Work, Wellbeing and Creativity: The Role of Social Infrastructure

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Discussions of the relationships between work and wellbeing has historically been coloured by managerialist concerns to integrate the individual into the pre-existing requirements of the work organization, and as such it has often led to a less than authentic concern with a full picture of what wellbeing might be for a fully rounded individual. After providing a critique of this inauthenticity, this article suggests that a consideration of the hallmarks of creative work might help one to arrive at this fuller picture. It goes on to discuss this against the context of imminent technological unemployment and the advent of universal income schemes. It contends that this context, along with the possibilities of developing broad social infrastructures to support creativity, hints at practically feasible possibilities for the expansion of wellbeing.

Introduction: A Managerialist Approach to Wellbeing in Work

When it comes to the question of work and its relationship to wellbeing – overcoming negative experiences of meaningless, powerless-ness and a culture of conflict, as well as more positive experiences such as increased motivation, greater commitment and a sense of teamwork - management has developed various theoretical arguments and devised all sorts of strategies. But they have done so from what might be called a *managerialist position*, one which takes the pre-established requirements of the organization and the work itself as central. The central intent is to integrate the motivations of individuals with these demands given the predefined status of the individual as employee only. Given that a full appreciation of the whole person is absent, the scope of such initiatives upon more rounded notions of wellbeing has been limited. As we will see below, the managerialist view is shot through with mythic assumptions that work is inherently 'good for you', just as the dull compulsion of the economic ensures that work is experienced as chronic unfreedom for the vast majority. A more authentic consideration of how work might better facilitate wellbeing rests upon transcending these pre-established conceptual horizons. And for this one can learn a lot by considering *creative work* - the motivations behind such work; its inner dynamics; the way it is experienced as a more authentic expression of the self; the way it often brings people together in more informal and self-organized ways; how it can be a mutual expression of shared values and ethical purposes. All facets which are germane to work becoming a more authentic route to wellbeing.

These are the basic parameters of our argument. But it is not offered in a utopian way. Current economic and cultural changes continue to suggest that work as it has been organized within industrial society is coming to an end. Technological unemployment will soon mean that paid work will not be the central facet of life it has been for the majority. One's occupation will be less central to one's identity and life experience just as universal basic income schemes will enable people to pursue other motivations away from paid work (Bregman 2017, Hughes 2014, LeGrandeur and Hughes 2017, Standing 2017). And these economic changes are associated with other cultural shifts signaled by a turn away from of wage maximization and greater embrace of work-life balance. This is sometimes expressed in the search for personally meaningful experiences rather than the pursuit of a consumerist lifestyle, for some at least (Shorthose and Strange 2004). By situating a detailed discussion of creative work and the possibilities for its practical expansion against this economic and cultural context one can ensure this argument is grounded in emerging social realities.

It may seem rather banal to start with the comment that relationships between work and wellbeing[1] are complex and overdetermined, but all arguments must start somewhere. It is obvious that too much work will cause stresses which manifests themselves in many ways. It is equally obvious that too little work causes problems beyond material poverty, and often lead to a loss of self-esteem, social isolation and alienation. But relationships between work and wellbeing clearly go beyond questions of the *quantity* of work, and involve issues concerning

the *quality* of work – its physical conditions; levels of autonomy and sense of control; experiences of workplace culture(s) and how it shapes how people interact with each other, or not. These experiential factors can have detrimental effects which, in and of themselves, also lead to a sense of isolation, feelings of low self-worth or outright conflict with one's peers (Braverman 1974, Doray 1988, Sennett and Cobb 1988).

Of course, management has been aware of these problems for many years and has developed many strategies to deal with them. In the early days of the factory system 'scientific management' approaches became the centre of gravity for most management thinking. But the overall effect of this 'scientific management' regime was to reduce employees to the status of a factor of production, with little or no scope to demonstrate their skill or discretion (Braverman 1974). After Elton Mayo's famous *Hawthorne Studies* (see Roethlisberger and Dickson 2003), the detrimental impacts of this upon wellbeing became widely recognised and led to the development of Human Relations management and its many variants since the 1970's (Herzberg 1974, McGregor 2006). These approaches all share the fundamental recognition that the workplace is a social and cultural place rather than simply a place in which undifferentiated and recalcitrant employees had to be corralled by eliminating autonomy. The Human Relations approach gave rise to multiple managerial strategies concerned with the experiences and feelings of employees. Most famously perhaps, Fredrick Herzberg's *Work and the Nature of Man* (1974) sought to integrate the emotional aspects of work into the overall organisational effort by increasing motivation, commitment and a sense of teamwork with work. *Hygiene factors* – levels of pay and general working conditions would, if insufficiently taken care of, cause dissatisfaction within work. But *motivator factors* – the degree to which individuals could demonstrate choice, initiative and expertise would increase motivation if facilitated. Only by getting hygiene right, and *then* going onto to increase motivator factors could management achieve improved experiences of wellbeing amongst employees. Perhaps equally influential, Douglas McGregor's *The Human Side of the Enterprise* (2006) made a distinction between those approaches to workplace management which relied heavily upon highly centralised control systems on the one hand, and approaches which took more account of the emotional and cultural needs of the individual employees on the other. His approach argued that it should be management's role to facilitate conditions which catered to such needs by allowing scope for more expression of individual initiative and discretion within work. Such ideas led to a plethora of discrete initiatives within management practice. Job Enrichment programmes were concerned to save work from the stultifying boredom of performing just one task all day at the pace of the assembly line. Job-Rotation schemes sought to give individuals opportunities to release their talent by taking up various roles within the organization and so have a more positive experience. Industrial Welfare programmes entailed management taking on board more responsibilities for the care of the general welfare of their employees outside of formal ambit of the workplace itself. Newer versions of this led to a more concerted focus upon organisational culture as a whole. Work-life balance initiatives have been more contemporary variations on this theme (Shorthose 2004).

Whilst such facets of management have tried to make work more germane to wellbeing, it is clear that work continues to be experienced as a negative experience for many. This is in large part due to changes in the broad economic context within which managerial innovations were taking place. Human Relations approaches originated in the 1960's when keeping skilled and trained staff in a time of full employment was at a premium. Since then, we have seen chronically high un/under-employment. This has made meaner approaches to management more viable. And this itself has taken place against the backdrop of neo-liberal political and economic policies associated business-centred strategies designed to make employment more 'flexible' within a post-industrial economy (Ford 2016, LeGranduer and Hughes 2017, Srineck and Williams 2016). This has led to the all too familiar casualization of work as something much more precarious (Standing 2016). Within high skill and high waged work, wellbeing continues to by an urgent organizational issue, but the speed with which concerns for wellbeing were dropped in many other workplaces suggests that managerialist approaches were always strategic and lacked thoroughgoing commitment.

But shifts in broad economic contexts notwithstanding, there was always conceptual deficiencies at the heart of the managerialist approaches which meant this limited scope and authenticity was likely. It is clear that managerialist approaches to the question of wellbeing were, and are, located very much within pre-established concerns with overall organizational efficiency and discipline. Its underlying worldview was one which always glossed over fundamental divergences of interest between workers and the organization. A critical view of this underlying managerialism highlights these features, but more fundamentally for the immediate concerns of this article, it shows the very narrow conception of human wellbeing which animated it from the start given its inherent 'technological rationality' (Marcuse 1964). A more sustained look at this critical perspective will help to highlight the inner dynamics of this. It will also help to make a clear distinction between managerialist approaches on the one hand, and the expansion of opportunities for creativity as a contribution to much more authentic interrelationships between work and wellbeing on the other.

A Critical View of Managerialist Conception of Work and Wellbeing

The managerialist 'universe of discourse' (Marcuse 1964) cannot be fully understood until we first recognise some broad contextual features, and certain myths about work which are propagated within that context. Perhaps the most ubiquitous of these is the notion that work is universally 'good for you'. And as with many myths, this covers over some fundamental contradictions. Some people undoubtedly do experience work as being good for them, but the vast majority clearly do not feel this. The post-industrial economy continues to casualize work (Standing 2016, Bregman 2017), and its technologies continues to make the prospect of technological unemployment more likely for more of us (Ford 2016), but the myth of work still occupies a central place within Establishment discourses. Going to work and 'having a job' continues to be discussed from within a moral invective just as shifts towards the 'gig economy'

ratchet up the emotional-economic stress facing The Precariat (Standing 2016). Their chances of having said job are taken away by the very economic system which sponsors the myth. As with the Establishment's general crisis of legitimacy, so with this continued rhetoric around work – more of the conceptual universe which causes the problem is held up as the solution within Establishment public discourse (Shorthose 2011).

And the managerialist approach to the relationship between work and wellbeing is but one facet of the contradictory nature of this public discourse. Its conceptual horizons display a marriage between traditional conceptions of work and a highly reduced conception of wellbeing which only really makes sense if the individual is pre-defined as employees above all else. It rests upon the mythic assumption that there can be a convergence of the interests of this person-as-employee and the organization. But such an assumption and the various managerialist discourses it gave birth to encodes the ultimate surrender of the emotional needs of individual to the operational and economic needs of the organization. In short, the managerialist approach articulates a highly 'one dimensional universe of discourse' (Marcuse 1964).

In *The Limitations of the Work Life Balance Campaign* (Shorthose 2004), the fine details of this were discussed specific to the work-life balance campaign that was current at the time. But similar points concerning the whole train of Human Relations management thinking since the 1940's can be made. Various iterations notwithstanding, it is a discourse which claims to align the interests of workers with the 'economic rationality' guiding the organisation of the work. It seeks to re-present the traditional organization of work, which lest we forget was always premised first and foremost upon discipline, as capable of leading to its own opposite, individual wellbeing (Gorz 1999). To claim that work can be an experience where the interests of individual and those of the organization can coincide any a sustained way is an ideological projection designed to cover over this most fundamental contradiction of traditionally organized work – the need to both discipline the individual whilst simultaneously seeking their cooperation in that discipline, and subsequent denial of their long-term wellbeing. To suggest that individuals can experience sustained wellbeing within this pre-established system of managerially ordained relationships is to deny the reality of centralised hierarchy and control, which remains as the central yet unquestioned part of broader managerialist discourse. Offered via the language of 'opportunity', entreaties are made to people to become more motivated, co-operative team players within an organization of work which by its very nature ensures their chronic emotional defeat – all as a way of achieving wellbeing!

The very language of 'the worker' denotes that people are already linguistically and conceptually reduced to their organizational function. On the other hand, the linguistic designation of The Organization is already linked to 'the organized' and managerial thinking is ubiquitously linked to 'the scientific'. All this culminates in representations of the organizational as an expression of 'the rational'. This is the very essence of 'one-dimensional language as discussed by Marcuse (1964). He locates his critique thereof as the operation of

power within the realm of Reason itself, along with the public discourses it throws up. The way in which power relations legitimate themselves as something other than power relations and reproduce themselves under the veneer of the 'natural', 'normal' or 'rational' is at the heart of one-dimensionality thought in a more general sense.

Historically this has moved through various broad cultural arenas. The public discourses concerning 'The Economy' and all the power relations which that involves, are cloaked in a rhetoric of 'rational decision-making'; Government policy-making is sold as apolitical 'technical necessities'; public investment decisions are presented as if they were a technology in themselves, which are always and already 'rationally', and thus neutral. And this sponsors the agenda which drives business-centered choices taking precedence over the broader public and ecological good. All this involves existing structures of power colonising the very rhetoric of Reason and 'the reasonable'.

And within the realm of work we see a similar phenomenon. By recruiting the credentials of a 'scientific' approach, managerialism gains a similar 'rational' status. This tends to propel those with alternative arguments down the rabbit hole of trying to prove their point whilst being already demarcated as irrational. Recall the ubiquitous Establishment refrain concerning its pre-established universe of discourse – 'there is no alternative'. The rhetoric of managerialism cast itself as an embodiment of the reasonable, and as such alternative views are seamlessly associated with the un-reasonable and the non-viable. In this way, the managerialist universe of discourse and the myth of work underpinning it has historically *contained* public debate concerning work and wellbeing to the one-dimension of the pre-established conceptions of managerialism (Shorthose 2004). The historically specific organization of work which caused the problem – the invention of a particular form of industrial work and the consequent denial of wellbeing - holds itself to be the source of the solution!

As the actual history of work, organization and management clearly shows, a full and authentic facilitation of wellbeing within work, explored via ideas and practices beyond this pre-established universe of discourse never came to pass. But that was never really the point. It was never a genuine prospect. Rather, the recruitment of broad discourses stemming from industrial psychology and sociology, along with the rhetoric of 'culture', 'freedom', 'choice', 'self-expression' and 'therapy' into the managerialist approach was at heart an attempt to gain the *credentials of wellbeing* as a tool to pursue greater organisational efficiency and discipline. Its one-dimensional nature is evidenced by the fact that it has always confined its thinking to internally self-validating analytical propositions (Marcuse 1964), which do not go beyond its own pre-established nexus. An elaborated code, but very restricted in meaning.

In stark contrast to the restricted scope inherent within this managerialist approach to work and wellbeing, the view which comes from a consideration of creative work offers a much more

profound basis from which to envisage how wellbeing might be expanded. Features of creative work as it relates to wellbeing which have been expressed by various exponents.

Some Features of Creative Work and Their Relationship to Wellbeing

There has been a plethora of debates concerning creative work in recent years (Crawford 2009, 2015, Gawunde 2007, Korn 2013, Madhaven 2013, Sennett 2008), along with a growing theoretical discussion concerning creativity itself (Csikczentmihaly 1996, Gardener 2011, Shorthose and Maycroft 2017). This is set against broad economic discussions of the creative industries and policy-oriented debates concerning the social and cultural impact of creative practices within the public realm. The appellation of 'creative' has sometimes been applied for little real reason. In his book *Against Creativity*, Mould (2018) provides a critique of this. But other aspects of Mould's argument are quite strange. In critiquing the colonization of discourses around creativity by the managerialist position, Mould seems to skirt very close to dismissing the felt experiences, personal meaning and expression of self-determined purpose which many people get from their own creativity. If we look at some of the inner qualities of creative work reported by artists and craftspeople, it is very clear that it has real, tangible qualities not so easily dismissed, which stand in sharp distinction from the managerialism discussed above.

There are two fundamental aspects to this. Firstly, creative work re-combines the conception of work with its execution, the separation of which was central to the very genesis of industrial management. This is fundamental to why creative work has the different quality and brings the different experience of work which makes it so germane to the expansion of wellbeing. It is this recombination of conception and execution which enables creative work to bring experiences of creative flow, of personal competence, of the imaginative use of tacit knowledge (Schon 1991, Polanyi 2009), which are reported by creative people as a vivid characteristic of their professional work. It is this which gives their interactions with the world a quality so very different from anything conceived by managerialism. Secondly, regular features of creative work go beyond purely individual experiences. Creative practitioners often report on how communities of like-minded people self-organized into informal cultural networks and spaces, which help to stimulate co-creative relationships and collaborative forms of working (Shorthose 2011). This in turn generates mutual forms of support, joint motivations and shared purposes – sometimes artistic, but also social, cultural and ethical - which differ markedly from the more orthodox workplace cultures. So, there is a social component to the way in which creative work is often much more germane to a sense of wellbeing. There is merit in more detailed inquiry into these two fundamental features.

Recombining Conception and Execution

In his seminal work *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (1974), Braverman has shown that separating the *conception* of work – the thinking, planning and conceiving aspects – from the *execution* of said work is the basic fact which has led to industrial work being so antithetical to wellbeing. Because it fragments the work, it fragments the person. Even in more contemporary professional settings the whole person tends to become reduced to mere function – the hand is separated from the head, the function is separated from the person, professional conduct is separated from more general ethical responsibilities (see also Illich 1982).

But alternative conceptions and modes of work, although dramatically reduced in prevalence since the industrial revolution, never really went away. It is sometimes still referred to as craft work, but today is also often linked to the idea of creative work. And for the people who live in and through such creative work, it is central to their sense of wellbeing. Indeed, some commentators (Csikczentmihaly 1996, Gardener 2011) have specifically related creative work to the origins of human flourishing and routes to the 'good life'. In recent years such conceptual discussions have been supplemented by more descriptive accounts from creative practitioners themselves concerning their own concrete personal experiences of creative work, and how these experiences have contributed to their sense of wellbeing (Crawford 2009, 2015, Gawunde 2007, Korn 2013, Madhaven 2013, Sennett 2008). Perhaps the most notable feature shared by these accounts is how the end point or *inherent meaning* of the work is thoroughly integrated into the concrete practices of doing it. The separation of conception from execution which defines the industrial organization of work ensures that work is only experienced as a means to an end laying beyond the control of the individual doing the work. Their sense of creative work on the other hand clearly re-integrates the doing of the work, the meaning thereof and the person involved. The *means* - the skills, tools and materials and the *ends* – the meaning, the ultimate uses and inherent beauty of the created outcomes are re-united. And it is this central point, an authentic re-integration of ideas and practice; thinking and doing; the head and the hand all in pursuit of a self-determined goal, which is fundamental to why creative work can lead to more authentic experiences of wellbeing compared to managerialist conceptions. It is central to why creativity-oriented accounts of work speak of felt experiences which allow personal knowledge to also become self-expression and more vivid engagements with the world pursued within the everyday lives of the practitioners (see also Polanyi 1998).

And when we look at the finer detail of this, we see that opportunities to realize *personal competence* is a commonly expressed source of such wellbeing by practitioners. For instance, Crawford (2009), an engineer, sees developing personal competence through daily practice as something which allows his work to become a personal vocation. This stimulates him towards a greater sense of *reflective self-awareness*, a work experience which simultaneously sits within, grows out of, and reflects upon the way his personal competence is a constant conversation between what is do-able, what is useful and his very existence. This is perhaps

why accounts of creative work all tend to speak of the sense of personal care or *diligence* kept at its centre. Experiences of wellbeing seem to flow from creativity when time is available to be diligent towards the details of the daily practical doing of the work itself. This in turn seems to animate a more general concern with *doing the right thing*, a sense of values and ethics to which we will return below. Perhaps not surprisingly, given these intimate inner connections between ends and means, between meaning and practice, Crawford talks about his work is a holistic experience, akin to being more of a master (mistress) of one's own. For him this experience of work seems to embody a (re)hearing, (re)learning, (re)seeing and (re)remembering of personal experiences of *his* work fully integrated into the context of his life as a whole.

By experiencing personal competence, cherishing diligence and working according to personal meaning, creative work provides greater wellbeing via a heightened sense of *immersion* in the actual concrete doing of it. When reporting this greater sense of immersion in their work, creative workers often report experiences of their work as a time and space of heightened self-knowledge, self-expression and self-worth. Polanyi (1998) argues that this texture flows from a *focal awareness* - a heightened experience of immediate engagement with the world through one's specific actions (See also Sennett 2008). Motivations to engage in such work will vary from person to person and situation to situation. But it is clear that creative work offers more potential for the *autotelic* – where the rewards lie thoroughly within the work itself, as opposed to the *exotelic* – where the rewards can only come from external factors outside of the work. And it is the autotelic which speaks of a sense of work which is radically open to individual choices and purposes conceived as something far beyond the integration of the individual into an alienating work organization. Ultimately, this speaks of experiences of work which are of unique importance to the human condition - using our innate creative capacities to demonstrate our existence to ourselves and others; to experience our lives through our potential for flourishing; to express all aspects of what we are capable of as an integration of ourselves into the world. It is this which really speaks of relationships between work and wellbeing.

Csikzentmihaly (1996) has called the experience of this deep integration of self and work *creative flow*. It involves experiencing an immediate feedback loop between one's focal awareness and its broader meaning as a vivid, life affirming experience (See also Crawford 2009, Korn 2013). There is a pleasurable balance between the challenges which the work presents and the personal skills one has to meet them. This also entails the pleasure of working 'at the edge' of what one is capable of without fear of failure, boredom or anxiety. One is aware of one's growing competencies at the same time that one is using them, such that concrete action and self-awareness merge, distractions fade away and any debilitating facets of self-doubt disappear. The work becomes more thoroughly autotelic, as the doing of the work becomes, in and of itself, the reward. The work becomes synonymous with a sense of purpose because the experience of work becomes a vivid expression of *intentionality* (Tallis 2011) with a profound property of 'about-ness' to it.

But these pleasurable experiences come more truly come to life when they lead to something concrete in the world. In this context Tallis goes on to discuss *extensions* - concrete manifestations of the creative capacities of the self via using tools and developing relationships which lead to actual creative outcomes. It is via intentionality and extensions that Tallis argues we experience an internal dialogue between our sense of self and our reflections thereupon (Tallis 2011). And this brings us to our second fundamental point. Tallis is at pains to point out that intentionality and extension denote a sense of work which proceeds through interactions between each individual and the world(s) of other people. It is regularly an experience of work that goes far beyond the purely personal.

Beyond Individual Experiences

As such, creative work is germane to the expansion of wellbeing because it embodies ways in which people come together to interact in more open and convivial ways to pursue common purposes (Illich 1973). Creative work, intimately connected as it often is to broader cultural life, is inherently inter-relational and leads to what Tallis calls the expression of *meant meaning* - being able to mutually refer to and share each other's meanings and live more vividly as fellow human beings. Buber (1992) makes a very similar point, referring to the inherently 'inter-subjective' nature of culture and creativity. But not only do we share meanings, we self-reflectively know that we share them, we share our shared-ness through the meant meanings that creative work can lead us to. This is partly why creative work is often connected to the shared sense of wellbeing involved in the work relations forged through co-creative interactions and shared dialogues (Buber 2004, Rogers 1980).

These shared experiences of co-creative work often find an 'organizational' expression through *self-organization* – whereby people create their own ways of doing creative work together out of the simple fact of taking part in those very co-creative processes. There is no external management and little in terms of organizational structure within these self-organized networks, given that there are almost entirely built from everyday social and cultural relationships. They are not limited to any formal sense of occupational time, place or functional role, but are often vital to stimulating and sustaining cooperative creative efforts in myriad important ways. Not least because they enable people to experience more convivial ways of working and living together without the hierarchy and fragmentation which orthodox work organizations tend to impose (Sennett 2013, Shorthose 2011)). They also persist over many years, even though the people who make up may come and go. As such we can see them as a kind of social infrastructure (Klinenberg 2018) – an informal creative infrastructure which stems purely from the actions of people taking part in them. As such, they are highly *emergent* (Johnson 2002).

As already noted above, relationships within work have just as much bearing upon wellbeing

as the nature of the work itself. So, these informal, self-organized creative spaces hint at intriguing possibilities. Increased conviviality is both the social attitude which gives *rise to them* and the subsequent experience of wellbeing gained from *being in them*. They are often the antithesis of our common cultural tropes of individualism. As an emergent expression of conviviality, such co-creative networks and communities can lead to greater wellbeing born simply of people being aware of being in the same emotional and ethical place as others, what Carl Rogers has called *congruence* (Rogers 1980. See also Johnson 2010, Singer 1997, Russell 1960). Such creative networks of relationships grounded within concrete actions and attitudes can become a shared sense of creative purpose guided by *genuine dialogue* (Buber 2004). This can lead to experiences of wellbeing via work which flow from experiences far beyond those of the work itself. By facilitating greater wellbeing via non-alienated ways of working, together, these relationships also help to articulate a different kind of *economic conscience* (Shorthose 2011) – finding proactive ways to do the right thing, grow self-conscious expressions of one's own flourishing, developed within mutual co-creativity with others as part of the daily cadence of life. A much more profound experience of the interrelationship between work, wellbeing and creativity compared to the managerialist conceptions discussed above.

Whilst this look at reports of creative work and its relationship to wellbeing from both theorists and practitioners might be informative, it is currently something which only the few experience when compared with the common experiences of work as alienated and a chronic barrier to wellbeing. So, what are the prospects of re-organizing work so that more people might experience creative work as something characterized by features similar to those discussed above? How can the expansion of work as a co-creative experience be expanded and consolidated? How do changes to the broad economic and technological context of work organization impact upon these questions? In short, let us now turn to the politics of work and the role of social infrastructure as it relates to an expansion of creative work.

The Politics of Work and the Role of Social Infrastructure

The objective economic and technological conditions which shape common experiences of work are changing - technological unemployment appears to be on the horizon for many; the relative weakening of orthodox work organization as the locus of everyday life, routine and identity is with us; the logic of universal income schemes increasingly fits with the underlying imperatives of the market economy (Bregman 2017, Standing 2019, 2017, Walker 2014). These existing trends hint at the near future of more free time for people to turn to self-determined creative work. These identifiable social and economic trends suggest that ideas concerning the expansion of self-determined creative work as a source of expanded wellbeing is not a utopian argument. Rather it might be more of a question of overcoming the 'containment' (Marcuse 1964) for progressive social and cultural change which some will no doubt lobby for. And for this there is great practical potential within building upon the many disparate cultural micro-experiments already being successfully developed around the world

(Fisher and Ponniah 2003, Sen 1999, Nussbaum 2001). A sense of pulling together elements of what is already happening given changing objective conditions, as opposed to inventing something entirely new is at the heart of this.

For instance, the ideas of Andre Gorz (1982) have for many years been the most convincing account of how alternatives to the currently orthodox organization of work might be conceived. Long before the prospect of widespread technological unemployment became commonplace, Gorz recognized that work was becoming de-skilled to the extent that such work could be shared out more evenly. This spoke of prospects for the humanization of work based upon the practical expansion of free time given more evenly shared amounts of work.

The more contemporary work of Bregman (2017), which discusses technological unemployment as the context for the development of universal income schemes, brings these conceptual discussions up to date. Moreover, the technological changes we have witnessed since Gorz's time suggest that the changes to work organization envisaged by him might now coincide with the very logic of industrial society. The prospect of wide-spread technological unemployment is itself being created by the industrial economy, and so its own internal dynamic is moving society towards a situation whereby orthodox work will no longer be the central facet of everyday life it has been for so long. If technological unemployment was only to lead to chronic widespread poverty (on a scale much greater than now), then the goods and services which the economy supplies would become unsaleable. No matter how far the individual business might wish to drive down their wage bills by utilizing technologies to replace workers, they still need to be in a society able to buy whatever is being produced. It is good for each individual business to have their own wages low, but it is also good to have everyone else's wages high! This is but one of the many fundamental contradictions of capitalism, one which threatens to freeze economic circulations if and when high levels of technological unemployment becomes the norm. It brings structural macro-economic threats to investments, fiscal policy and public spending. But it also threatens the consumption end of the economy, the one which influences the everyday lives of people and workplaces most directly. Hence the embryonic experiments with some version of universal income we are beginning to see. The very teleology of technological unemployment requires them. Over and above these technological and economic aspects, some cultural shifts also seem to be developing which are germane for new ideas concerning work, wellbeing and creativity. The consumerism lifestyle, so dominant in western societies for so long, necessitated wage maximization to pay for such a lifestyle. But this appears to be weakening somewhat as people increasingly seek a new balance between work and life, so as to have more free time to pursue fulfilling experiences rather than the possession of objects.

Whilst Establishment discussions concerning some form of universal basic income are taking place at the highest levels, it is still unclear how they will develop and what their implementation will mean (Srnicek and Williams 2016, Standing 2019). A central question

within this is the extent to which the re-organization of work will happen in a humane way. If work is to be re-organized across more of society and be a greater source of wellbeing, then lessons from creative work will be a useful part of this politics. But the lessons concerning how creative work might lead to greater wellbeing will not be obvious to everyone, ways of being creative will not be familiar, access to resources and other 'tools for conviviality' will not be immediate for many. Educational and cultural initiatives to answer these questions and make self-directed creative work viable for the many will be needed. And this implies a cultural dimension to the politics of how we develop a humane post-work society. Srnicek and Williams (2016) seem to imply such notions, which they rather dismissively refer to as 'folk politics' are a distraction from the 'counter-hegemonic' politics they advocate. As they put it,

> *At its heart, folk politics is the guiding intuition that immediacy is always better and often more authentic… folk politics typically remains reactive (responding to actions initiated by corporations and governments, rather than initiating actions)., ignores long-term strategic goals in favour of tactics (mobilizing around single-issues politics or emphasizing process); prefers practices that are often fleeting (such as temporary autonomous zones); chooses familiarities with the past over the unknowns of the future (for instance, the repeated dreams of a return to 'good' Keynesian capitalism); and expresses itself as a predilection for the voluntarist and spontaneous over the institutional (as in the romantization of rioting and insurrection).* (Srnicek and Williams 2013. P.11)*

Given this characterization, Srnicek and Williams would no doubt be rather dismissive of the argument put forward here as being far too redolent of this folk politics. But whilst it is undeniable that the hegemony around markets and economic technocracy has advanced markedly since the 1980's, the persistence of alternative visions of work and myriad experiments in alternative ways of living remain as testaments that this hegemony has not yet triumphed. The cultural realm is likely to remain the realm where the counter-hegemony which Srnicek and Williams call for will continue to find its new expressions and gain it real life energies. To suggest that this cultural realm is only reactive to the initiatives of corporations and governments is to simply ignore the evidence from a whole world of alternative ways of living and new forms of economic and social solidarity which persist in ways thoroughly outside and beyond the corporate. And especially when we come such thoroughly experiential issues as wellbeing, the cultural realm will need to be part of any political considerations about its expansion via creative work. The idea that this is merely 'single-issue' politics is a facile argument. The ecological movement is well aware of feminism; co-farmers and hack spacers are well aware of those building their own homes; human rights activists are well aware of the efficacies of the alternative technology movements in the developing world. Much more could be done to seek and express commonalities across these various cultural and political facets, but to dismiss all these aspects as folk politics, and therefore of less import than the politics of structural issues and state policy is to take a rather strange idea of what politics *is*. The re-

organization of work for an expansion of wellbeing is an equally valid component of envisaging a progressive future given the advent of technological unemployment, and we should not be apologetic about the fact that facets of it will emerge and grow from a temporary autonomous zone. Srnicek and Williams seem to favour the 'institutional' over the 'temporary' and 'romanticized'. If so, perhaps they should perhaps then allow that alternatives emerge from practical doing and living, and only then become established as institutions - which only really means that they become more regularized. Such practical demonstrations of things such as the re-organization of work and expanded experiences of wellbeing for more people are likely to have greater 'counter-hegemonic' impact than the conceptual calls between academics alone. Indeed, as this is already happening it may be time to envisage practical ideas for the *how*, *why* and *with what* of expanded wellbeing, rather than arguing about which type of political position is best in the abstract.

If this is folk politics, then so be it. So long as it entails expanding the beneficial possibilities of creative work to those injured by alienated work in ways which avoid technological unemployment descending into further social isolation and cultural fragmentation. Developing social capacities and practical facilities to help people find their own creative self-expressions, as part of their own particular conception of the good life, in concert with others, as a route to greater wellbeing is but one facet of this. And this highlights the central value of developing social infrastructure, and particular cultural and creative facets thereof, to encourage the expansion of wellbeing within work.

Some of this is already there if one looks in the right places. Myriad micro-experiments concerning new creative work relationships abound - many towns and cities now have a creative hub of some kind, many run creative networking projects, offer creative work spaces and have initiated tool libraries and hack space which are having an impact beyond just the Arts. More traditional social and cultural spaces such as libraries are finding new purposes in helping to support creativity and articulate new ways of enacting political, cultural and ethical motivations within concrete co-creativity (Klinenberg 2018). The Web will continue to be a vehicle for these convivial micro-experiments by making peer-to-peer and Open Source orientations for mutual support more possible (Leadbeater 2008, Shirkey 2010, von Hippel 2006). In his magisterial work *The Wealth of Networks*, Benkler (2006) goes as far as to argue that such possibilities offer the basis for a 'new political economy' which might challenge the containment of progressive changes towards an expansion of wellbeing through creative work.

Communal engagements with(in) a revived public cultural realm will also help to foster greater wellbeing beyond purely individual experiences of one's own creativity. Anthropological research (Dissanyake 1995, Harth 1995, Hyde 2006, McIntosh 2001, Shorthose and Maycroft 2011, 2012, 2017, Shorthose and Strange 2004) has shown how relationships born of doing creative work together leads to a self-affirming sense of those very relationships and gives rise to further creative work. In particular, Dissanyake (1995) has argued that through the creation

of public cultural rituals, ceremonies and festivals, groups of people are able to come together for mutual benefit and achieve things they would not otherwise be capable of. A public realm born of mutual experiences of that very mutuality operate to 'make special' that which is useful for concrete, practical purposes. Through 'making special', a deeper level of shared meaning and sense of mutual existence is engendered. The creative networks I have lived and worked in over recent years have shown a direct analogy to this – the shared events which make special shared meanings do indeed seem to forge a greater sense of shared practical effort geared towards concrete co-creative work, which in itself re-forges the appetite to congregate again around those very shared meanings. Albeit in embryonic forms, albeit at very local levels, albeit only in very nascent expressions which are rather temporary, spontaneous and haphazard, these convivial ways of working together nevertheless add to the picture of creative work as a practical route to expanded wellbeing.

But this suggests that by developing social infrastructure society can work towards a *regularization of wellbeing*. Established cultural venues could expand their remit to take on such a role - schools and universities could grasp the potential in this to enable people to pursue their creative purposes; public libraries can and are re-positioning themselves to become spaces of practical wellbeing. Much is already happening, but these kinds of public institutions can expand their capacity to support creative work as part of a broader civic purpose in many ways. Let's give the final word to Klinenberg (2018),

> *When social infrastructure is robust, it fosters contact, mutual support, and collaboration amongst friends and neighbors… social infrastructure is crucially important, because local, face-to-face interactions – at the school, the playground, and the corner diner – are the building blocks of all public life. People forge bonds in places that have healthy social infrastructure – not because they set out to build community, but because when people engage in sustained, recurrent interaction, particularly while doing things they enjoy, relationships inevitably grow* (Klinenberg 2018, p. 5).

It always feels rather inelegant to speak of the future of other peoples' lives. Who know what the future will bring? But if Klinenberg's statement is something like a definition of why social infrastructure should be strengthened and expanded, a role can envisage within that concerning the expansion of creative work for more people and the consequent expansion of wellbeing. It is a vision which is far from utopian. It is a very practical proposal concerning what the future of work might involve given the eminently achievable aim of expanding social infrastructures. Civic spaces, creative projects, informal creative networks, self-organized creative work spaces are here and are doing this work already. New relationships via creative work and an alternative sense of what work is *for* beyond the orthodox myths around it, are all being experimented with in myriad ways, in myriad realms of life. There are clear signs given the advent of technological unemployment and the economic logic of universal income schemes that orthodox work as the central facet of life is coming to an end. Expanding social infrastructure is but one way of

preparing for that future. And if it leads to one which enables more people to experience their capacities for work as self-directed creative purposes, experienced with others in a revitalized public realm, it is highly likely to increase the sum of wellbeing. Embracing the potential for expanded creativity for the many and supporting that by growing social infrastructures is part of a very viable future.

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