

Work Under the Façade of Mainstream Discourse
Defining *Work* with George Orwell, Hannah Arendt,
Bertrand Russell and David Graeber

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In this thesis I analyze how *work* is defined by George Orwell, Hannah Arendt, Bertrand Russell and David Graeber in their texts selected for this thesis. Work is commonly thought with certain assumptions that seem common-sense to most people. I argue that it is impossible to talk about *work* in a meaningful way if it is not first defined with full acknowledgment of the ideological background against which it is described. Overall, this study simply concentrates how the word *work* can be defined.

The study focuses on the term *work* as a social phenomenon (i.e. a ritual performed) by analyzing the aforementioned four prominent thinkers' writings. I investigate these texts in order to develop ideas of *work* that delve into the aspect beyond those of common perception. In four case studies, I analyze some writings by George Orwell, Hannah Arendt, Bertrand Russell and David Graeber for the purpose of conjuring an image of *work* as a social construct that appears to have a strong sense of morality, duty and sacrifice that has been implemented top down in an attempt of controlling societies and status quo.

I claim that the discussion on work is largely neglected in academia and in mainstream discourse, especially in the sense what work actually entails as a means of maintaining the order of society today. I argue that work is one of the most defining aspects of human beings in societies: consumes most of the time of human lifespan, physiologically uses a great deal of energy (also mental), causes a lot of serious health problems, defines people's lives for them without real freedom in choosing one's profession (dictated ultimately by necessity). My study illustrates that while work is talked about at every turn, it is seldom talked about what it actually entails as a social practice and under the various beliefs and assumptions attached to it. Therefore, I argue that a lot of time work is talked about, it is not at all clear what is actually meant by it, thus making the discourse stuck in a certain parameters set by the current market logic and its definition of value(/money).

Keywords: Work, Labor, Value, Society, Class, Time

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1 Introduction

“The three most harmful addictions are heroin, carbohydrates, and a monthly salary.”

– Nassim Nicholas Taleb, “The Bed of Procrustes”

We humans are engaged in the constant business of word-defining, whether we are consciously aware of it or not. The meaning of such an everyday concept as *work* seems to be one of the words that people still believe they know without much thought; in other words, work comes with such a cultural baggage full of assumptions that are in most cases taken at face value without any critical thinking. It is rather ambiguous to talk about work without first defining it because the concept can be used to refer to so many things from so many different subjective vantage points, ideologies and strata of society. Bog, hoe and the worker. It seems that in the beginning there is always the trinity of workplace, tool and the worker, but what is work? What is work build of and what has been cast as foundation for it? Or is work perhaps rolled out of paper and dictated to a secretary? Maybe work has been welded to the collective subconscious architecture? Or has someone forgotten the word *is* from between the phrase *working life* – maybe it has been omitted on purpose? Be that as it may, conventional answers are trite and well-known: work builds character, it brings structure and content to life, it cultivates proper values and gives direction and goals, it gets you out of bed in the morning and makes you do something else besides watch TV all day long – quite simply: work seems to give meaning to life as the ultimate value. But are these answers anything but white lies and will-o’-the-wisps. Shadows on Plato’s cave wall?

In this thesis, I claim work is the single most important question to think critically because nothing else comes even close how much it affects the brief time we human beings exist on this planet. Furthermore, things we call work, and the overall ideology behind it, is the reason we are needlessly destroying our environment, and mental health for that matter; nowadays nearly all detrimental aspects of society come from the current idea of work and from the civilization made for, and in the image of, work. Also, as a university student it amazes me how little work has been discussed critically; work is the last bastion of religious belief even most of the academics take as a god-given fact that exists as a law of nature that has to be done eight hours per day on average (in the European context) in spite of vast developments and

increase in production in the past one hundred years: the eight-hour work day was a proletarian victory in the early 1900s, but it can be seen as a crime against human existence in the 2020s.

We live in a world that is built for working and that is the reason why all major political parties from left to right are conservative because they all believe first and foremost in work – and after that in so little else. In fact, it is hard to discern whether it is the so-called left or the right that is more fervent about work. Also, and interestingly, the president of Finland, Sauli Niinistö (National Coalition Party) has been worried of a phenomenon labelled as “ideologically unemployed,” referring to people who want, according to him, live in an “idle-society” or “living-room-society” (Huusko 2013; my translation) where people just wait for others to serve the table. In the same speech, Niinistö further states that “all work is valuable, and it is also valuable to pursue work” (ibid.; my translation), and he is also concerned that some people just consciously decide to not use their possibilities. In addition, it can be argued that Niinistö himself lives in the living room he is speaking of which is built by others that do the really necessary work. Interestingly, the Finnish union for refusal-to-work (Työtäkieltäytymisliitto, TKL) states in their book that work is mostly talked about from the vantage point of the economy, even though work is also a controlling institution together with schools and the army (Kankila etc. 2019).

Work is talked about continuously in media and politics as well as between friends and families, but what is work exactly? When the National Coalition Party is calling for more work (as in jobs), do they mean nurses, teachers or something else? When the Finnish export industry states that Finland lives from shipments abroad, does that make the work done by those manufactures the most important task done in society? In similar logic, does the planet Earth then live from exports to space? Why is it that production and selling is somehow seen as profit while societal work like nursing and teaching is seen as expenses? How can telemarketing and being a doctor both be referred to with the same term: work? For instance, why are some actions considered to be worth a wage while some actions are not? In relation to this, in 2013, David Graeber, an anthropologist from London School of Economics, wrote an essay “On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs,” for the *Strike!* magazine (that led Graeber to write a 2018 book, *Bullshit Jobs: The Rise of Pointless Work and What We Can Do about It*, which was based on the replies he received from his readers for the essay). Graeber (2013, 2) begins his essay with the following lines:

In the year 1930, John Maynard Keynes predicted that, by century's end, technology would have advanced sufficiently that countries like Great Britain or the United States would have achieved a 15-hour work week. There's every reason to believe he was right. In technological terms, we are quite capable of this. And yet it didn't happen. Instead, technology has been marshalled, if anything, to figure out ways to make us all work more. In order to achieve this, jobs have had to be created that are, effectively, pointless.

In a similar fashion, futurist Martin Ford (2015) wrote in his *Financial Times* Business Book of the Year Award winning title, *The Rise of Robots*, about the effects of technology on work. He opens his book by referencing one of the most well-known economics of 20th century:

Sometime during the 1960s, the Nobel laureate economist Milton Friedman was consulting with the government of a developing Asian nation. Friedman was taken to a large-scale public works project, where he was surprised to see large numbers of workers wielding shovels, but very few bulldozers, tractors, or other heavy earth-moving equipment. When asked about this, the government official in charge explained that the project was intended as a "jobs program." Friedman's caustic reply has become famous: "So then, why not give the workers spoons instead of shovels?" Friedman's remark captures the scepticism—and often outright derision—expressed by economists confronting fears about the prospect of machines destroying jobs and creating long-term unemployment. (Ford 2015, ix)

This paper aims to answer how work can be defined and described by studying selected writings of George Orwell, Hannah Arendt, Bertrand Russell and David Graeber. All of the works chosen for this study concentrate on work but in rather different ways. I go through all of these texts and analyze the most important textual evidence in relation to the question how the word *work* can be defined. At the end of every chapter, I draw conclusions of the findings from each of the author's text(s). In other words, I try to do the rather impossible because pinpointing the meaning of a given word is doomed to fail since words do not refer directly to the reality outside of the human mind; ideologies, belief systems, paradigms and so on. This necessarily places all of us human beings in a constant word defining war, whether we are actively aware of it or not. For example, the 'work' most people do for the so called 'living' has changed many times drastically in the past 150 years; so, 'work' as in paid labor (or 'wage slavery') does not even on average refer to similar actions as it used to in different historical times, and new technological developments have increased the pace of the change of societies thus making 'work' even a more fluid concept.

In the first chapter, I study how work is defined in George Orwell's books *Down and under Paris and London* (1933) and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937). Orwell's texts are the

most ‘down to earth’ from the selected writing for this paper in their approach since they are based on his own experiences and investigations. Orwell worked himself as a plounger (i.e. dishwasher) in Paris and made investigations into the situation of the poor working class of England in the 1930s. In many instances Orwell sees work to be modern slavery, since the pay is only enough for reproducing oneself as a worker for wage. Orwell sees work also as a class distinction that enforces class hierarchy. Moreover, Orwell discusses the notion that necessary work is omitted from consideration in favor of so-called production as the real source of value.

In the second chapter, Hannah Arendt’s book *The Human Condition* (1958) is discussed. Arendt’s text is without dispute the most technical and philosophical piece of text chosen for analysis in this thesis. Arendt makes an interesting distinction between labor and work: labor being the fundamental biological necessity that must repeat itself; on the other hand, work for Arendt is something that can be done after the laboring process is guaranteed. One of Arendt’s concerns is that we have become a laboring society where the market logic has started to function in the image of the laboring process, as in biological necessities that by pure necessity are repetitive; human beings must eat, breath, defecate every day, while consuming clothes, cars, furniture is not necessary in the same fashion.

In the third chapter, Bertrand Russell’s essay *In Praise of Idleness* (1935) is under scrutiny. According to Russell, work in its current conception is a belief structure enforced top-down to maintain the class structure of societies. Russell crudely divides work into two categories: those who do the work, and those who watch others to do it; in principle, the latter pays well, and the former does not. Russell further sees the ‘gospel of work’ to cause a lot of harm to human beings as it keeps them from using their energy to something more productive and worthwhile. Moreover, Russell claims that workdays could easily be reduced to four hours per day (it is notable that the essay was written in the 1930s).

In the fourth chapter, a book *Bullshit Jobs: The Rise of Pointless Work and What We Can Do about It* (2018) by David Graeber is discussed (Graeber sadly passed away recently in 2020). Despite its provocative name, the book delves into the many aspects of what work is and has become, making it clear that what we call work changes according to times. Graeber’s book differs from all the others works selected for this thesis in that it is based on texts sent by the readers of his 2013 article, responding to the question whether they feel their job is completely useless for the overall society. Towards the end of Graeber’s book there is also a strong emphasis on theory, as he tries to analyze the reasons behind the current state of work, and why so many people feel that they are working in meaningless jobs. Graeber estimates that 40% of the jobs are not really needed for anything. He points out further that there is a wide

misconception that work is about production because most work is caring work: maintaining, fixing, using, cleaning and so on.

In the concluding chapter 6, I discuss the similarities between the writer in how they are defining work, and draw together the findings. Furthermore, on the basis of my analyses, I discuss critically why work should get a lot more attention in critical thinking in the academia as well as in the mainstream. Moreover, I make my case why work should be studied in an interdisciplinary way, and why and how it would be very important to study it from particular perspectives.

How, then, can the word *work* be defined? In the next few paragraphs, I present some examples from multiple sources to paint a picture of the difficulties in defining work; the jumps between time, space and languages are there to emphasize the fluidity of concept: work. In ancient Greece, according to Friedrich Nietzsche (1911, 3)

We moderns have the advantage over the Greeks with two concepts given as consolation, as it were, to a world which behaves in a thoroughly slave-like manner whilst anxiously avoiding the word 'slave': we speak of the 'dignity of man' and of the 'dignity of work' [...] The Greeks have no need for conceptual hallucinations like this, they voice their opinion that work is a disgrace with shocking openness.

In ancient Rome, Augustine (354–430 CA) ruminated that work will always be full of misery: “A hard condition is the life of man. What else is it to be born, but to enter on a life of toil? Of our toil that is to be, the infant’s very cry is witness. From this cup of sorrow no one may be excused. The cup that Adam has pledged must be drunk” ([393] 1844, 103; it is good to keep in mind that in Augustine’s time there were a lot of slaves). Then, during the Renaissance, “[p]atrons made it possible for artist to work and develop new techniques. [...] The most famous patrons were the Medici family in Florence [...] who [...] supported artists like Michelangelo, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael” (Szalay 2016). It can be argued that the Renaissance idea of paid labor was not just toil, but, at least to some individuals, also a way to express oneself. In 1520, in the Holy Roman Empire, the founder of Protestantism Martin Luther proclaimed that all kinds of work can actually serve god, not just *spiritual works* by entering the priesthood or monastery. He claimed that the everyday peasant work can be more valuable for god than all the fasting of priest and monks; furthermore, it can be said that Luther made common tasks moral from milking cows to teaching children because those were helping the whole of society. Thus, Luther’s ideas reformed the idea of ordinary tasks by giving them dignity (in the framework of religion) (Ayers 2012). In the 18th century, Diderot describes in detail hundreds of different jobs in his famous *Encyclopedia*, e.g. the “baker”:

This profession, which today seems so vital, was unknown in ancient times [...] earliest bread had almost nothing in common with our own, either in its shape or consistency. It was almost like what we call biscuits or cakes, and flour, butter, eggs, fat, saffron and other ingredients were often added to it. It was not baked in an oven, but cooked on the warm hearth, on a grill, in a sort of pie dish. But even for this sort of bread, the wheat and other grains had to be made into flour. In all countries, slaves were always given this hard task, and any small mistakes they made were punished. (Diderot [1752] 2009)

Diderot's descriptions of work bring forth the great variety that can fall under the concept of *work*; also, the fact that how subjectively different experiences people have when they are *working*: the same work can be drudgery to some, and a pleasing for other. In the middle of 19th century, Karl Marx wrote about the alienating effects of work in the capitalistic framework. According to Marx, one form of alienation is when a money-shape of an object replaces the use-value of any given commodity; thus, “[w]hen they assume this money-shape, commodities strip off every trace of their natural use-value, and of the particular kind of labor to which they owe their creation, in order to transform themselves into the uniform, socially recognized incarnation of homogeneous human labor” (Marx [1867] 1887, 74). In other words, when commodities arrive at the market, labor also becomes commodified as something unified that can be bought. Moreover, what is left out is all the particular tasks that are involved in different kinds of work; therefore, the human ability to perform countless tasks with its body gets a price that is determined by the markets. Ultimately, for Marx, the products of someone's labor can meet them separated from themselves in the market relations, and the labor process itself is being reduced to the point of mere repetition, which adds to this alienating effect.

It can be said that Marx's emphasis on use and exchange value illustrates that a lot of the work that is harder to commodify is not seen as *productive* since it cannot be commodified per se, only in reference of keeping the '*capitalist*' system's production of things in perpetual output by maintaining the human beings as workers alive, such as *caring class work*: maintenance, nursing, garbage disposal and so on (Marx[1932] 1959, 74). In 1899, Thorstein Veblen published a book called *The Theory of the Leisure Class* in which he points out that, “[t]he upper classes are by custom exempt or excluded from industrial occupations, and are reserved for certain employments to which a degree of honor attaches” (Veblen [1899] 1922, 3). Veblen describes the life of the upper classes whose life does not anymore exist, at least not in the same fashion and social relations as in Victorian or Edwardian Era.

Nonetheless, Veblen paints a picture of those who are at the top of society by pointing out that, during those days, affluent classes wanted to display and show-off by various status symbols, and, more importantly, with how much leisure they had in their lives: “[T]he

characteristic feature of leisure class life is a conspicuous exemption from all useful employment” (Veblen [1899] 1922, 20). In other words, leisure from work was a status symbol, which, it can be argued, is not the case in the prevailing contemporary mode of thinking. Only a few decades later, Bertrand Russell wrote that, “[i]n America men often work long hours even when they are already well-off; such men, naturally are indignant at the idea of leisure for wage-earners except as the grim punishment of unemployment” (Russell 1932, 2). The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) questionnaire was developed during the second world war and was used to find ideal work for individuals. (Erve August 30, 2018). It can be argued that the ultimate aim of the test, and similar tests, was to find a job for everyone that would simultaneously be fulfilling and make money in order to survive in society (and maybe to make everyone to believe that the *true job of your life* is out there waiting). Whereas, as we all know, in Nazi concentration camp *Arbeit Macht Frei* was placed above the entrance of Auschwitz.

Thomas Piketty (2014, 172) states in his book *Capital in the 21st Century* that, “[f]or Jane Austen’s heroes, the question of work did not arise: all that mattered was the size of one’s fortune, whether acquired through inheritance or marriage.” Piketty uses a lot of references to literature to flesh and point out how economic awareness of work, inheritance, dividends and class has changed from the late 17th century to the 21st century; Piketty makes it clear that people (readers) used to be keenly aware of how much capital someone had to own in order to gain certain amounts of dividends that the authors of the novels like Honoré de Balzac could just mention the sum of their characters’ wealth, and the readers could determine their class status, and calculate in the heads the yearly income they got from their property (ibid.). Piketty emphasizes also that “Jane Austen’s heroes usually eschew any professions.”: he is acutely concerned whether the merits of education and work will remain to have the same meritocratic power in the future that they still have today.

Of course, discussion on work can be found in popular novels of present time; for example, Karl Ove Knausgård, in his book *Min kamp, sjette bok (My Struggle – Book Six)*, where he addresses the Heideggerian notion that we cannot fully prognosticate the things we set in motion, and he ties this with capitalism’s tendency to create workers:

And when capitalism got stronger and we needed help, did someone say that it was a good thing for a woman to leave home and start producing commodities, so that the production could be doubled? No. Women had to get all the same rights as men. The right to do work, what kind of right is that?” (Knausgård [2011] 2017, 219; my translation)

In relation to this, the article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the states:

(1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. (United Nations 1948)

It is interesting that work is described as a right, but clearly, it can be argued, a right with vested interests. Furthermore, and of course, the concept of a ‘right’ is debatable, and it is important to keep in mind: work as a right can be said to be a moral judgement, duty and outright order from a society.

As all the quotes in the previous paragraph show, the task in defining the word *work* is not simple, not only because it has many synonyms, but, also, many different connotations in multiple schools of thought: philosophies, religions, ideologies, economic schools and politics and so on forth. Therefore, it is important to further frame the word in what I will call a *commonsense mode*. Moreover, I would like to add that whenever I am using the word *work* I would like to put in quotations or italics, or both, because the word is insidiously elusive, thus, among other things, deceptive and misleading in a lot of instances; therefore, whenever the word *work* is used, it needs a defined backdrop, ideological framework or context, otherwise discussions on *work* render themselves to be lost in translations and misconceptions. Nevertheless, Lexico (Oxford’s) dictionary gives the word *work* the following definition:

1. Activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a purpose or result.
‘he was tired after a day’s work in the fields’
 - 1.1 Mental or physical activity as a means of earning income; employment.
‘I’m still looking for work’
 - 1.2 The place where one is employed.
‘I was returning home from work on a packed subway’
 - 1.3 The period of time one spends in paid employment.
‘he was going to the theatre after work’ (LEXICO, “Definition of Work.”)

This is only a minute part of the definition that also deals with the word’s other denotations, e.g. work can be a task or tasks, materials taken home, moral deeds done in religions, a thing(s) made as an outcome of an action, ‘a work of fiction’, the works as in oeuvre, work as a verb as being engaged in mental or physical tasks so that certain goals can be met, work in phrasal verbs: work something out and so forth (LEXICO, “Definition of Work”).

It is also important to bear in mind that work has many synonyms; therefore, those synonyms will be present in texts studied in this thesis. For instance, thesaurus.com lists

following synonyms for work as a noun in reference to labor: chore, effort, endeavor, industry, job, performance, production, struggle, task, trial, assignment, attempt, commission, drudge, drudgery, exertion, functioning, grind, grindstone, moil, muscle, obligation, pains, push, servitude, slogging, stint, stress, striving, sweat, toil, travail, trouble, and undertaking being in the list of “most relevant” (Thesaurus.com, “work”). Importantly, and interestingly, the same source lists also antonyms for work: fun, idleness, laziness, unemployment, entertainment, failure, loss and pastime (ibid.). It is crucial to discern the differences, similarities and paradoxes of these definitions, not only between themselves, but in reference to the quotes in the previous paragraph.

To further elaborate the matter, it is important to pay extra attention to work also purely as a construct, and its more colloquial synonym job and to the connotation of labor. In reference to this, Raymond Williams ([1976] 1977, 282; henceforth abbreviated as *K*) defines work to be the most common word to describe of doing something, but now work mainly means employment for a wage. Williams continues that work also means in the broader sense everyday action done at home for example: “We speak naturally of working in the garden. But, to take one significant example, an active woman, running a house and bringing up children, is distinguished from a woman who works: that is to say, takes paid employment” (ibid.) Furthermore, Williams writes that before the time of agriculture man did not work in the sense we perceive the word today; nowadays work means an action in relation to certain circumstances in society such as work as in wage, salary, work time: “being hired” (*K* 335). In other words, selling one’s body (and mind) as a biological entity for a certain period of time for money; moreover, when the body is sold, the “buyer” can demand certain repetitive tasks to be done, or tell to wear certain outfit, or to remain silent, or to say something specific – and the only way out are the (safe) words *I quit*: wage labor is prostitution if so defined.

Nonetheless, Williams observes the intriguing historical relationship between the words labor and work; according to Williams, “labor had a strong medieval sense of pain and toil; work, earlier, in one of its senses, had also the strong sense of toil” (*K* 282). Nevertheless, Williams states that toil and labor still have harsher connotations than work (ibid.). He continues that the capitalistic relations in society fixed the meaning of work to, “paid employment”; moreover, “to be in work or out of work” reveals in what way work is relational in society, and, it can be argued that it shows clearly the difference between the one who does work out of necessity for salary (worker), and, in comparison, the one that owns the means of the production (employer, manager) (ibid.). Thus, according to Williams, work is in this sense a relation: “social relationship” (ibid.). Moreover, interestingly, Williams, states that it is

precisely in this way that we can see why a parent that runs all the household chores and brings up the children does not do any work per se, and “can be said to be not working” (ibid.). In contrast to the time that is used doing work, the words such as free time, holiday and leisure or leisure-time are used to describe time spend without earning money from it, but quite often activities that are performed during leisure-time can demand great effort mentally or physically or both, but are not described as work (K 282–83). However, the word job, according to Williams, is mainly a colloquial term, and job has its origin in the 14th century: “certen Jobbes of woorke” meaning a piece of work, doing small occasional small ‘jobs of work’; nonetheless, nowadays job, regardless of its other connotations, means most commonly a position of being hired: employment (K 283). It is very important, and crucial, to discern what these words mean and how they are similar and distinct from each other:

Work is still centrally important, and in much everyday use means only labor or a job. But experience of every kind of work has quailed some of its more positive senses. Works, plural, is still neutral, but a work is relatively dignified. Labor, from its general sense of hard, difficult or painful work, became a term for a commodity and a class. As the latter it was adopted as a conscious term for a political movement which, among other things, asserted the dignity of labor. All these developments have interacted; many are still important. But running along at their base has been this short, colloquial and popular word job, with its significant practical range; the piece of work, the activity you get paid for, the thing you have to catch or to shift or to do, the ordinary working experience. (K284)

While there has been somewhat little interest on work in the domain of literary studies, especially studies that would concentrate solely on work itself, it is nonetheless clear that a lot of critical theory/cultural theory/literary studies do focus on certain aspects of work, such as ‘emancipation’ of women to the work force, discrimination of immigrants in search of work, racial division of work places, and so forth (it can be said that the concentration has been on work as a right). But these studies are seldom focused solely on work, albeit it is impossible to talk about work without some context; nonetheless, in this study I will try to place the concept of work itself to limelight, i.e. work as a value in itself. In any case, first and foremost I am seeking the definition(s) for the word *work*. And as stated many times throughout this paper, the word *work* comes with so many suppositions that are taken as a law of nature kind of concept without very little critical thinking; therefore, as Mari Lindman (2015, 8) states in her dissertation, “questions about work are treated [...] as clichés so that many problems in our relations to wage labor and the labor market remain untouched and even swept under the rug”; in relation to this, Lindman quotes sociologist P .D. Anthony (1977, 4): “Perhaps it is because work is so general and commonplace that we believe it to be a matter of common sense and general agreement; our assumptions about it are so basic that we do not even recognize them

as assumptions.” Indeed, those assumptions are in the crux of this paper; therefore, it is interesting and important to see how work can be defined as a word and what conclusions can be drawn from them.

2 George Orwell: *Down and out in Paris and London*

“But what is work and what is not work?”

– Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*

In *Down and out in Paris and London*, George Orwell describes his experiences of poverty in the 1920s, and especially what poverty does to a human being, and what kind of work it makes people do. Orwell worked as a plongeur (dishwasher) in a hotel kitchen in Paris, days were 10–14 hour long in a dirty, hot and noisy atmosphere: “I think one should start by saying that a PLONGEUR is one of the slaves of the modern world [...] he is no freer than if he were bought and sold; thus, his work is servile and without art; he is paid just enough to keep him alive” (Orwell 1933, 157; henceforth abbreviated as *DUPL*). In relation to this, Orwell goes through ideas why this might be the case: “People have a way of taking it for granted that all work is done for a sound purpose” (*DUPL* 158). Furthermore, according to Orwell, people tend to think that a lot of work is disagreeable, but necessary for the civilization; thus, it can be justified and tolerated (*DUPL* 158).

In this respect, Orwell considers his job as a plongeur by questioning its necessity; he claims that so called honest work is appreciated exactly because it is disagreeable and hard, and people, for some reason, have a fetish for ‘honest’ manual work (*DUPL* 158). Moreover, Orwell states that a plongeur’s job is by and large useless, along with many other jobs, given that work is measured on the scale of necessity; according to Orwell, a plongeur does work so that some can eat in expensive restaurants; thus, that work creates luxury that serves no real benefit but creates a lot of unnecessary work (*DUPL* 160). Orwell questions this by asking – putting aside the economic reasons for everyone involved – why anyone would want to see this kind of predicament to go on in society where people wash dishes all their lives. Moreover, Orwell states that there is people who find some pleasure in knowing that this is the case: “A slave, Marcus Gato said, should be working when he is not sleeping. It does not matter whether his work is needed or not, he must work, because work in itself is good – for slaves, at least” (*DUPL* 161). Orwell writes that this sentiment still lives during his day, and it has amassed “mountains of useless drudgery” (*DUPL* 161).

However, Orwell asserts that the cause for the continuation of useless work is, in the end, the fact that a lot of people fear the mob; according to Orwell, the mob is something so

animal-like and low that leisure for them would possess a great threat to the order of society in the imaginations of the upper echelons of the society (*DUPL* 161). In summary, Orwell maintains that his considerations are based on his experiences as a plongeur – nevertheless applies to many other jobs – but are devoid of any serious theories and detached economic questions. Nevertheless, Orwell compares the work of a plongeur to slavery, also to wasted slavery, i.e. a human being forced to earn his wage by doing unnecessary and “stupid” work and is kept in this situation in fear of their leisure (*DUPL* 164).

This investigation to the definition of *work* started with Orwell’s take on his first-hand experiences as plongeur in Paris. As it becomes clear, in his text *work* is a synonym for slavery; also, *work* has value in itself regardless of the outcome, purpose or impetus. Moreover, *work* has the aura of necessity that justifies it, even though it is seldom clear what are actually *real* necessities - and what are not. Furthermore, work is placed with describing words: useless, drudgery, slavery, stupid, without art, honest, necessity and so on. To sum up, Orwell clearly sees a lot of work to be plain slavery, especially in this particular situation, along with clear emphasis on questioning manual work’s socially existing self-evident value by describing the work in question as useless and waste done for unnecessary aims. Nevertheless, this is only one take that is questioning *work* from a certain vantage point. Therefore, this only serves as an example of the difficulties in defining *work*.

2.1 Writing from experience

George Orwell was an author and journalist who was keenly aware of politics, supported social justice and believed in democratic socialism. Nevertheless, he was extremely critical of socialist and communists, and was fervently against of all forms of totalitarianism. It can be argued that all Orwell’s major works are political, from his novels and books to many of his essays. Thus, it can be further argued that all of his writings deal with working, not necessarily directly, but implicitly, nonetheless. His most famous novels *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949) are analogies to totalitarian states; thus, the novels have strong emphasis on *work* – and especially on the division of work and work for status quo. Furthermore, interestingly, Orwell wrote in many of these books about the hatred he felt when *working* as an officer for the English empire that he felt was a massive crime. In addition to this, from all the authors analyzed in this thesis, Orwell had the most direct experience with war, death, poverty, manual labor and actually

worked in many different jobs. In any case, in order to further analyze how *work* can be defined by using Orwell's writings, I am concentrating on a non-fiction book *The Road to Wigan Pier*.

2.2 *The Road to Wigan Pier*

The Road to Wigan Pier was released in 1937 and it is Orwell's first-hand account on the poverty, working conditions and injustices that working-class people had to live under in dismal industrial cities of Lancashire and Yorkshire. The book is full of vivid descriptions of slums, bad housing, caravans, malnutrition, shame and rise of unemployment and the conditions where coal miner had to do their underpaid work. Second half of the book is more pertinent for this thesis because Orwell goes in depth to the question of work, and, also, automation, class distinctions and prejudices, authority, rise of fascism, mistakes of socialist and so forth.

Surprisingly, Orwell engages with the topic of *work* by criticism of socialists that purport the idea of fully mechanized future utopia where all the work would be done by machines. This, Orwell writes (he was a strong supporter of democratic socialism), is not an idea that is the main aim of socialists, but many people have this false image of simple progressive socialism, and this turns a lot of people against socialism/socialists. To elaborate, according to Orwell, socialists and communists do not understand working-class people's psychology and that leads them to overlook the vital aspects that many people identify with, e.g. nationality, religion, repulsion to hedonism and "a cheap conception of 'progress'" (Orwell 1937, 199; henceforth abbreviated as *RWP*) This in turn, Orwell writes, leads the masses to the hands of fascists that capitalize exactly by emphasizing those things that socialist leave out (*RWP* 175). In other words, a lot of working-class people fear the machines exactly because they threaten to take their livelihood (*work*) away; also, working class people do not see the benefit existing in supra national socialism, and they rather want to cling to their traditions. This is important to keep in mind, as mentioned time and time again, because it is impossible to define work without the context of any given ideological/political/economic backdrop: This is precisely at crux of this thesis and paramount in significance – since it can be asserted that nothing cannot be conceptualized in a vacuum.

To move forward, Orwell poses the important question of, "what is the function of the machine? Obviously its primary function is to save work" (*RWP* 178). Nevertheless, Orwell critiques techno-utopians who have not, in his mind, thought about the question of technology deeply enough; he writes that there exists people who think that if all the work would be done

by machines, people would go back to the good old ways of living like their grandfathers; on the other hand, he also refutes the idea that people only work in order to get leisure time and want to create a world completely freed from physical and mental pain, fear and the need of strength, in which he writes that Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) is a good parody of that kind of utopia of "little fat men" (*RWP* 180). In reference to this, and *work*, Orwell puts forward a Nietzschean idea that a lot of the qualities we admire in people only come forth when opposed to some obstacles to overcome that require "some kind of disaster, pain or difficulty." In reference to this, Orwell speculates rather sarcastically on H. G. Wells' techno-utopian views:

In books like *The Dream* and *Men Like Gods* it is assumed that such qualities as strength, courage, generosity, etc., will be kept alive because they are comely qualities and necessary attributes of a full human being. Presumably, for instance, the inhabitants of Utopia would create artificial dangers in order to exercise their courage, and do dumb-bell exercises to harden muscles which they would never be obliged to use. (*RWP* 180)

Interestingly, this has come into fruition in form of ubiquitous gyms of all kind and in the massive popularity of extreme sports. Maybe, to speculate, the aspect Orwell could not see during his time was that human beings need to use their bodies to get endorphins and so forth if physical labor is mostly obsolete, and some people need artificial dangers to fulfill their genetics' desires because work nowadays have very little danger left, or feats that require so called bravery (*RWP* 180). Orwell is not cheering for machine-utopias as a solution to human condition and problems in society; he is extremely skeptical of the idea of machine-slave world were all the work would be done by machines: He is not against machines per se, but only critics techno-utopians of thinking too little.

Orwell continues by restating that, "The function of the machine is to save work" (*RWP* 183). He adds that in a fully automatized world people would be free from all work leaving people to pursue other aims (*RWP* 183). But, Orwell is a little skeptical here, even though he says that it pains him to see group of men sweating and digging a hole that could be done by a machine in minutes, making the men free (*RWP* 183). But here Orwell poses the question – if the men are actually freed from work – "what else are they to do? [...] [s]upposedly they are set free [...] that they may do something which is not 'work'" (*RWP* 183). And precisely here the difficulty in defining *work* surfaces: "But what is work and what is not work?" (*RWP* 183). In the following lengthy quote that I find well justified because it presents the question of this thesis in its own style and eloquence, and I think it would lose a lot of its meaning in

paraphrases; nevertheless, Orwell starts to list various works/tasks/actions/jobs/professions etc. to make his point across:

Is it work to dig, to carpenter, to plant trees, to fell trees, to ride, to fish, to hunt, to feed chicken, to play the piano, to take photographs, to build a house, to cook, to sew, to trim hats, to mend motor-bicycles? All of these things are work to somebody, and all of them are play to somebody. There are in fact very few activities which cannot be classed either as work or play according as you choose to regard them. The laborer set free from digging may want to spend his leisure, or part of it, in playing a piano, while the professional pianist may be only too glad to get out and dig at the potato batch. Hence the antithesis between work, as something intolerably tedious, and not-work, as something desirable, is false. The truth is that when a human being is not eating, drinking, sleeping, making love, talking, playing games or merely lounging about – and these things will not fill up a lifetime – he needs work and usually looks for it, though he may not call it work [...] life has got to be lived largely in terms of effort. (*RWP* 183–84)

The quote is also vital in defining work – not only because it lays out very common arguments and counter arguments – but due to the fact that a great deal of the problems in defining *work* is, indeed, semantic, but also ideological (sociological & economical). What is *work* given that it can be simultaneously non-*work*? From where is this transition reached? To continue, Orwell entertains the idea of the ultimate aim of technological development that will lead, at some point in future, to the disappearing of *work*; furthermore, to quote Orwell: “Therefore the logical end of mechanical progress is to reduce the human being to something resembling a brain in a bottle” (*RWP* 187). Here, I think it is crucial to focus to the phenomenon of *work* that can ‘disappear’. What are the aspects in *work* that disappear due to technological developments? This is one of the questions that will be further analyzed later in this thesis.

In reference to the technological developments, Orwell further elaborates the Heideggerian notion that every invention leads to outcomes in the future that no-one, not even its creator can possibly foresee, i.e. it has its own momentum independent of any authority that could be totally in control of it. Orwell makes the point that people are but to work in service of the machine-economy, and he claims that machine produced articles decay taste, but, at the same time, create more and more demand (*RWP* 192). Moreover, Orwell brings forth the capitalist tendency to favor industrial product that can turn quick profit, thus many other products that would be useful or long-lasting would go against of the logic of the way the system functions (*RWP* 192). Orwell states that western people are born in so utterly mechanized world that inventing new apparatuses and improvements come almost on their own and are almost always aimed at making the work less laborious, but not necessarily obsolete: “Give a western man a job of work and he immediately begins devising a machine that would do it for him; give him a machine and he thinks of ways improving it” (*RWP* 191). In addition, Orwell describes

the way work itself and the workers themselves are not conscious of *work*'s aims, especially in the long run:

A chemist perfects a new method of synthesizing rubber, or a mechanic device a new pattern of gudgeon-pin. Why? Not for any clearly understood purpose, but simply from the impulse to invent and improve, which has now become instinctive. Put a pacifist to work in a bomb-factory and in two months he will be devising a new type of bomb. Hence the appearance of such diabolical things as poison gases, which are not expected even by their inventors to be beneficial to humanity. (*RWP* 192–93)

To return to the beginning of the book, Orwell writes from the point of view of the coal miners he is visiting; he claims that all similar work that is simultaneously considered necessary, i.e. keeping people alive, and awful, i.e. work that no one would want to do, and is often totally forgotten the same way as “we forget the blood in our veins” (*RWP* 30). In fact, necessary work that keeps human beings alive is clearly one way to define what is *work*: Work keeps the society functioning on its most fundamental level, as in this case, coal was extremely important in 1930 for the English society/economy; Orwell writes that pregnant women used to work in the mines, and he adds that:

If coal could not be produced without pregnant women dragging it to and fro, I fancy we should let them do it rather than deprive ourselves of coal. But most of the time, of course, we should prefer to forget that they were doing it. It is so with all types of manual work; it keeps us alive, and we are oblivious of its existence. (*RWP* 30)

It becomes rather clear how certain work is inherently and necessarily relational to the structure of society. Like Nietzsche, Orwell is not shy to compare certain work as “modern day slavery.”

2.3 Summary: Downplay of Necessary Work

According to Orwell, people tend to think all work is necessary for civilization, which justifies horrible jobs tolerable; furthermore, there exists a fetish for ‘honest’ work, precisely because it is disagreeable and hard. In other words, it can be argued that a lot of people have not thought about work beyond its common perception. Moreover, for Orwell, some work is modern slavery; it pays just enough to keep the worker sustained, and their lives are entirely defined and consumed by their drudgery. In relation to this, as stated by Orwell, unnecessary work often has its basis on class hierarchy that sees work as a value in itself, and this attitude has created “mountains of useless drudgery”. Furthermore, in the opinion of Orwell, work, as a modern-day slavery, is making people do unnecessary and “stupid” work because some fractions of

society afraid of the leisure for the masses: Fear of the mob. For Orwell, work functions also as a social relation for status quo; thus, it has been praised top down. According to Orwell, same action can be both leisure and work. In other words, the defining of the work is done subjectively and situationally.

As stated by Orwell, necessary work is often forgotten, i.e. it is not visible, people also want to forget it, e.g. keeping oneself alive, taking care of the household, raising children, maintenance and so on. In other words, all the work that is truly necessary for the functioning of society on a basic level is often forgotten, and the work done on top on that base is more visible, appreciated and considered 'real' work.

3 Hannah Arendt

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.
–Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*

Hannah Arendt's book *The Human Condition* (1958) is a lot more philosophical, and technical, than the works by Orwell, Russel or Graeber's analyzed in this thesis. Arendt's book has a strong emphasis on history, politics, philosophy, theory, ancient Greek thought and etymology. All these aspects make the book extremely interesting for defining *work* – and what entails *work* for Hannah Arendt.

Arendt uses the term *Vita Activa* to describe three central activities for human beings: “**labor, work and action**” (Arendt, [1958] 1998, 7; henceforth abbreviated as *VA*). These three terms are fundamental in Arendt's thinking because for her each of them responds to one of the basic ground tenets of life on earth for human beings (*VA* 7).

For Arendt, *labor* is equivalent to the biological process of the human body, e.g. growing of hair, beating of the heart, functions of the liver, metabolic reactions (and ultimately body's decay), which all are completely depended on the labor people have to do in order to survive. Therefore, for Arendt, labor simply equals life: “The human condition of labor is life itself” (*VA* 7). In other words, the processes in the body require nourishment that create needs like hunger and thirst that tell the human organism what needs to be done. Basically, labor, for Arendt, is functioning of the body itself, and the deeds human animal has to perform to, if possible, sustain it and procreate it. (Childbirth is also known as labor.) Therefore, it is clear in Arendt's thinking that labor is not work, they are by definition separated.

Work, on the other hand, is something that can be done when the labor process itself is guaranteed and has reach a level where it does not require a lot of time to keep the body functioning on its biological level (labor). This in turn makes it possible to work, and work for Arendt is “the activity which correspond to the unnaturalness of human existence” (*VA* 7). In other words, work is detached for the repetitive everyday circle of existence (labor); thus, by doing work, human beings can produce and build something that has the possibility to last a lot longer than any individual human being. Therefore, for Arendt, this “artificial’ world” that is

built by work is ‘unnatural’ in the sense that it creates its own realm that humans inhabit, which is distinctly different from nature (VA 7). In other words, work is all the infrastructure, books, movies, tables and anything that makes up the world of things that can last longer than any individual human lifespan(s), i.e. in short: civilization: “The human condition of work is worldliness” (VA 7).

To emphasize, the difference between *labor* and *work* is temporality; *labor* is referring to the biological processes and needs of the body that functions in constant repetitive cycles that will in end in death; whereas *work* refers to worlds (e.g. societies) build by human beings that last longer than any given one individual, and all individuals live in this “worldliness”, which has been, and will be there, before and after birth and death.

Lastly, the trinity is complete with *Action*. For Arendt, *action* is activity that happens between human beings in a way that there is no *labor* or *work* directly involved; moreover, *action* always happens between human beings in plural and, thus, it concerns specifically “the condition of plurality” (VA 8). In addition, Arendt states that *work* and *labor* are also related to politics, but *action* is the condition that is purely political (non-material), i.e. the condition of plurality is the essence among humans due to the fact that human beings are gregarious animal (VA 8). Furthermore, she adds that humans are the same in essence but different in the sense that all “models” are unique from another, and that is at the crux of the true plurality and *action* for Arendt (VA 8).

To sum up these ideas, in Arendt’s thinking, these above mentioned three words/concept refer to conditions that are closely related to the part of human existence that are most fundamental to it: “birth and death, natality and mortality” (VA 8). First concept, *labor* is the process that is life itself, not only in individual, but in the species as a whole (VA 8). Secondly, *work* and its outcomes, such as infrastructure and painting, give continuity to otherwise rather brief human lifespan (VA 8) Thirdly, *Action* organizes and maintains the political bodies, and, also, makes it possible to remember, record and, ultimately, create history (VA 8).

3.1 Ancient Greece: *Work* and Slavery

It is important for this thesis to pay attention to Arendt’s analysis of Greek thought in *The Human Condition* ([1958] 2002; henceforth abbreviated as *HC*) especially concerning work and the way in which it was viewed. Arendt writes that for Aristotle there existed three ways of living for the men that were considered free: what made these men *free* were the fact that

they were above of all the necessities of life (*HC* 12). Therefore, this freedom from necessities excluded all lifestyles that served being alive, i.e. work, being a slave, any kind of craftsman, or being a merchant etc. (*HC* 12). Moreover, Arendt states that all activities that were for the free men were concerned with “beautiful” (ibid.) ‘things’, i.e. actions or things that were not necessary for staying alive (as far removed from so called necessities/condition of existence: *labor & work*), or in any way useful as such, i.e. 1) a life spend in pleasures of the body in which beauty is just consumed for the sake of it; 2) a life that deals with the concerns of the “*polis*” (ibid.) where virtues that brought forth acts that were considered to be ‘beautiful’ in themselves; 3) thirdly, the life of a philosopher that has devoted his life to ponder eternal things - things that cannot be produced into existence per se, or changed by consumption (*HC* 12–13). In other words, in order to be considered free in Aristotle’s thinking, was to be free from work given that *work* refers to anything dealing even slightly with survival or necessities (labor and work), as mentioned before.

In relation to all this, Arendt defends her “unusual” dichotomy of *labor* and *work* on the basis of phenomenal evidence’s great gravity (*HC* 79) and to the etymological fact; according to Arendt, all the European languages from ancient times to this day have two different words from unrelated origins to describe the same activity. Arendt states examples of evidence in support her claim, and reason why she thinks this was not discovered earlier in political thinking or labor theories; for instance:

[. . .] 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 actual modern development so closely that the verb form of the word “work” has become rather obsolete. (*HC* 80–81)

In other words, *labor* is never ending process of life itself, i.e. it does not have finished products as such (only in so far as *product of labor*).

It is important to understand Arendt analysis of ancient Greek thought because it gives clear illustration of how *work* (in the general sense) has been defined in different historical epochs, and why work was considered the way it was in ancient times. Arendt writes that for Aristotle the worst kind of professions were those that wore down body the most (*HC* 104). She adds that, overall in ancient Greek thought, all the other occupations, even if they were praising them, were still following the logic that everything dealing with the necessities of life were slave-like; and, this is the reason why all the professions that were not counted as labor per se

were considered nevertheless as labor because they were involved in the process of producing the necessities of life somehow or another (*HC* 104).

A brief summary in order to clarify some key ideas. Arendt points out the presumption that Greeks considered all labor disgraceful because it was done by slaves is false because ancient Greeks thought that it is necessary to own slaves precisely because professions that produce all the necessities of life are slavish in nature (ontologically). Arendt argues that this was the ground on which slavery was justified because to do work meant that human being was enslaved by necessities (to paraphrase broadly, to emphasize a key point, it is important to understand the Greek thinking in this respect, for example Aristotle thought that you cannot call a laboring being *human*, but only after all possible necessities were provided, humans could exist free in pursuit of higher goals than mere slavish survival). In other words, following the Greek thought, the fact that human beings are born into a world without knowing why, and that they acknowledged that the totality of existence was using them in a process so vastly beyond human understanding that it would have been slavery two times over if individual human existence was used in labor or any form of work because the very existence itself was slavery in itself (extreme conditionality). Thus, and therefore, a title of *human* was only granted to those who had risen above all the necessities (as far it is possible; one still has to breathe and so forth); and, importantly for ancient Greeks, *human* beings could concentrate purely on matter that were considered *beautiful*. i.e. free from conditions to do things that are, or can be, means to an end themselves.

In order to grasp the idea of slavery in ancient Greek thought and society, Arendt delves into it with multifarious references. Arendt states that the debasement of slaves was considered to be worse than death because it meant that human beings were reduced into tamed animals (*HC* 104). Nevertheless, there was a crucially different reason why people had slaves than, for example, in Confederate States south because for Greeks it was not ‘exploiting’ the slave for economic profit, but it was an effort to try to eradicate the necessities from the lives of *human* beings, i.e. free citizens (*HC* 104). On the other hand, Arendt points out, Aristotle freed all his slaves on his death bed because he did not think that slaves were inhumane, but, simply, slaves could not be called as *human* beings as long as their existence was to take care of the necessities of life (*HC* 104). For example, Arendt gives an example of how Seneca replied to the complaints of slaves by saying: “If freedom is in your own hand, can anyone be a slave?” (*HC* 34). Although, Arendt continues, slaves in ancient Rome were mostly conquered people and only few were born a slave; in turn, in ancient Greece the slaves were mostly from the same nationality, and they showed their slavish nature, precisely, because they did not commit suicide

(HC 352). She adds that in ancient Greece the highest value in political lives was bravery and if slaves did not end their own lives, they were considered unfit as citizens (HC 352).

3.2 *Animal Laborans & Homo Faber*

As the term suggests (?), *animal laborans* refers to humanity (or mode of humanity, or groups/classes of humanity) as being in the mode of *labor*, i.e. dealing with perpetual cycle of necessities. Furthermore, *labor* is distinctly unfree, and closest to necessities, thus least *human*, in the sense that labor is most animal like intimately linked with the needs of biology/nature (ultimately existence). Also, labor is helpful to see as private, e.g. bodily functions.

In comparison, *Homo faber* is the builder/worker (architects, artists, legislators, etc.) of things: Both physical (infrastructure etc.) and cultural (laws etc.). *Work* is clearly different from labor, e.g. work has certain degree of freedom because it is *built* on labor (i.e. work is free from certain necessities), work is specific to homo sapiens in creating a distinctly human “world” that has temporality beyond individual biology. Also, work is, in contrast to labor, public in so far as it *builds* the common “world” that brings humans together but also separates them. Work makes it possible for politics to emerge.

As it becomes clear, with these distinctions between *labor & work / animal laborans & homo faber*, Arendt wants to make a clear distinction with the aforementioned *labor* and *work*. She is concerned that work has become labor; therefore, we consume products of work as they were, for example, food. Furthermore, Arendt is concerned that politics have become primarily about labor (economic growth) – not action, or work. This in turn, according to Arendt, has made the rationale of the way we live to be the *logic* of animal laborans and therefore we have forgotten all the higher activities. In other words, according to Arendt, we have the ability to free ourselves from most of labor (necessities), but, instead, we do not anymore remember what is beyond necessities. (HC 15). Moreover, and interestingly, Arendt also states that all stratum of societies (from presidents and kings to prime ministers) think about their profession through the lenses of labor as socially necessary; thus, and also, all the intelligentsia see their jobs, ultimately, as a way to earn a living, not as work. (HC 16). Hence, and paradoxically, Arendt states that we live in a world of labor, but there is very little real labor to be done. (HC 16). In other words, we have directed our energy to the repetitive cycle of producing artificial necessities (shoes, toothbrushes, shirts, cars and so on; moreover, we need adds to keep this going).

Consequently, Arendt claims that Adam Smith and Karl Marx were not careful enough in their views on work (labor theory of value) that has played a part and has led to the modern predicament where all work is seen from the state of *animal laborans*, i.e. work has become first and foremost concerned with the repetitive process reminiscent of the biological process. (HC 128). All this, in turn, according to Arendt, has caused that even all the products of *homo faber* are used like they were not made to last but to be consumed, e.g. she states that a chair or a table is used almost like a jacket, and jacket is used in similar fashion like food (ibid.). In addition, Arendt claims that industrial revolution has replaced all *work* with *labor* (ibid.). This is the reason why Arendt writes that modern things produced have become the results of *labor*, which are to be consumed, not to be taken as something to be used (till they wear out); thus, the aspect of *homo faber* is diminished as a creator of permanence in favor of constant *animal laborans* behavior of fast consuming and producing and consuming and so on (HC 129). Arendt argues that modernization in industry, the division of work, the ever-increasing pace of machine production has created a situation in which *work* simply has taken the characteristic of *labor*; thus, the efficiency of modern production turns things into consumer goods simply by the sheer abundance of them:

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. (HC 125–26)

Thus, it is important to reiterate Arendt's notion that *work* and *labor* have now become the same thing in modern times, and this, according to Arendt was, exactly the error in Marx and Smith's thinking as work being considered the sole source of value, since they failed to make the distinction of *labor* and *work*. Therefore, Arendt asserts that what was seen as the virtue in the mode of *homo faber* – permanence, stability and durability – is now sacrificed at the altar of abundance, i.e. to the wants and mode of *animal laborans* necessity of repetitive consumption (HC 131).

In reference to this, Arendt notes that it is often said that we live in a society of consumers, and that she has shown that *labor* and consumption are the two sides of the same

coin, to which human being are forever tied to because of the necessities of human animal's perpetual needs; Arendt observes that this is just another way of saying that we live nowadays in a society of *laborers* (HC 131). Arendt continues that this has led to a situation where life is almost completely lived by in order to acquire the means of subsistence (ibid.). This in turn, Arendt argues, had created a situation that there is less and less people who question this assumption. i.e. *animal laborans* laboring/working for working's sake in order to create consumable things (ibid.).

Importantly, for this thesis, Arendt notes that is almost ubiquitous in modern theories of work/labor that they define work in opposition of play; thus, she claims that all the so called serious activities are now called *laboring* regardless of what is been actually produced. (ibid.). Thus, put differently, *homo faber* cannot anymore appear as a sole worker even as an artist because it would be consider to be mere play in the eyes of the economic logic of modern industrial production that is based on the human condition as *animal laborans*; furthermore, Arendt tries to point out that these are the reasons why the society has become a society of *laboring* and consumerism; furthermore, this has degraded *homo faber*'s 'works' to be, in many cases, just mere useless play that produces trivialities.

In addition, Arendt expresses her concerns and claims that the leisure time of *animal laborans* is always centered around consumption; she adds that the more *animal laborans* has the more they want. (2002, 136). In other words, in the modern consumeristic societies laboring human beings develop increased levels of what is viewed satisfactory standards of living, and then they go beyond the limit what those necessities are, and then they reach a limit where there must be always more and more new things to consume that end up, ultimately, threatening the ecological balance of nature. (2002, 136). To phrase it differently, even the so-called leisure time is exactly similar to the laboring time, i.e. the process of production and consumption are integrally one and the same process, thus it is, according to Arendt, a mode of living as *animal laborans*. (ibid.). Importantly, for this thesis, is it crucial to notice how Arendt uses the distinction of *labor* and *work* to explain what work (in the general sense) has become in the modern society. To elaborate, the produce of work is not meant to last per se, but to be consumed exactly the way food has always been consumed due to the necessity of human biology; in addition, the difference is that even the things that were considered in ancient times to be above necessities are also now seen as and treated as 'food' to be just consumed.

3.3 Summary: Laboring Society

To sum up the aim takes from the analysis, Arendt, basically divides the *work* (in its common usage) into three distinct categories: labor, work and action (*vita activa*). Arendt defines *labor* (*homo laborans*) to be the perpetual and repetitive process of biology that requires daily care; to put it bluntly, *labor* is biology and it is private (inside the body). In other words, for Arendt, labor is the process that is completely embedded and subjugated in necessities (nature) (the human condition of labor is life itself).

According to Arendt, *work* (*homo faber*) is performed when the needs of the biology are met sufficiently; *work*, for Arendt is the human capacity to be able to build a distinctly different ‘human world’ from nature that outlasts any given one individual’s lifespan (work is outside of human body). For Arendt, to put it simply, *work* is building things that are meant to last, also things of culture like painting, statues and architecture (the human condition of work is worldliness).

Action, on the other hand, is the most intangible mode of human existence, that is the most far ‘removed’ from all biological necessities of human biology and nature. Furthermore, Arendt defines *action* to be the mode of plurality (human are gregarious animals) where politics, communication, memory, history and the ‘highest’, ‘non-material’ activity happens in the sense that *action* does not produce anything consumable as such (the human condition of action is plurality).

Moreover, Arendt claims that the mode of *labor* has taken over the logic of societies where a lot of *work* has been degraded into producing consumable goods mimicking the biological process. According to Arendt the problem of the modern world is that *work* has become *labor*. In other words, value is only seen in *labor* like processes where something consumable/sellable is produced, and this has made most professions of *work* that create something lasting into dire straits economically. As Arendt puts it, only few real *workers* are left in society like different kind of artists that might survive as *workers*.

As claimed by Arendt, for ancient Greeks freedom is being as far removed from necessities as possible (both labor and work) in order to be able to pursue higher aims; thus, slaves were used to free some classes from necessities (not to extract surplus labor). Arendt further claims that the labor theory of value created a one-dimensional picture of value, i.e. value was mainly seen in the surplus labor as in commodities, and in the repetitive process itself.

4 Bertrand Russell

What is work? Work is of two kinds: first, altering the position of matter at or near the earth's surface relatively to other such matter; second, telling other people to do so. The first kind is unpleasant and ill paid; the second is pleasant and highly paid.
–Bertrand Russell, *In Praise of Idleness*

In 1899, the sociologist Thorstein Veblen published a book *The Theory of the Leisure Class* in which he describes how the affluent class was displaying their wealth by being publicly idle-rich, free and leisurely; this was indeed still true at the time of the book was published, although the old aristocratic way of life was about to disappear (and it largely did during the first world war) (Piketty 2014, 80). Nonetheless, Veblen writes that, “the characteristic feature of the rich is a conspicuous exemption from useful employment” (Veblen [1899] 1922, 40). In reference to this, Bertrand Russell was born in 1872 into an aristocratic family, and he knew exactly what Veblen was arguing about in his theory of the opulent.

During his lifetime, Russell was a prominent figure in mathematics, logics and in philosophy, and he wrote extensively about politics, morals, social order, education, religion, science, war and so on. His *In Praise of Idleness* was published in 1932, which is important to note since the aristocratic idleness of the 19th century had effectively already come to an end. (Russell, 1932; henceforth abbreviated as *PI*).

Russell starts his essay by stating that, “Like the most of my generation, I was brought up on the saying: ‘Satan finds some mischief for idle hands to do’” (*PI* 1). Russell writes that because he was an obedient child that believed everything he was told, thus he “acquired a conscience” that has made him a hardworking man all his life (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, Russell states, that regardless of the fact that his conscience has dictated his action throughout his life, he has experience “a revolution” in his opinion toward work (*ibid.*). Russell claims that, “in all seriousness, [...] a great deal of harm is being done in the modern world by belief in the virtuousness of work, and that the road to happiness and prosperity lies in an organized diminution of work” (*ibid.*). Importantly for this thesis, Russell asks, “What is work?” (*ibid.*). Russell states that there is work of two kinds: the first one is mostly dealing with the arrangement of matter close to the surface of the earth; the second kind of work, according to Russell, is done by managers, directors, executives and so on whose work is to give orders how to do the work (*ibid.*). Furthermore, then there exists those who supervise the ones that give

orders, and they tell what kind of instructions should be told to the workers (ibid.). In other words, Russell is simply describing a hierarchy where the more useful your actual task is, the less you are likely to get paid, and vice versa. Russell also claims that from the group of managers (in broad respect) eventually arises politics, in the sense that the higher you climb in the hierarchy, the less they actually do of the work that is done by the first/base group of workers (ibid.). Although, Russell adds, the highest stratum of the manager class possess an art of, “persuasive speaking and writing, i.e. advertising” (ibid.).

In reference to this, Russell suggests that in Europe exists, indeed, a third class of people that is considerably more respected than the other two that are situated below the highest stratum; this class is able to live life without really working themselves but use and need others to attain and maintain their freedoms and affluence (ibid.). Furthermore, Russell maintains that this third group of people are also the ones that praise the “gospel of work” to other classes of society in order to keep the status quo (ibid.). As stated by Russell, this third class, e.g. owner of large estates and lands, capital, and ‘means of production’ is only capable of supporting their affluent lifestyles with the work of others (ibid.).

Importantly, Russell asserts that, “[f]rom the beginning of civilization until the Industrial Revolution, a man could, as a rule, produce by hard work little more than was required for the subsistence of himself and his family (ibid.). Russell continues by explaining the situation of workers in ancient times, to feudalism and to the above-mentioned Industrial Revolution. He argues that the way people were indoctrinated to see work as a duty, honorable and in a way desirable was due to the fact the rules of the past implemented it in various different forms; thus, the same ethos is transferred to the modern age which is a calamity because the technological developments could provide more leisure time for everyone – not just the few (ibid.). To emphasize, Russell adds that, “[t]he morality of work is the morality of slaves, and the modern world has no need of slavery” (ibid.). Furthermore, Russell claims that in the course of history many of the ruling classes induced peasants and others to work hard in order to produce surplus that could then be used to maintain others in idleness, especially from work concerning necessities (ibid.). Therefore, argues Russell that, “[t]he conception of duty, speaking historically, has been a means used by the holders of power to induce others to live for the interest of their masters rather than for their own” (ibid.). Interestingly, Russell proclaims that the classes in power also believed this arrangement to be in accordance with the overall interests of humanity (ibid.). Nonetheless, in history, writes Russell, many have worked so that few can have leisure (ibid.). Pertaining to this, Russell writes:

Athenian slave-owners, for instance, employed part of their leisure in making permanent contributions to civilization which would have been impossible under a just economic system. Leisure is essential to civilization, and in former times leisure for the few was only rendered possible by the labors of the many. But their labors were not valuable, not because work is good, but because leisure is good. And with modern technique it would be possible to distribute leisure justly without injury to civilization. (ibid.)

Russel upholds that modern technology has transformed the dynamics of civilization to a point in which the laboring hours could be drastically diminished without causing any problems to provide all the necessities to everyone (ibid.). As part of this claim, Russell provides an example from the time of the war when the whole society was structured to serve the military effort: men were at the trenches, men and women were working to produce weapons, spying, making war propaganda; most of these workers were taken from the productive sector (ibid.) Also, Russell claims that the war time was the best time then and since for the well-being of the average worker (in England) (ibid.). Moreover, Russell stresses that the war made it clear that the scientifically structured society and production can maintain modern masses in fair ease and comfort with only fraction of, “the working capacity of the modern world” (ibid.). Furthermore, Russell predicts that if the working arrangements, logistics and relations would have been kept the same after the war ended, reduction of working hours to four would have been easy to achieve, however everything returned to the old state were others were over working and other were starving and unemployed (ibid.). Russel states: “Why? Because work is a duty, and a man should not receive wages in proportion to what he has produced, but in proportion to his virtue as exemplified by his industry” (ibid.).

As it has become clear, it is virtually impossible to talk about work without using the word *slave*; the word is strongly present in all of the author’s text analyzed in this thesis; thus, the next paragraph is continuation of this. In regard to this, Russel writes that, “the morality of the Slave State” is not used in a situation that is completely different from the circumstances from which it arose in history; this has led to a disaster in which some people work long hours and some only have leisure (in punishment) which is, according to Russell, “insane” because the same amount of produce could be done by diminishing the work hours of some in order to give work to others, this in turn would provide work and leisure to all (ibid.). In reference to this, Russell states:

But in the actual world this would be thought demoralizing. The men still work eight hours [...] There is in the end, just as much leisure as on the other plan, but half the are totally idle while half are still overworked. In this way, it is insured that the unavoidable leisure shall cause misery all round instead of being a universal source of happiness. Can anything more insane be imagined? (ibid.)

Proceeding from paragraph above, according to Russell, he addresses a phenomenon that the rich have always been shocked if poor have leisure time (ibid.). He continues by stating the fact that in England it was common to work fifteen hours for men, and children sometimes did the same, although commonly twelve hours; when the working days were voiced to be rather long there was a suggestion that work is beneficial for the poor because it keeps adults from the bottle and children from waywardness (ibid.).

Coming from his own experiences, Russell writes that he remembers the time when working men got the right to vote and were given holidays by law, he heard old Duchess say: “What do the poor want with holidays? They ought to work” (ibid.). Russell argues that the similar argument still lives on and causes a lot of confusion in economic matters (ibid.). In reference to this, Russell argues for smart use of free time, he wants to admit, is an outcome of civilization (*PI 2*). Nevertheless, Russell explain a point that human beings who have worked all their lives will become bored if they are suddenly freed from work; on the other hand, he maintains that a “considerable amount” of free time is needed for human beings in order receive “many of the best things” in life (ibid.). He continues that the reasons why the “bulk” of people are made to work so many hours do not exist anymore: “only a foolish deprivation, usually vicarious, makes us continue to insist on work in excessive quantities now that the need no longer exists” (ibid.).

4.1 ‘Dignity of Labor’

According to Russell, the new state “creed” that was in control of the government in Russia was at Russell’s time somewhat different from the other states in the west, but, interestingly, some things remained quite the same, especially, Russell mentions, the rule and attitude of the highest classes of the soviet society that orchestrate the same propaganda for working class people as in the west (*PI 2*). Russell states that:

[T]he dignity of labor, is almost exactly that which the governing classes of the world have always preached to what were called the ‘honest’ poor’. Industry, sobriety, willingness to work long hours for distant advantages, even submissiveness to authority, all these reappear; moreover, authority still represents the will of the Ruler of the Universe, Who, however, is now called by a new name, Dialectical Materialism. (ibid.)

In other words, Russell sees no clear difference in the ideological framework of any ruling class, whether it is soviet, feudal, Roman or capitalist democracy, when it comes to work, work

is always being promoted the same way top down. Russell continues by stating in reference to the idealization of work in soviet Russia that:

For ages the rich and their sycophants have written in praise of “honest toil,” have praised the simple life, have professed a religion which teaches that the poor are much more likely to go to heaven than the rich, and in general have tried to make manual workers believe that there is some special nobility about altering the position of matter in space [...] In Russia all this teaching about the excellence of manual work has been taken seriously, with the result that the manual worker is more honored than anyone else. What are, in essence, revivalist appeals are made to secure shock workers for special tasks. Manual work is the ideal which is held before the young, and is the basis of all ethical teaching. (ibid.)

The quote illustrates well what Russell is trying to argue; in other words, that work has always been ‘preached’ as a moral value, “the basis of all ethical teaching” in all the cultures throughout the history, and that it has always been done by the upper stratum of society to the most populous class: to the so called working class (ibid.). Therefore, and in this light, it could be argued that Russell sees work also as something that is used to maintain the relations between certain groups in society, thus work is not purely done for work’s sake because it, at all times, subjugates its performer to the ruling classes of society. Therefore, it could be argued that work is a moral value, even if the work has no real-life value, in the sense other than maintaining social order.

Considering that the essay was written in the 1930s, Russell foresaw the developments in Soviet Russia when he wonders about the future state of the proletarian paradise after all the necessary work and required sacrifice has been done to achieve it; Russell postulates that, “it seems more likely that they will find continually fresh schemes” (ibid.). In reference to the soviet system, Russell states that this kind of outlook on work, “will be the result of regarding the virtue of hard work as end in itself”, and not a way to do away with hard labor (ibid.). In regards to Russell’s remarks, he writes that “the fact is that moving matter about [...] is emphatically not one of the ends of human life” (PI 3); he goes on by stating that if this were so all the excavating machines would invariably be considered higher in value than Shakespeare (ibid.) In addition to the above-mentioned points, Russell ties all this to two factors that are needed to keep “the poor contented” (which is the first factor), which is done by preaching “the dignity of labor” (ibid.), that is done, in turn, in order to keep the rich “undignified” in this respect to maintain the social stratum in place (ibid.).

Furthermore, Russell states that this has been the case already thousands of years (ibid.). In other words, Russell is conveying the aspect of work that serves the relations and domination of society by making work appear a moral value, which is something good, already, in itself, regardless of the outcome or ultimate aims since the purpose of work, among other things, is to

preserve the status quo. Furthermore, the second factor, according to Russell, is the fascination with technology that allow humans to revel in wonder how it can change the “earth’s surface”. (ibid.). Nevertheless, Russell states that neither of these two aspects do not actually appeal to the average worker; he continues by making a witty example of the illogical nature of the whole situation for an average worker:

If you ask him what he thinks the part of this life, he is not likely to say: 'I enjoy manual work because it makes me feel that I am fulfilling man's noblest task, and because I like to think how much man can transform his planet. It is true that my body demands periods of rest, which I have to fill in as best I may, but I am never so happy as when the morning comes and I can return to the toil from which my contentment springs. (3)

Russel continues by stating that he has never heard any working man actually say this kind of statement, and he concludes that work is considered by the working class a necessary means to get enough money to survive (ibid.)

4.2 Four-Hour Workday

In the following, Russell address a common point of view that somehow people would not know what to do if they only had to work four hours per day; Russell writes that if this is the case, it is the fault of the modern civilization, and that it would not have been true in previous times (*PI* 3). Russell says that the “cult of efficiency” has invaded more and more the human psyche, and this has led to a situation where everything is done *for* something:

Serious-minded persons, for example, are continually condemning the habit of going to the cinema, and telling us that it leads the young into crime. But all the work that goes to producing a cinema is respectable, because it is work, and because it brings a money profit. The notion that the desirable activities are those that bring a profit has made everything topsy-turvy. The butcher who provides you with meat and the baker who provides you with bread are praiseworthy because they are making money but when you enjoy the food they have provided you are merely frivolous, unless you eat only to get strength for your work. Broadly speaking, it is held that getting money is good and spending money is bad. (ibid.)

Russell returns to his suggestion of four-hour working day by making clear that he is not implying that all the remain time should be used in mere frivolities, but that four hours of work should be enough to provide adequate amount of money for basic needs and comforts (ibid.). Also, Russell adds that this would probably lead to more varied social life that would be more active, instead of passive leisure that has emerged in urban working force.

One of the many key aspects of discussion in this paper have been *class*; Russell makes a strong case against the “small leisure class” that lives on the shoulders of the “larger working

class” by stating that there is no “basis in social justice” for this arrangement in society (ibid.). In addition, Russell claims that theories were needed to be created to justify this unfair arrangement (ibid.). Interestingly, Russell gives credit to the leisure classes of the past, for

in spite of this drawback it contributed nearly the whole of what we call civilization. It cultivated the arts and discovered the sciences; it wrote the book, invented the philosophies, and refined the social relations. Even the liberation of the oppressed has usually been inaugurated from above. Without the leisure class, mankind would never have emerged from barbarism. (ibid.)

Nevertheless, Russell states that the existence of the leisure class was incredibly “wasteful”; According to Russell, this class was never organized to do anything useful as such, and the class as a group of people was not “exceptionally intelligent” (ibid.). For example, Russell poignantly writes that, “[t]he class might have produced one Darwin, but against him had to be set tens of thousands of country gentlemen who never thought of anything more intelligent than fox-hunting and punishing poachers” (ibid.). In comparison, and interestingly, Russell claims that the university system is a great improvement to this, but he argues that “university life” is too divorced from everyday life and problems that it loses itself in itself. Interestingly enough, Graeber argues similarly pertaining universities almost ninety year later. Graeber states that,

academic concerns should be relevant to people’s lives [...] much intellectual debate [has turned] into a kind of parody [...] with everyone trying to reduce each other’s argument into ridiculous caricatures [...] the debate is usually taking place in language so arcane that no one who could not afford seven years of grad school would have any way of knowing the debate was going on. (REF... ???) (3)

In relation to this, Russell returns to the idea of four day working day by stating that every person could have enough energy and time to pursue personal aims that would lead to the benefit of the society (PI 3). Also, and a key notion in this paper, Russell sums up by stating that all the modern developments in the means of production would allow people to have four-hour workdays, but that, “we have chosen, instead, to have overwork for some and starvation for others. Hitherto we have continued to be as energetic as we were before there were machines; in this we have been foolish, but there is no reason to go on being foolish forever” (ibid.).

4.3 Summary: In Defense of Leisure

According to Russell, work is a belief, moral value, a cult like social structure, praised top down for status quo. Furthermore, as state by Russell, the *dignity of labor* and the belief in the

virtuousness of work has caused a lot of harm to humanity. And this is done, as maintained by Russell, by the upper echelons of society, and they that they believe that their view is beneficial to all of humanity; according to the top down logic work, as a 'value' in itself, is good for morality, virtuous and good for life.

For Russell, there exists essentially two kinds of work; the work that is done by someone, and then the job of the boss, but there exist higher stratum in society that live off on this work in affluence that has no basis in social justice. Also, the further away a person gets from the task to be done at the most rudimentary level, the more likely they are higher and higher in the management of work, e.g. politician (essentially managers of work). Moreover, for Russell, there exists three crudely three classes: workers, managers and owners, which all see work from their own perspective.

As claimed by Russell, work is an end in itself; thus, for example, technological developments have not reduced working hours: there is endless fresh schemes to keep people working. This ties into Russell's statement about modern slavery (slave state): "Morality of work is morality of slaves, and the modern world has no need of slavery." (REF...???)

Russell argues that workdays could be easily reduced to four-hours, and that leisure is essential for the progress for humanity. In other words, given more freedom, people could actually have more time to produce new invention, ideas, art, etc. that would take humanity to the next step.

5 David Graeber

We have become a civilization based on work – not even “productive work,” but work as an end and meaning in itself.
– David Graeber, *Bullshit Jobs*

To make a summary of Graeber’s book is self-evidently doomed to be a caricature of sorts, and I am doing one in order to suit the purpose of this thesis. I start by arguing the rather obvious that Graeber is making an overall case against a social concept that has a lot of (collective baggage) unconscious aspects and weight: that concept is of course *work*. Graeber’s main aim is to address the unprecedented increase in the phenomenon of pointless jobs: work that is so clearly useless, or even “pernicious” that there exists no justification for its existence even in the minds of the job holder, but, nonetheless, many feel obliged to act that it would not be the case - and this *act* is, precisely, written in between the lines of the employment contract.

Graeber addresses the importance of subjective accounts when forming his arguments; thus, he is backing up his claims of pointless work by analyzing a large body (corpus) of replies to his 2013 article “On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs” published in the magazine *Strike!* Graeber lists five common types of pointless tasks from the study of the corpus: “flunkies, goons, duct tapers, box tickers, and taskmasters”: 1) Flunkies: similar to feudal serfs, e.g. making someone appear or feel important. 2) Goons: e.g. telemarketer, i.e. hired to e.g. sell aggressively. 3) Duct tapers: e.g. fix or clean after someone making an unnecessary mess or unfinished job/product/etc. 4) Box tickers: an organization can claim to be doing something that they actually are not. 5) Taskmasters: “opposite of flunkies: unnecessary superior, e.g. middle management (Graeber 2013, 28). Graeber gives a lot space of the book to make his arguments with the replies he received and builds his arguments around them. In the following, I summarize the main arguments of the book.

Graeber claims that most of the common believes of human motivation are false; he writes about cases in which people with well-paid jobs that are totally meaningless actually drive many people into despair and depression. In relation to this phenomenon, Graeber mentions the persistent false believe, that is very much alive in certain groups of society, that if people are not ‘incentivized’ to work, most of them would simply do nothing. In similar vein, Graeber writes about a presupposition of why someone should be considered happy to get paid and do nothing at work; this Graeber assumes is due to the old ideas of “economic man,” which

is the idea of human being as a walking calculator that only and constantly assesses outcomes of effort and resources; Graeber says that the simplicity of the idea makes it seem believable, but in reality, human motivations are way more complex. In relation to this, Graeber maintains that the problem is that public discourse takes the ‘economic man’ as a given fact; when in truth, human beings want to do something useful and meaningful, and this is already due to the gregarious nature of human beings. Also, that the underlying need to pretend to work, Graeber points out, is extremely detrimental to human well-being.

As an anarchist, Graeber is vocally against all kinds of bastions of concentrated power: public or private; thus, it can be said that he has no leanings to the left or to the right for that matter. He points out that all the economies in the world are in varying degree mixed economies: markets, public and private sectors, social security infrastructure and so on. Nonetheless, Graeber claims that there exists firm believe in ‘free markets’, e.g. if someone is rich, it is because the ‘free markets’, if someone is poor, it is because of government intervention: this argumentation is of course circular, thus it is based on faith. But the real problem for Graeber is that, since the fall of the soviet bloc (where work was a right and a sacred duty, and it was created for the sake of it), those who have blind faith to the ‘free markets’ are unable to see how the current economic system also creates plethora of unnecessary jobs, and these are not in the public sector only, but in increasing numbers in the private sector. Furthermore, Graeber adds that the private sector’s pointless work is more supervised than in the public sector.

Quite similarly, the same dynamic/dichotomy of public and private, left and right surfaces many times in the book in varying ways. For example, Graeber writes about an imaginary protest where left-wing shouts for more jobs, and right-wingers are on the sides yelling: “Get a job!” Interestingly, in relation to this, Graeber points out that it is extremely common to hear ‘rights-scolding’ (making someone feel bad if they dare to expect anything from life) directed to the young from both left and right, especially in the United States.

Graeber concentrates a lot on the psychological aspects of meaningless work; he writes that these kinds of jobs are essentially violence against the human existence that cause all kinds of mental (and physical) problems.

Graeber makes an important point that is the correlation that the more useful the work, the less it pays: this can be seen virtually everywhere, e.g. nurses v. middle-management. In addition, this ties into one of the big claims of the book, which is in turn tied into a misconception of working class as a concept. According to Graeber; when we think of working class, we see factory workers, when in fact the number of workers in factories have always been

relatively small compared to all the other professions: cooks, barbers, cashiers, maids, clerks, nurses, teachers and so forth. Furthermore, Graeber strongly emphasizes the misleading effect of the nowadays ubiquitous term “service economy”; that the term gives an impression that there is something called a service sector that is the basis of the economy in which everyone is serving each other “iced lattes or pressing one another’s shorts” (Graeber [2018] 2019, 148; henceforth abbreviated as *BJ*). Graeber uses the graph below to illustrate the misconception people tend to have about what consists the service sector, i.e. roughly 20 percent of service jobs are salesclerks, waiters, barbers and so forth, and the rest 80 percent of the “service” jobs are actually something that can be called *information work*: consultants, IT professionals, administrators, clerical and accounting staff and so on (see figures 1 and 2). As it become clear, the service sector employs around 80% of the work force in France and United States and in western countries (and the service sector is also biggest sector in places like India with 59 percent) (*BJ* 148). But, and most importantly, Graeber wants to divide the service sector in two (information and services) in order to make it represent the reality of the situation more accurately. Therefore, Graeber wants to emphasize that there exists a huge collective misconception of the “service economy.”

Furthermore, Graeber writes that, precisely, the *information* part of the “service economy” has been increasing drastically from the 1950s onwards; and, the information jobs are exactly those where the most pointless and meaningless jobs exist, and increasingly proliferate. (See figures 1 and 2.)

Graeber addresses the role of governments in the creation of unnecessary jobs; he is rather on his toes and want to make clear that there is nothing controversial in saying that social engineering exists, and that it is widely agreed that in Communist Russia and China had full employment policies. Furthermore, Graeber connects this with the current, rather ostensible, aim of job creation, when in fact, Graeber says, and refers to Marx, that no one really wants to achieve full employment since it would too much pressure on wages. Nonetheless, Graeber reiterates the notion that left and right can always agree on one thing: More jobs. In addition, the difference is mainly that of how to achieve this, and it is seldom discussed weather these jobs are for any useful or meaningful aim.

(% of total employment)	France			United States		
	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Services	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Services
1800	64%	22%	14%	68%	18%	13%
1900	43%	29%	28%	41%	28%	31%
1950	32%	33%	35%	14%	33%	50%
2012	3%	21%	76%	2%	18%	80%

In 2012, agriculture made 3% of total employment in France, vs. 21% in manufacturing and 76% in the services.
Construction - 7% of employment in France and the U.S. in 2012 - was included in manufacturing.

Sources: see piketty.pse.ens.fr/capital21c.

Figure 1 (Piketty 2014, “Table 2.4”)

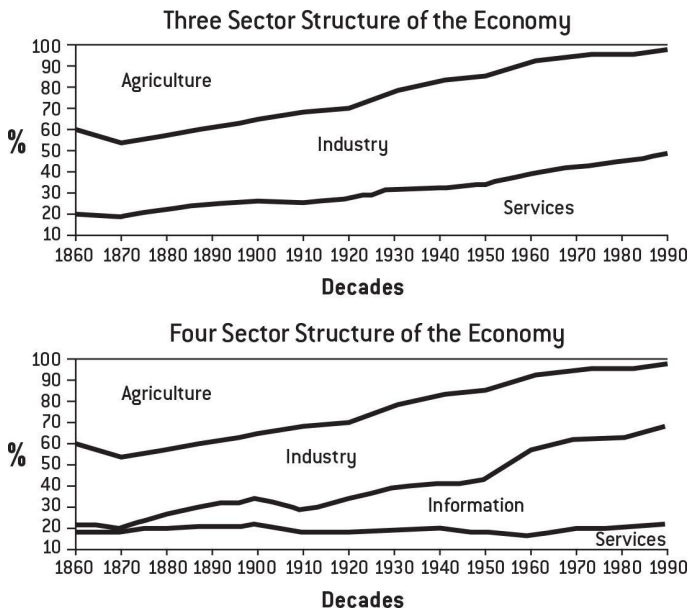


Figure 2 (BJ 149)

Interestingly, Graeber compares the current situation to feudalism: he comes to this argumentation by stating that the current believe that economy is somehow seen as unpolitical is obviously false. Graeber urges his readers to see economy and politics different sides of the same coin. Graeber uses a term *managerial feudalism* to describe the current situation where the affluence created by technological developments were directed into creating a huge managerial class that, ultimately, acts as a puffer and as a justification for the opulence of the upper echelons of the society; and, this is done in order to direct the fruits of the real creators of value to the managerial class' owners.

Graeber discusses the reason why no one seems to do anything to solve the problem of pointless work. Graeber starts that if someone or some group is addressing the problem, they are actually trying to make it worse, because the big picture of things is so poorly understood. In reference to this, and throughout the book, Graeber uses multiple thought experiments; for example, if we were to imagine that all the garbage disposal infrastructure and workers would disappear, how long could the society survive if that would be the case; or, in contrast, if all the middle-management or even all the CEOs were to vanish, would anyone really notice anything.

Also, Graeber concentrates on the terms ‘value’ and ‘values’; he writes that the confusion with these terms has also caused a lot of misunderstandings. To put it quite simply, Graeber argues that ‘value’ is something purely economical, i.e. money is always involved; on the other hand, ‘values’ are self-evident everyday pattern of behavior: childcare, housework, ideals, morality and so on, i.e. these can be considered being outside of money economy as such. In reference to this, all these aspect ties into “social value” and economic value as production that can be sold; furthermore, there is also the before mentioned aspect of the more useful one’s work is as social value, the less it normally pays. Interestingly, Graeber writes that there seems to be moral justification for low wages in these jobs that are seen to have so much ‘moral salary’ included in them. In other words, as Graeber uses the term ‘negative social value’, the less overall social value a job has, the more it usually pays, and on top of that socially negative work takes from the collective purse of the society more than it puts there. Also, in similar vein, Graeber addresses the phenomenon that paid work is value in itself, even if one is paid to ‘trick’ elderly to buy something they do not need, killing people overseas, or working in a company that causes a lot of damage to nature and so on and so forth. In addition, Graeber notes that nowadays people are expected to be busy, and even if they are not, they should act like they are, i.e. being busy is also value in itself.

Closer to the end of the book, Graeber address yet another rather misleading concept *productive labor*, as in creating something that can be sold, as a source of many misconceptions about the nature of work; because, most of the work done in any society falls into what Graeber calls “caring class” jobs: we produce most things once and then maintain them many times over, i.e. washing dishes, caring babies, cleaning building, fixing computers, staying healthy and so on and so forth.

Graeber ends his book by reiterating a claim he makes many times in the course of the book, i.e. that there is every reason to believe that we could already be doing fifteen-hour workweeks, but we have to make that decision politically. Also, Graeber claims that it can be roughly estimated that around 40 percent of existing jobs are unnecessary, and that this situation

is wasting human capacity, intelligence and talent and, most crucially, preventing the freedom of humankind and is causing a lot of psycho-physiological illnesses: putting a lot of costs on healthcare.

5.1 Defining *Work* with Graeber

Graeber starts his chapter “on the theological roots of our attitudes toward labor” by asking “What is ‘work’?” (BJ 220). He states that work is normally seen as opposite of play, and play is some action that is done purely for the sake of doing it, or doing it for pleasure; therefore, work is “activity – typically, onerous and repetitive, that one does not carry out for its own sake, or if one did certainly not for very long, but engages in only to accomplish something else (to obtain food, for example, or build a mausoleum)” (BJ 220).

Graeber addresses the fact that most languages have a word that similarly refers to certain action as *work*, but that the exact borders between “‘work,’ ‘play,’ ‘teaching,’ ‘ritual,’ or ‘nurturance’” are not as clear cut and tend to vary a great deal from culture to culture (BJ 220). Nonetheless, Graeber claims that the origin for the meaning of the word *work* today can be traced back to Eastern Mediterranean cultures; the myth of Prometheus and the story of the Garden of Eden can be viewed to present *work* as a punishment for acting against the will of the Creator (BJ 220). Nevertheless, *work* itself, at the same time, make human beings able to build houses, make clothes and grow food, but this aspect is seen more of a part of the creation of itself (BJ 220). In relation to this, Graeber says that it could be argued (a) that *work* is then something that one ordinarily would not prefer to do for its own sake “(punishment)”; also (b) that *work* is done in order to “accomplish something beyond the work itself (creation)” (BJ 221). Here Graeber emphasizes the problematic notion of ‘creation’ as the end ‘product’ of *work* as ‘something beyond’ itself; he states that it is rather obvious that most of *work* does not actually ‘create’ ‘things’, but is mostly done in order to maintain the existing state of society (thing, buildings, people [hopefully nature] etc.):

After all, most work can’t be said to “create” anything; most of it is a matter of maintaining and rearranging things. Consider a coffee cup. We “produce” it once. We wash it a thousand times. Even work we think of as ‘productive’ – growing potatoes, forging a shovel, assembling a computer – could just as easily be seen as tending, transforming, reshaping, and rearranging materials and elements that already exist. (BJ 221)

In reference to all this, Graeber argues that the idea of *work* as “production”, and that we tend to think (‘real’) *work* is interchangeable with ‘productivity’ “is essentially theological” (BJ 221). In addition, Graeber makes an interesting connection between the idea of *work* as punishment for men, and giving birth (labor) for women, but this has somehow been used to degrade all the ‘caring work’ (which is the majority of all *work*) in favor of the manly ‘productive’ *work* (BJ 222). To elaborate, Graeber argues that the idea of ‘production’ as something appearing out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) like a baby is born from a mother, although everyone knows that this is not the case, has affected many ‘patriarchal’ social orders:

“Production” is thus simultaneously a variation on a male fantasy of child birth, and of the action of a male Creator God who similarly created the entire universe through the sheer power of his mind and words, just as men see themselves as creating the world from their minds and brawn, and see that as the essence or “work,” leaving to women most of the actual labor of tidying and maintaining things to make this illusion possible. (BJ 222)

In addition, Graeber notes that the words ‘production’ and ‘reproduction’ have the same etymological root: “Latin *producere*, ‘to bring forth,’ or ‘put out’”, as in, e.g. “[s]he produced a wallet from her handbag” (BJ 222). Thus, as Graeber points out, ‘(re)production’ has the connotation of making something appear out of thin air, and this is, indeed, in a way, similar of a baby seemingly coming out of nowhere (BJ 222).

Graeber maintains that in order to understand the way we are seeing *work* has its roots in theology and economic thinking derived from it; for example, the notion derived from Saint Augustine that human beings are cursed to live with insatiable needs and desires in a world that is finite, thus we humans are competing with each other (BJ 223). Furthermore, according to Graeber, this idea surfaces again in a secular formulation of *bellum omnium contra omnes* (the war of all against all) by Thomas Hobbes, and this still resonates today in the core economic assumption of human being’s utmost nature as rational walking calculator that is constantly “economizing” in a world that is the stage of competition of finite resources (BJ 223).

5.2 The Paradox of Work

In reference to the theological origin of the conception of work, Graeber argues that the notion of “service” cannot be overstated in relation to labor; the conception of labor as ‘service’ Graeber attributes to particularly to northern Europe and the middle ages, but he maintains that

the idea is not explicitly theological (BJ 223). Nonetheless, Graeber claims that all this ties into the feudal system where a lot of people were spending their time in service for others, e.g. young in service in other's households, or apprentice learning a skill within craft guilds, serfs and alike in service of the hierarchy: "historical sociologists have called 'life-cycle' service" (BJ 223). The difference between this practice of 'service', in which one was expected to learn the right manners and achieve the skills for their later lives, and the classical view of *work*, for example Aristotle's, that work is exactly something that makes you a bad person, in the sense that you do not have the time to educate yourself or fulfill your political and social life (BJ 226). Furthermore, this 'service' as paid labor, argues Graeber, would prove transformative in the history of *work*, and that it echoed Weber's Protestant work ethic long before the birth of it (BJ 226).

In relation to all this, Graeber argues that after the emergence of 'capitalism', which Graeber separates from markets to be just a class structure that has created permanent classes of wage laborers, and those who have the capital, to be the change in the old 'service' outlook on work as something that 'educates' a human being slowly with manners, skills and morals and finally sets out individuals to be independent adults, e.g. as a smith in middle ages (BJ 226). In addition, Graeber argues that 'capitalism' left people into permanent teen-age in social terms (compared to feudal system, where people could get a self-sufficient lifelong skill, e.g. carpenter, smith or cobbler), but that the idea of work as something that is good for people, especially for lower class people in the mind of the middle and upper classes, in the sense that it instills proper manners, ethic and morals to human beings, kept on living even into the 'capitalist' age (BJ 226). In other words, *work* was seen to have value also purely in itself, without any relation to usefulness as such, because, ultimately, it kept people in check and 'trained' them with 'right morals'; although, *work*, in itself in 'capitalist' framework, does not anymore build character (manners, skills and so on) the same way it did in the feudal era and sense.

In reference to this, Graeber argues that Thomas Carlyle's idea of *work* as the essence of existence, and that *work* is also somehow noble in itself has become a notion that dominates many minds today; and, this has led to a somewhat paradoxical situation where, "the most noble work should *not* be compensated, since it is obscene to put a price on something of such absolute value" (BJ 229). Nevertheless, Graeber argues, that in the minds of the laborers *work* did not have this kind of nobility, but that *work* had value in the material sense on which all the wealth of society was based on: "everything that made rich and powerful people rich and powerful was, in fact, created by the efforts of the poor."; furthermore, Graeber states that the founders

of British economic science, David Ricardo and Adam Smith, supported this notion that became the labor theory of value (BJ 230). Moreover, and importantly, Graeber states that the labor theory of value was also supported by many industrialists because it separated them from the gentry (that the industrialist saw only as mere idle consumers), “but the theory was almost instantly taken up by Socialists and labor organizers and turned against the industrialist themselves” (BJ 230). Furthermore, Graeber asserts that economist started to find other explanations only because of political reasons, and what happened, ultimately, was that capital replaced labor as the source of value in the minds of the people, and that ‘producerism’ was overcome by the ‘consumerism’:

Nowadays, if one speaks of ‘wealth producers,’ people will automatically assume one is referring not to workers but to capitalist. This was a monumental shift in popular consciousness. What made it possible? It seems to me that the main reason lies in a flaw in the original labor theory of value itself. This was the focus on “production” – a concept which, as earlier noted, is basically theological, and bears in it a profound patriarchal bias [...] which was always conceived primarily as male work – as a matter of making and building things [...] while for women “labor” was seen primarily as and emblematically as a matter of producing babies. Most real women’s labor disappeared from the conversation. (BJ 234)

Additionally, Graeber maintain that the ambiguity in the term *work* as something that produces has made it hard to distinguish caring work’s importance because, in fact, most of the *work* that is done is actually archetypical ‘women’s work’ that does not produce anything as such but maintains existing *things*: taking care of other people, looking after children, listening and talking, explaining; maintaining things, objects, plant, animals, machines, buildings, roads and so forth. Subsequently, Graeber emphasizes importance of the concept “caring labor”; “women’s unpaid caring labor is made to disappear from our accounts of ‘the economy’, so are the caring aspects of other working-class jobs made to disappear as well” (BJ 236). Furthermore, Graeber adds that “caring labor” is normally seen as directed at fellow human beings, and that it invariably entails a specific “labor of interpretation, empathy, and understanding.”; Graeber proceeds that it can be argued that “caring labor” actually, “is not really work at all, it’s just life, or life lived properly” (BJ 236).

Similarly, Graeber points out, as human beings are “naturally empathetic creatures”, that it very much becomes *work* when the *caring* is done by primarily one side of the equation, i.e. “caring classes”; Graeber asserts that the underlings are always in position of being cautiously aware what the supervisor might be thinking; Graeber back-up his arguments with studies that state that those with working-class origins are better with reading what other people might be feeling, more caring and empathetic, compared to middle-class and the top echelon of society (BJ 236).

Another reason for the prevalent conception of *work*, according to Graeber, is that the labor theory of value has been ousted, even though it is commonsensically true that world is “made” from existing materials and maintained by people, and capital has replaced it as the image of *value* in the collective mind (BJ 239). Also, Graeber uses a thought experiment to illustrate a point: ultimately humans are collectively creating the world every day, and nowadays we are creating ‘capitalism’ that sees *work* in a certain light, i.e. ‘capitalism’ values “productive” *work* over “caring work” and sees capital as the source of value, not the worker (as in labor theory of value) (BJ 239)

Interestingly, Graeber states that there exists a paradoxical situation in society in which a lot of people do not want to identify themselves with their work (because a lot of people detest their jobs), but, indeed paradoxically, a lot of people report that *work* is something that gives them meaning, and unemployment is a serious physiological state. In fact, Graeber recites a conclusion of studies of work (blue- and white-collar) which results can be said to boil down to two fundamental points:

1. Most people’s sense of dignity and self-worth is caught up in working for a living.
2. Most people hate their jobs. (BJ 241)

Graeber refers to this as “the paradox of modern work.”; furthermore, Graeber states that a lot of effort has been used to understand this situation in the, “discipline of the sociology of work, not to mention industrial relations” how these two things can live side by side (BJ 241). To further illustrate this, Graeber cites two authors, that he claims to be “paragons of the field”, Terry Sullivan and Al Gini:

In well over a hundred studies in the last twenty-five years, workers have regularly depicted their jobs as physically exhausting, boring, psychologically diminishing or personally humiliating and unimportant. [But at the same time] they want to work because they are aware at some level that work plays a crucial and perhaps unparalleled psychological role in the formation of human character. Work is not just a course of livelihood, it is also one of the most significant contributing factors to an inner life... To be denied work is to be denied far more than the things that work can buy; it is to be denied the ability to define and respect one’s self. (BJ 241)

In addition, Graeber writes that Gini’s final conclusion was that work had become less about means to an end and more about value in itself, i.e. people do not work anymore in order to achieve something outside of work: in family life, community, culture, sports, religion and so on (BJ 242). But, paradoxically, the value in itself aspect was felt as oppressive and harmful (BJ 242). In relation to this, Graeber analyses these findings by starting that, “human beings essentially *are* a set of purposes, so that without any sense of purpose, we would barely be said

to exist at all” (BJ 242). Moreover, Graeber stipulates that one reason might be, which a lot of sociologists fail to see, that, “work is a form of self-sacrifice [...] the very awfulness of modern work is what makes it possible to see it as a value in itself [...] [w]orkers, in other words, gain feeling of dignity and self-worth because they hate their jobs” (BJ 242)

Graeber summarizes his analysis of work and the increasing proliferation of purposeless work by arguing that, “the peculiar nature of managerial feudalism [...] has come to dominate wealthy economies [...] [and] increasing degree, all economies” (BJ 243) Moreover, Graeber states that these kind of needless jobs cause psychological problems because human well-being and happiness is closely tied into a “sense of having effects on the world” (BJ 243). According to him, this aspect is usually expressed by using the notion of “social value” (BJ 243). In addition, Graeber maintains that people are aware on some level of the situation that the more important one’s work is in social value, the less it pays, and vice versa.

5.3 Summary: Unnecessary Work

As stated by Graeber, purposeless work is bad for mental health, and that pointless work has proliferated increasingly, especially in the information sector. Also, another psychological notion Graeber points out is that there still exists a belief that people should be incentivized / intimidated to work, otherwise people would simply do nothing. According to Graeber, the common understanding of human motivation is wrong; human beings are not walking calculators as the myth of the economic man would insist, rather people are set of purposes and they want to do meaningful tasks. Furthermore, Graeber argues that the idea of the feudal era idea that work builds character was transferred unchanged to the capitalist framework, even though in capitalist setting a few learn as a result of a working a comprehensive skill that can support themselves independently at some point (nonetheless work is seen to train right morals and behavior). Furthermore, Graeber states that the modern sociologists fail to see that very fact that a lot of work is awful makes it function as a value in itself for people, thus people can have extremely ambivalent thought about the same exact thing: work.

When it comes to the problems in word definitions. Graeber argues that terms *working class*, *service economy*, *value and values*, *productive work* are all problematic due to false image they create of the society in the mind of the public, such as ‘productive work’ in contrast with ‘caring work’: work seen as creation when in fact most of the work is caring. Also, for Graeber, the blind belief in the efficiency of the “free-markets” and market economy leave out the fact that all economies are mixed economies, and that the so-called productive sector with

factories and such has always been rather small compared to the others. Also, Graeber point out that economy is nowadays seen as something unpolitical (and Graeber argues that we could easily work fifteen-hour work weeks if there would be the political will behind the change). Moreover, according to Graeber, *capital* has replaced labor as the source of value. Thus, this is also a matter of definition. Furthermore, Graber claims that the origin of work as creation plays a major part in creating a false image of how things are, and that in turns hides all the caring work. Moreover, Graeber argues that *value* and *values*, as mentioned above, are mixed with each other that value is something purely economic (money) and values are something outside of economy, such as morals, human interaction, simple human kindness, upbringing children and so on. Furthermore, Graeber argues that *work* has theological root as a punishment for men and *labor* for women, but for some reason societies have had bias toward the manly creative *work*, even though most of the work is actually so-called women's work: *labor/maintenance*.

As claimed by Graeber, managerial feudalism has transferred technological developments' increase in 'value' to the top through the managerial class. In other words, the owners of the means of production have accumulated the wealth that is produced in society into few hands by the efficiency of technology. Also, as Graeber states, technology is used to make us work even more. In reference to this, Graeber states approximately 40% of jobs are unnecessary.

6 Working Through Definitions

The Bible legend tells us that the absence of labor idleness was a condition of the first man's blessedness before the Fall. Fallen man has retained a love of idleness, but the curse weighs on the race not only because we have to seek our bread in the sweat of our brows, but because our moral nature is such that we cannot be both idle and at ease. An inner voice tells us we are in the wrong if we are idle. If man could find a state in which he felt that though idle he was fulfilling his duty, he would have found one of the conditions of man's primitive blessedness. And such a state of obligatory and irreproachable idleness is the lot of a whole class the military. The chief attraction of military service has consisted and will consist in this compulsory and irreproachable idleness.

– Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace* (2010, 522)

Maybe the “inner voice” Tolstoy writes about, is actually indoctrinated to us; nonetheless, the quote from *War & Peace* depicts very neatly the sense of duty, value and morality that is present in *work* as something that has to be done away with some way or another, perhaps by escaping it somewhere, like the army, or to the pointless offices jobs, but unlike the army, you have to pretend to be busy at your desk even if there is nothing to do, as mentioned by Graeber.

I believe that the execution of the study brings forth many interesting conception of work as a social phenomenon, and as I have mentioned before, my aim was not to answer to *is* as ontologically in asking what is ‘*work*’, and what is ‘not *work*’, but namely, and rather broadly, what *work* is as a socially constructed system, convention, word, habit, believe, faith, presumption, i.e. as everyday phenomenon performed. This study clearly shows that the discourse on *work* is still very much a ‘work’ in progress, and it is crucial for it to come part of mainstream debate.

In relation to this, it became clear by the study of the aforementioned thinkers discussed in this thesis that *work*, as a term, is, indeed, extremely problematic and confusing. In fact, if the term *work* and words and concepts relating to it are not carefully defined, a constructive conversation about *work* is nearly impossible, since even the terms relating to work are oftentimes faith based and unfounded assumptions. This became clear from all of the texts because all of them placed the word *work* under scrutiny along with terms and concepts in close relation to it. For example, Arendt divided, what we might call *work* into three categories: labor, work and action. Similarly, Orwell writes about necessary work, and unnecessary work. Russell's focus is on idleness and points out the hierarchy of work: workers, managers and the owners of managers. Graeber brings forth many terms that cause confusion in relation to work:

caring work, productive work, working class, service economy, value and values among others. Overall, as mentioned time and time again in this thesis, it is important to understand and carefully define all the terms used when talking about *work* because it is clear that the ideological position of any given argument defines terms such as *economy or value creation* (in relation to work) according to a particular theory (often presented as a fact), e.g. nowadays when *economy* as a ‘science’ is preached by its adherents, it is important to note in what way *work, value creation* and the justification of the distribution of the effects of *work* is argued, along with all the actions that are not taken into account (e.g. in GDP) without which the ‘economy’ we know totally depends on.

Furthermore, one of the most prominent features of all the texts was *work* as a moral value in itself, regardless of what any given *work* actually entails. Moreover, *work* as a moral value comprises of a belief that it is a virtue, a duty, and a sacrifice; it is been praised top down, and it is a social structure with clear hierarchy. In other words, work is not purely work where useful things are to be done, but it is a pattern of behavior considered as a duty, a sacrifice that endows the sense of acceptance as a proper citizen. In other words, work functions, among many things, partly as a way to keep the status quo in place. In relation to this, Orwell wrote about the “fear of the mob,” Russell of the fear of others leisure, Arendt points out that all *work* has become purely a matter of ‘making a living’, and Graeber asserted that work has become more and more a value in itself. To sum up, it is important understand this aspect of *work* because we are still doing approximately forty-hour workweeks (which has been the case now for one-hundred years), and this raises the question why this is still done by the carrot or the stick, or both; also, why the asinine belief still exists that no-one would do anything if there were not ushered to *work* (moralized to work).

Furthermore, common to all of the authors was the notion of “caring labor” expressed with various terms. For Arendt, caring work, is *labor (animal laborans)* that is keeping the human biology alive (food, drink, house, clothes, rest, procreation, taking care of children, housework), and, self-evidently, work can only be done if the body is functioning, which requires repetitive actions dictated by the very existence as a human animal. Furthermore, for Arendt the maintenance of the proper functioning of human biology is private. Thus, *labor* does not pay a salary, but in fact, and rather paradoxically, salary is exactly for that. In other words, people get wages so that they can keep their biology functioning (plus some modern day ‘luxuries’ that justify the order of things; also, consumption is also integral part of biology and of working for wage: spending the wage is also a crucial part of the job of a worker). Therefore, for Arendt, modern day society has become that of labor where everything is consumed as if it

is necessary for human biology. Furthermore, here the notion of being free in Aristotle's thinking, mentioned by Arendt, is vital since it defines freedom in terms of being the furthest away from necessities as possible, but nowadays the current system creates massive amounts of artificial necessities, and this is in fact at the crux of the current economic paradigm. Similarly, Orwell pointed out that necessary work is often forgotten; Graeber emphasized the fact that most work is not productive as such but caring in nature.

I think it would be extremely important to study *work* in an interdisciplinary manner taking into account as many academic fields as possible, or several combinations of them: psychology, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, economics, physiology, politics and so forth. Moreover, since *work* is the social ritual that consumes and defines the lives of virtually everyone on this planet (and more and more shapes the planet itself), it should be studied more widely, and more importantly, the discourse on work should be attempted to gain vastly more space in the mainstream discourse, in order to replace the empty talk of job creation with discussion of what work actually comprises of, and thus, what work is actually worth pursuing.

Also, I think it would be interesting to study, if *work* were to 'disappear', due to technological advances, will *work*, as a moral value in society, transform itself to something else, e.g. social credit system, sports, fame, prestige, achievements etc. Or will there be some kind of universal basic income, or negative income tax system. Or, will *work* be rebranded to mean new things like 'caring work', e.g. raising children. Whatever might be the case, if *work* disappears/transforms as a performance (as a performance that has fixed working hours, e.g. nine to five (8 hours), but not as a moral value as a justification of existing in a society, what might replace it, and how would it possibly unfurl. Also, work has been the way how people can rise up in society, if this cannot anymore be done the same way, or it fails to justify the existing structure of society, what forms will *work* take, and if it loses its connection to production/'productive work', will this start to affect the way people see 'value' and 'values'. Moreover, it would be interesting to study the fight against and for UBI, and the way in which some parts of society would not like to do away with *work* as a way of controlling people. Moreover, and possibly most importantly, it would be crucial to study how people have been subjected to *work* (genealogy of work) as a moral value, and how this will be attempted to be implemented in the future with for example of the arguments of life-long learning, perpetual self-creation and entitlement to lifelong study, i.e. people are for economy, economy is not for people.

All misconceptions are because of conceptions – especially those that are taken as written in stone send by some infallible god. As a though experiment, let us imagine at some distant point

in time in the future that virtually all that we nowadays consider as paid labor that “guarantees” our “survival” on this planet would disappear due to technological developments, eventually people would lose their salaries step by step (maybe at first some social welfare). Even before that demand would go so low that a lot of businesses would go bust, causing a drop in taxes so dramatic that it would be impossible to maintain any welfare, let alone infrastructure. The society’s production capacity would reach somewhere before the end of payed labor its peak efficiency in near total automation, but soon no-one would have any money to consume anything: people would be poor and dying amidst of the most dynamic technological production system ever created because everyone, in the end, would ran out of money. The world would become completely valueless (in the parameters of the current system). This dystopia would only happen if nothing could be changed in the way we think about *work* and, for example, *value* and *values*.

I claim that the first society that frees its people from the unnecessary burden of eight-hour work day would quickly become the most *value* producing group dynamic system because it would give people time to concentrate on things that they excel in without excess burden in the back of their mind of how they will ‘survive’ in a world where all the necessities are provided in such abundancy (that they are starting to be a problem, e.g. early deaths caused by overweight). Furthermore, we have not freed ourselves with necessities to be freer, in the sense Arendt meant it, but we have created, and advertised, a massive array of artificial ‘necessities’ to steer us away from our possible potential as human beings.

To conclude, *work* as a social reality is in perpetual change, and *work* as a concept is increasingly, due to the fastening pace of technological developments, under pressure to be defined once again and many times to come. I argue that we have already entered the death of wage labor (as eight hours per day five times a week), those days are over, but the system is too rigid and conservative that it takes some time for the ideas of *work* (and *value*) to change. Unfortunately, I claim, it is always possible that the change will come only when there is no other way: that is the point when the conservative thinking will eventually cave in. As I stated before in this paper, our values are always in the past, and technology is always in the future, and we human being are in the amidst of it all trying to adjust to the world around us. I argue that it is a high time to start to see beyond the moral value that work has in itself; I claim that there exist higher vistas to measure human value than being in a wage labor arrangement. A world that would not have the current work mentality could already be easily imagined, and probably exist, or at least society would be aware of this to come; nevertheless, even if humanity

is not aware of it, technology has and is already taken/taking us closer and closer where the current idea of work will be totally obsolete.

As an final remark, *work* as a general term for collective labor done by society has shifted the rural work into white collar shirts and services due to the transformative power of technology, in other words away from necessities, but as the nature of technology is virtually its unpredictability because no-one can know the *cause and effect* chain when it comes to *work force* along with rest of the society which are in separately linked; thus, the term *work* has to be defined constantly alongside with the changes. We are not any more working for living like we used to; we working to maximize production and consumption: over-eating causes huge problems, nature suffers, people have jobs that focus on tricking people to consume more; “work” takes away time from family and children, self-care, individual pursuits that could lead real value creation and forth. We live in a society that has abundance of everything but with the current logic we apparently do not have enough *money* to take care of the elderly. The problem we are facing is the logic of the system and what it sees as *work* that creates *value* (money). All in all, since going to work, being at work, coming home from work, recovering from work takes nearly all our daily time and energy in a world of abundance, it would be extremely interesting to study *work* from multiple academic angles in combination; for example, why we are still working exactly eight hours per day. In any case, technological leaps will transform the world and *work* and the concept of work with it, and I think by studying *work* we could be ready for the things to come.

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Appendix 1: Finnish summary

Työssäni analysoin neljän merkittävän ajattelijan kirjoituksia läheisessä yhteydessä tai suoraan liittyen termiin *työ*. Käsitukset työstä ovat usein hyvin pintapuolisia ja poliittisessa diskurssissa työllä on yleensä täysin itseisarvoinen ja kyseenalaistamaton asema. Toisin sanoen työ kuin työ on hyvä asia riippumatta siitä, mitä se on. Tutkimuksessani haen termille *työ* määritelmiä, joita siihen ei yleensä, ainakaan suoraan, liitetä. Tutkin, miten George Orwell, Hannah Arendt, Bertrand Russell ja David Graeber kirjoittavat työstä ja siitä, miten *työ* ilmenee yhteiskunnallisena ilmiönä ja toteutettuna rituaalina analysoitujen kirjoitusten kautta. Edellä mainittujen kirjoittajien lähestymistavat eroavat toisistaan hyvinkin paljon, mutta silti esille nousee suuri määrä samoja ajatuksia eri näkökulmista. Tutkimukseni kohteena ovat Orwellin kirjat *A Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) ja *Down and under Paris and London* (1933); Russellin essee ”In Praise of Idleness” (1935), Arendtin teos *The Human Condition* (1958) ja Graeberin kirja *Bullshit Jobs: The Rise of Pointless Work, and What We Can Do about It* (2018).

Tutkimukseni tuo esiin monia mielenkiintoisia käsityksiä työstä sosiaalisena ilmiönä, mutta tavoitteeni ei ole vastata niinkään ontologiseen kysymykseen, mitä on ”työ” ja mitä ”ei-työ”, kuin mitä työ on sosiaalisesti rakennettuna käsitteenä, uskomusjärjestelmä, tapana ja olettamuksena. Tämä tutkimus osoittaa selvästi, että työstä käytävä diskurssi on edelleen, ja välttämättä aina, käynnissä oleva prosessi ja onkin erittäin tärkeää, että se tulisi enemmän osaksi valtavirtaista keskustelua, jossa puhuttaisiin olettamuksien alla piilevistä työn aspekteista.

Tämän tutkimuksen perusteella on selvää, että työ terminä on erittäin ongelmallinen ja hämmentävä. Itse asiassa, jos termiä *työ* ja siihen liittyviä sanoja ja käsitteitä ei määritellä tarkkaan, rakentava keskustelu työstä on melkein mahdotonta, koska muutkin työhön liittyvät termit ovat usein olettamuksiin perustuvia uskomuksia, joiden taustalla vaikuttaa jokin ideologia, tai ideologiden sekoitus. Tämä käy selväksi analysoimistani teksteistä, koska ne kaikki asettivat sanan *työ* monien muiden (läheisesti työhön liittyvien) termien yhteyteen; on tietenkin selvää, etteivät sanat ole tyhjiössä tai toisistaan riippumattomia. Esimerkiksi Arendt jakaa työn kolmeen ryhmään: työ, valmistaminen ja toiminta. Vastaavasti Orwell kirjoittaa välttämättömästä ja tarpeettomasta työstä. Russell puolestaan keskittyy vapaa-aikaan ja tuo esiin työn hierarkian: työntekijät, johtajat ja johtajien omistajat. Graeber tuo esiin monia ulottuvuuksia, jotka aiheuttavat sekaannusta: hoitotyö, tuottava työ, työväenluokka, informaatiotyö, palvelutalous, arvo ja arvot ja niin edelleen.

Kaiken kaikkiaan, kuten olen työssäni monasti todennut, mielekkään keskustelun kannalta on tärkeää ymmärtää ja määritellä huolellisesti kaikki työstä käytettävät termit, koska on selvää, että minkä tahansa argumentin ideologinen asema määrittelee termit. Lisäksi tutkimani tekstit painottavat työtä moraalisen arvona, joka on annettu ylhäältä käsin; tästä syystä työ kuin työ on hyvä asia, oli se sitten puhelinmyyntiä, sairaiden hoitoa tai jotain mikä epäsuorasti tai suoraan saastuttaa luontoa, kunhan siitä maksetaan palkkaa. Lisäksi työ moraalisen arvona käsittää uskomuksen, että se on hyve, velvollisuus ja uhrilahja. Toisin sanoen, työ ei ole puhtaasti työtä, jossa on tehtävä hyödyllisiä asioita, vaan toimintamalli, jota pidetään velvollisuutena, uhrina, joka antaa tunteen hyväksynnästä kunnollisena kansalaisena. Toisin sanoen työ toimii muun muassa keinona pitää yllä status quota. Tähän liittyen Orwell kirjoittaa ”väkijoukon pelosta”, Russell osaltaan muiden vapaa-ajan pelosta, Arendt huomauttaa, että kaikesta työstä on tullut puhtaasti ”elannon ansaitsemista”, ja Graeber toteaa, että työstä on tullut yhä enemmän ja enemmän itseisarvo.

Yhteenvetona voidaan todeta, että on tärkeää ymmärtää, että työtä pidetään edelleen moraalisen itseisarvona, ja teemme edelleen noin 40 tuntia ”töitä” viikossa (vaikka näin oli jo sata vuotta sitten), ja todellisuudessa työhön käytetty aika palautumisineen ja työmatkoineen on paljon 40 tuntia enemmän, mutta siitä ei makseta korvausta. Kaikki tämä herättää kysymyksen, miksi edelleen elää usko, ettei kukaan tekisi mitään, ellei häntä pakotettaisi työhön joko porkkanalla tai kepillä, tai molemmilla. Lisäksi kaikille kirjoittajille oli yhteistä käsite ”huolehtiva työ”, joka ilmaistiin eri termein. Arendtille hoitotyö on työtä (*labor; animal laborans*), joka pitää ihmisen biologian hengissä (ruoka, juoma, talo, vaatteet, lepo, lisääntyminen, lasten hoito, kotityöt). On itsestään selvää, että valmistavaa työtä (*work*) voidaan tehdä vain, jos keho toimii, joka vaatii toistuvia toimia, jotka sanelevat ihmisen biologiset vaatimukset päivittäisistä toistuvista toiminnoista. Lisäksi Arendtille ihmisbiologian moitteettoman toiminnan ylläpitäminen on yksityistä, mutta tästä ei makseta palkkaa, mutta itse asiassa (ja pikemminkin paradoksaalisesti), palkka on juuri tätä varten. Toisin sanoen ihmiset saavat palkkaa, jotta he voivat säilyttää itsensä hengissä biologisina raatajina ja että he voisivat kuluttaa tavaroita kuin biologisia välttämättömyyksiä kuten ruokaa. Siksi Arendtille nykyajan yhteiskunnasta on tullut työvoimaa (*labor*), jossa kaikki kulutetaan ikään kuin se olisi välttämätöntä ihmisen biologian kannalta. Aristoteleen vapauden käsite on Arendtin ajattelussa tärkeä, koska se määrittelee vapauden olevan toimintaa, joka on kauimpana välttämättömyyksistä, mutta nykyinen järjestelmä luo valtavia määriä keinotekoisia ”välttämättömyyksiä”, ja tämä tosiasia on nykyisen taloudellisen paradigman ytimessä. Vastaavasti Orwell huomauttaa, että välttämätön työ unohdetaan usein, ja Graeber korostaa sitä,

miten suurin osa työstä ei ole sellaisenaan tuottavaa, vaan esimerkiksi huolehtivaa, korjaavaa, hoivaavaa ja puhdistavaa.

Mielestäni olisi äärimmäisen tärkeää tutkia työtä monitieteellisesti ottaen huomioon mahdollisimman monet akateemiset alat: psykologia, antropologia, sosiologia, kielitiede, taloustiede, filosofia, ekologia ja niin edelleen. Lisäksi, koska työ on sosiaalinen rituaali, joka kuluttaa ja määrittelee käytännöllisesti katsoen jokaisen planeetallamme elävän ihmisen elämän (ja muotoilee yhä enemmän itse planeettaa), sitä tulisi tämänkin vuoksi tutkia laajemmin. Voidaan myös kysyä, onko tässä maailmassa paljoakaan ”pahaa” joka ei johtuisi suoraan tai epäsuorasti työstä ja yhteiskunnista, jotka on rakennettu ensisijaisesti työn tekemistä varten ja sen varaan. Kriittisen työkeskustelun tulisi saada huomattavasti enemmän tilaa valtaviiran diskurssissa korvaamalla tyhjä puhe työpaikkojen luomisesta keskustelulla siitä, mistä työ todellisuudessa koostuu ja mikä työ (tai paremmin sanottuna mikä toiminta tai teot) on oikeasti tekemisen arvoista yhteiskunnan ja ihmisten hyvinvoinnin kannalta.

Mielestäni olisi myös tärkeää tutkia, mikä toimisi moraalisen arvona yhteiskunnassa tämän jälkeen, jos (ja ennemminkin kun) työ ”katoaa” teknologisen kehityksen myötä: urheilu, maine, arvostus, saavutukset, muiden auttaminen, itsensä kehittäminen ja niin edelleen. Vai tulisiko yleinen perustulo tai negatiivinen tuloverojärjestelmä jossakin muodossa jakamaan resursseja nykyisen kaltaisen työpanokseen (vaikkakin mitä välttämättömämpi työ sitä vähemmän siitä saa korvausta) sidotun palkkiojärjestelmän (orjuuden) sijasta. Vai voitaisiinko tulevaisuudessa ottaa huomioon kotona tehdyt työt (vaikkakin tässä kohdassa *töistä* puhuminen on harhaanjohtavaa, koska miten näitä voisi edes verrata esimerkiksi puhelinmyyntiin): synnytys, imettäminen, lasten kasvatusta, muiden auttaminen, kaikki hoiva- ja opetus työ sekä harrastusten vetäminen ja niin edelleen.

Yhteenvetona voidaan todeta, että työn kuva on jatkuvassa muutoksessa, ja työ käsitteenä on määriteltävä jatkuvasti uudestaan, jo teknologisen kehityksenkin pakottamana. Väitän, että olemme – ainakin länsimaissa – jo astuneet palkkatyön katoamisen aikaan suurimmalta (?). Kahdeksan tunnin työpäivä on työväen yli sata vuotta sitten saavuttama etu, mutta järjestelmänä se on jäykkä ja konservatiivinen, joten työn näkeminen uudessa valossa ottaa varmasti aikansa. Tämä johtuu myös siitä, että arvojen suunta on aina (?) menneisyyteen ja teknologian aina tulevaisuuteen, ja me ihmiset kaiken keskellä yritämme sopeutua ympäröivään maailmaan. Olisi erittäin tärkeää nähdä työ ja työn ympärille rakennettu yhteiskunta vanhojen moraaliarvojen ulkopuolella, ja hylätä myös siihen liittyvät vanhat ’taloustieteelliset’ oletukset. Inhimillisen arvon mittaamiseksi on olemassa muutakin kuin palkkatyön järjestely ja bruttokansantuote.

Voidaankin todeta, että yhteiskunnan tekemä kollektiivinen työtaakka on siirtynyt maaseudun työstä valkoisiin kauluspaitoihin ja palveluihin teknologisen muutosvoiman vuoksi, toisin sanoen pois välttämättömyyksistä, ja teknologia edelleen mullistaa ja tulee muuttamaan sen mitä yhteiskunta nyt kutsuu töiksi, ja tämä muutos pakottaa myös määrittelemään sanan työ uudestaan ja uudestaan. Emme enää työskentele samalla tavoin välttämättömyyksien parissa kuin ennen, vaan tuotannon ja kulutuksen maksimoimiseksi. Jo nyt liiallinen syöminen aiheuttaa valtavia ongelmia, luonto kärsii, kun monilla on työ, joka keskittyy ihmisten huijaamiseen kuluttamaan enemmän. ”Työstä” on tullut ansa, joka vie aikaa perheeltä ja lapsilta, itsestään huolehtimisesta, harrastuksista, yrittämisestä, taiteista ja kaikesta muusta jotka voisivat johtaa todelliseen arvonluontiin ja eteenpäin kohti jotain muutakin kuin muutamien rikastumista ja tavarakasoja.

Elämme yhteiskunnassa, joka antaa pienen prosentin rikastua, mutta nykyisen talouslogiikan mukaan meillä ei ole tarpeeksi rahaa vanhusten hoitamiseen, sairaanhoitajiin tai opettajiin. Ongelmana on järjestelmän logiikka siinä, mitä se näkee arvoa luovana työnä. On tragedia, että töihin meneminen, töissä oleminen, töistä palaaminen ja työstä toipuminen vie melkein kaiken päivittäisen ajan ja energian maailmassa, joka pystyisi takaamaan kaikki välttämättömyydet hyvin pienellä prosentilla työvoimasta (työvoimaksi lasketaan Suomessakin vain alle puolet kansasta eli noin 2,5 miljoonaa ihmistä). Työn monitieteellinen tutkimus tulisi asettaa prioriteetiksi, jotta emme tuhoa nykyisen logiikan varassa rakennetulla kulutusyhteiskunnalla koko planeettaa ja ihmisten fyysistä ja mielenterveyttä.