

Abstracts

Geoff Boucher

Regulation Theory and the Struggle for Recognition: Notes on Neoconservatism and Integration Crisis

In this paper I venture an understanding of neoconservative governments in terms of a reactionary (mis-)recognition strategy. The basic intellectual framework that I propose for analysing neoconservatism combines the work of Jürgen Habermas with the research in political economy conducted by figures such as Bob Jessop and Michel Aglietta in the so-called Regulation School. I then combine this perspective with insights from Axel Honneth's recognition ethics to suggest that neoconservatism tries to solve the integration crisis of contemporary western democracies with a programme of 'culture wars' and authoritarian governance, one that has the effect of aggravating asymmetrical forms of recognition.

Christophe Dejours

To be provided

Jean-Philippe Deranty

What is work? Key lessons from the French psychology of work

The conceptual definition of work is an area of philosophy where little conceptual progress has been made since the classical discussions of it by Smith, Marx, Arendt and Habermas. It is also a classical conundrum in sociology. In fact, it is an area of great conceptual confusion in the social sciences since a single discipline, economic theory, has come up with its own definition of work without worrying too much about how other disciplines characterise it, and now occupies a position of hegemony, not just in academic disciplines, but also in public discourse. This institutional hegemony, however, is far from making other approaches irrelevant. The paper centres around a school of psychology of work arising out of the research of Christophe Dejours, which defines work as the activity required of the subjects to bridge the gap between the prescriptive characterisation of the tasks and the reality of their performance. The paper will argue that the psychological definition of work elaborated has implications that far extend the narrow psychological angle. The paper suggests that the definition of work as working in fact speaks directly, in substantive and critical ways, to philosophers, social theorists and social scientists working on questions related to work, including and especially economic theorists. More specifically, I try to highlight the important insights this definition of work brings to a recognition-theory approach to work.

Axel Honneth

Work and Recognition. A Redefinition

In this lecture I want to ask how we have to incorporate the category of societal labor into the framework of social theory so that the prospects for qualitative improvement can be more than merely utopian. In order to get at this complex problem, I first want to propose that we apply the distinction between external and immanent criticism to a critique of currently existing relations of work. We can only speak of immanent criticism, in which normative demands no longer

merely have the character of mere wishes, if the idea of meaningful and secure work already constitutes a rational claim embedded in the structures of social reproduction themselves (I). Second, I aim to show that societal labor can only take on this role of an immanent norm if it is linked to the conditions of recognition prevailing in the modern exchange of services [*Leistungsaustausch*]. Every instance of work that transcends the threshold of merely private, autonomous activity must be organized and structured in a certain specific way if it is to be worthy of societal recognition (II). Finally, I would like to develop the immanent demands connected to this structural linkage between work and recognition with reference to the organization of the modern world of work. This should make clear that the idea – which ultimately goes back to Durkheim – of a just organization of the division of labor has more normative impact than might appear at first sight (III).

Craig MacMillan

Recognition Theory and Heterodox Labour Economics: Points Of Contact

The encounter of recognition theory with the world of work will be enhanced if it can find useful dialogue partners within the discipline of economics. It is the argument of this paper that potentially fruitful points of contact will be found with heterodox labour economics. Institutionalism, a branch of heterodox economics, is one potential dialogue partner for recognition theory. The institutionalist approach postulates that it is the interplay of socio-cultural, political as well as economic forces that determine the structure and outcomes of labour markets. Consequently, the institutionalist approach adopts both a multidisciplinary perspective and a wide range of research methodologies when studying labour markets. In order to demonstrate the potential compatibility of institutionalism with recognition theory the paper will discuss a key institutionalist concept, the internal labour market. The paper will also examine the topic of workers' rights which is clearly an area of interest for recognition theory. Specifically, the paper will draw upon the work of the radical US labour economist Richard Edwards on rights at work. An issue that will receive particular attention is that of enterprise rights, which are normally articulated in employee handbooks. These rights have proved difficult to enforce yet they are of great significance for workers in non-union workplaces.

Paul Redding

The Role of Work within the Processes of Recognition in Hegel's Idealism

The theory of recognition at the centre of much recent political philosophy has its origins in the idealist philosophies of Fichte and Hegel. While Fichte introduced the notion in the context of his theory of rights, Hegel generalized it so that it became one of the key concepts of his multi-layered idealist philosophy of spirit. From both the well-known “master-slave dialectic”, found in chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and the treatment of “civil society” in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, we can reconstruct some of the logical structure of Hegel's “recognitive” treatment of the processes and objects of work in order to shed some light on his conception of practical reason and personal identity. Against this background, I say something about how Hegel's analysis might help us to understand some of the consequences of the technical transformation of the activities of work characteristic of the modern world.

Emmanuel Renault

The Political Invisibility of Work

Why should political philosophy be interested in work ? The issue of work has been less and less considered in the political sphere since the 1970s and some sociologists speak nowadays of a political and social invisibilization of work. At the same time, political philosophy also began to focus on issues such as democracy and social justice in a way that tended to marginalize the political and social problems linked with work. This paper addresses the following question : how should political philosophy contend with this invisibilization and marginalization and what would be at stake in such critical attempts?

Beate Roessler

Meaningful Work: In Defense of (Weak) Perfectionism.

Most social-philosophical theories of work nowadays assume that they cannot say anything normatively interesting about the quality, or the character, of work, and the meaning which work has (or might and should have) for social subjects. They restrict themselves, for philosophical reasons, to normative claims concerning the conditions of work in a free and just society. Theories which do not want to restrict themselves in this way are being dismissed as either marxist or perfectionist (or, obviously, both). The theory of recognition, although arguing not within a liberal tradition but within the tradition of critical social theory, does not differ here from liberal positions. In my paper, I want to discuss some problems which, I think, these liberal as well as recognition-theoretic approaches get caught up with: the problem of the necessity and significance of work for the society as a whole; the problem of the personal identity of the working subject; and the problem of the relation between the autonomy of the social subject and her work. In this discussion, I shall try to defend a (modest or weak) form of perfectionism.

John Rundell

Work in Societies of Strangers

'This paper argues that the condition of modernity, generally, is the condition of absolute strangers, in which their phenomenological experience is one of mobility, contingency and the diremption of forms of life. Whilst this may be viewed as a form of estrangement or alienation, or as a post-modern condition of the motility of the ever-present, this condition is a 'normal' one when viewed from the perspective of the longer history of modernity. As such, working within the modern condition, whether Fordist or post-Fordist, assumes that one is working with other absolute strangers. The working day structures relations of sociability, from generalised and positive indifference to negative indifference; to forms of friendships and affections bound by shared experiences and mutually expressed bonds of trust (irrespective of whether these are implicitly or explicitly articulated); to forms of power - whether contested or otherwise, which can take the forms of the tactics of surveillance, management-talk, collective forms of action, corporatism, or neo-liberal individualisation. In this context, the world of work for absolute strangers is not individualistic or individualistically structured, notwithstanding the (neo)-liberal representation and ideal. Rather, the working day is complex and presents many forms of work and sociability within the context of modern functional arrangements and divisions. Hence, rather than beginning with the structure of Marx's labour theory of value imbedded in his

mysterious first chapter in *Capital*, Vol 1, this paper begins with the tone of his tenth chapter - 'The Working Day' - with a Marx that is beyond Marx.'

Nicholas Smith

Three Normative Models of Work

My presentation takes its departure from two social facts that are plain for any observer of (at least Australian) society to see. First, uncertainty and anxiety about the worth of work, of how and why it matters. This is reflected in the steady stream of newspaper columns on the 'work-life balance', the 'stressed society', and so forth, as well as scientific studies showing deterioration in the quality of work experience. Second, there is normative conflict between workers and their traditional representatives on the one side, and advocates of the 'liberalisation' of the workplace on the other. This conflict is visible in the extraordinary class war by advertising currently being played out in the Australian media, and more generally in the social movement mobilised around the 'deregulation' of work.

These two features of work – its contribution to a defining malaise of our times and its significance as a site of social struggle - suggest that work should be central to critical social theory (given how that kind of theory understands itself). But for some time now the thought has been that critical social theory is conceptually ill-equipped for understanding the full moral significance of work. I then distinguish three normative models of work that vie for the allegiance of the critical theorist: the instrumental/pragmatic model; the 'recognition-theoretic model' and the 'expressive-constitutive model'. I argue that while the recognition-theoretic model marks an improvement on the instrumental model, there are features of the 'normativity' of work that the expressivist model is better positioned to capture.

Shaun Wilson

After the end of work – recognising the role of work in contemporary societies

Twenty years have passed since social commentators began to forecast an 'end of work' in western democracies, predicting permanently high unemployment, the decline of a work-centred social life (including a work ethic) and a headache for progressive politics that could no longer advocate full employment as the main building block for reform. It is a good time to reconsider the value of this argument, its impact on the social sciences, and its usefulness as a framework for recasting progressive politics.

This paper considers the impact of the 'end of work' thesis, questioning three main elements of this thesis: the inevitable decline of employment levels; the increasingly marginal role work will play in personal and social identity; and, the improbability of a future progressive politics with a work-centred vision of social welfare at its centre.

I will argue that work – as a social category – has retained, and is likely to retain, an important role, even if this role is still searching for adequate, new theoretical and political bearings.