

worker" whose main task is to supervise an almost entirely automated production), has even less contact with the product than the Fordist worker. There is no physical, visible, perceptible achievement; the monitor worker has created *nothing*. The only reality he can touch upon is a calculated, quantified one, expressed in figures on a screen. Yet this nothing has drained him: during his working day, the worker has imposed a self-denial (or more exactly a denial of his own being-in-itself) upon himself which consists in repressing his sensory existence – he exists only as pure intellect, all living contact with the lifeworld in and through his body is constantly eliminated and suppressed.

The practical incompetence and emotional distance to computerised work described by Sennett, Gorz explains by distinguishing between *connaissance* (knowledge) and *savoir* (here, capability). To know a language (in terms of grammar and vocabulary), Gorz gives as an example, is not the same thing as having command of a language. Capabilities cannot be taught – "you learn them by practical experience, by being apprenticed, i.e., by practising to do what it is about to learn to do."[96] Gorz fears that our culture is impoverished by the encoding and transformation of our capabilities into knowledge, seeing that the capability is crucial to our experience of the world and consequently to ourselves:

> From the outset we meet with the world through experience, in its sensible reality, and we 'understand' it through our body, by evolving it, informing it, and forming it through the practice of our sensory faculties which, they too, are 'formed' by it. We perceive the world through our body and our body through the actions by which our body evolves the world when evolving itself in it. It is this 'sensory world' directly known to the body, experienced by this body which, as Husserl asserted already in 1906, 'is the only real world, virtually apprehended as existing, the only world that we have and can experience – our daily lived world'. Without this pre-cognitive capability, nothing would be comprehensible, intelligible, meaningful to us. It is 'the foundation of our certainties' (Husserl), the reservoir of evidence upon which our existence rests.[97]

Gorz never uses the term himself, but the computerised production has certainly increased what I would call the *technique alienation*. It abolishes the intelligence of hand and body and renders the sensory faculties redundant; "it disqualifies the senses, steals perception's certainties away,

takes the ground from under our feet."[98] Furthermore, our free praxis is not only alienated when put into a system of others' actions which is out of individual control. Alienation may just as well occur when our praxis is integrated into an incomprehensible technological system, especially if this technological system reduces the worker into "a mere coding and decoding station"[99] and disconnects him from his physical inherence in the world.

To fit into the technological megamachine, the human intelligence must be "liberated" from its body and accordingly from desire, intentionality, emotions and temporality. The human body is obsolete – "one must provide it with chemical prostheses to 'tranquilise' its nervous system overstrained by the violations it endures and with electronic prostheses to increase the capacities of its brains."[100] Science and capital have together created a *hatred of the body* which outside the industrial sector is openly manifested in a mass of "scientific" projects such as: the emancipation of the woman from pregnancy (since fecundation *in vitro* would be much *safer*), the genetic modification of the human genome (the human being must become more adapted to society – not the other way around), the creation of artificial life (as if the being-for-itself could actually be liberated from being-in-itself) and the creation of artificial intelligence (or to quote Noam Chomsky: "natural stupidity"). What it all amounts to is an unprecedented validity for Weber's judgement upon the modern man: "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved."[101]

8. Conclusion

In the introduction we asked ourselves, if we assume the impossibility of a human essence, what is there to be alienated from? The answer was: the absence of such an essence. When we experience our freely chosen actions to have consequences beyond our control, we experience alienation. This may occur when our actions are integrated with others' or with a technological system whose opacity is so intense that we cannot understand it.

In this paper I have discussed alienation *in work* for the simple reason that it is this alienation that deeply impinges on the individual's life. Alienation can, however, occur on a number of fields where individual actions, whether intended or not, influence each others' consequences: in the traffic, in the use of natural resources, in the pollution of nature etc. Alienation is a conditioned phenomenon, i.e., not inherent in our existence, but as soon as we start to consider systems which are too complex for the individual praxis to be sovereign, alienation appears inescapably.

This practical impossibility to escape alienation is particularly obvious in the industrial production. The highly productive division of labour has along with its increasing effectiveness also increased the alienation of work. Even if the produced wealth could be fairly divided – "to everyone according to his needs" – and thereby give our work more meaning, we would still experience alienation when serving our limited purpose in the system. Marx's delusion of a possible unity between functionality and free, self-fulfilling work (*poeisis*), therefore remains an ideal which, if the worst comes to worst, may result in a totalitarian denial of the inevitable alienation of work – a denial all too familiar to us in the Western World. The only way to reach the de-alienation of production would, as things are at present, be the regression to an agrarian society. Work in this society would however not be autonomous – it would still be governed by necessity.

The human being has no essence and is free in so far as he is always – regardless of external limits – freely choosing between the actions possible to him. But the being-for-itself would not exist if it was not for the human being-in-itself, i.e., the human body. We are *sensory* beings and since "all consciousness is consciousness *of* something" the experience of and through our bodies is crucial to the permanent creation of ourselves. To subordinate our direct experience to intersubjective communication is, ironically, to say what one might call, using the Habermasian vocabulary, a "performative contradiction": if our communication (and consequently our consciousness) is determined by norms, values, and traditions that, as said by Habermas, "remain at the back" of the individual, how can Habermas himself (as a sociologist – and as an individual) then be conscious of this very relation? And how can he know that this sociological observation is not the result of social operations going on behind his back?

Besides the division of labour, the rationalisation has also made work more abstract through computerisation. How this change affects the worker's experience of his daily activity is impossible to account for on the basis of "linguistic philosophy". Here, I have, starting from a phenomenological foundation, been able to demonstrate how also this process of rationalisation has an alienating impact upon work in so far as it replaces the direct experience of work with screen representations of it and, in this way, additionally separates the product from its producer. To liberate productive work from this alienating factor could only be realised by the regression to a less effective production. The purpose of this paper, however, is to justify a neo-Luddite critique of modern industrialism. The critique has mainly been levelled against the advocates of liberation *within* work instead of from work.

This, since the process of rationalisation besides an intensified alienation also has made the human labour enormously productive which, to, instead of consuming *in absurdum*, devote most of our time to autonomous activity. More concretely, this would imply to recognise that work (with our complex division of labour and passivating means of production) by definition is alienating and for that reason something which we, in opposition to the spirit of today, should devote the least possible of our lives to – given the agreed standard of living (a balance that of course will have to be further discussed). It would imply to realise the inevitable alienating character of modern work, and *consequently* the maximal reduction of work in people's lives.

The realisation of such politics would by no means signify the final phase of humanity's development. As Marcuse argues, it might rather constitute a transitory stage in a total liberation from heteronomous work.[102] When the autonomous activity gets the better of people's lives, the elements of alienating work will, perhaps, become less tolerable and in the end completely automated. The problem of today seems to be, to quote Sigmund Freud, that "no other technique for the conduct of life binds the individual so firmly to reality" and so loosely to the pleasure principle, "as an emphasis on work, which at least gives him a secure place in one area of reality, the human community."[103] The bad faith combined with alienation has become a hard nut to crack. That libertarian socialists (as Peter Kropotkin) as well as authoritarian socialists (as Paul Lafargue) have made the liberation from work a fundamental question is probably due to the fact that work has become the threshold of not yet realised utopias. This, not too well-founded, reflection will hereby be left open for further discussion. I shall, however, allow myself to conclude this paper with a just as elevating as disheartening quotation from Simone Weil on this matter of interest: "no one would accept being a slave for two hours a day; for slavery to be accepted, it must last enough each day to break something within man."[104]

9. Bibliography

Baudrillard, J. *Symbolic Exchange and Death.* London: Sage, 2002.

Bowring, F. *André Gorz and the Sartrean Legacy: Arguments for a Person-Centred Social Theory* London: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Chiodi, P. *Sartre and Marxism.* London: Harvester Press, 1976.

Freud, S. *Civilization and Its Discontents.* London: Penguin Classics, 2002.

Fromm, E. *Escape from Freedom.* New York: Owl Books, 1941.

Fromm, E. *The Sane Society.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956.

Fromm, E. *The Art of Loving.* New York: Perennial, 2000.

Gorz, A. *La Morale de l'Histoire.* Paris: Le Seuil, 1959.

_____. *Le Socialisme Difficile.* Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967.

_____. *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism.* London: Pluto, 1982.

_____. *Paths to Paradise: On the Liberation from Work.* Sidney: Pluto Press, 1985.

_____. *Critique of Economic Reason.* Bristol: Verso, 1989.

_____. *Reclaiming Work, Beyond the Wage-Based Society.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.

_____. *L'immatériel: Connaissance, Valeur et Capital.* Paris: Galilée, 2003.

Habermas, J. *The Theory of Communicative Action, i: Reason and the Rationalisation of Society.* Cambridge: Polity, 1984.

_____. *The Theory of Communicative Action, ii: The Critique of Functionalist Reason.* Cambridge: Polity, 1987.

_____. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere.* Cambridge: Polity, 1989.

Marcuse, H. *From Luther to Popper.* Norfolk: Verso, 1983.

_____. *Reason and Revolution.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.

_____. *One-Dimensional Man.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.

Marx, K. *Grundrisse.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.

_____. *The German Ideology*, Elecbook (e-book), 2001.

_____. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and The Communist Manifesto.* New York: Prometheus Books, 1988.

Mills, C.W. *White Collar: The American Middle Classes.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951.

_____. *The Marxists.* London: Penguin Books, 1962.

_____. *The Sociological Imagination.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Naville, P. *De l'Aliénation à la Jouissance.* Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1970.

Sandberg, Å. (red.) *Enriching Production.* Vermont: Avebury, 1995.

Sartre, J-P. *Being and Nothingness.* New York: Philosophical Library, 1956.

_____. *The Transcendence of the Ego.* New York: Vintage, 1957.

_____. *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme.* Paris: Nagel, 1970.

_____. *Critique of Dialectical Reason, i.* London: Verso, 1991.

Sennett, R. *The Corrosion of Character.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998.

Touraine, A. *Critique of Modernity.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.

Articles

Balazs, G. & Pialoux, M. "Crise du Travail et Crise du Politique" in *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, No. 114, (1996): 3-4.

Dassa, S. & Maillard, D. "Exigences de Qualité et Nouvelles Formes d'Aliénation" *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 115 (1996): 27-37.

Davies, J. "Toward a Theory of Revolution." *American Sociological Review* 27 (1962).

Kanungo, R.N. "Alienation and Empowerment: Some Ethical Imperatives in Business." *Journal of Business Ethics* 11, nos. 5-6 (1992): 413-422.

Pialoux, M. "Stratégies Patronales et Résistances Ouvrières." *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 114 (1996): 5-20.

Ritzer, G. "The McDonaldization Thesis." *International Sociology* 11 (1996), 3: 291-308.

Sayers, S. "Creative Activity and Alienation in Hegel and Marx." *Historical Materialism* 11, no. 1 (2003): 107-128.

Endnotes

[1] H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 13.

[2] R.N. Kanungo, "Alienation and Empowerment: Some Ethical Imperatives in Business" *Journal of Business Ethics* 11, no. 5-6(1992): 416. (my italics)

[3] Sartre was heavily influenced by Edmund Husserl's claim to reconnect philosophy with our actual experience of the world. This claim was premised on the theoretical possibility of stripping consciousness of all those acquired beliefs and interpretations which are presupposed by our rational and habitual dealings with it (the phenomenological reduction). Following this philosophical method, Sartre, however, renounces Husserl's notion of a transcendental subjectivity as an Absolute Being.

[4] J-P. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego* (New York: Vintage, 1957), 81.

[5] J-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* New York: Philosophical Library, (1956), lx.

[6] Ibid., 619.

[7] Ibid., 485.

[8] J. P. Sartre, *L'Existentialisme et un Humanisme,* (Paris: Nagel, 1970), 17.

[9] Ibid., 37.

[10] Cf. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* 55.

[11] Sartre, *L'Existentialisme et un Humanisme*, 32.

[12] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* 23.

[13] H. Marcuse, *From Luther to Popper,* (Norfolk: Verso, 1983), 172-174.

[14] H. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution,* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 260.

[15] Ibid., 115.

[16] S. Sayers, "Creative Activity and Alienation in Hegel and Marx" *Historical Materialism* 11(2003): 110.

[17] K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 76.

[18] Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution,* 218.

[19] Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and The Communist Manifesto,* 71.

[20] Ibid., 74.

[21] Ibid., 78.

[22] Marx idea of the human nature is largely based upon Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* which also had a great influence on Sartre and his ontology with its two types of being. The Marxian trains of thought found in Sartre's later writings, should, against this background, become more understandable.

[23] Since the ideal of the artisan implies a problematisation not only of economic relations, but also of the growing mechanisation of work, it should be noted that Marx later on viewed the automatisation process as a precondition for the "all round" individual. Freedom from necessity brought by mechanisation has been highly appraised by some Marxists (such as Marcuse and Gorz) while rejected by others. Erich Fromm, for instance, asks whether "completely automatized work [does] not lead to a completely automatised life?" Since (the artisan's) work "could be attractive and meaningful" he considers the craving for freedom from work to by a symptom of laziness which, he asserts, "*is a symptom of mental pathology*". This question has never been linked to the "Fromm-Marcuse" debate, though I believe it is fundamental for the understanding of the divergence within Freudomarxism. Cf. E. Fromm, *The Sane Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956).

[24] C.W. Mills, *The Marxists* (London: Penguin Books, 1962), 111.

[25] Gorz, A. *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism* (London: Pluto, 1982), 19.

[26] Mills, *Marxists*, 111.

[27] Cf. Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*, 25.

[28] C.W. Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 228.

[29] The difference between the existing and the not yet realised possibility. J. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution" *American Sociological Review* 27, no. 1(1962).

[30] C. W. Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 11.

[31] Quoted in Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism,* 27.

[32] Extract from Marx, K. (2001) *The German Ideology*, Elecbook, 62: "As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production."

[33] " *la 'coïncidence' des individus objectifs avec leur réalité objective* " (my translation), A. Gorz, *La Morale de l'Histoire* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1959), 48.

[34] *"une 'réalité-dialectique' qui a sa fin et sa manière spécifiquement humaine mais qui est jugée (c'est-à-dire confirmé ou contredite) par les résultats qu'elle concourt à produire."* (my translation), Gorz, *La Morale de l'Histoire,* 48.

[35] P. Chiodi, *Sartre and Marxism,* (London: The Harvester Press, 1976), 79.

[36] A. Gorz, *Le Socialisme Difficile* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967), 230.

[37] Sartre, J-P. (1991) *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* quoted in Chiodi, P. (1976) *Sartre and Marxism.* London: Harvester Press, 84.

[38] Gorz, *Le Socialisme Difficile*, 233.

[39] Consequently there are several, more subtle, dimensions of alienation (that are unrelated to the organisation of work) than the one treated in this essay. These dimensions are however only described in *La Morale de l'Histoire* and have apparently not been worth to be mentioned in any of Gorz's later works. Cf. Gorz, *La Morale de l'Histoire*, 60-83.

[40] Ibid., 99.

[41] Ibid., 103.

[42] *"la révolution communiste ne peut pas, ne doit pas aboutir à mettre un système communiste à la place d'un système capitaliste ; car qui dit système dit aliénation de la libre praxis à la rigidité et à l'inertie anti-humaine des structures et des processus"* (my translation) Gorz, *La Morale de l'Histoire*, 176.

[43] *"la victoire sur la rareté"* (my translation) Gorz, *Le Socialisme Difficile*,, 233.

Definition: *"La possibilité de satisfaire largement, chez tous, les besoins tels qu'ils se manifestent historiquement" (The possibility to largely satisfy all needs that are historically manifested*), 115.

⁴⁴ F. Bowring, *André Gorz and the Sartrean Legacy: Arguments for a Person-Centred Social Theory* (London: St. Martin's Press, (2000), 102.

⁴⁵ K. Marx, *The German Ideology*, Elecbook, (2001), 124.

⁴⁶ Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*, 6.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 91.

⁴⁸ A. Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason* (Bristol: Verso, 1989), 43.

⁴⁹ Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism* (London: Pluto, 1982), 33.

⁵⁰ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 159.

⁵¹ Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 32.

⁵² Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*, 37.

⁵³ Gorz takes the production of a washing-machine as an example to illustrate the complexity of modern industrialism – a production process which brings together, he claims, skills which far exceed the individual capacities of tens of thousands of people. "The machine's components – stainless-steel drum, cast-iron frame, enamelled panels, electric circuits and motors, automatic control, rubber belts and piping, etc. – depend on very different industries and technologies. These in turn use machines (for laminating, smelting, wiredrawing,stamping, enamelling, coiling) whose design and construction presuppose a range of other industries and skills.

Still further along the chain, the teaching, classification and development of these skills, the extraction of raw materials, transport of semi-manufactured products, etc., all rely on a complex network of institutions and services, and thus on a highly diversified society and its division into specialised agencies." A. Gorz, *Paths to Paradise: On the Liberation from Work* (Sidney: Pluto Press, 1985), 50.

⁵⁴ Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*, 81.

⁵⁵ Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 43.

⁵⁶ Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*, 136.

⁵⁷ Gorz, A. (1999) *Reclaiming Work, Beyond the Wage-Based Society.* Oxford: Blackwell, 83.

[58] Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 46.

[59] Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 88.

[60] Gorz repeatedly returns to the women movement (in which he otherwise sees one of the most subversive forces) and how it enters the logic of capital when seeking to free women from non-economically oriented activities such as the feeding, minding, raising and education of children by turning these activities into wage labour – activities which has to be autonomous given their affective quality.

[61] G. Ritzer, "The McDonaldization Thesis" *International Sociology* 11, no. 3 (1996): 293.

[62] F. Bowring, *André Gorz and the Sartrean Legacy: Arguments for a Person-Centred Social Theory,* (London: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 146.

[63] J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, i: *Reason and the Rationalisation of Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1984), 390.

[64] J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, ii: The Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), 277.

[65] Habermas, *Reason and the Rationalisation of Society*, 335.

[66] Habermas, *Reason and the Rationalisation of Society*, 196.

[67] Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 174.

[68] Habermas, *Reason and the Rationalisation of Society*, 135-137

[69] Gorz uses the "sociologist" as a generic term for structuralists, materialists, functionalists, positivists and others whose ambition is to explain the individual from macro-structures.

[70] Gorz, *Le Socialisme Difficile,* 224.

[71] A. Gorz, *Reclaiming Work, Beyond the Wage-Based Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 131.

[72] Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 175.

[73] Ibid., 86.

[74] A. Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, 264, in A. Gorz, *Reclaiming Work, Beyond the Wage-Based Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 139.

[75] Ibid., 141.

[76] Habermas, *Critique of Functionalist Reason*, 58.

[77] Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 86.

[78] Ibid., 174.

[79] Rationality is not used as a term to describe any objective rationality here. What I mean by rationality is more accurately defined by Marcuse as "one of the most vexing aspects of advanced industrial civilization: the rational character of its irrationality." Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 9.

[80] Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 174.

[81] "By activity is not meant 'doing something' but an inner activity, the productive use of one's powers. Love is an activity; if I love, I am in a constant state of active concern with the loved person". Fromm, E. *The Art of Loving,* (New York: Perennial, 2000), 118.

[82] Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 175.

[83] A. Gorz, *Paths to Paradise: On the Liberation from Work,* Sidney: Pluto Press, 1985), 66.

[84] Since socialisation often implies a certain degree of functionality, we have, to return to Fromm, developed a concept of health based upon the individual's capability to fulfil the social role society has given to him – i.e. to work. But "the person who is normal in terms of being well adapted is often less healthy than the neurotic person in terms of human values". The same holds true for the autonomous individuals – they are certainly not adapted to their social roles and probably not even happy, but then, since

they are not working, they are not as alienated as the well adapted worker. E. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Owl Books, 1941), 138.

85 Gorz, *Paths to Paradise: On the Liberation from Work*, 67.

86 Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 177.

87 Ibid., 78.

88 There are, according to Gorz "two types of hetero-regulation or totalization which are conflated in Habermas' system: first one which derives from a totalization (which no one wanted, anticipated or planned) of serialized actions by the material field in which they inscribe themselves; and secondly, one which involves organized programming, an organization chart drawn up for the purpose of getting individuals, who are neither able to communicate nor to arrive at a mutual agreement, to realize a collective result, which they neither intend nor are, in many cases, even aware of". Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 34.

89 Even in Mills' ideal of the craftsmanship there is a focus on the organisational dimension (cf. Mills, C.W. *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 220). The same holds true for most of the social thinkers who wrote under impression of Fordism and its bureaucratic counterpart in the service sector. The "human resources management" sets many of the old critical theories out of the running.

90 R. Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, (1998), 65.

91 Ibid., 68.

92 Ibid.

93 Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 76.

94 J. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (London: Sage, 2002), 6.

95 Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 85.

[96] *"On les apprend par la pratique, par l'apprentissage, c'est-à-dire en s'exerçant à faire ce qu'il s'agit d'apprendre à faire"* (my translation) A. Gorz, *L'immatériel: Connaissance, Valeur et Capital* (Paris: Galilée, 2003), 38.

[97] *"Nous apprenons le monde originairement par l'expérience, dans sa réalité sensible, et le 'comprenons' par notre corps, le déployons, l'informons, le mettons en forme par l'exercice de nos facultés sensorielles qui, ellemêmes, sont 'formées' par lui. Nous apprenons le monde par notre corps et notre corps par les actions par lesquelles il déploie le monde en s'y déployant. C'est ce 'monde sensible' su à même le corps, 'vécu' par lui qui, notait Husserl dès 1906 'est le seul monde réel, réellement perçu comme existant, le seul monde dont nous avons et pouvons faire l'expérience – notre monde vécu quotidien'. Sans ce savoir précognitif, rien, pour nous, ne serait compréhensible, intelligible, doté de sens. Il est 'le sol de nos certitudes' (Husserl), le reservoir d'évidences sur lesquelles notre existence se construit."* (my translation) Gorz, *L'immatériel: Connaissance, Valeur et Capital*, 107.

[98] A. Gorz, *Reclaiming Work, Beyond the Wage-Based Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, (1999), 113.

[99] Ibid., 39

[100] *"Il faut le doter de prothèses chimiques pour 'tranquilliser' son système nerveux stressé par les violations qu'il subit et de prothèses électroniques pour augmenter les capacités de son cerveau"* (my translation) Gorz, *L'immatériel: Connaissance, Valeur et Capital*, 112.

[101] Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, 37.

[102] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man,* 227.

[103] S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, (London: Penguin Classics, (2002), 16.

[104] "*Nul n'accepterait d'être esclave deux heures; l'esclavage, pour être accepté, doit durer assez chaque jour pour briser quelque chose dans l'homme.*" (my translation) P. Naville, *De l'Aliénation à la Jouissance* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1970), 488.