

**FROM MANUAL WORKERS
TO WAGE LABORERS
TRANSFORMATION OF THE
SOCIAL QUESTION**

ROBERT CASTEL
TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY
RICHARD BOYD



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That which we have in front of us is the vision of a society of workers without work, that is to say, deprived of the one activity that remains for them. One can imagine nothing worse.—Hannah Arendt

I would wish that specialists in the social sciences likewise find in history a means of knowledge and of research. Isn't the present nothing other than the most prized morsel of a past determined to survive, and the past, by its rules, its differences, and its similarities, the indispensable key to all knowledge of the present? —Fernand Braudel

No matter how far as we go back in time, we shall never lose sight of the present.—Emile Durkheim

Translator's Preface

Maybe the best evidence of wage-labor's pervasiveness in modern society is the rich and complex vocabulary we (often unthinkingly) use to describe it. These ambiguities come vividly to light during the translation process. The French "*salariat*," "*salarié*," and the notion of a "*société salariale*" (or indeed the adjective "*salariale*" itself) present special difficulties. For the former, I have generally chosen "wage-labor," "wage-earner" and "wage-earning society," respectively, and the adjective "wage-earning" more generally. Because of the American connotation of "salaried" as someone who receives a fixed monthly "salary" for professional services—in contrast to one who is paid an hourly "wage" for (largely) manual labor—I've succumbed to the temptation of the unfamiliar English adjective "salarial" only in later chapters where it seemed appropriate. Beyond these particulars, I have tried as much as possible to preserve the author's neologisms in all cases where a more standard English-language or social-scientific equivalent was not readily at hand. Whenever the results of strictly applying the preceding rules seemed to me either monotonous or barbarous, I have not hesitated to disregard them. This translation would not have been possible without the assistance of several people. The extraordinary patience of Irving Louis Horowitz and Mary Curtis throughout the project is a testament both to their professionalism and personal understanding. Laurence Mintz of Transaction Publishers went well beyond the call of duty in editing the book. Ms. Avital Rabin, my research assistant at the University of Chicago, kindly transcribed most of the footnotes. With her characteristic patience and grace Séverine Rosée rescued me from countless errors and mistranslations. The remaining shortcomings of this translation are mine alone.

RB

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Preface

It seems to me that in these times of uncertainty, when the past has escaped us and the future is indeterminate, we must marshal our memory in order to try to understand the present. Perhaps such grand tableaux, like grand theories, are no longer in style today. But can we really afford to abbreviate such a long detour if we wish to understand the specifics of how we have arrived *hic et nunc*? In particular, contemporary circumstances are marked by a recent upheaval threatening the system of wage labor: massive unemployment and the insecurity of many jobs, the failure of traditional networks of social protections to deal with these conditions, the proliferation of individuals who occupy the position in society of “supernumeraries,” either “unemployable,” unemployed or employed only precariously and intermittently. Henceforth, for many individuals, the future bears the imprimatur of jeopardy.

But what counts as a hazardous condition, and how should we begin to make sense of it? We forget that wage-labor, which today occupies the vast majority of those who work, and to which most of our protections against social risk are inextricably tied, has long been among the most uncertain, as well as undignified and miserable, of conditions. One was a wage earner whenever he was nothing else, and had nothing to exchange other than the force of his arms. Someone fell into the position of wage earner when his conditions had deteriorated: the ruined artisan, the tenant whose land would no longer sustain him, the journeyman who could never become a master, and so on. To be or to fall to the level of wage laborer was to be put into a condition of dependency, to be condemned to live “from day to day,” to find one’s self subject to the empire of necessity. An archaic inheritance, which makes the earliest forms of wage labor little more than painful manifestations that were only euphemistically modeled on the feudal *corvée*. But this is not so far removed from us after all. If we recall, for example, that the main governing party of the Third Republic, the Radical Party,

included in its platform stemming from its Congress of Marseille, in 1922, the “abolition of wage labor, a survival of slavery.”¹

It is no small matter to try to understand how wage labor has been able to overcome these fantastic handicaps in order to become in the decade of the 1960s the basic framework for modern “wage-earning society.” But to try to give some account of this is not just a matter for the historian. Some deeper sociohistorical characterizations of the place occupied by wage labor are necessary in order for us to take the full measure of the threat of fracture that haunts contemporary societies and pushes to the foreground the themes of precariousness, vulnerability, exclusion, segregation, relegation, disaffiliation, etc. Although it is true that these questions have been put forward only in the past twenty years, they are posed after and with respect to an earlier context of social protections, which were slowly replaced by the imposition of powerful systems of coverage against risk guaranteed by the social State which only began, in truth, with the consolidation of the wage-earning condition. This new vulnerability, defined and conceived on the basis of protections, is thus entirely different from the uncertainty of yesterday that characterized, throughout the centuries, the common condition of those we call “the people.” Indeed there is no point in speaking today of a “crisis” unless we are prepared to take the full measure of this juxtaposition. What is it that distinguishes—that it so say, what is both shared by and different from—earlier conditions of large-scale vulnerability and the precariousness of today, wrought by the processes of a breakdown with respect to the still vigorous networks of stability?

Such is the kind of intelligibility I strive to produce here. If history occupies such a large place in this work, it is the *history of the present* that it relates to: the effort to reconsider the upheaval of the most contemporary circumstances by reconstructing the transformations that our current conditions have inherited. Turning toward the past with a question that is our own today, and to write the account of its dawning and of its main pathways. It is this that I wish to attempt, because the present is not just the contemporaneous. It is also an effect of a heritage, and the recollection of this heritage is vital in order for us to understand and to manage today.

But what current problems will we be attempting to bring to light? Over time, an analysis of our relationship to labor has come to occupy a more and more important place in this book. This is not, however, the point of departure of this reflection. At the outset, there

was—and remains still—the intention of giving some account of the uncertainty of status, of the fragility of the social bond, of itinerants whose pathways are threatened. The concepts that I try to develop—of what I call “social deconversion,” “negative individualism,” “large-scale vulnerability,” “handicapology,” “social invalidation,” “disaffiliation”—make sense only within the framework of a problematic of social integration, or in its absence, of anomie. Indeed, this is a meditation on the preconditions for social cohesion that begins with the analysis of certain extreme cases of disaffiliation. The goal was thus, and remains, to get a sense of this new contemporary variable: the presence, apparently more and more insistently, of individuals who virtually drift about within the social structure, and who populate these interstices of society without, however, finding any established position within it. Vague silhouettes, at the margins of labor and at the frontiers of socially consecrated forms of exchange—the long-time unemployed, inhabitants of abandoned suburbs, recipients of a national minimum income, victims of industrial downsizing, young people in search of employment who carry themselves from place to place, from menial jobs to temporary work—who are these people, where did they come from, and what will become of them?

These questions are not those traditionally posed by the sociology of work, and my intention is not to enter into them. However, by forcing myself to go beyond the empirical descriptions of these situations, it appears to me that the analysis of the relationship to labor (or, to the lack of work, or intermittent relationships to work) represents a determinative factor for situating them back within the social dynamic that has created them. I do not envision here labor as merely a technical relationship of production, but as a privileged support by means of which we fit into the social structure. Indeed there is a strong correlation, which we will confirm over the entire period, between the place that one occupies in the social division of labor and one’s participation in networks of sociability and in systems of protection that “cover” an individual confronted with the vagaries of existence. From this arises the possibility of constructing what I shall metaphorically call the various “zones” of social cohesion. Thus, the link between stable work and durable social relationships makes up a zone of “integration.” Conversely, the absence of any participation in productive activities and relative social isolation give way to the negative effects of “exclusion,” or

rather, as I will try to show, of “disaffiliation.” Somewhere in between these, “social vulnerability” is an intermediate, unstable zone that goes along with the precariousness of work and the fragility of proximate supports.

Properly understood, these affinities do not apply in a strictly mechanical sense. For example, for many popular groups, the precariousness of their jobs has often been compensated for by the density of the networks of social protection offered by neighbors or others close to them. Above all, these configurations are not given once and for all. With the advent, for example, of an economic crisis, the rise of unemployment, the generalization of underemployment: the zone of vulnerability expands, impinging on that of integration and increasing the dangers of disaffiliation. The makeup of the various equilibria between these “zones” can thus—or such at least is my hypothesis—serve as a unique indicator of the cohesion of an entire society at any given moment.

Apparently, it is a matter then, at least initially, of a formal grid. Only the analyses that it allows us to offer will confirm its validity. Two preliminary remarks, however, must be added to avoid the confusions carried by such a construction.

First, this social grid does not precisely mirror social stratification. For example, there may be some groups that are strongly integrated but only weakly provided for. This is the case of artisans in a corporatist structure that generally guarantees, despite mediocre earnings, the stability of employment and solid protections against major social risks. Even better: there are examples of an integrated poverty, such as those of groups receiving assistance, for which the absence of resources gives rise to them being looked after in the form of what I call a “protection of proximity” (chapter 1). The economic dimension is therefore not the essential factor, and the question posed is not simply that of poverty, even though the risks of disaffiliation weigh more heavily upon those who are deprived of economic resources. Thus if it is not the most richly endowed who are our chief concern, neither is it necessarily the case that the “poorest” or the “most impoverished,” as such, are our main focus. Rather our main concern must be with the relationships prevailing between economic insecurity and social instability.²

Second, the model proposed is not static. It is less a matter of placing individuals in these “zones” than of clarifying the processes that carry them from one to the other, for example, passing from

integration to vulnerability, or descending from vulnerability into social nonexistence.³ What gives rise to these social spaces, how are they maintained, and above all else, how do they give rise to social status? This is why, in the face of the chorus of those today who speak of exclusion, I prefer the term “disaffiliation” to describe the end point of these processes. This is not merely to play with words. Exclusion is static. It designates a state, or rather several states of privation. But the constant of deficiencies does not allow one to assess the processes that have led to it. In order to apply such a notion with any degree of rigorousness, that will correspond to the model of a dual society, it must correspond to situations characterized by a precise geographical locality, by at least the relative coherence of a culture or a subculture, and, most often, by an ethnic basis. The American ghettos are reminiscent of associations of this kind, and we can speak in this context, even if the idea is contested, of an “underclass.” We are not there—at least not yet—in France. Even the “*beur*” phenomenon, despite its reference to ethnicity, does not arise from a specific culture. *A fortiori* there exists some culture common to all the different groups of “excluded.”

To speak of disaffiliation, on the other hand, is not to confirm a rupture but rather to retrace a process. The notion belongs to the same semantic root as dissociation, disqualification, or even social invalidation. But disaffiliated, dissociated, disqualified, or invalidated with respect to what? Herein lies the entire problem. We may notice already what register of analyses will be required by this choice. It must relocate these deficits in their historical trajectories, reconstruct the larger dynamics at play, and remain attentive to the pivotal points formed by the limiting conditions. To discover the relationship between the conditions one currently finds one’s self in and where one has come from, not to focus on the extreme situations, but to examine that which has passed toward the peripheries and what is coming on the horizon. We may see already that, from this perspective, the zone of vulnerability will occupy a strategic position. Reduced or controlled, it allows the stability of the social structure, either in the framework of a unified society (a form in which all members benefit from basic securities), or in the form of a consolidated dual society (a society like Sparta, where there no longer existed intermediary positions between full citizens and that of the helots they held in captivity). To the contrary, open and by extension, as is apparently the case today, the zone of vulnerability feeds

the tremors that shake inherited conditions and affront guaranteed statuses. This constant holds for the long term. Vulnerability is a secular stamp that marks the condition of the masses with the imprimatur of uncertainty, and most often of despair.

The subtitle of this work is the “Metamorphosis of the Social Question.”

“Metamorphosis,” as the dialectic of similarity and difference: in order to draw out the historical transformations of this model, to underline the fact that its main embodiments partake of both the novel and the permanent, even when they occur in forms that may not be immediately recognizable. For, strictly speaking, the particular contents that derive from concepts like stability, the precariousness or expulsion from work, relational insertion, the fragility of protective supports or social isolation are now entirely different from what they were in pre-industrial societies or in the nineteenth century. Indeed they are very different today from what they were only twenty years ago. However, it is a matter of demonstrating that, first, the groups that inhabit these “zones” occupy as a result of this fact an analogous position in the social structure. There is a correspondence of position between, for example, those “useless of the world” represented by vagabonds before the industrial revolution and different categories of the “unemployable” today.⁴

Second, that the processes that yield these conditions are likewise comparable, that is to say, analogous in their dynamic and different in their manifestations. There is still the problem of finding a stable place in the dominant forms of the organization of labor and in the recognized modes of communal belonging (but that has, in the mean time, between them, completely changed) that constitute the “supernumeraries” of former times, not so long ago, and even today. Third, that we can hardly be content to participate in the unfolding of a linear history whose begetting of profiles has guaranteed its continuity. To the contrary we should be astonished in the face of the discontinuities, bifurcations, innovations that will have to be resolved. For example, confronted by this extraordinary adventure of wage-labor—passing from almost utter discredit to the status of the main distributor of revenues and of protections. Insofar as such a “passage” is not the irresistible ascension of a reality generated by the dawn of history: at the moment of the installation of liberal society, the imperative to redefine the entirety of the relations of labor in a contractual framework represented just as pro-

found a break as the changing of the political regime simultaneously taking place. But, as fundamental as it was, this transformation was not imposed in a hegemonic and homogenous manner. At the moment when free wage-labor becomes the legally sanctioned form of the labor relationship, the condition of wage-labor remains still, and for long afterward, associated with precariousness and misery. This is the enigma of the growth of a multiplier of wealth that produces misery in the very midst of its diffusion. And today still we will be astonished by the curious reversal through which, after having been drawn from the matter, wage labor once again threatens to become a dangerous condition.

Thus the word “metamorphosis” is not a metaphor employed in order to imply the perennial nature of an essence that remains underneath the changes of its external attributes. To the contrary: a metamorphosis shakes certainties and transforms the entire social landscape. However, at their essence, these upheavals do not represent absolute innovations insofar as they remain inscribed in the framework of the same *problematic*. By problematic, I mean the existence of a unified set of questions (whose common characteristics we need to define), that emerged at a given moment (that we must date), which are reformulated several times throughout crises and in doing so incorporate new variables (and we must establish the stages of this transformation), and which remain live questions even today. It is because this inquiry remains alive that we must recur to its own history in order to construct the *history of the present*.⁵ If it is in fact forbidden to make use of a past that contradicts the demands of historical methodology, it does appear legitimate to me to pose questions of this historical material that historians themselves have not necessarily raised, and to revive it from the point of view of new categories, especially those of sociology. This is neither to recreate history, nor to revise it. But it is to re-read it, that is to say, to offer of variables entirely accessible to historians, *another reading*, which has both its own coherence beginning with a primarily sociological framework, but which will nonetheless be compatible with that of historians. The materials my argument rests upon are in the first instance historical, after all. But they are retained and redeployed in light of sociological categories that I have taken the liberty of introducing myself.⁶

“Metamorphosis of the *Social Question*.” The “Social Question” is a fundamental aporia through which a society experiences the

enigma of its own cohesion and tries to forestall the dangers of its disintegration. It is a complaint that interrogates, calls into question the capacity of a society (known in political terms as a nation) to exist as a collectivity linked by relations of interdependency.

This question, as such, is spoken of explicitly for the first time in the 1830s. It was raised then through an awareness of the living conditions of populations who were both the agents and the victims of the industrial revolution. This is the question of pauperism. This was an essential moment, when the divorce first appeared between a juridico-political order founded on the recognition of the rights of citizens and an economic order that carried with it widespread misery and demoralization. The conviction gradually sunk in that there was even then “a threat to the political and moral order,”⁷ or, even more forcefully: “One must either find an effective remedy for the plague of pauperism or prepare one’s self for the overthrow of the world.”⁸ We may understand by this that liberal society risks being shattered by the new social tensions that are the effect of a savage industrialization.

This split between the political organization and the economic system allows us to note, for the first time with clarity, the place of the “social”: to be deployed in this gap, to restore or establish new bonds that obey neither a strictly economic logic nor a strictly political authority. The “social” consists of systems of non-market regulations brought to bear to try to fill this chasm. The social question becomes thus in this context the question of the place to be occupied by the most desocialized fringes of workers in an industrial society. The response to this question will be the whole range of provisions set up to facilitate their integration.

However, even *before* this “invention of the social,”⁹ there was already a social. Thus the multiple institutional forms of non-market relations with respect to different categories of the poor (the practices and institutions of social assistance). But also the systematic modes of intervention with respect to certain groups: the repression of vagabondage, the obligation to work, control of the circulation of the labor force. Thus there existed not only what I will call the “social-assistential,” but also some public intervention through which the State played the role of upholding the organization of labor and the regulator of the mobility of workers. Why? Because a “social question” was already posed in the pre-industrial societies of Western Europe. The carefully intertwined interdepen-

dence of status relationships in a society of orders was threatened by the pressures exerted by all those who had been unable to find a place in the traditional system of labor. The question of vagabondage, we shall see, both expresses and disguises at the same time the fundamental demand for free access to labor from which productive relations will be redefined on a new basis.

But if the “social question” had already been raised even before its explicit formulation in the nineteenth century, must it not then remain an issue even *after* the vagaries of integrating the working classes have ceased to be an immediate issue? It is true that those events which took place between the first half of the nineteenth century and the decade of the 1960s are in the process of being forgotten. It is also the case that there is no longer a word to express the whole of the multiplicity of “social problems” that have taken its place. For example, the vogue of this notion of “exclusion,” whose indeterminacy comes to encompass a multitude of unhappy conditions without clarifying their connection to a common genre. What in effect distinguishes a chronically unemployed worker intertwined in the familial sphere with wife, apartment and television,¹⁰ from the youth whose imprisonment is the result of repeated errancy and of abortive explosions of rage?¹¹ They have neither the same past, nor the same future, nor the same existence nor the same values. They cannot sustain a common project and do not seem to be capable of overcoming their disorder through collective forms of organization.

But what unites situations as diverse as these is not so much any common traits of an empirical nature but rather a similarity of position with respect to economic restructuring and contemporary society. They are less excluded than left behind, like those stranded on a river bank after the current of productive exchanges has passed them by. All this comes to pass as though we have rediscovered with anguish the reality that, accustomed to economic growth, to semi-full employment, to the progress of integration and to the extension of social benefits, we nevertheless find conjured up before us, once again, the “useless of the world”—certain subjects and groups that have become redundant in the face of the ongoing acceleration of economic and social competencies.

This status is actually completely different than the position occupied by even the least favored members of society in the preceding variation of the social question. Thus, the manpower of the spe-

cialized worker, the OS of the last great worker's movements, probably exploited, was at least no less indispensable. Put differently, he remained tied to the whole of social exchanges. He was a part, even if he occupied the lowest rung, of an extended society, according to the Durkheimian model, as a collection of interdependent elements. From this it followed that his subordination might be understood in the context of a problematic of integration, that is to say, in its "reformist" incarnation, in terms of the reduction of inequalities, of policies of income, of increasing the social opportunities and means of cultural participation, or, in its "revolutionary" version, in terms of a complete overhaul of the social structure in order to guarantee everyone a real equality of conditions.

But the "supernumeraries" are not even exploited, for, in order to be so, it is necessary to possess some skills that may be converted into social value. They are superfluous. We can hardly imagine how they can represent a force of pressure, a potential struggle, if they are not taken upon each neuralgic sector of social life. Thus they undoubtedly represent a new theoretical and practical problem. If they are no longer in the strict sense of the word "actors," because they *make* nothing that is socially useful, how can they *exist* socially? This is in the sense where to exist socially means that one actually holds a place in society. For, at the same time, they are ever present—and this is the whole problem, for they are in abundance.

Herein lies the profound "metamorphosis" with respect to the preceding social question, which was to comprehend how a subordinate and dependent social actor might become a full-fledged social subject. Now, the question is rather to rationalize this presence, to render it discrete to the point of effacing it altogether (this is, we will see, entirely the effort of policies of insertion, conceived in the space of a reflux of policies of integration). Thus we are confronted with a new problem, *but not with an entirely different problematic*. Indeed we cannot isolate the condition of these populations placed at the margins, except to confirm the rupture that we have denounced by pretending to struggle against exclusion. The proposed historical detour will demonstrate that what gets crystallized at the margins of society—as in the case of vagabonds before the industrial revolution, the "miserable" of the nineteenth century, or the "excluded" of today—is embedded in a global social dynamic. This is a fundamental given that is imposed in the course of the research

through the analysis that I offer of the condition of vagabonds, and the lessons it offers for today: the social question is explicitly posed at the margins of social life, but it “calls into question” the entire society. There is here a kind of boomerang effect whereby the problems posed by groups stuck at the margins of a social structure will rebound toward its center. Consequently, just because we have entered into “post-industrial” society, or “post-modern” society, or whatever one wishes to call it, this does not preclude the conditions of those who are “out” still depending on the conditions or those who are “in.” There are still policies taken in the making of decisions—in matters of economic and social policy, the management of business, industrial reconversion, the search for competitiveness, etc.—that have repercussions experienced as shock waves in different spheres of social life. But the reverse is equally true. We can see that the powerful and the secure are not placed on an Olympian plateau from which they can dispassionately contemplate the misery of the world. Integrated, vulnerable, and disaffiliated alike belong to the same category, but one whose unity is problematic. It is the preconditions for forming and maintaining this problematic unity that we shall examine here. If the redefinition of economic efficiency and of social skills must be paid for at the expense of 10 percent, 20 percent, 30 percent or more of the population, can we still speak of belonging to the same social collectivity? What is the threshold of tolerance of a democratic society for that which I call “social invalidation,” rather than “exclusion”? This to my mind is the new social question. What can we do to put back into the social enterprise these groups invalidated by circumstances, and to put an end to the hemorrhage of disaffiliation that threatens to let the blood out of the social body?

The question posed is also that of the State, or of the role that the State can be called upon to play at this juncture. The social State (I shall explain later why I avoid speaking of the “providential state”) came into being at the intersection of the market and of labor. It was at least as powerful as the dynamics that it regulated: economic growth and the structuring of the wage-earning condition. If the economy is deregulated and the wage-earning condition is cut off, the social State loses its integrative power. But here again it may be a matter of a metamorphosis rather than a qualitative transformation. If we take the trouble of reconstructing the vagaries that it has endured, it becomes clear that a single, ideal form of the social State is not

inscribed somewhere in the universe of ideas. The circumstances after the Second World War were able to give the articulation of the economic and the social elaborated then a satisfying enough version that it has been tempting to think of this as quasi-definitive. Everyone knows that today we are no longer in an era of social compromises made possible by economic growth, but what can we say about this? Perhaps we are confronted by a contradiction: to accept a society entirely submitted to the exigencies of the market economy, or to construct an image of the social State on the scale of these new challenges. Our consent to the first alternative cannot be ruled out. But it risks coming at the costs of the downfall of wage-earning society, that is to say, by this overlooked montage of labor and of social protections that required so much pain before coming into being.

Emile Durkheim and the republicans at the end of the nineteenth century coined the term “solidarity” to describe this problematic bond that upheld the complementarity of parts of a society despite the increasing complexity of its organization. This is the foundation of the social compact. Durkheim reformulated this in these terms just at the moment when the advent of industrialization threatened those former solidarities that still contributed to the reproduction of an order founded on tradition and custom. At the dawn of the twentieth century, solidarity required society to deliberately take charge of itself, and it was to be the social State that would serve as the guarantor of this. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, when the regulations put in place in the context of industrial society are at their most attenuated point, it is perhaps this same social contract that must be redefined once again. Pact of solidarity, pact of labor, pact of citizenship: to conceive of the conditions of inclusion for all so that we can “have commerce together,” as it was said at the time of the Enlightenment, or in more contemporary terms, so that we can “make society.”

Note on the Problem of Comparison

In principle, the problematic that will be explored in the first part covers a large part of Europe west of the Elb: the geographic area of “Occidental Christianity,” which later became the “successful Europe,” to recall the expressions of Pierre Chaunu, cradle of the dual industrial and political revolution whose heritage has dominated Western civilization.¹² It is no less a matter, however, of irreducible national specifics. For two reasons at least, it was impossible to treat

this problem in its entirety: first, the sheer magnitude of materials to work with, and the difficulties of meeting the demands of undertaking a serious comparative work of this scale. Thus the context we have surveyed remains largely that of France. Even so, this is not simply a matter of a purely Francophile interpretation. Indeed, correspondences with other nations have been underlined (paradoxically, somehow, these are more visible before the rise of nation-states: the middle of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century, for example, reveal astonishing likenesses in terms of the structures of assistance and the forms of organizing labor throughout Europe).¹³ On the other hand, the reader will notice that I am constantly referring to corresponding transformations in British society and that I have made much of these differences (nonetheless, putting these two societies alongside one another cannot pretend to have the rigorousness of a true comparative analysis; it serves only to show what is at stake between the resemblances and differences in order to help us discern the constants). Finally and above all else, an analysis of this kind assumes, as a precondition for its own existence, that there are indeed constants in time and space, whether these be in spite of or thanks to cultural and historical diversities. “Constants” does not mean the perennial nature of the same structures, but rather homologies in configurations of circumstances and in their processes of transformation. But it is a matter at this level of a principled inquiry, which must now be dedicated to the task of organizing the historical diversity.

Roughly speaking, then, one might say that my analysis is very largely “European,” at least up until the Renaissance. It makes frequent references to the situation in England up to the end of the 18th century. Beyond that it was impossible to take into account the problem of the diversity of social States and the specifics of current conditions in different countries of Western Europe (along these lines it would also have been necessary to include in the analysis circumstances in the United States). If one wanted to give a name in one word to the perspective underlying my analysis, one might think of it as being inspired by the work of Karl Polanyi¹⁴: the Social States of Western nations responded to a common challenge, that of industrialization and of the factors of social dissociation that it brought along with it, but they have apparently done so according to different rhythms, by mobilizing their national traditions and taking into account different social forces present in each context. However, the

debate at this level is somewhat metaphysical, and would obviously benefit from precise comparative analyses of different national contexts that must remain largely to be encouraged in the future.

Notes

1. Cl. Nicolet, *le Radicalisme*, Paris, PUF, 1974, p. 54.
2. If some elevated social positions reveal themselves to be poorly situated, or indeed threatened, the model proposed may still be applied to the different levels of social stratification. I have attempted to test this in the extreme case at the summit of the pyramid of social grandeur: "The novel of disaffiliation, in the context of *Tristan et Iseut*," *le Debat*, No. 61, September 1990). Conversely, here, I will describe the destabilizing mechanisms that culminate in the limiting condition of social death, ranging from the condition of the worthless of the earth, the vagabonds of preindustrial society, the sub-proletarians of the dawn of industrialization, or the "beneficiaries" of the RMI, for example.
3. Without denying that there have been circulations or fluctuations in the other sense, in other words, examples of ascending social mobility. But, for reasons just stated, I will concentrate mainly on populations threatened with social invalidation.
4. To invoke the standard condemnation of the vagabond in the fifteenth century cited by Bronislaw Geremek, "To be dignified in dying as useless to the world, this is to experience being hanged like a thief" (*les Marginaux parisiens aux xvieme and xvieme siecles*, Paris, Flammarion, 1976, p. 310).
5. The persistence of a question does not derive solely from the importance it may have assumed in the past. For example, the question of whether the earth revolves around the sun, or vice-versa, mobilized in the time of Galileo fundamental stakes variously theological, philosophical, political, scientific, and practical. But these have vanished by the time the "Copernican Revolution" was more or less unanimously accepted and the Vatican itself agreed, albeit recently, that Galileo was indeed correct.
6. I have made explicit the methodological presuppositions of this approach in "Problematization: A Way of Reading History," J. Goldstein, ed., *Foucault and the Writing of History Today*, Cambridge, Basil Blackwell, 1994. Jean-Claude Passeron has sketched out the epistemological basis that justifies an approach of this type. Cf. *le Raisonnement sociologique, l'espace non-Popperien du raisonnement naturel*, Paris, Nathan, 1991. This means that in spite of the academic division of labor, history and sociology (and also anthropology) deploy discourses which are situated on the same epistemological register, maintain the same relationship with the processes of determining truth, and have the same empirical bases, what Passeron calls "the historical course of the world." Consequently, cross-disciplinary borrowing and transfers between disciplines are legitimate, so long as they respect the rules unique to each. Respect for these rules forbids the non-historian from permitting himself the smallest modification of even the most minute data developed by the historical science. Not that these constructions are definitive, but their re-elaboration is the task of procedures unique to the craft of historian. Thus I shall not enter into contemporary historiographical debates that re-question the construction of historical data. I shall borrow the testimony of the past and the work of historians when there is a consensus (or, when this is not the case, I strive to indicate these divergences of interpretation), in order to apply them in other ways in keeping with the configuration of another assertoric space, that of "sociological reasoning."

7. Vicomte A. de Villeneuve-Bargemont, *Economie politique chrétienne, ou recherches sur le paupérisme*, Paris, 1834, p. 25.
8. E. Buret, *De la misère des classes laborieuses en France et en Angleterre*, Paris, 1840, tome 1, p. 98.
9. J. Donzelot, *L'Invention du Social*, Paris, Fayard, 1984.
10. O. Schwartz, *le Monde privé des ouvriers*, Paris, PUF, 1990.
11. F. Dubet, *la Galère, jeunes en survie*, Paris, Fayard, 1987.
12. P. Chaunu, *Histoire, science sociale: la durée, l'espace et l'homme à l'époque moderne*, Paris, SEES, 1974.
13. As demonstrated by E. J. Hobsbawm (*The Age of Revolutions*, Paris, Fayard, 1970), the putting in parallel of the circumstances in France and England is especially suggestive, the former having been the epicenter of political revolution, and the latter, the industrial revolution.
14. K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*.
15. This debate is currently led mainly by what is known as the "new institutionalist" or "state-centered" approach, which emphasizes the heterogeneity of national contexts, and on the specific role of states and of state agents; cf. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol, *Bringing the State Back In*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1985. Presentation of different positions may be found in F. X. Merrien, "État et politiques sociales: contribution à une théorie 'néo-institutionnaliste,'" *Sociologie du travail*, no. 3/90, 1990. For a comparison of factors presiding over the birth of the development of the social state, cf. P. Flora, A. J. Heidenheimer (eds.), *The Development of Welfare States in Europe and America*, New Brunswick and London, Transaction Publishers, 1979.

Part 1

From Tutelage to Contract

Introduction to Part 1: From Tutelage to Contract

The “social question” may be characterized as a concern about a society’s ability to maintain its own cohesion. This threat of breakdown is borne by groups whose very existence shakes the cohesion of the whole collectivity. Who are these groups? The problem here is complicated, due in part to the conceptual fuzziness that accompanies the term “social.” We will explicitly consider one by one its different accepted usages. But we must begin with a major distinction, even if it will have to be qualified later on. The populations who benefit from different social interventions differ fundamentally according to whether they are or are not capable of working, and they are treated in a totally different ways according to this criterion.

One kind of population falls back upon what we might call a *handicapology*, in the widest sense of the term. Elderly poor, children without parents, cripples of all sorts, the blind, paraplegics, scrofulous, and madmen—the whole ensemble is as heteronomous as a painting by Hieronymus Bosch. But all these sorts share in common the fact of not being able to satisfy their own basic needs on their own because they cannot work. From this fact they are relieved of the obligation to work. The problem can be posed—and indeed is posed at every instant—of knowing where precisely to draw this dividing line between the capacity and incapacity to work. This decrepit old man, can’t he nonetheless manage to survive by his own means? The unfortunate will always be suspected of wishing to live at the expense of the wealthy. Nonetheless, there exists a certain core of circumstances of recognized dependency, based around the inability of entering into the order of work because of physical or psychological defects manifested due to age (children or the elderly), infirmity, sickness, and which may even be extended to some familial or burdensome social conditions, like that of the “widow with children,” to invoke an expression frequently encountered in

the regulations of assistance. "Handicapology" must then be understood in the metaphorical sense: this category is heterogeneous with respect to the conditions that have given birth to it; on the other hand, the criteria assume a greater coherence within the context of the relationship of work that it designates.

These groups exonerated from the obligation of working are potential clients of the *social-assistential*. Such a responsibility may pose difficult financial, institutional, and technical challenges. However, it does not cause any problem of principle. So long as the indigent manages to communicate his incapacity he can be assisted, even if in practice this treatment ends up being inappropriate, insufficient, condescending or even humiliating. But if the existence of this kind of population is still a source of embarrassment, it does not fundamentally call into question the social organization itself. One of the main issues involved (cf. chapter 1) is sorting out those who are truly handicapped, in this sense, from another category of indigents who pose the "social question" in its most acute form. This distinction between a *problematic of relief* and a *problematic of labor* represents one of the axial points of my analysis. Although this distinction has eluded the majority of historians of social assistance, I hope to demonstrate that it is not at odds with what they have written.

Entirely different from the condition of those who are truly incapable of working is the situation of those who can work, but who do not. This appears mainly in the form of the *able-bodied indigent*. These latter, impoverished, and consequently dependent on relief, cannot however partake directly of the provisions established for those who have been exonerated of the responsibility of supporting themselves. In violation of the obligation to work, he is most often the one repulsed beyond the zone of assistance. Thus he will come to be placed, and for a long time, in a paradoxical situation. Particularly if he is a stranger, a "foreign" without attachments, he cannot take advantage of the networks of proximate protections that assure, however poorly, the indigenes of at least some minimal relief of their basic needs. His condition will be literally unlivable. It is that of the vagabond, the disaffiliated *par excellence*.

This was foreseeable, and thus my first intention was to analyze the basic questions posed by this wayward relationship to labor in preindustrial society, beginning with the treatment reserved to this most stigmatized fringe.¹ For it is in this way that the problem is posed in its most graphic form, and the determined efforts brought

to bear in trying to eradicate vagabondage aptly demonstrate the decisive importance of this question for several centuries.

However, the question is complicated when one conjures up the sociological reality that falls under the label of vagabond. Most often, this term is merely used to condemn the errancy of a precarious worker in quest of a job that has escaped him. This kind of personage reveals an irreparable break in the dominant form of the labor system. It is the inability of this system to make room for social mobility that feeds and dramatizes the question of vagabondage. This is only the paroxystic form, then, of a conflict that runs throughout large sections of the social system. It is indeed the question of *wage-labor* itself that is posed here. That is to say, at the same time the growing necessity of recurring to wage-labor, and the impossibility of regulating the condition of wage-earning due to the persistence of traditional tutelages that surround labor with rigid networks of obligation that are *social*, and not at all economic.

From tutelage to contract: the pathway is long and culminates, at the end of the eighteenth century, in liberal modernity. If one is resolved to follow this trail, it is necessary to penetrate the complex modes of organizing labor in preindustrial society: regulated labor, forced labor, the development of a core, sketchy and fragmentary, but always circumscribed and contained, of “free” wage-labor. Then it appears that the condition of the majority of those who lived by the labor of their hands is not in any way guaranteed by the protections associated with regulated labor. They are characterized by a *mass vulnerability*, engendered by the fact that labor can not be regulated on the model of the market.

I have finally resolved myself to following these long trails. It was necessary to reconstruct the gradual emergence of a new formulation of the social question: the question of the *free access to labor*, which is imposed in the eighteenth century and has at that time a singularly revolutionary impact. The establishment of free access to labor is a juridical revolution perhaps as important as the industrial revolution that is its counterpart. Indeed it seems to have a fundamental importance with respect to everything that precedes it. It breaks the secular forms of organizing the trades and turns forced labor into a barbaric atavism. The encouragement of free access to labor thereby closes a long cycle of conflictual transformations by putting an end to the blockages

that have discouraged the dawning of the wage-earning condition. But this revolution is also decisive with respect to that which follows. For this process itself in turn relaunches the social question on an entirely new basis at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Under the reign of tutelage, wage-labor was stifled. Under the system of contract, however, it flourishes but, paradoxically, the working condition becomes vulnerable at the very moment when it is liberated. Thus we discover that liberty without protection can give rise to the very worst of servitudes, that of need.

The process that will be reconstructed in this first section may be summarized as follows. At the beginning were tutelages and constraints, which the absolutist State and the traditional system of the trades conspired to maintain. Afterward—at the end of the eighteenth century—came contracts and the entrepreneurial liberty that the liberal principle of governmentality fashioned by the Enlightenment imposed in fact through political revolution. Thus, the succession of these episodes will serve as a basis for understanding the vagaries of the following section. Indeed the task of a social policy beginning in the nineteenth century will be to scrutinize this excessively tenuous structure of the free contract of labor. Such a liberty that too strongly favored business was too strong, too savage, for those who could only submit themselves to it. Triumphant liberty and individualism have a darker face, the *negative individuality* of all those who find themselves without belongings and without support, deprived of any protections or recognition. The Social State was constructed as an answer to these circumstances. It imagined itself able to dispel the risk of this by weaving around the relationship of labor a solid system of guarantees. If this is so, then following these developments, or rather these ruptures and recompositions, truly represents the best way, if not the shortest, then at least the most rigorous, of arriving at the contemporary problematic. This is true insofar as this contemporary crisis stems mainly from the fact that these regulations woven around labor have begun to lose their integrative power. Thus from preindustrial society to postindustrial society we have witnessed a total reversal. Vulnerability was born from an excess of constraints, whereas it now appears to be nourished by the enfeeblement of protections. So we must now examine the entirety of the circumstances of this reversal. They delimit the edges of the social question within the framework of a similar problematic that began to take shape in the middle of the fourteenth century.

Note

1. We will call here “preindustrial society” the historical period which, in the Christian West, runs from the middle of the fourteenth century to the profound transformations that intervene at the end of the 18th century. Its relative unity will be deployed mainly in terms of the perspective of forms of organizing labor that pertained to it before the “industrial revolution.” It is not that this sequence of more than four centuries does not know important social and economic transformations. To the contrary. But they run up against a system of constraints which gives these centuries a large degree of permanence. It is this *tension* between the constraints of an “embedded society,” a society of orders and status, and the factors of change, that will serve as a guide for our analysis of the first four chapters.

1

Protections of Proximity

Of the two sides of the social question whose transformations we will explore, that of social assistance can least be said to have enjoyed a distinctive history. It is organized according to formal characteristics whose equivalents will undoubtedly be found in every historical society. "To assist" includes an extraordinarily diverse group of practices, which are inscribed in a common structure determined both by the existence of certain categories of disadvantaged populations and by the necessity of caring for them. In the first place, then, a tentative effort must be made to bring to light those characteristics that compose the very essence of assistance.

However, this cannot be done by purely formal models alone: for the constellation of assistance has obviously taken on distinctive forms in each social milieu. The form that has prevailed in the Christian West is particularly deserving of our attention for two reasons. First, because it remains part of our own heritage: the stakes of contemporary welfare are still constituted by its influential lines of force whose full meaning can never be understood unless we compare them to the historical situations at the heart of which they have been formed since the Middle Ages. The second reason is found in the fact that these patterns of welfare have interfered and continue to interfere (both to adopt as well as to overshadow) with the other great side of the social question which arises primarily from the problem of work, and which will emerge only much later (in the middle of the fourteenth century). In order for us to appreciate the originality of this conclusion (cf. chapter 2), we must situate it against the backdrop of a kind of welfare that was even then already formed in its essential characteristics.

Primary Sociability

The “social-assistential” can be formally characterized in opposition to modes of collective organization that economize such means. This is the case because there are some non-social societies. Indeed the social should not be understood here as the collection of relationships that distinguish humanity as the species for whom it is fitting to live in society. Undoubtedly, “man is a social animal,” but so too is the bee. But in order to avoid being burdened by a simple matter of vocabulary, one will term as “societal” this general feature of human relations, insofar as it refers to all forms of collective existence. The “social,” on the other hand, is a specific configuration of practices that is only found in certain human collectivities. We must first determine the preconditions for its emergence.

A society lacking the social would be entirely regulated by primary sociability.¹ I understand by this the systems of rules linking directly the members of a group on the basis of their familial belonging, locality, work, and by weaving networks of interdependence without the mediation of particular institutions. It is first a matter of permanent societies, at the heart of which the individual, embedded since birth in a tightly constrained network, simply repeats the injunctions of custom and tradition. In these formations, there is no more “social,” than there is an “economic” or “political” or “scientific,” in the sense that these terms might refer to identifiable domains of practices. Ancestral rules are imposed on the individual in a synthetic and directly normative way. Stable forms of relations are linked to one’s social roles in the family, neighborhood, age group, sex, and place occupied in the division of labor, permitting transmission of apprenticeships and the reproduction of social existence.

This extremely simplified model—that of social formations that reproduce themselves over time by strictly disciplining the development of individuals—generally applies to societies without history. In fact, for those societies who are attentive to the ethnology of their foundings, change is attributed to external sources (for example, to conquest or colonization), and it explodes them by imposing a model of transformation that they are unable to integrate by their own dynamic. But structures of this kind can be found in every cultural era, including those of the Christian West. They correspond to what historical anthropology has termed “peasant soci-

eties.” Thus, until very recently, rural communities lived in semi-autarchy, not only economically but also relationally, like enclaves at the heart of groups carried along by the movement of modernity.² Moreover, at least in the Christian West, this closed structure was the dominant social structure of the feudal era. It was marked by the sacralization of the past, the preponderance of lineage and the bonds of blood, and an attachment to permanent relationships of dependence and interdependence rooted in bounded territorial communities. In this way, feudal society manages to combine two main vectors of interdependence which contribute to its stability: the horizontal relationships that make up the rural community and the vertical relationships of seigniorial subjection. Its underlying unity is based on the community of inhabitants made up of an ancestral line of families who are united in the face of the military and economic dangers of the seigneur who dominates them.³ Each individual found himself trapped in this complex network of unequal exchanges which both subjects him to obligations and offers him protections. This double equation takes into account both one’s dependence on the religious or lay seigneur and one’s place in the system of solidarities and constraints of lineage and locality. As was optimistically said by an historian of the old school whose effusiveness often proves suggestive: “Each epoch is no longer compelled to establish permanent relations among individuals; as a result each has not been more embarrassed by its work, and has suffered no longer for annihilating it.”⁴

Even in those societies most governed by traditional interdependencies, there are often conflicts in this process of primary integration. For example, the case of orphans rends the fabric of familial responsibility; infirmity or accidents can render the individual temporarily or permanently incapable of holding his place in the system of exchanges that maintains the balance of group belonging; or moreover, complete indigence can put the individual in a situation of complete dependence without interdependence. Disaffiliation, at least as I understand it here, is primarily such a rupture with respect to these networks of primary integration; a first release from regulations dictated by one’s embeddedness in family, lineage, and other systems of interdependence based on communal belonging. There is a risk of disaffiliation when the collection of relations of proximity that maintain an individual on the basis of territorial belonging—which is also his familial and social belonging—finds itself unable to reproduce his existence and to ensure his protection.

However, highly structured communities can, under certain conditions, overcome these failures of primary sociability by mobilizing the potentialities of this same sociability. They reaffiliate the destabilized individuals by marshalling the economic and relational resources of family or locality. For example, the orphan will be cared for by the extended family; the invalid or indigent will find some minimum of “natural” solidarity in the village community. One can thus speak, at least metaphorically, of the “providential family.”⁵ Beyond the family, even without specialized institutions the territorial community can guarantee certain collective regulations, as was the case in the Middle Age for the use of communities, the redistribution of taxes and certain feudal subjections.⁶ It can also see to it that the most abject members of the community will receive at least some minimal care, insofar as their utter abandonment would threaten the cohesion of the group.

These communities thus tend to function as self-regulating and homeostatic systems, which recover their equilibrium by marshalling their own resources. A reaffiliation is accomplished without changing the body of reference. Integration is reestablished on a territorial basis and in the framework of interdependencies given by this embeddedness. When confronted by a break in the system of protections, primary sociability is not so much broken as distended, and the success of efforts to repair it depends on its elasticity. This elasticity is not unlimited, however. Expulsions, abandonments, and rejections may very well occur. The primary networks of solidarity can be disequilibrated by being overtaxed, and under some circumstances they may even be broken. These responsibilities can also have serious costs, for example, the problems of exploitation, small persecutions, or overwhelming anger. The life of the village idiot, for example, though tolerated and in part supported by his community, is by no means paradise.⁷

What I propose here is hardly an idyllic vision of the merits of a primitive version of civil society. Instead I seek to reconstruct, for better or worse, the tribulations of those societies without specialized examples of care-taking when they are confronted by an avatar who threatens their traditional rules: either we find a revival by the “given” communal network (and it always brings a cost), or nothing takes place except different forms of neglect and social death. One can multiply here the testimony of ethnologist on the disturbing character of the presence in these societies of individuals

subjected to social isolation.⁸ This social structure already knows this profile of individuals called supernumeraries. But it is unable to deny them all treatment.

With some obvious qualifications this schema is applicable in some degree to the feudal society prevailing in the West before the year 1000. Georges Duby has been able to conclude: “All the documents of the era (*polyptyques, censiers, coutumiers*) describe a peasant society that was certainly very hierarchical, but a society bounded, secure, and well provided. The result of this is a sentiment of economic security.”⁹

We are still left with the question of those miserable peasant communities, constantly exposed to war and periodically in the grip of terrible famines. But, just as with the razzias or the arrival of colonizers in “exotic” societies, there are even there uncontrollable eruptions from elsewhere, catastrophic weather or the ravages of conquest and war, which are able to shake the unity of the community even to the point of annihilating it. Nonetheless, Duby is able to speak of “secure” or “well provided” societies: by their internal organization, they can in large measure ward off internal dangers, like the fact that an individual or subgroup would be completely written off and relegated to a situation of permanent disaffiliation. In the same way, vertical solidarity-obligations are joined to horizontal interdependencies, or supplement them. Georges Duby says of this: “During the entire high Middle Ages, no noble could close his granaries to the miserable, and thus his obliged generosity undoubtedly provoked in the rural society distributions of goods of very considerable amplexness.”¹⁰

“Obliged generosity” implies that the task of providing for the helpless is not an option left to personal initiative, but the mandatory consequence of one’s place in a system of interdependencies. Around the eighth century, when this society based on the bonds of vassalage began to impose itself, it was not uncommon for free men (*des alleutiers*) to offer voluntarily to make themselves “the man” of a master: independence threatened their very existence; for it was this same independence that deprived them of protections:

The one who recommends himself to the power of another. To the magnificent seigneur, “one such,” me “one such.” Expecting that it is perfectly known to everyone that I lack what is necessary to nourish and dress myself, I beg your pity—and your generosity will grant me—the power to deliver myself or recommend myself to your maimbour. This I have done with the following conditions. You must aid and support me, with

food as well as clothing, so long as I am able to serve you and do well by you. As long as I live, I will owe you service and obedience, such as you cannot expect from a free man, and I will have no power to diminish your power, or maimbour, but to the contrary I must remain for the rest of my life under your power and protection.¹¹

Such is a typical formula established to serve as a model for the scribes entrusted with recording these demands, which shows that they must have been relatively frequent. In the absence of an administrative structure or specialized services, the solidification of personal relations in the vassal's oath of allegiance represents the first kind of effective protection against social risks. Subjection of the person by means of inscription in a territory: one can hardly pretend that this relationship of dependence was absolutely hegemonic (there were always *des allutiers*, for example), but only that it represents the dominant social relationship, which though it varied in its mode of expression, came into full bloom with "feudalism."¹²

Thus the conjunction of the fact of being placed under the patronage of a power (this is the meaning of the word "maimbour," transcribed from ancient German law) with that of being embedded in networks of family, kinship, and neighborhood of a community of residents insured a maximum of protection against the hazards of existence. Such communities were both extremely vulnerable to external threats (crises of subsistence or ravages of war), while at the same time powerfully integrated by tight networks of interdependence. The precariousness of existence was part of the condition of all and did not break communal belonging. Such societies had difficulty accommodating novelty or mobility, but they were very effective against disaffiliation.

Such stability allows us to understand how it was that although poverty in these societies was immense and widespread, it did not pose a "social question." Michel Mollat has similarly observed of the high Middle Age: "Despite their great numbers, the rustics had no appreciable influence on the course of everyday social life."¹³ Not only because, as one might say in an undoubtedly anachronistic language, they were "resigned" to their lot in life; but above all because (except during revolts, and even these it seems gained force only in the eleventh century, that is to say, only once this structure began to be eroded by the first effects of population growth¹⁴) the most abject did not represent an internal destabilizing factor in this social formation, which controlled the threat of massive disaffiliation by virtue of its own rigid structure.

Certainly, the errant and the isolated already existed. Even from the beginning of the year 1000 they were a constant part of the social landscape. But they were outside the community and the “domestic” sphere of life (organized as *domus*, or houses). They inhabited instead a world where men are rare and the scattered hearths of habitation leave wide spaces for deviancy. This is the universe of the forest and lands haunted by the hermit, the errant knight, coal-sellers, brigands and also magical and malevolent forces. But such individuals are beyond borders and it is fitting to say that they are excluded from the organized world.¹⁵ The symbol of the vagabond will be overwhelmed by the memory of these disturbing figures. Because the vagabond, as we shall see, represents a different type of stranger. He has become an other, disaffiliated with respect to a social order of which he was formerly a member. In the strict sense, the figure of the vagabond could not appear except in a structured world from which he has been disconnected. In contrast to such a world, the stranger, the vagrant symbolizes complete otherness with respect to a kind of communal organization which regulates its own turmoils. Feudal society also knew several types of adventurers on hazardous paths like those “youths,” youngest sons of families without land and responsible for all sorts of enterprises, whose importance as a font of social mobility within feudal structures George Duby has underlined. Among the religious, students might also find themselves socially and geographically displaced, either temporarily or permanently. But the vagabond, belonging to the mass of the “poor,” who could live by manual labor alone: his fate was to be unique. He was doubly constrained in having the need to work without the ability to perform it.¹⁶

This model of “societies without the social” includes several historical variants. Only the hierarchical interdependence of feudal society has momentarily distracted us, insofar as it is its decomposition, or rather, as we will attempt to show even more precisely, its “deconversion,” which has given rise to the modern problematization of the social. But it is this general reference to societies that economize the social that will allow us, by way of contrast, to illuminate one of the first kinds of special interventions constitutive of social assistance. Whether the bonds of primary sociability are relaxed, whether the structure of society increases in complexity to the point of making impossible this kind of universal and undifferentiated response,¹⁷ the care of the disadvantaged is

gradually entrusted to specialized practices. As a result, the hospital, orphanage, the organized practice of alms giving become “social” institutions. They arise in order to offer unique and specialized treatment for problems that had previously been addressed directly by the community in less differentiated societies. Subject to the particular historical circumstances according to which it has been employed, this category of social assistance reveals a certain number of formal characteristics.

First of all, it is a collective *construct* of practices whose function is protective, integrative, and only later, preventative. By this I mean that social assistance arises from the intervention of society upon itself, as distinguished from institutions that exist by tradition or custom alone. On this point one can speak, at least by way of analogy, of secondary sociability, since it is a matter of relational systems set off in distinction to groups based on familial, kinship, locality and vocational belongings. At the beginning of this tearing away, more and more complex assemblages come to be developed, giving birth to ever more sophisticated structures of social welfare.

Secondly, these practices always reveal at least some traces of specialization, the core of future professionalization. Social problems are not to be reconciled by just any means, nor entrusted to just any person. Rather, what is significant is that some individuals or groups are at least partially responsible for handling them, and are acknowledged as such. For example, the parish priest, the church warden, or municipal official—all are in some manner the “functionaries” of the social insofar as their mandate is, at least in part, to ensure that such specialized activities are performed. The delimitation of a sphere of social intervention thus gives birth to specific personnel who carry it out. This is the first outlines of the professionalization of the social sector.¹⁸

Thirdly and closely related, we find at least the rudiments of some minimal *routinization*. Even in the absence of an exclusive specialization, and *a fortiori* of specific professional training, the persons encharged must determine whether or not they should intervene, select those who deserve relief, and construct criteria, however rough, to guide their actions. His activities should not be confused with those of an ordinary (unmandated) member of the community, even if many perform services of a similar type, for example a person who gives alms privately. The actions of the mandatee must be ritualized and are founded on a minimum of knowledge, expertise,

and technique of their very own. There is no social practice without a core, however minimum, of knowledge about the concerned populations and the means of taking care of them, or conversely, of excluding them from being cared for.

Fourthly, the question of the *localization* of these practices arises from the very outset, and further reveals the distinction between “intra-institutional” and “extra-institutional” practices. The reason for intervention, we have said, is a breakdown in primary sociability. It is tempting, and in general more efficient in every sense of the word, to provide reparations on site, for example to offer relief in the home. But the very nature of the problem that requires treatment may often prohibit this, and hence we find a resulting deterritorialization-reterritorialization, that is, treatment in a specialized institutional site (for example, healing in a hospital). This tension represents an important force in the development of social assistance and already shapes even the least polished forms of relief organization.

Fifthly—and this essential characteristic has already been alluded to, even if we will have to come back to it at some length—simply being utterly abject is often not enough to receive assistance. *Even within populations without resources, some will be rejected and others will be cared for.* Two criteria are drawn. There is first the matter of communal belonging: assistance is tied to preference for members of the group, while rejecting strangers (of course, we will need to elaborate what counts as “being a member of the group” and “being a stranger”). The second is an inability to work: assistance accords preference to those who are impoverished because, like the isolated orphan or the helpless elderly, they cannot support themselves by working (even here, however, this criterion is imprecise and varies according to the practices and regulations that define it). This distinction, which will be developed in the following chapters, differentiates the range of social assistance from other forms of social intervention directed toward populations capable of working.

These characteristics are necessarily formal, in the sense that one finds them as general preconditions for any range of assistance. Their goal is to compensate in an organized, specialized way for the breakdown of primary sociability. More precisely, one can say that social assistance is constituted *as an analogue to primary sociability*. It attempts to plug a breach in those relations previously afforded by primary sociability and to ward off the risks of disaffiliation that accompany their collapse. In addition it is firmly linked to

territoriality. Assistance depends on the domesticity of relief. This requirement of domestication does not mean that one must receive relief in the home (treatment can be dispensed in an institution), but that one must have a recognized place in the community in order to receive assistance. This variable of domestication not only corresponds to the practical need to routinize the distribution of relief. It is primarily the criterion that decides whether one receives assistance or not. Thus the majority of regulations for social assistance demand that the indigent, even if he is “without fixed residence,” prove at least several years of residence in the village or community, otherwise he will be left out. The goal of social assistance is first and foremost the maintenance of social harmony. As such, it primarily concerns a fellow-creature threatened by social dislocation and unable to provide for himself and his needs.

The Evangelical Myth

Even today, the parameters of the field of social assistance are set by questions about its specialization, professionalization, institutionalization, and how to determine which populations are to be cared for. How did these questions transform themselves in order to make up the actual landscape of social welfare today? Obviously, we do not intend here simply to replicate the history of welfare; a number of admirable works already exist on this subject. It will be enough for us to draw from them the logic of its development in order to dissociate it, more firmly than has often been done, from the question of work beginning with the observation that these structures of assistance have primarily been concerned with populations unable to work. This compels us to discuss the classical historiography on two points. First, the singular impact of Christianity on the form of social assistance is often misunderstood in many histories of assistance. Second, it is misleading to suggest that the transformation of assistance inspired by a concern with rationally administering poverty began with the Renaissance or the Reformation.

Furthermore these two distortions are often closely related. In this traditional view, the advent of the sixteenth century represented a significant break; for it marked the emergence of new social and political demands stemming from the weakening of previously hegemonic Christian values. From this moment onward we would notice an appreciable hardening of attitudes toward the poor, regarded as a burdensome and potentially dangerous population that

must henceforth be classified, administered, and contained by strict regulations. An attitude of suspicion and accountability—often termed “bourgeois” or “secular”— would replace the generous solicitude inspired by Christian charity.¹⁹

But such an interpretation is debatable. We can surely observe a growing complexity of beliefs about the apparatus of social assistance in which the “municipal policies” of the sixteenth century represented an important stage, but not a wholly new beginning. The administrative concern did not suddenly loom large, as these interpreters would have it, but rather it already underlay those practices of social assistance inspired by Christianity. Without underestimating the originality of the Christian development, I propose to show that it reinforced more than contradicted the fundamental categories that structured the entire range of social assistance. These, especially the dual criteria of being unable to work and of being a resident, had their own consistency that subtly shaped the medieval construction itself.

On the other hand, there is a deep reconsideration of the question of social assistance that stems from the difficulty of making sense of a new category of the impoverished. This group posed the problem of a wholly new relationship to work (or to non-work), rather than a relationship of support. This newfound consciousness emerges not at the beginning of the sixteenth century but in the middle of the fourteenth. Thus if there were to be a break—even though in history there are never absolute breaks—it would be when, against the relatively stable background of assistance, the social question of work came to light in its own right. Indeed, the social question strictly speaking deserves its own treatment, which will be touched upon in the following chapter. But, in order to avoid confusing these two problematics, one must first recall the widespread belief that sees Christianity in general and medieval Christianity in particular as the carrier of a conception *sui generis* of assistance.

Charity is surely the Christian virtue *par excellence*, and poverty is further valorized by reference to Christ and models of the *vita apostolica*, saints, hermits, the devout, all of whom have understood how to cast off the earthly burdens in order to come closer to God. However, this way of “killing the old man,” to invoke the phrase of St. Benoit, is a chosen poverty, an ascendance toward God whose motivation is spiritual. As such, that kind of deprivation applies only to certain, select people. It represents an essential at-

tribute of the religious vocation; “the valorization of poverty was traditionally concentrated around the religious and clerical life.”²⁰ Even at this level, this attitude has not yet been accepted by everyone. The great polemic against the mendicant orders who crossed the Christian Middle Age at its high point often blamed “these larva of men who are maintained in idleness thanks to our work.”²¹ Even from the perspective of spiritual ascent, though poverty may prove a necessary condition, it is by no means an absolute value. As Peter de Blois commented in one of his sermons, “blessed are those who are poor from spirit, but not all.”²²

The evaluation will be even stricter, evidently, for poverty endured, the material poverty of the miserable. Here one should recall the terrible allegory of poverty in the *Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris:

Poverty has nothing upon him but an old meager sack, miserably patched; this is both his cloak and his overalls, and he has nothing but this to cover him; as a result he often trembles. Set aside from the others, he cowers and retreats like a sad and shameful dog. Cursed is the hour when one imagines the poor, for he will never be either well nourished, clothed, or shod. He will be neither more loved nor exalted.²³

Surely this attitude may be found in “secular” texts. But the judgments of religious authorities are often only slightly less pejorative toward the condition of the poor. Saint Augustine, earlier, evoked with a certain contempt those poor who are “so in need of charitable aid that they have not even shame to beg,” and Pope Innocent III speaks of “the miserable condition of the beggars.”²⁴ Michel Mollat observes that, in Christian iconography, the poor are almost always depicted at the doors of the rich or the gates of the city in a humble and suppliant position.²⁵ They are not initially allowed to enter: they must first be conscious of their indignity, and in every case the act of alms giving depends on the good will of the pledges.

Hence at the very least, one can conclude of this that Christian charity was not automatically mobilized to relieve all forms of poverty. Poverty that is chosen, or in some way sublimated on a spiritual level, is heralded. It is an ingredient of saintliness. But the social condition of the poor provokes a whole scale of attitudes ranging from commiseration to contempt. Because of its connotations of hunger, cold, disease, abandonment—lack in all of its forms—common poverty of those people “of vile condition” is most often seen pejoratively.

This ambivalence, evident in the contradiction at the heart of Christian views of poverty, is imposed on the map of practices by two unique ways of managing poverty: assistance becomes embedded in an economy of salvation, and the Christian worldview introduces distinctions between different forms of poverty.

The economy of salvation: though unhappy, pitied or even scorned, the poor may nonetheless become important instruments for the rich to exercise their supreme Christian virtue, namely charity, thereby allowing the rich to secure their salvation. “God could have made all men rich, but he ordained that there should be poor so that the rich could expiate their sins.”²⁶

The practical implications of these attitudes are considerable, since this attitude, in large measure, financed the medieval budget for assistance through almsgiving and donations to charitable institutions. In an era when the means of enriching one’s self by trade and financial speculation still created guilt, and where, one must recall, men lived in fear of hell, charity represented the quintessential means of atonement and the best security for the afterlife. The considerable number of wills that redistributed part or all of the deceased’s goods to the poor proves both the force of this attitude and the importance of their economic consequences. But the fact that poverty is acknowledged as a means for attaining one’s salvation does not mean that it is loved or desired for its own sake, or even that the poor are loved as individuals. The “works of misericordia” develop a political economy of charity in which alms, which “extinguish transgressions,” constitute the primary value of exchange. Commerce between the rich and poor is accordingly established to the benefit of both parties: the first earns his grace by virtue of his charity, but the second is equally saved, if he accepts his condition. Last but not least, the unequal order of the world is also preserved in this economy. It is revealed providentially simply in the sense that, once we acknowledge the necessary function of poverty, its existence is justified with no need to take responsibility except in the most extreme cases of hardship. Christian wealth accordingly came to offer a double advantage over poverty: it is both a means to ensure one’s salvation in the afterlife, and it is a more agreeable way to live in this one. In a later period, St. Francis de Sales has perhaps given the clearest formulation of this redoubling of commodious living, addressing himself to the rich in these terms:

So are you able to enjoy riches without being poisoned by them, if you have them in your house or your purse, but not in your heart. To be rich in fact, and poor in spirit, this is the highest good of the Christian, for he has at his disposal the goods of the rich in this world, and the reward of the poor in the other.²⁷

What we know of the instrumentalization of the works of misericordia in the Middle Ages allows us to surmise that this was already the dominant attitude of the rich, and probably *a fortiori* of the poor as well, toward poverty: material poverty in and of itself is a misfortune, even if we can earn our salvation by it. This opinion is basically common sense, and whether we are rich or poor, one must be a virtual saint in order to avoid this conclusion.

This economy of salvation established at the same time a *discriminatory perception of the poor* who deserve to be cared for. The first to be excluded are those unfortunates who would revolt against the order of the world that God has ordained. The link between poverty and heresy is deep. Not only because numerous heretics have preached, along with the denial of the world, the subversion of its social organization, and from this fact have been pitilessly reprimanded, but also because the nonacceptance of poverty is already a virtually heretical act contesting the creation and economy of salvation. Accordingly the poor risk the sin *par excellence*, which consists of being at odds with the views of Providence. The “bad poor” is primarily a theological category.

But one can be more precise. Even among those poor who suffer without revolting against their condition, the Christian conception of poverty creates a qualitative distinction. The spiritual poverty of the *pauper Christi* is exalted because it realizes the denial of the world and manifests contempt toward all terrestrial belongings, including the material envelop that is the body. But this eminent dignity can be diffused by a halo effect to some forms of poverty that are endured, provided that they exhibit visible signs of this detachment. In this fashion bodily misery suggests itself as the essential criteria that lends spiritual dignity to material poverty. By a typically Christian reversal, even as Christ’s suffering and horrible death testify to his divinity, and the long martyrhood of saints is the best sign of their election, so too the horror of dirty, ragged crowds who are ulcerous, mutilated, blind, and paralyzed, crippled, and amputated, of deformed women, famished old men, and handicapped children are sanctified by this religious exaltation of suffering. The poor are part of the body of the church because insofar as their

body suffers, they are a metaphor for the suffering body of the church. The emblematic figures of poverty in the Scriptures—Job in his manure, Lazarus whose body already smells, the miraculous miserables upon which the misericordia of Christ is directed, the thin and ragged bodies, the ulcers and deformities—exhibit signs of that most spectacular despair experienced by creatures abandoned by God. They reveal that, before they are saved by the love of Christ, the world is evil and the body contemptible. The sick body is a sore whose complaints rise toward God.

Poverty is not only a value of exchange in an economy of salvation. Encumbered by sickness and suffering sanctified by them, the deterioration of the body veils this in the mystery of redemption. Proof of the dignified eminence of poverty is given by its extreme and undeserved manifestations, particularly those maladies that are most destructive of bodily integrity, in the same way that the most irrefutable proof of the divinity of Christ is his ignominious death on the cross. Love of the poor is not immediately given by conscience. Rather it is a mystery to which the Christian has acceded only with the fundamental inversion of values whose logic Nietzsche disentangled, and which is nourished by contempt of the world.²⁸

As a result, if indeed there is a sanctification of poverty, it is premised on overestimating the misfortune of the everyday life of the poor. In those most beautiful moments of the Christian exaltation of poverty, Michel Mollat has discovered the stereotypical character of this image of the poor in the Christian pastoral: “Gaunt, blind, ulcerous, often limping, the poor is in rags, hairy: he begs from door to door, in front of churches and on the streets.”²⁹ In the same vein, Charles de La Roncière analyzed the content of sermons of the mystics of Florence during the flowering of Christianity that marked the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries. He took from the study of these sermons the ubiquity of this portrayal of poverty which is expressed through the degradation of the carnal envelope.³⁰ The poor who were most able to attract charity were those whose bodies most personified human powerlessness and suffering. An immense Christian dramaturgy was unleashed around the orchestration of physical signs of poverty. But it so discovers, in exaggerating it, a fundamental anthropological characterization required for the indigent to enter unimpeded into the framework of assistance: they must be exonerated from the obligation of work. The enfeeblement of the body, extreme age, abandoned child-

hood, disease, preferably incurable, infirmities, preferably unbearable to the sight, have always been the best passport to receiving assistance. We must place in parentheses an eventual complaisance for the morbid. In any case, these signs of decadence immediately demonstrate that these individuals are involuntarily prohibited from working by their afflictions.

In this way Medieval Christianity elaborated a fascinating and unique version of the exaltation of poverty founded on the guilty conscience about the misery of the world.³¹ This is not to say that Christianity is alone in making use of the criteria of bodily affliction in order to receive social assistance. This preference, which we propose to call an “handicapology,” constitutes a main force in the politics of assistance. But it has a counterpart, which the evangelical legend also draws to our attention. To accord preference to physical incapacity gives birth to other categories of indigence and precludes their receiving assistance. At the peak of the Christian Middle Ages, another kind of misery was developed. This was the case of those people of few means, the “masses,” the *populo minuto*, who survived at the very edges of poverty. By calculating the budgets of some of these small professions, such as gardeners or masons, Charles de La Roncière has shown that certain years in the first half of the fourteenth century in Florence, the majority of them, particularly those burdened with families, fell below subsistence level. But this misery that they skirted, the Florentine mystics did not speak of it, and perhaps did not even recognize it. They employed other categories of analysis and perception. This was a misery composed by the mere absence of goods, whose common manifestation are obscure, except when they burst into tumultuous revolts or when they oblige the unhappy to cry for relief. Lack of food, housing, clothes, work—all this merely serves to illuminate the gray lives of suffering people—but it falls short of that pathetic stagecraft necessary to mobilize charity. Thus the *pauperes Christi* relegated working misery to the outskirts of remote darkness.

My Neighbor is a Fellow-Kinsman

As important as it is, the criterion of physical incapacity is not the only one to open the doors to social relief. Along with communal belonging, these two variables taken together serve to delimit the range of social assistance. In this case as well, medieval Christianity contributed greatly to its development. But in this case one must

still derive some conception of the “neighbor” as “kindred,” which can be interpreted in terms of social or geographic proximity, insofar as the Christian ideal of fraternity among men admits of specificity.

It was very early in the Christian West that the concept of residency became a precondition for the care-taking of indigents, and this idea persists for a considerable time, bridging the hypothetical break between a medieval or “Christian” organization of assistance and its modern or “secular” forms. The *matricula*, or definitive list of poor who are to be cared for by the local church, dates back to the sixth century. This institution links residency and assistance to the point that those who were originally responsible for basic assistance (the churchwardens) came by this to be permanent agents of the church.³² In the Middle Ages, the monastic system guaranteed the basics of charitable practices. Monasteries received both deterritorialized individuals travelling on the main roads of pilgrimage and the miserable and sick of the area. For this reason the reception is not indifferent. The rule of Saint Benoit makes the distinction between those solicitors who can work and the “idle” able-bodied, who are to be sent along after two days.³³ At Cluny, for example, travelers are to be lodged for a single night only; whereas the “truly poor” are assisted by occasional or periodic distributions of relief, and some indigents become permanent charges.³⁴ The “doormen” of monasteries—often themselves recipients of assistance—are responsible for sorting out the solicitors.³⁵ This notable centralization of the function of social assistance in monasteries and other religious institutions corresponds to a kind of social mandate of the church, which made of it the main administrator of charity. This division of labor is confirmed very early by political power. In this way a capitulary of Charlemagne established in advance what portion of taxes would be devoted to this social service.³⁶ Beyond its service to God, the Church found in this service of the poor another justification for its social preeminence and privileges. Hence nothing in the carrying out of this mandate came from private initiative: The Church was the main institution entrusted with administering assistance.

The organization of assistance on the basis of residency was formalized with the development of towns, transplanting into the urban tissue what were previously religious institutions and professionals. Throughout all of Christian Europe, the mendicant orders

were uniformly and exclusively settled in the cities.³⁷ Similarly, the number of religious homes, charities, and hospitals multiplied. In France, particularly in the neighborhood of Paris, most of the great charitable religious institutions were founded between 1180 and 1350.³⁸ Even if one can speak of this era as one of Christian renewal, these establishments also corresponded to a profound sociological transformation, the development and differentiation of urban space, which religious authorities were not alone in taking up. The breaking up of the immediate dependencies and protections of agrarian societies, the deepening of social divisions between groups imposed a pressing demand for assisting the most disadvantaged. Urban authorities likewise took part in what would subsequently become the problem of managing urban poverty. Assistance was organized on a local basis and imposed a more rigorous process in determining who was to be assisted. For example, the hospital of Dinant was taken over by the community by the end of the thirteenth century. After 1290, the city of Mons collected a “common alms,” which aided, even beyond those offered occasional assistance, indigents whose names were entered on an annually revised list, who thereby merited assistance by means of this kind of belonging.³⁹ Similarly, the cities of Gand and Florence each regularly supported more than a thousand “resident” indigents.⁴⁰ Relief might also be distributed outside hospitals, so long as the beneficiaries were carefully screened and localized. From the fourteenth century onward one began to impose distinctive markers on these indigents (tokens, lead plates, crosses sewn on the sleeves or breast) paving the way for a kind of “right” to participate in the regular distributions of alms or to frequent houses of charity. Bronislaw Geremek refers to this as “pensioned poverty,” and of veritable “prebends.” To live on assistance could become a quasi-profession. Furthermore, in Augsburg in 1475 beggars were listed on the fiscal registers as an occupational group.⁴¹

Thus even well before the sixteenth century social assistance had a territorial component, and was no longer monopolized by the church, if indeed this had ever been the case. Alongside the church, ordinary or secular, a whole collection of authorities, both lay as well as religious, played their part in administering social assistance: seigneurs, nobles and rich bourgeois, brotherhoods or associations of mutual assistance based on profession—all these multiplied the sustenance.⁴² By the end of the thirteenth century the act of charity

became a sort of local social service that allowed collaboration between all those who had some hand in the “good government” of the town. Such a process of investing responsibility in local powers increased throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This form of assistance, obviously related to concerns with the rational treatment of poverty, hardly needed to await the coming of the sixteenth century to make its appearance. Nor did it require the secularization of society. Before as well as after the sixteenth century the church played its part in the concert of urgency charged with providing assistance. No doubt this role was greater before than after, but not always for reasons that pertained to the specific role of the church. Hence, if the monasteries played this charitable role in the Middle Ages, so too did the manors, and just as the abbey assumed the role of protector of his dependents, bishops were often the lords of the towns and of their own plots of land. These ecclesiastical lords had in fact the same duties of protection and assistance as secular lords, and they undoubtedly fulfilled them in the same way.

That which has been generally interpreted as the flowering of a “new social policy”⁴³ at the beginning of the sixteenth century served only to systematize this trend. This new beginning was occasioned by an unfavorable economic and social juncture: crises of subsistence, increased food prices, unemployment linked to a strong demographic surge after the hecatombs of the plague, agrarian reforms, anarchic growth of the towns. Factors of social dissociation perceptible for at least two centuries were brutally acknowledged. Poverty became the object of widespread public debate fueled by the controversies of the Renaissance and the Reformation, from which the success of the work of Juan Luis Vives, *De subventionem pauperum*, is the best testament.⁴⁴ Between 1522 and the middle of the century, almost sixty European towns adopted a complex of related attitudes. These municipal policies rested on a few simple principles: exclusion of strangers, strict prohibitions against begging, the enumeration of requirements and classification of distinct categories of beneficiaries. The exclusion of strangers, vagabonds, and peddlers, associated with the abolition of begging, facilitated efforts to take systematic charge of poverty among residents: care and sustenance to the sick and invalid, but also the placement of poor children into tutelage and distribution of relief to families without work or whose income is insufficient to guarantee survival.⁴⁵ The systematic concern to manage assistance on a local basis gives

birth to a considerable innovation: namely, the guarantee of sufficient sustenance to some categories of indigents, even among those who are able to work. As a result the town attempts to take into its care the entirety of its inhabitants in need of relief. We will have to return later to these fragile attempts to remove prohibitions against able-bodied indigents receiving assistance.

Although primarily developed at a local level, these measures were taken up by national legislation. For example, by the ordinance of Charles Quint of October 7, 1531 for Flanders and the Netherlands; by the ordinance of Moulin in February 1556 in France; by the English “poor laws” of the second half of the sixteenth century culminating in the great Elizabethan Law of 1601. Their general spirit is captured by Article 73 of the ordinance of Moulin:

We have ordained that the poor of each town, borough or village, will be nourished and maintained by those of the town, borough, or village where they were born and reside, such that they will have no need to depart and ask alms elsewhere than the place where they are, whose poor will be required to take bulletin and certification of the undersaid in case that, in order to heal their illnesses, they were constrained to come to boroughs or villages where there are hostels or dispensaries for this destination.⁴⁶

The “great confinement” of beggars, which extended throughout seventeenth-century Europe, did nothing to contradict, despite appearances, this principle of harmonious care-taking. It must be read as a continuity and not as a rupture with the policies of the sixteenth century, of which it represents only a more developed and explicit form of organization, if we expect to make sense of the failure of early municipal policies.⁴⁷ The consequences of the development of towns and the extended relationships of urban sociability are to make increasingly difficult the kind of face-to-face assistance that minimized the role of hospitalization. In the same fashion, by their increasing numbers and their disorderly mores, beggars threatened to become “as an independent people,” who knew “neither law, nor religion, nor authority, nor police,” such “a libertine and lazy nation who have never accepted law.”⁴⁸ They consequently threatened to complete an already half-realized rupture of the communal bond. To tolerate the condition of beggars would be to concede the existence within the communal body of a completely disaffiliated group, who had become strangers to the city.

In the face of this threat, the policy of confinement is nothing more than a means, albeit a radical one, but which presents itself as a necessary deviation in order to restore communal belonging. The

patients of the public Hospital were not so much cut off from the community as relocated, that is to say, transferred to an ad hoc space where they continue to be cared for. Neither by its institutional structure, nor by the kind of population that it looks after, nor by its way of functioning, does the public Hospital represent any real innovation.

From an institutional point of view, it merely follows in the wake of previous ways of providing assistance. For example, in Lyon, the general Almshouse, one of the most complete realizations of the municipal policies of the Renaissance, by the end of the sixteenth century enclosed those “incurable beggars” in a tower, and by 1640 the town founded the Saint-Laurent Hospital, whose regulations combined work and prayers for the rehabilitation of beggars.⁴⁹ We find the same evolution in England, where London’s Bridewell, the model workhouse, was founded in 1547. In Amsterdam, the Rasphaus, at the same time, is faithful to the same principles. The fact that the foundation of public hospitals was ordered by royal power is no evidence at all of a significant break from previous policy. It falls to towns and “large boroughs” to implement these measures, a different but analogous version of the central-local dynamic of the sixteenth century, when Royal power relied upon municipal initiatives in order to put them into practice.⁵⁰

In terms of the *concerned populations*, confinement, at least in its earliest stages, targets only resident beggars. It excludes strangers, vagabonds, who must leave the town and continue to be under the charge of the police.⁵¹ The individuals considered the most desocialized, least desirable, and most dangerous are in this way excluded from confinement (and not *by* confinement). The edict of 1662 which sanctions the establishment of a public Hospital in “every town and large boroughs of the kingdom” specifies once again that it pertains to beggars “natives of places where they have resided for a year, as well as orphans or those born of parents who are beggars.”⁵² A new royal declaration of 1687 restated the necessity of confinement, but condemned vagabonds to galleys for life with their first arrest. Resident beggars are condemned to galleys only with their third arrest, that is to say, after they have twice demonstrated that they are rebels against the “charitable” solution of confinement which is denied vagabonds. In its broader intention, confinement is primarily an instrument for managing beggary, within an urban framework, among the indigenous poor. In the language of the time, the preamble of the edict of 1657 said this almost ex-

plicity. It pertains to “begging poor” still potentially reattachable to the community, whom Louis XIV distinguishes “as living members of Jesus Christ” from the “useless members of the state,” vagabonds who, having severed all communal belongings, find themselves beyond the limits of charitable intervention.⁵³

Regarding *techniques* that are deployed within the community Hospital, they too represent a strategy of inclusion and not of exclusion. The discipline of the public Hospital, forced labor with breaks for incessant prayers, the learning of order and regularity are the well-known recipes of a rigid pedagogy whose logic Erving Goffman has systematized.⁵⁴ They must allow the recluse, after his period of reeducation, to reclaim his place in his community of origin and to be henceforth a “useful member of the state.”

The parenthesis of confinement to vocational reeducation is then not at all at odds with the residential principle of assistance. It attempts to make of this an original reformulation that takes into account conditions no longer amenable to more intimate forms of assistance. Louis XIV can in this way affirm that it is a matter “not by order of the police”—which concerns here “the useless members of the state,” primarily, vagabonds—but “by the only motive of charity,” that is to say, the goal of supporting those who remain part of the communal order.⁵⁵ Confinement is not an end in and of itself. It brought to bear a strategy of avoidance that consisted first, of controlling the social environment in order to reeducate the able-bodied beggar for his ultimate return to the community.

After the failure of this pedagogical utopia the principle of residency prevailed anew. Expressing the conventional wisdom of enlightened spirits at the end of the ancien régime, the *Memoirs Presented to the Academy of Dijon on the Means of Defeating Poverty* are explicit on this point: “Among the various ways proposed to abolish beggary, none among them are better suited to gather their suffrage than those that return the beggars to their place of birth.... Each parish responds to its poor like a father of a family to his children.”⁵⁶

Far from weakening, then, this demand for residency as a qualification for relief was even more strongly affirmed as one approached the end of the ancien régime. Another revealing detail can be found in the great royal ordinance of 1764, “the last solemn expression of the ideas of the former monarchy,” according to Camille Bloch.⁵⁷ This ordinance is especially repressive, because it assimilates able-bodied beggars and vagabonds and condemns all men to the gal-

leys, all women and children to confinement, and even the sick and invalid are to be relieved in their home or in the hospital depending on their condition. Nonetheless, the following year, the vice-chancellor specified the intention of the directive in order to show the intendants the spirit in which they should apply it: “The intention of the king is that one should stop all beggars who beg more than a half-league from their home.” Hence, the resident beggar escaped the stigma and sanctions that applied to vagabonds, as the vice-chancellor specified: “A resident beggar is thus one who, dwelling more than six months in a place, begs only occasionally, for a few goods in order to subsist or a profession, who promises to work, and who can be attested to immediately by persons of dignified faith.”⁵⁸

This ambiguous definition was hardly persuasive, and proved to be untenable in practice. But it nonetheless underscores the weight accorded to proximity, not only geographical proximity—as measured by the distance of a half-league—but also social proximity—the fact of being able to “be attested to immediately by persons of dignified faith.” This local embeddedness decriminalized begging. It also tempers the fundamental obligation to work, which became simply “promise of work,” which practically means very little and which is unverifiable in practice. But it further expresses the demand that an individual become reattached to his social territory in order to avoid being completely abandoned. The able-bodied beggar is largely relieved from the liability of being able to work, which is prejudicial to receiving assistance, by being known—“attested to”—as belonging in a territorial community.

Exercise of a communal tutelage—“each parish responds to its poor as a father of a family to his children”—represents the second main axis of the structure of social assistance. This idea similarly prevailed in England where the various Poor Laws of the sixteenth century established the parish as the basis for the organization of relief. This emphasis is maintained and reinforced by the famous Speenhamland Act of 1795: not only does each parish undertake the care of its poor, but it must guarantee them a kind of minimal income by ensuring a supplement of staples indexed against the price of grain if their salary is insufficient. As for the previous poor laws, their financing derives from mandatory assessments on the residents of the parish. In exchange, recipients of relief are linked in an almost intangible way to their territory of birth. From this fact they

are made to depend on local nobles, nearly to such an extent that one can speak of this as “parish serfdom.”⁵⁹ The Speenhamland Act represents—at the moment when the Industrial Revolution is already well underway in England, as we will see later—the most developed form of organized assistance since the Middle Ages rooted in the requirement of communal belonging. Beyond residency, in its dual system of afforded protections and imposed constraints it is hardly salvation for the poor.⁶⁰

A Schematic for the Provision of Assistance

We have hazarded a reconsideration of several historical constructions of assistance on two broadly related points. This first concerns the motivating force of Christianity in the birth of assistance in the West since the Middle Ages. Christian ideals and practices of charity are generally modeled in the constitutive categories of assistance. Christianity incorporated and transformed the criteria of inability to work by making bodily distress the predominant sign in order to inscribe the poor in an economy of salvation. It was similarly convinced that the neighbor upon whom one must invest the love of suffering humanity should preferably be kindred, or one among those mutually embedded in networks of communal participation.

From this it follows, in the second place, that we must amend the common view that sees the evolution of assistance up to the modern era as neatly divided into discrete periods. Even from the institutional point of view, the role of the church is to be interpreted only in light of the demand for organizing assistance on a local basis. If the practical principles of assistance were initially localized in the monasteries and other religious institutions, and if the church was for some time the main administrator of assistance, then the transition was made without an abrupt shift toward secular authorities. As a result there was less a transfer than collaboration and constant shifting between a plurality of actors, ecclesiastical and secular, centralized, local and professional—like the generosity of great individuals—whose differences are hardly captured by the rough opposition between “public” and “private.” Even the seventeenth century’s policy of confinement, which can plausibly be interpreted as expressing the desire for centralized state control on the part of royal absolutism and which translates into a particularly repressive (anticharitable) attitude toward the poor, was influenced by Louise de Marillac, a disciple of Saint Vincent de Paul, supported by the Society of Saint-Sacrement,

and owed much for its enacting to the initiative of particularly enterprising Jesuits, who crossed France from Brittany to Provence and from Flanders to Languedoc in order to enforce it.⁶¹

Two remarks, however, are required to avoid a double confusion on the uses of these conjectures. First, this mutual affinity between a “Christian” economy inspired by charity and a “secular” economy of assistance dictated by the need for control obviously does not preclude tensions and differences between these two orientations. Neither does it suggest that these two orientations have always been followed to the letter. In particular, popular attitudes toward indigents have obviously been much more subtle than we would think if we confined our account to prescriptions set forth in official regulations. Individual almsgiving persisted in spite of these numerous condemnations. Hospitality, for example, soup and a bed in the barn, was largely given out—fortunately for the indigent—without the donor demanding that the beggar “deserve” to be relieved. We can discern in these attitudes some traces of the evangelical message of love for the other. But one finds them in many other cultures as well—for example Muslim hospitality—and probably in all cultures, especially the agrarian, where traditions of generosity are mixed with a wariness toward strangers and the poor. As a result one can say that they are motivated by a religious sense more general than that embodied by Christianity, or by a consciousness of social proximity. The common peasant or urban worker might well imagine that he too could very well find himself some day wholly abject, thus bringing into play a solidarity of conditions.⁶² One can hardly attribute to Christianity alone, then, all that passes for the “charitable” in a dominantly Christian civilization.

The relationship between Christian spirituality and assistance is also much more complex than we have suggested here in our account of only prevailing social practices. The most generous forms of compassion were exercised both by the faithful as well as by some dignitaries of the church. St. Francis Assisi developed the cult of “Lady Poverty.”⁶³ Even as eminent a theologian as the Spanish Dominican Domingo de Soto opposed the Renaissance humanists by standing up against all restrictions on the exercise of charity.⁶⁴ And there were surely many Christians who provided relief to others without any concern for canonical rules.

We could cite countless examples of such attitudes, which are probably more “evangelical” than those officially prevailing. But

we must concern ourselves primarily with the latter: those of “actual Christianity,” in the sense that one speaks of “actual socialisms,” that is to say those that were historically imposed in order to direct a policy of assistance. In this view, the Church more often aided than discouraged “reasonable” efforts to look after those indigents who satisfied its discriminatory distinctions.⁶⁵ As a result its impact is manifested in a socio-anthropological conception of assistance. Whatever the society in question, it is likely that no coherent system of assistance can be structured without first making a distinction between “good” and “bad” poor. This is to translate into common language a multitude of scholarly or pseudo-scholarly considerations based on theological, moral, philosophical, economic and technocratic arguments. If one tried to relieve all forms of suffering, where would this lead one? In the West, the rationalization of charity contributed in no small way to constructing the culturally dominant form of this basic necessity of limiting the range of assistance by deliberately reformulating the criteria for access. But, despite its ostensible principle of generalized love for the other, the Christian exaltation of a type of poverty where one must be overwhelmed by misfortune in order to be relieved, along with its condemnation of idleness as the “mother of all sins,” both contributed to its preserving these criteria in potentially restrictive ways. In any society, and a Christian society is no exception, the poor must display a good deal of humility and exhibit convincing proofs of their unhappy condition in order to deflect suspicions that they are “bad poor.”

Our second distinction relates to the emphasis placed here on the continuity of the problem of assistance since the Middle Ages. This should not be taken to mean that we find the same vicissitudes monotonously repeated across several centuries. The progress of urbanization; the consolidation of a central power; the refinement of technical and institutional apparatuses—all these have added nuance to these developments. Accordingly, the systematic organization of relief on a municipal basis at the beginning of the sixteenth century and increased intervention by royal power against begging, this “leprosy of the kingdom,” which came increasingly under suspicion as a grave social problem—these mark the essential and qualitatively different stages in the organization of social assistance. Throughout all this, however, the organization of these practices remains dominated by two fundamental vectors: the relationship of

proximity between the assisted and those who assist, on the one hand, and the inability to work, on the other. We can locate the zone of assistance, or at the very least, its core, at the intersection of these two axes:

- 1) *The relationship of proximity prevailing between the beneficiary of relief and the dispensing agent.* Whether it is a matter of alms, welcoming one into an institution, of punctual or regular distributions of relief, of tolerance toward begging, etc., the indigent enjoys a much greater chance of being relieved when he is known and recognized, that is to say, when he is part of the network of locality expressed by communal belonging. The act of assistance is really, within limits, a surrogate for primary sociability.⁶⁶ To find one's self in a condition of deprivation is the effect of an initial rupture from "natural" and "spontaneous" bonds provided by the family, locality and other primary groups. But, in basing itself on the recognition of embeddedness in a territorial community of which residency is at once the sign, support and condition (residence of support), assistance attempts to mitigate these shortcomings, even while mirroring to a great extent these same relations of proximity. It resists the permanent danger of disaffiliation by attempting to reawaken this kind of implicit social contract that unites members of a community on the basis of territorial belonging. These practices form the core of the tutelary complex whose jurisdiction often surpasses mere assistance, insofar as it also attempts to regulate the workplace and to shape the framework of preindustrial society, giving rise to the different forms of philanthropic paternalism that would prevail throughout the nineteenth century. Moreover, this is a framework that must be grasped in order to appreciate fully the significance of the return to the local in contemporary policies of insertion.

- 2) *The criteria of the inability to work.* By themselves, poverty and even complete indigence are not enough to entitle one to assistance. Those who receive assistance are principally those who cannot support themselves or their needs because they are unable to work. A handicap in the broadest sense of the word (not just infirmity and disease, but also old age, abandoned children, widowhood with oppressive familial burdens, etc.) can be the consequences of a familial or social "cause," an accidental rupture in the primary networks of care-taking, as much as of a physical or psychological defect. But, above and beyond these circumstances, one decisive criterion that grants some access to assistance is the recognition of an inability to work.

The core of assistance is formed at the intersection of these two axes. Its extent depends on the meaning, often highly flexible, attributed to each of these criteria. For the social definition of the relationship between proximity and the ability or inability to work

may vary. But, at any given moment, to find one's self at the very heart of potential care-taking is to be situated at the point where these two vectors cross one another to the greatest extent possible. This is to link a complete incapacity to work with a maximum embeddedness in the community.

These structural components of assistance are even more important than the magnitude of available resources. Even in a situation where no specific revenue has been set aside, or where institutional structures are practically nonexistent and the methods of intervention very crude, if one is both conclusively unable to ensure one's survival by work and embedded in a territorial community, he is virtually guaranteed relief. At the extreme, the invalid who has his appointed place under the porch of the church, making himself part of the social landscape of the parish, enjoys a kind of minimal guaranteed income. One can interpret the development of assistance as a progressive sophistication of those resources put at the disposal of this end, that is to say, a specialization, institutionalization, routinization, and professionalization that grows gradually more extensive with the arrival or more and more abundant financial means. But this transformation modified the way of actualizing these two criteria without in any way challenging their operational efficiency.

We are concerned here with constructing an ideal model of assistance. In this model, assistance is only fully realized when the two vectors of social proximity and inability to work are maximized. But it is perhaps just as revealing to study in detail those forms of assistance that would seem to deviate from these ideal vectors. Far from refuting the force of the model, these apparent deviations actually confirm its validity, at least if one makes use of it dynamically. In effect, we must interpret the actual practices of assistance not simply as the mechanical application of these criteria, but rather as a balance between these two vectors. In so doing, we discover that maximizing either of the two axes can compensate, at least in part, for a deficiency of the other, and vice-versa.

Feigning a disability arises as one key strategy for more closely conforming to the ideal model of care-giving. The exhibition of diseases, feigned wounds or illnesses, is a recurrent theme in the literature concerning poverty. Those faking blindness, the falsely crippled or wounded, who abandon their crutches and props with the coming of evening in order to make merry—these populate the world of beggary.⁶⁷ One even finds that the concern with looking

pitiful can be pushed to its extreme limits, as in the many tales alleging self-inflicted mutilations by professional beggars, or even that they have made children submit to. But even when it is ineffective, this mania to fake an inability to work testifies to the decisive importance of this criterion for access to relief. In faking an illegitimate injury, the dissembler may slip into the sphere of assistance where he would otherwise have had no place if healthy in body and spirit. As a testament to how vice leads to virtue, in this case to the eminent value accorded to work: You must have pity for me, for I am obviously unable to support myself by working.

The “shamed poor” present a more subtle case. They can be assisted without being physically unable to work. The ashamed poor are those indigents who have received a good education and have occupied an honorable place in society, but who have fallen and are unable to reclaim their status. They find themselves “in distress by the misfortune of circumstances without the resources of manual labor because the prejudices of birth, education, profession, or more appropriately, the sway of custom, cuts them off from this resource.” As this anonymous eighteenth-century commentator observes, “The sword, the robe and the plume: each has its shamed poor. The third estate does not fail to produce them, nor in these inferior classes, abandoned to the purely mechanical arts, but among those who have embraced the liberal arts or other professions whose execution demands more the work of the spirit than of the hands.”⁶⁸

I have cited this text relatively late in the work because it offers a particularly explicit definition of the “shamed poor”; but this category had already appeared in Italy by the second half of the thirteenth century.⁶⁹ It is a manifestation of social decline. Its emergence is tied to the development of an urban society that, along with increasing social differentiation and stratification, brought with it a concomitant downward mobility. But it maintained its consistency until the end of the *ancien régime*. Frequently the registers of hospitals or religious foundations make mention of a special budgetary line, often annotated as “An honest family who wish to be discrete. Artist. Four loaves of bread.”⁷⁰ Very often those entrusted with providing assistance hastened to give priority to this category of poor, for whom the parish or town felt themselves particularly responsible.

Such forbearance toward the “shamed poor” attests first of all to an underlying contempt for manual labor: an individual of importance, even reduced to misery, is relieved of the need to lower him-

self to these degrading labors. It also confirms the negative value generally attached to poverty: the “shamed” poor are embarrassed to show that they are poor, because they have preserved their dignity, as poverty is undignified for those of good breeding. But the special treatment of this kind of indigence is primarily understandable in terms of the strength and quality of the communal bond that these unfortunates have retained. Known and recognized for having once occupied an honorable station, they hold a social capital of respectability whose dividends they now receive in the form of relief. This strong factor of social participation compensates for the paradoxical handicap of their being able to work, which would otherwise present a barrier to them receiving relief.

Thus what seems an apparent exception to the rule of work hardly serves to refute its importance. To the contrary, for the shamed poor are not entirely released from the obligation to work, but only from that kind of servile labor that would be undignified for their condition: the obligation to manual labor applies only to low or common people. On the other hand, however, access to assistance represents a combination of both work and one’s relationship to the community. On this second axis, the treatment of the shamed poor exemplifies in its most extreme form the extent to which protection is based on social proximity: the intensity and the quality of embeddedness in a system of interrelations. Although the dissembling beggar, a member of the low and undistinguished masses, must feign and showcase bodily deterioration in order to be granted assistance, the shamed poor, equally healthy, can content themselves by discretely cashing in on their social capital.

But the treatment reserved for the able-bodied beggar is probably more interesting for the inevitable ambiguity that it reveals. This category appeared as such, with a pejorative connotation, at the beginning of the fourteenth century.⁷¹ Its emergence is roughly contemporaneous with that of the “shamed poor,” and this is not an accident. While there were formerly the “idle,” who lived on alms (is it not these whom Saint Augustine, for example, accused in his condemnation of “those who were not ashamed to beg”?), but they became prominently visible with rapid population growth, the growth of towns, and the social stratification that they brought along with them. They became an identifiable category in their own right and hence they presented a problem for administrative authorities.

From this moment onward, most regulations echoed prohibitions against giving alms to them. As a result, according to the ordinance

made in France in 1351 by Jean II also known as the Good, "Those who would like to give alms should give nothing to those with healthy bodies and limbs who can labor to make that from which they merit their life, but give them instead to those who are deformed, blind, disabled and other miserable people."⁷² At the same time in England, the ordinance of Richard II of 1388 conflated all able-bodied beggars ("Every person that goeth to begging and is able to serve or labor") with vagabonds, who are matters for the police, and distinguished them from invalids (disabled beggars) who were allowed to pursue their activity in place, so long as the inhabitants would tolerate them.⁷³ This same distinction is repeated throughout the long series of condemnations of vagabondage and begging by the Valois⁷⁴ and in the first English "poor laws" of the sixteenth century.⁷⁵

The heart of the problem comes from the fact that this distinction has never been applied in a fully rigorous way. And this is not only because the permanence of "charitable" attitudes would have contributed to attenuating their rigor. Despite the moral and religious condemnation of the "idle" it appears that they are not all guilty of not working, and that they can also be assisted without begging, so long as they belong to the parish. This is the meaning of the evolution of England's "poor laws" throughout the sixteenth century: Beginning with the condemnation of the "able-bodied" beggars who will be whipped and driven away (first law of 1535), these laws eventually culminate in the aspiration of taking care of the whole of their indigents, even the able-bodied.⁷⁶ Similarly, in France the instructions for applying the ordinance of 1764 analyzed above call for special treatment for residential beggars: those who are detained "less than a half-league" from their home are not beggars by trade but rather members of the community deserving relief. Confinement itself was intended as a means to reinstate the resident poor. As for the "shamed poor," the criterion of residency totally obscured that of inability to work in order to receive assistance.

But this position can not be maintained for long. If one deconstructs this notion of the able-bodied beggar, one is left with an irresolvable paradox. Like Janus, this dilemma has two faces. On the one side, he looks toward assistance because he lacks everything: but on the other hand, he evokes repression, since he is able to work and should live from the sweat of his body. Some times the condemnation of the able-bodied beggar is that of a usurper: someone who presents him-

self as a potential beneficiary of assistance in order to be relieved from the obligation to work. At other times one acknowledges, or one suspects, that he is not responsible for his situation, and the door of assistance is opened to him. But in contrast to the mildness from which the “shamed poor” benefits, this assistance is never given without reserve. As a member of the common people, he does not benefit from the same kind of social capital. It is upon those people of his species, of “vile estate,” that weighs in an unforgiving manner the Biblical condemnation: “You must earn your bread by the sweat of your brow.” Certainly, but what becomes then of those who are unable to earn it, because they cannot work, not by their own incapacity, but instead because there is no work?

The entire history of assistance abounds in this contradiction. It poses and reaffirms the demand that one be unable to work as a condition for getting relief, even as it disposes of and betrays this criterion just as often. This is why all these propositions are tentative even at best, and most often miscarry. They fail not only for lack of material resources, or adequate financial, human or institutional means. Instead they falter on the impossibility of completely disposing of the problems that able-bodied poverty poses to the particular categories of assistance. Insofar as it pertains to abandoned children, disabled elderly, infirm, sick indigents, etc., inasmuch as it is in the body of handicapology,⁷⁷ they do not pose a fundamental problem. I mean by this that although there are often very serious difficulties, they are essentially on the order of technical, financial, or institutional problems. By way of contrast, for those people who can work an inability to sustain one’s self recalls the fundamental problem that the able-bodied beggar was the first to present historically. This is to ask of social assistance the riddle of the sphinx: how does one make an importunate beggar into the producer of his own existence? This question does not lend itself to a solution, because the “correct response” is not to be found in the order of assistance, but rather in the order of work.

Accordingly, from the ambiguity of the able-bodied beggar, one emerges with a redoubling and dramatization of the social question. This personage represents the concrete transition that will allow us to move beyond the general category of discontent and to consider instead the particular and essential case of the discontent of the masses: the decadence of miserable work, or worse yet, the misery of having no work.

Notes

1. I borrow this expression from Alain Caillé, "Socialité primaire et société secondaire." In *Splendeurs et misères des sciences sociales*, Genève-Paris, Droz, 1986, p. 363-375. Caillé opposes sociability or primary sociability to "secondary" sociability, which is a sociability arising from participation in groups presuming a specialization of activities and mediations. Of course, it is primarily a matter of a formal and abstract opposition, but we can also apply it to specific situations. I use it here as a model to characterize the emergence of a specialized care-taking from a break in non-specialized or "primary" care-taking.
2. Cf. W.I. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, first edition, New York, 1918. For a general conceptualization, T. Shanin, "Peasant Economy" I and II, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, October 1973 and January 1974.
3. Cf. J. P. Gutton, *la société villageoise dans l'ancienne France*, Paris, Hachette, 1979. Robert Fossier speaks of "enclosurement" to describe, in the Middle Ages, the processes of crystallization of the rural habitat in communities of autarchically dominated inhabitants (*Histoire sociale de l'occident médiéval*, Paris, A. Colin, 1970).
4. G. d' Avenel, *Paysans et ouvriers depuis 700 ans*, Paris, A. Colin, 1907, p. 9. Of course this form of social organization can be found in other cultural areas and other historical times. It is in particular the case of the "Japanese Middle Age."
5. Cf. A. Lipietz, *l' Audace ou l' enlissement*, Paris. La Decouvert, 1984.
6. Cf. R. Fossier, *Histoire sociale de l'Occident médiéval*, op. cit., chap. 5.
7. Marc Augé speaks of "totalitarianism of lineage" to specify situations of quasi-absolute dependency toward lineage, tradition and custom in societies "without any history." Cf. *Pouvoirs de vie, pouvoirs de mort* Paris, Flammarion, 1977, p. 81.
8. Cf. For example the catastrophe represented by, according to Lévi-Strauss, the existence of the single person in this type of society: from the fact that he does take his place in the network and exchanges regulated by structures of parenthood, he finds himself outnumbered and is rejected by the group (Cf. "La famille" in *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, texts gathered by R. Billour and C. Clement, Paris, Gallimard, 1979 p. 105). Also, W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki underline that the "collection of a system of familial attitudes absolutely implies the necessity of marriage for all members of the young generation... Someone who after a while, is not married creates in the familial environment a reaction of hostile surprise. It is as if this person halted the course of things, and he is put outside of the circle and left alone" (*The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, op. cit., p. 104). The "system of familial attitudes" translates the constraints of the primary sociability.
9. G. Duby, "Les pauvres des campagnes dans l'Occident médiéval jusqu'au XIIIe siècle," *Revue d'histoire de l'Eglise en France*, t. LII, 1966, p. 25.
10. G. Duby, *Guerriers et paysans*, Paris, Gallimard, 1978, p. 261.
11. Quoted in R. Boutruche, *Seigneurie et féodalité, le premier âge des liens d'hommes à hommes*, Paris, Aubier, 1968, p. 166.
12. For a discussion on the notion of feudality, whose meaning has been rendered more complex since the classic *Société féodale* de Marc Bloch (first edition, Paris, 1939), Cf. For example G. Bois, *la crise du féodalisme*, Paris, Hachette, 1978, p. 354.
13. M. Mollat, *les pauvres au Moyen Age*, Paris, Hachette, 1978, p. 354.
14. Cf. G. Duby, *le Moyen Age*, Paris, Hachette, 1987, chap. 4.
15. G. Duby, *ibid.*, p. 18.
16. To appreciate the difference between a disaffiliation of luxury in this type of society and the posterior and "popular" figure of the vagabond, cf. chap. II and "Le roman de la disaffiliation: à propos de *Tristan et Iseult*." loc. cit.

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17. Social differentiation should not be confused with social hierarchy. Some extremely hierarchical social formations like feudal society can be very tightly fit together, and by this fact extremely protective. But undoubtedly they can not be very differentiated: the multiplication of intermediary statuses leads, one has seen, to the endangerment of the type of feudal control and to the emergence of zones of turbulence populated by individuals who are situated between the sacred statuses
18. It is not incongruous to speak in this way of profession if, following Max Weber, "One understands by profession the fact that a person fulfills continuously these payments toward the ends of subsistence or profit." Cf. Max Weber, *General Economic History*. Gallimard, 1991, p. 17). Weber remarks that so defined, the first profession is that of sorcerer. But the sorcerer is still not properly speaking a specialist, he is the professional of the religious in general. By way of contrast, a religious person can be a professional at moments by means of specialized social activities. The clergy is both in the service of God and at the service of the poor, and it is primarily paid for these two activities.
19. This schema of thought often inspires even the best historical works on assistance. For example, Jean-Pierre Gutton, at the beginning of his work on *La Société et les Pauvres, l'exemple de la généralité de Lyon, 1524-1798*, Paris, PUF, 1971, invokes "the passage of the representation of a 'poor of Jesus Christ' in the more or less sacred character, to that of a poor repulsed, lost and socially endangered." While availing myself of these same givens, here understood those reported by J.-P. Gutton, I have made of them a different interpretation.
20. M. Mollat, "La Notion de pauvreté au Moyen Age," in *Etudes sur l'économie et la société de l'Occident médiéval*, London, Balorum Reprints, 1977, XIV, p. 10.
21. Cited by M. Mollat, *Les pauvres au Moyen Age*, op. cit., p. 356.
22. Cited by M. Mollat, "La notion de pauvreté au Moyen Age," loc. Cit., p. 322.
23. Cited in M. Mollat, *Etudes sur l'économie et la société de l'Occident médiéval*, op. cit., p. 17. In this same vein, the very aristocratic Christine de Pisa said of the poor, "Since they are not nothing, it is all refuse—poverty is its name—Who from nothing was loved." And she concludes eloquently, "Of this ilk, he is nothing but excrement." (*Le Livre de la Mucacion de Fortune*, cited in P. Sassié, *Du bon usage des pauvres*, Paris, Fayard, 1990, p. 90).
24. Cited in G. Ricci, "Naissance du pauvre honteux," *Annales ESC*, 1983, No. 1, p. 160.
25. M. Mollat, *Les Pauvres au Moyen Age*, op. cit., p. 133.
26. "Life of Saint Eloi," Cited in B. Geremek, *La Potence ou la Pitié*, trad. Fr. Paris, Gallimard, 1987, p. 29.
27. Saint Francois de Sales, *Introduction à la vie dévote*, Paris, Editions Florissone, p. 29.
28. Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, trad. Fr. Paris, Gallimard, 1971.
29. M. Mollat, *Les Pauvres au Moyen Age*, op. cit., p. 159.
30. C. de La Roncière, "Pauvres et Pauvreté à Florence au XIV^{ème} siècle," in M. Mollat, *Etudes sur l'histoire de la pauvreté*, Paris, 1974, Vol. II, p. 661-745.
31. One should be able to give concrete examples of this thesis by a large study of medieval iconography. Emblematic of this vision of the world is the sequence of the arrival of the procession of scourges in the Bergman film, *le Septième Sceau*. The insouciance of the festival in the center of the village: the artists are beautiful, young, carefree, they sing the joy of life, and the people are amused. Surging the men in black with their lamentations, chains and fear, the plague and death. The instant of wavering goodwill in suffering, this world of the here-and-now is accursed.
32. M. Mollat, *Les Pauvres au Moyen Age*, op. cit., p. 55.
33. D. Willibrord Witters, "Pauvres et pauvreté dans les coutumiers monastiques du Moyen Age," in M. Mollat, *Etudes sur la pauvreté*, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 184.

34. G. Duby, "Les pauvres des campagnes," loc. cit., p. 26.
35. M. Mollat, *Les Pauvres au Moyen Age*, op. cit., p. 56.
36. B. Geremek, *La Potence ou la pitié*, op. cit., p. 25.
37. Cf. J. Le Goff, "Apostolat mendiant et fait urbain," *Annales ESC*, 1968.
38. Cf. M. Candille, "Pour un précis d'histoire des institutions charitables, quelques données du XII-XIV^{ème} siècle," *Bulletin de la Société française d'histoire des hôpitaux*, No. 30, 1974.
39. M. Mollat, *Les Pauvres au Moyen Age*, op. cit., p. 71.
40. Cf. C. Liss and H. Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe*, Harsocks, The Harvester Press, 1979, p. 25.
41. B. Geremek, *La Potence ou la pitié*, op. cit., pp. 53-63. Max Weber already observed that in the medieval towns certain beggars were endowed by statute or condition (*stand*); cf. M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.
42. On the role of brotherhoods, Robert Fossier (*Histoire sociale de l'Occident médiéval*, op. cit., chap. V) shows that the impetus of these charitable associations, "refuge of the humble," analogous to the development of chivalrous associations for the powerful, corresponded to the moment of the dissolution protections afforded by the extended family. It is above all an urban phenomenon, but one finds less elaborate forms of them in the country as well.
43. B. Geremek, *La Potence ou la pitié*, op. cit., chap. III, "Une nouvelle politique sociale."
44. J. L. Vives, *De subventione pauperum*, Bruges, 1525, trad. Fr. *De l'assistance aux pauvres*, Bruxelles, 1943.
45. For an account of these municipal policies, cf. B. Geremek, op. cit.; Liss and Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe*, op. cit., Chapter III; T. Vissol, "A l'origine des législations sociales au XVI^{ème} siècle: humanisme et frayeurs populaires," *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 19; for a detailed account of the functioning of the "public hospital" of Lyon in J.-P. Gutton, *La Société et les pauvres: l'exemple de la généralité de Lyon*, op. cit.; for England, cf. J. Pound, *Poverty and Vagrancy in Tudor England*, London, 1971.
46. Cited in L. Parturier, *L'Assistance à Paris sous l'ancien régime et pendant la Révolution*, Paris, 1897, p. 73.
47. These seem to have more or less correctly functioned for some dozens of years before falling more or less into neglect. Cf. Liss and Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe*, op. cit. In England, however, the initiatives of the sixteenth century were based on a system of "legal charity" more elaborate than on the Continent, and this particularity will later characterize nineteenth-century England as well.
48. Text of the edict of April, 1657: "Edit du Roy portant établissement de l'Hôpital Général pour le Renfermement des pauvres mendiants de la Ville et Fauxbourgs de Paris," reprinted as an appendix to the first edition of *The History of Madness* by Michel Foucault, Paris, Plon, 1961, p. 646 and passim. The interpretation of the "great confinement" offered here is nonetheless different than that of Foucault. For a more elaborate justification of this difference and its implications with reference to the genealogical approach of Michel Foucault, cf. R. Castel, "Problematisation: A Way of Reading History," in J. Goldstein, ed. *Foucault and the Writing of History Today*, loc. cit.
49. Cf. J.-P. Gutton, *La Société et les pauvres*, op. cit., In Paris, one put forward a proposition of the same genre as Catherine de Medici of 1612, the hospital of Petites-Maisons. In fact, the structure of the public hospital or the workhouse was largely implanted in Europe from the end of the sixteenth century, and even earlier in Italy. Cf. Liss and Solly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe*, op. cit.

Cf. Also B. Geremek, "Le renfermement des pauvres in Italie (XIV-XVIII^{ème} siècle)," in *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel*, Toulouse, Privat, 1973, Vol. 1. It must therefore be said that Michel Foucault synthesized in the founding of the public hospital of Paris in 1657 a quasi-secular trend that affected all European public space.

50. "Edit de 1662 portant établissement d'un Hôpital général dans toutes les villes et gros bourgs du Royaume," in Jourdan, Decrouzy, and Isambert, eds. *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises*, Paris, 28 Vols., Vol. 18, p. 18. For one interpretation of this progressive process of care-taking by the central examples of the problem of assistance in the tradition of Norbert Elias's theory of collectivization, cf. A. de Swaan, *In Care of the State*, Cambridge, Polity, 1988.
51. Cf. J. Depauw, "Pauvres, pauvres mendiants, mendiants valides ou vagabonds? Les hésitations de la législation royale," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, XXI, July-September, 1974.
52. Jourdan, Decrouzy and Isambert, eds. *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises*, op. cit., Vol. XVIII, p. 19.
53. "Edit du Roy portant établissement de l'Hôpital général..." loc. cit., p. 648.
54. Erving Goffman, *Asylums*, trad. Fr. Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1968.
55. "Edit du Roy portant établissement de l'Hôpital général..." loc. cit., p. 648.
56. *Des Moyens de détruire la mendicité en France en rendant les mendiants utiles à l'Etat sans les rendre malheureux, Mémoires qui ont concouru pour le prix accordé en 1777 par l'Académie des sciences, arts et belles-lettres de Châlons-sur-Marne*, Chalons-sur-Marne, 1780, p. 5.
57. C. Bloch, *l'Assistance et l'Etat en France à la veille de la Révolution*, reprinted Geneva, 1974, p. 160. Text of the declaration of 1764 in Jourdain, Decouzy and Isambert, eds. *Recueil des anciennes lois de la France*, op. cit., Vol. XXII, p. 74.
58. Cited in Christian Paultre, *De la répression de la mendicité et du vagabondage en France sous l'ancien régime*, Paris, 1906, p. 400.
59. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, op. cit.
60. We will discuss in chapter 4 the transformation represented by the right to support proposed by the Committee for the Extinction of Poverty of the Constituent Assembly, and voted for by the Convention. But it did not contradict this demand for residency. Instead the nation became the territorial unit of reference, and, in making the obligation to support the poor into a "sacred debt," it lent it the dignity of a right. However, the exercise of this right demanded one's submission to the requirements of localizing the "residency of relief." This had as its flip side the exclusion of foreigners.
61. Cf. O. H. Hufton, *The Poor in Eighteenth Century France*, Oxford, 1974, pp. 140-144.
62. This sentiment of solidarity takes into account the fact that the common people of the towns regularly participated in the archers of lookouts or the "tramp-chasers" who came to arrest the poor. Cf. A. Farge, "Le mendiant, un marginal?" in *Marginaux et exclus de l'histoire*, "Cahier Jussieu No. 5," Paris, UGE, 1979.
63. But Franciscanism is not an exaltation of poverty as such. The question is complex, so we will note here only that the "Povorello" makes an apology for frugality and humility rather than material poverty strictly speaking, and its ideal is to promote a society eradicating wisdom and power as much as riches in order to leave one's self entirely dominated by spiritual values. In addition, this ideal is not foreseen, it is the means that one can say, in the church. On the social orientations of the Franciscans, cf. J. Le Goff, "Le vocabulaire des catégories sociales chez saint François d'Assise et ses biographes du XIII^{ème} siècle," in *Ordres et classes*, Colloque d'histoire sociale de Saint-Cloud de 1967, Paris-La Haye, Mouton, 1972.

64. Cf. J. Vilar, "Le picarisme espagnol," in *Marginaux et exclus de l'histoire*, op. cit. De Soto availed himself of this in particular in Vives, who condemns "the shamelessness of begging." More generally, one must discuss the controversial position assumed by the mendicant orders in the development of charitable practices.
65. It is impossible to treat here the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism in their implementation of the policies of assistance. Two schematic remarks only. The thesis that attributes to the Reformation the rebirth of the municipal policies of the sixteenth century is not founded on serious arguments (cf. N. Zenon Davis, "Assistance, humanisme et hérésie" in M. Mollat, *Etudes sur l'histoire de la pauvreté*, op. cit., Vol. II). Secondly, the Protestant doctrine of salvation by works contributed to making poverty even more suspect and to harden the criteria of access to relief. Cf. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, op. cit. And R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: An Historical Study*, New York, 1947, who underline the role played by the Puritans in making of poverty a contemptible condition for which the immorality of the poor is intrinsically responsible.
66. This "measure of the possible" depends in fact on two principal variables: the resources available within a community, and the homogeneity of this community. The development of urbanization and the geographical expansion of the area of assistance (the state replaces the parish or the community, for example) make difficult the exercise of a solidarity of proximity. But as we will see (cf. chapter 4, on the efforts deployed by the Revolutionary Assemblies) that the nation-state can attempt to reactivate the imperative of communal care-taking by imposing a right to support.
67. Cf. R. Chartier, ed. *Figures de la gueuserie*, Paris, Montalba, 1982.
68. Cited in J.-P. Gutton, *La Société et les pauvres*, op. cit., p. 23.
69. G. Ricci, "Naissance du pauvre honteux," loc. cit.
70. Cf. Cited in J.-P. Gutton, op. cit.
71. Cf. M. Mollat, *Etudes sur l'histoire de la pauvreté*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 14.
72. "Ordnance concernant la police du Royaume," in Jourdan, Decrouzy and Isambert, eds. *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises*, op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 577.
73. Cf. J. C. Ribton-Turner, *History of Vagrants and Vagrancy, and Beggars and Begging*, New Jersey, 1972, p. 60.
74. Cf. Jourdan, Decrouzy and Isambert, eds. *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises*, op. cit., Vol. 13, pp. 262-264.
75. Cf. J. Pound, *Poverty and Vagrancy in Tudor England*, op. cit.
76. Cf. The appendix to J. Pound, *Poverty and Vagrancy in Tudor England*, op. cit., for extracts of the repertoire of the poor supported by the town of Norwich in 1570. They show that certain families of workers effectively benefited from relief, who were unemployed, or even when the salary of the head of the family was not enough to ensure survival. Similarly, the public almshouse of Lyon, since its founding in 1534, directed the daily distribution of bread to indigents, many of whom were representatives of small professions (cf. J.-P. Gutton, *La Société et les pauvres*, op. cit.). But the remedies proposed by these "municipal policies" have always been all out of scale with the size of the problem. For the group of proposals to put able-bodied poor to forced labor, cf. the following chapter.
77. Obviously this does not mean that this "handicapology" can be reduced to a naturalist categorization, without reference to the social situation and relationship to work: the "charities" of Lyon are mainly frequented by the "elderly," and primarily by "elderly women," former workers, workers or widows of workers in textiles and other small urban artisans (cf. J.-P. Gutton, *La Société et les Pauvres*, op. cit.). Invalidity due to age entitles them to assistance, so long as they were born in Lyon or have lived there for more than ten years. However, these "elderly" also pose in miniature the question of work: it is the insufficiency of resources acquired during

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their working lives that condemns them to poverty in the twilight of their life. One can see as a result that this is the advent of assurances linked to work that represents the “solution” to this problem, as it will be the resolution of the problem of able-bodied poverty in general (cf. chapter 6).

2

Embeddedness in Society

By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries social assistance had taken on a complex form, even to the point that we can discern the rough outlines of a “modern” policy of relief. Already social assistance entailed the classification and selection of recipients; efforts to organize such benefits rationally on a territorial basis; and a pluralism of responsible parties, whether religious or secular, “private” or “public,” centralized or local. The emergence in this era of two sorts of groups, the shameful poor and able-bodied beggars, suggests that these societies were already well-acquainted with the phenomena of downward mobility and underemployment (able-bodied workers confronting poverty). All this came to pass, however, as if they were forced to assimilate these populations to the categories of assistance: the dual criteria of residency and of an incapacity to work continue to be imposed (even if they were often bent in practice) as preconditions for receiving assistance. This doctrine remained in place until the end of the *ancien régime*. However, with the appearance of a new category of indigence characterized by the impossibility of finding work, the middle of the fourteenth century witnessed a transformation that most historians of assistance, in my opinion, have tended to overlook. This is because it no longer fits neatly within the framework of the problem of relief. With the case of vagabondage, the deeper question of the existence of the able-bodied poor takes on a new dimension.

Understandably, this is not a total departure from earlier attempts to define the problem of relief. The ambiguous character of the able-bodied poor will never be disposed of entirely. The core of the regulatory and institutional structure for the relief of the poor is already in place and it will attempt to adapt itself to the new goal. Thus it is in part by a rereading of the same givens by which we will have to

proceed. But this new reading will have to be significantly modified if it indeed proves to be the case that toward the middle of the fourteenth century an entirely new personage appeared on the scene, or at least became sufficiently visible that he would serve as the supporting for an entirely new version of the social question. There had long existed those in need, indigents, disabled, impoverished, and even undesirables of all sorts. Henceforth one must take into account those individuals who occupy the position of “supernumeraries” in society. These have no assigned place in the social structure and the system of distribution of recognized positions, not even those that make relieved indigents into an integrated clientele. They are predecessors of the supernumeraries of today. This is not, of course, by similarity of conditions, but rather by virtue of occupying an analogous position.

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What is it, then, that suddenly transpires in the middle of the fourteenth century? We find a striking potential for mobility in a social structure that is unprepared to accommodate it, and which in fact will do virtually anything to oppose it. It is this breakdown which draws attention to a new category of indigents. In 1349, Edward III, king of England, promulgated the ordinance known as the “Statute of Workers” (*Statutum serventibus*). Its main provisions are summarized below:

Because a great part of the people, and especially of workmen and servants, late died of the pestilence, many seeing the necessity of masters and great scarcity of servants, will not serve unless they may receive excessive wages, and some rather willing to beg in idleness than labour to get their living; We, considering the grievous incommodities of which the lack especially of ploughmen and such labourers may hereafter come, have upon deliberation and treaty with the prelates and nobles, and learned men assisting us, of their mutual consent ordained:

That every man and woman of our realm of England, of what condition he be, free or bond, able in body, and within the age of threescore years, not living by merchandise, nor exercising any craft, nor having his own whereof he may live, nor proper land, about whose tillage he may himself occupy, and not serving any other, if he be in convenient service (his estate considered) be required to serve, he shall be bounden to serve him which so shall him require; And take only the wages. Livery, meed, or salary which were accustomed to be given in the places where he oweth to serve, the xx year of our reign of England, or five or six other common years next before. Provided always, that the lords be preferred before other in their bondmen or their land tenants, so in their service to be retained: so that nevertheless the said lords shall retain no more than be necessary for them; And if any such man or woman, being so required to serve,

will not the same do, that proved by two true men before the sheriff or the bailiff, lord or constable of the town where the same shall happen to be done, he shall anon be taken by them, or any of them, and committed to the next gaol, there to remain under strait keeping, till he find surety to *serve in the form aforesaid*.

That if a workman or servant depart from service before the time agreed upon, he shall be imprisoned.

That the old wages and no more shall be given to servants.

That if the lord of a town or manor do offend against this statute in any point, he shall forfeit the treble value.

That if any artificer or workman take more wages than were wont to be paid, he shall be committed to the gaol.

That victuals shall be sold at reasonable prices.

Because that many valiant beggars, as long as they may live of begging, do refuse to labour, giving themselves to idleness and vice, and sometime to theft and other abominations; none upon the said pain of imprisonment shall, under the colour of pity or alms, give anything to such, which may labour, or presume to favour them towards their desires, so that thereby they may be compelled to labour for their necessary living.¹

This long citation is necessary to show the systematic articulation of a new problematic of work at the origins of modernity, to wit:

- The call for a categorical imperative to work for all those who have no other resources to live by other than the power of their limbs.
- The insistence that the task should as much as possible conform to the division of labor as it is dictated by tradition and custom. That is, he who already works should keep his job (unless he asks his employer to allow him a vacation), and that he who is in search of employment must accept the first offer which is given to him in that territorial unit marking the system of dependency of a society still dominated by feudal structures. This seignorial right of preemption holds as much for free men as for serfs.²
- The freeze on wages for work, which can neither be the subject of negotiation nor of adjustment, and must be firmly set once and for all.
- The prohibition against evading this imperative to work by appealing for social assistance (prohibitions against the disabled begging, and correspondingly, against the wealthy giving sustenance or alms to those subjects who are able to work).

These provisions exemplify what amounts to a general imperative to work for all those who are obliged to earn their livelihood by laboring. It functions on two levels, and sketches a line of demarcation between two different kinds of workers. For those who hold a

position in the established system of artisans and craftsmen, or who serve a master, domestics, household workers, personnel of ecclesiastical and secular domains, or those who, servile or free, are attached to a piece of land from which they draw their sustenance at the leave of the owner, the ordinance primarily serves a preventive function: it insists that they remain tied to their place of work and be content with their condition and the rewards that are attached to it. Likewise, the ordinance stemmed the flow toward the creation of “free” individuals, who are liberated from these traditional regulations, both those who are unemployed and those who are placed in a position of mobility with respect to employment. The ordinance responds to the undeniable fact that a certain kind of population that no longer fits into the traditional division of labor will henceforward be problematic. At the same time it imposes a solution: eliminate mobility, blocking this flux at its source, and forcefully reinstating a fixed structure upon all those who have been disconnected. In particular, it closes the loophole of those who are capable of working but whose pattern is to have recourse to social assistance for their survival. The code of work is formulated in explicit opposition to the code of assistance.

Is this to make too much of the text? It is not isolated. In England alone, it will be repeated several times, albeit with variations, in the second half of the fourteenth century. In 1388, Richard II introduced three notable distinctions. First, the employed (servants) leaving their job must be provided with a voucher certified by the authorities of their district. If they are found errant (wandering) without this passport, they will be imprisoned and held until one can be certain that they will return to the job they have left. Second, all workers of more than twelve years old who were accustomed to agricultural work could not choose another manual job, and all new contracts for laborers or apprenticeships that violated this rule were declared null and void. Finally, all beggars were assumed to be vagabonds who wander without documentation. Conversely, invalid beggars must remain in place if the other residents would tolerate them; otherwise, they must seek refuge in those towns that grant asylum, or in their place of birth, where they will remain until death.³

In France, a first ordinance of Jean II the Good of 1351 confronted those “who are held to be idlers by the city of Paris, and who do not wish to expose their body to take a job, of whatever estate or condition that they will be, having trade or not, being men or women,

being healthy of body and limbs” and enjoined them either to “take any [that is to say, it doesn’t matter what] job at labor from which they can earn their livelihood or to leave the city of Paris within three days after this announcement.” If they fail to do so, they will be imprisoned, pilloried in the case of a second arrest, and for the third offense marked on their chest by a red-hot iron and banished.⁴ Three years later, a new royal ordinance (November, 1354) addresses itself explicitly to:

The great costliness of workers who in wishing to take jobs if they are not paid as they like...and wishing only to work at their own pleasure [and to those who] pick up and leave their places of birth and leave behind their wives, children and their own country and residence...Ordnained is it that all sorts of people, men and women, who are accustomed to work or labor on the land or vines or workers in textiles and leather, carpentry, masonry, house workers and the like, will go before the sun rises to places accustomed to hiring workers, for them, to go work, for whatever price will be paid for daylaborers by these crafts⁵

These injunctions or duties, we should emphasize, both for workers in the cities and for those in the countryside, would be repeated several times until the ordinance issued by the States General in 1413, which observed that “many lands remain uncultivated, and several villages poorly inhabited,” and as a result “the King ordains that all beggars able to earn their living will be forced to leave their positions of begging and to go earn a livelihood elsewhere.” Those to whom assistance is forbidden are always “male and female beggars who are not disabled but have the ability to labor or otherwise earn a living, and also vagabonds and idlers, like rogues and others like them.”⁶

In the Iberian Peninsula, Alphonso the IV of Portugal in 1349, the Courts of Aragon in 1349 and 1350 and those of Castille in 1351, set maximum wages, and these and similar measures were augmented throughout the fourteenth century, ranging from the prohibition of travel in the search for work to the repression of vagabondage.⁷ Ludwig von Wittelsbach, Duke of Bavaria, decreed in 1357 that for Bavaria and the Tyrol, servants and day laborers must remain in the service of their employers without any additional salary. Should they attempt to quit their job, their goods are to be confiscated.⁸

England, France, Portugal, Aragon, Castille, Bavaria: that is, in most countries where a strong, centralized power began to assert itself, there arose an amazing variety of related measures intended to impose rigid guidelines on work and to prevent idleness and the

mobility of laborers. But this was also the policy of many cities throughout “civilized” Europe during this era: Orvieto in 1350, Florence in 1355, Metz in 1356, Amiens in 1359.⁹ Both centralized and municipal powers conspired in their desire to circumscribe labor within its traditional framework by limiting the professional and geographical mobility of manual workers to the greatest extent possible. They were similarly aligned in their consciousness of the fact that there was an essential difference between this question of the obligation to work and the question of assistance.

Hence this situation is defined by a conjunction between a new kind of mobility for workers and a political desire to prohibit it. Mobility as such was by no means a novelty in medieval society. Primarily this was mobility in the sense of geographical movement:

Life on the road in the Middle Ages was particularly intense during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Hawkers or millers plied their wares from village to village; pilgrims made their way to numerous pilgrimage sites, principally to Saint-Jacques, living on alms; the mendicant brothers, preachers of every type went from village to village, delivering passionate speeches in front of the churches; others speculated on the merits of the saints of heaven; clerics wandered from convent to convent, bringing new ones, students rejoining their university. One also met on the roads the jugglers, story-tellers, sellers of animals; soldiers on leave or joining an army filled the paths. These carried a multitude of beggars, while the woods adjoining the roads were populated by bands of thieves.¹⁰

As a result, this aspect of the fourteenth century, in a world where vast expanses of land and forest still existed which had never been touched by civilization, these disturbing entities prowled about. Referring to the expansion of Latin Christianity between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, Georges Duby observes, “Accordingly, on the fringes of this affluent society, one discovered the existence of small groups of maladapted, of tragedies such as are concealed in every form of society. These beings are repressed outside the regions of rootedness, in the uninhabited forests, and on the roads.”¹¹

These errants were frequently the source of problems. When one could no longer ignore them, it became necessary to fight them as enemies, particularly when they formed themselves into groups, like those bands of highwaymen who ravaged the countryside in the twelfth century.¹² But this was a matter of an exercise in self-defense, which gave rise to the virtual elimination of these undesirables. These latter remained outside of all social intercourse, and one could neither make use of them nor integrate them. By way of

contrast, there were some legitimate forms of social mobility, like those of pilgrimages or crusades, which were in theory accepted and ritualized, even if they sometimes gave birth to outbursts and disorders. More or less regular marches of armed troops proved more devastating, but they are similarly a part of the social landscape of the era, just as famines were part of its economic landscape. The mobility of merchants, which was undoubtedly problematic in the beginning, likewise becomes an integral part of the medieval social structure of which it represented the most dynamic segment.¹³

Categorically different is that mobility which appeared, or at least began to pose an obvious problem, at the beginning of the fourteenth century. This is no longer a matter of a minority of individuals who found themselves outside the framework of organized society, or who were not integrated into it professionally, or who passed in and out of its borders. Rather this new mobility gave birth to a disturbance within the very heart of organized society. This accounts for the categorical difference in the kinds of measures to which it gave rise. No longer is it just a matter of society protecting itself from external threats; instead it becomes that of enforcing the internal rules of the social order by obliging each to maintain his place in the division of labor. Henceforth, the difficulty is that of organizing work, and of subjecting these new sorts of individuals to the traditional forms of labor. Such target populations represented what we might justifiably call, before the letter but in the strict meaning of the word, a “proletariat”: those who had nothing to sustain themselves but the strength of their bodies.

Accordingly a new question of workers was posed even beyond the disturbance of feudal society. We are hence justified in speaking of a proletariat before the rise of capitalism. For example, Saint Thomas Aquinas had already alluded to them: “the mercenaries who let out their work are the poor for they depend upon their labor for their daily bread.”¹⁴ A contemporary of Aquinas, Jacques de Vitry, Canon of Orgnies, near Liège, similarly documented the existence of a category of “poor who acquire their daily sustenance from the sweat of their brow without which they are left with nothing after they have eaten.”¹⁵ Thus, these “mercenaries,” whose survival depends solely on their power to work, are literally proletarians. But so long as they remain integrated, territorially, they are “simply” the poor. They are in their place and compose one part of the order of the world; they do not yet pose a “social question.”

The situation in the middle of the fourteenth century is different. Its distinctiveness lies in the deregulation of the system of labor. In this respect, it calls to mind the circumstances at the beginning of the nineteenth century, just at the moment when the social question is for the first time posed explicitly in the form of the problem of pauperism.¹⁶ It is merely reminiscent of this, because that which we will come to know as pauperism is the product of the savage liberalization of the free market for labor, whereas here, to the contrary, it is the absence of a market for labor that poses the problem. We can formulate this as follows: how do we prevent a social mobility that has no place in the traditional organization of labor? This is the spirit behind the measures taken from the beginning to middle of the fourteenth century: they strive to do away with this contradiction between traditional, fixed structures for organizing work and this nascent socioeconomic mobility. Although an integrated proletariat raises no questions for a preindustrial society, this is not the case for those individuals in search of work. They represent a fluctuating manpower that has no true place in the organization of labor and hence cannot be accepted as such.¹⁷ Consequently they must not only be forced to work, but also to work at their ancestrally established station in the productive system.

Yet if such individuals have left behind their traditional positions in the division of labor, this is frequently because they had no other choice. These provisions dating to the middle of the fourteenth century express a dilemma: on the one hand, they acknowledge a propensity for movement, but on the other, they insist on imposing immobility. The populations that they concern are literally held in the grip of a vice: while caught up in the midst of a process of mobility, they are nonetheless constrained to return to the *status quo ante*.

The Deconversion of Feudal Society

What historical context gave birth to this conundrum? The spectacular convergence of so many measures promulgated in the middle of the fourteenth century may be traced back to a single tragic event: the Black Plague, which, it is estimated, carried away nearly a third of the population of Europe before the turn of the century. Accordingly, upon the foundation of *dies irae*, accompanied by the processions of flagellants and the rounds of *danses macabres*, the “plagues” shattered the “wide world” of the Middle Ages at its peak into a world where man became rare.¹⁸ In this general desolation, the suf-

fering, who were obviously most vulnerable to the ravages of the plague, paid the heaviest death toll. One student of the end of the century observes “Widespread mortality destroyed so many cultivators of plants and of land, so many artisans of every kind...that there was a great want of them.” He adds, “All workers and their families demanded exorbitant wages.”¹⁹

What could be more natural than for these sorry poor to seek to “profit” from a situation where they had become more sought after by virtue of their scarcity? They only wanted to take advantage of the laws of supply and demand for their labor, and they in some measure succeeded in doing so. During the twenty years following the first outburst of the Black Death, wages rose considerably, often more than doubling. Conditions remained in other respects favorable for wage earners until the beginning of the sixteenth century, which was marked by a net demographic recovery.²⁰

Yet this rise in wages, confirmed by all the documents of the era, did not signify after all that these measures for blocking them were ineffective. For without these provisions, the shock would undoubtedly have been even greater. For example, one especially detailed study shows that in England systematic efforts were employed to make sure that the Statute of Workers would indeed be applied vigorously.²¹ Again in England, during the first years following its promulgation, the penalties inflicted on workers for having violated it became extremely heavy, representing in some accounts more than a third of all taxes paid.²²

More generally, and contrary to some apocalyptic descriptions of the aftereffects of the Black Plague—accompanied in France by the ravages of the worst period of the Hundred Years War—the fissure opened by an initial demographic collapse was not followed by general impoverishment. The analyses of Carlo Cipolla document a per capita increase in both production and consumption throughout Europe between 1350 and 1500.²³ Although it is obviously an exaggeration to speak of a “golden age of wage earners,” at least amongst the poor the welfare of the plague’s survivors was, at least for a while, likely to be improved.²⁴ Consequently one must not confuse the social disorders and popular revolts of the era with riots provoked by misery, of which there had previously been countless numbers, and which this misery would continue to produce at least until the seventeenth century. Instead, in the second half of the fourteenth century, these outbursts echoed the shock waves of social distur-

bance more than being the effects of any worsening of the conditions of the suffering poor.

This is the case surrounding the intense troubles unleashed round about 1380.²⁵ We are dealing here with the “developed” Europe that was set in motion in England, in maritime Flanders, in Florence, in the county of Barcelona, and in the most developed cities of northern France. Robert Fossier perceives in all these events, “the violent sign, as witnessed by the climate of the times, of a vivid desire for social improvement.”²⁶ A contemporary extremely hostile to these movements said much the same in the language of the time: “the wicked men begin to be restless when they say that they are held in an unbearable servitude...that they wish to be all one with their lords, and that if they are themselves to undertake the labors of the lords, they wish to have their wages.”²⁷

In this drama to be played out in the second half of the fourteenth century, the protagonists are not just death and its tragic sacrifices; nor war, which was a constant of social history since the Middle Ages; nor misery, the common condition of the masses. What is equally and perhaps more importantly at stake is the governability of society, which has been seriously threatened, particularly with respect to the organization of labor.

The hypothesis being proposed is that these changes during the second half of the fourteenth century are symptomatic of what I shall call a *deconversion* of feudal society. I borrow this term from Philip Rieff. He uses it to characterize the transition from rigid systems of regulation (which he calls “positive communities”) to social organizations in which the individual is no longer organically bound by norms and must contribute to the making of the system of regulations.²⁸ I prefer this term to that of “crisis,” which is too vague, or to that of “decomposition,” which exaggeratedly overlooks the uniqueness of situations such as this one where the foundations of society will not ultimately be undermined. To the contrary, the foundation of society will even be strengthened in some important respects. Nonetheless, short of the rigid juridico-political regulations, it had become obvious that new elements of change had come into being which these new measures undertaken from 1350 onward sought to block. A zone of turbulence was opened, which was no longer dominated by traditional structures, without these losing their ascendancy. From the apparent interplay between the networks of interdependencies, some zones of uncertainty were opened up out

at the margins of established statutes. We see the birth of a new kind of individual, who can no longer find a place within recognized social conditions and established “orders.”

These developments are in vivid contrast to what was happening east of the Elba River. There a conjunction of the same type gave birth to a “second serfdom.” Because traditional powers were stronger there; because rural and urban communities were less differentiated; or rather because of both these reasons at the same time, the reaction of the nobility succeeded in blocking these transformations and preserving the stratification and rigidity of society for several more centuries. In the West, however, challenges to feudal society were characterized by that paradoxical juxtaposition of continuity and change whose logic we are here trying to disentangle. These events of the middle of the fourteenth century mark a decisive step in a dynamic whose earliest appearances are evident even before the Black Plague.

During the first three centuries of the second millennium, an unprecedented economic, social and cultural vibrancy gradually came into being, at least in what Pierre Chaunu calls “the successful Europe”: that is, Flanders, the south of England; Germany and Northern Italy, some Mediterranean outposts, and France, primarily between the Somme and Loire.²⁹ Medieval society thereby passed from an essentially agrarian civilization, dominated by the great ecclesiastical domains and a rural and military nobility, to an uneasy balance between more diversified rural communities and more prosperous and independent urban communities. Undoubtedly the city remained quantitatively marginal, but its growth was the source from which artisans, commercial transactions, the monetary economy, and the banking techniques of capitalism came to be developed. But even these innovations displayed themselves across precise hierarchies, which maintained, both in the city and in the countryside, the same subordination of each to the collectivity.³⁰ Thus it was that this novelty was invented which would give birth to the developments of modernity while still appearing hemmed in by the traditional regulations of a society of orders.

However, this open world was a fragile world for at least two reasons: its overpopulation called attention to the scarcity of available resources with respect to the population, and the deepening of social differentiation gradually undermined the efficacy of traditional social controls. Some signs of this weakening had been evident since

the thirteenth century for both these reasons. The clearing of lands had removed the possibility of new spaces to conquer, while the population continued to increase. Great famines of years past reappeared, and the years 1313-1315, for example, were marked by a terrible famine throughout Europe.³¹ But the equilibrium of medieval society was similarly affected by the progress of social differentiation. We have already taken note of examples of downward mobility (the shamed poor) and of the discrepancy between offers and the demand for work (the able-bodied beggar). Detailed analyses show that by 1300 there were already, in the wealthiest countries of Europe, both in country and city alike, certain groups who lived in conditions of permanent precariousness, even as the general improvement seems to be continuing.³²

The middle of the fourteenth century did not give rise to a completely new set of social conditions. It was the demographic impact of the Black Plague, which created a sharp void in this open world and provoked a breach of social relations that some historians have seen as "the great fracture of European history." Between 1300 and the Black Plague the proportion of day-laborers swelled dangerously, even while the central group of rustics still remained in the majority.³³ But beginning in the middle of the century, land came to be divided, and often changed hands, leading quickly to the polarization of the rural world. At one extreme, the "cocks of the village" began a social ascension that would often carry them all the way up to the status of bourgeois, and even to political office. At the other extreme, the dispossessed peasants were impoverished. They frequently hired themselves out to the very rich, for a half-wage, while they kept a small plot of land to cultivate, for no salary at all, that is, as veritable agricultural proletarians, when they were without land. Monographs treating specific localities confirm this interpretation. For example, a study of subsequent economic transformations on an English manor across several centuries demonstrates that the decisive transformations, in the sense of the pauperization of the tenants, may well have taken place in this second half of the fourteenth century.³⁴ More general treatments have estimated that the proportion of such rurals who were unable to live by working the land was nearly a third, not including artisans.³⁵ Hilton summarizes this movement in its fundamentals: "a peasant society governed by customs was disturbed by the threat of the unchecked mobility of peasants and of all transactions bearing on the land."³⁶

“Unchecked mobility”: the masses of the poor take advantage of the negative experience of liberty to escape from traditional ascriptive bonds. One group of these disaffiliated individuals emigrated to the town. But the towns quickly lost whatever power they might once have had to welcome arrivals during their great period of expansion, when the rapid growth of artisanry and commerce created what we would today call “jobs.” The fourteenth century was also the moment when access to mastery became more and more difficult and began to be reserved to the sons of masters.³⁷ Likewise these rural immigrants represented a largely unqualified body of manpower, poorly suited to enter into the framework of the apprenticeship of urban artisans. Branislaw Geremek speaks of the “afunctionality” of this manpower with respect to the demand for it.³⁸ This “afunctionality” became overtly dysfunctional when the number of these workers in flux exceeded a certain threshold. “Residual population” put former peasants at odds with their rural culture, the competency they acquired there, the resources and protections that they attained, but it also made them strangers to the culture of the towns and the economic and relational supports that they were able to provide.³⁹ Hence, “pauperism owed its origins to the transformation of the agrarian system, but it was in the town that it was manifested in its most extreme form.”⁴⁰

We should add that this deconversion was only part of a broader and more elemental transformation of familial relations and of sociability, which, if it is more difficult to demonstrate, probably brought with it decisive consequences. Following the suggestions of Pierre Chanou, we can imagine that the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries marked an important step in the transition from the old lineal family (“patriarchal”) to the conjugal family in many parts of Europe.⁴¹ The peasant community of inhabitants is thus to be contracted around narrower and more fragile cells, making the exercise of primary sociability more hazardous. This effect was to be combined with the rigidification of social stratification, increasing the conflict of interests between subgroups at the heart of the community of inhabitants. In addition, because of the demographic vacuum caused by the Plague, several networks of primary solidarity were severed. Thus the previous “homeostatic” equilibrium, which allowed most factors of disruption at the heart of the community to be regulated and which blocked the process of disaffiliation, found itself endangered or abolished altogether.

This allows us to be more specific in our use of the term “deconversion.” Deregulated social mobility coexists alongside the rigidity of surrounding structures. Accordingly, if we may be permitted to venture an anachronism that we will shortly show to be partially justified, we find a “paradoxical unemployment.” Although the demographic vacuum caused by the Plague created vast new possibilities for employment, we find that “poverty grew in the second half of the fourteenth century.”⁴² Two kinds of constraints weighed simultaneously and heavily on the most impoverished: the reinforcement of established forms of domination, and a propensity to movement which derives from the inability of these same relations to provide the minimal conditions for survival in any given locality. Jurgen Habermas thus speaks of the “ambivalent character” of what he calls “precapitalism,” an expression that must be discussed.⁴³ This expression is debatable insofar as it is far from evident that it is the transformation of the means of production which unleash the process of deconversion. As Habermas himself notes, “agricultural production remains in essence inscribed in relationships of feudal dependency, and industrial production in the framework of the traditional artisanry.” If there is indeed a contradiction here, it is not between the conservative (feudal) forces of production and a mode of production already capitalist, but between these forces of production and the populations who can no longer be accommodated by them and yet who lack the power to enter into another mode of the organization of labor, “capitalist” or otherwise.

“Deconversion” in this way manifests itself by the apparition of uncertain guidance produced by the simultaneous play of these antagonistic processes: on the one hand, an accelerated circulation of land, goods and individuals; and on the other, a mode of structuring social relationships that strives to maintain its traditional ascendancy. Something resembling liberty begins to arise, but without any power to achieve a recognized standing. The codes of work that were articulated in the second half of the fourteenth century take their bearings from this contradiction. They demand that workers remain fixed in their locality and status, in the countryside in order to maintain or intensify the productivity of the land, and in the city to maintain the productivity of “industrial” labor in the system of corporatist monopolies. But it subsequently came to pass that the “liberated” elements of these structures—those who had been expelled from these

structures, or who had managed to escape from them—now found themselves in the position of outcasts.

Undoubtedly their condition was not completely frozen. This imperative for change, or this emergent liberty to innovate, did in fact open some new opportunities. Most often, however, this was the case only for those who had just left the best-situated positions, as in the countryside with the wealthiest tenants who were able to acquire their own land and hire the labor of dispossessed peasants. But even amongst the poor, some were able to take advantage of these conditions where men were scarce and some new land became available for purchase or by the repopulation of rural sites.⁴⁴ Hence there was an upward mobility, that is to say, successful social mobility. But it need not concern us directly here because the “social question” was posed primarily by the disaffiliated, or those who had been cut off, and not by those who were successfully integrated.

Although one must be suspicious of exclusively economic accounts of this process—for as we have stated above this situation is not simply the effect of generalized impoverishment—we must also take pains to add nuance to this functionalist interpretation of the process. Simiand has thought it possible to establish a “law” according to which increases in the number of beggars and vagabonds may be correlated to a cycle of the lowering or stagnation of wages, which is itself a reflection of the lack of offers of employment with respect to demand.⁴⁵ Such a correlation is not verified here: salaries rise, and also global demand for labor, and yet the number of those left behind also grows. Conversely, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the question of vagabondage and begging once again arose under conditions marked by a strong demographic push and a lowering of real wages.⁴⁶ From these apparently contradictory bits of evidence, two explanations can be proposed, neither of which is necessarily contradictory. In a context characterized by a scarcity of manual labor, the obligation to work paired with efforts to block wages are useful in order to approach conditions of full employment at the least possible cost. But it is just as useful if manual labor is superabundant, such that the mass of unemployed weigh heavily on the labor market, thereby lowering wages. In order for the “reserve army” to exercise pressure on wages, it is not enough that there are many workers who lack employment. They must also desire to work or be obliged to do so. Thus, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, even though the number of unemployed was con-

siderable, Vives preached the obligation to work even for disabled poor.⁴⁷

But if this kind of explanation works for two equally contrasting situations, it is not unique to either one. It fails to capture a given whose importance is determinate in societies where there is no “free” market for labor. It is a matter of the contrast between a demand for labor and the existence of subjects who do not respond to it under the forms established by the dominant modes of the organization of labor. This conjuncture must be compared to the actual situation, where we find both a “paradoxical unemployment” rooted in a mismatch between the demand for employment and the lack of qualifications of those who would aspire to them.⁴⁸ Today these constraints on employment are imposed by the modernization of the productive apparatus. By way of contrast, in the fourteenth century the constraint was that of tradition. Tradition sought to fix manual laborers into their immutable status in the organization of labor. Consequently the *residual population* is not just a simple surplus of labor power, a “reserve army.” It is composed, at least in part, of dislocated mobile individuals who have found no place in the traditional organization of labor, but according to the code of work that became explicit by means of injunctions that proliferated since the fourteenth century, wished to forbid employment except on traditionally prescribed terms. This contradiction is central until the Industrial Revolution. This takes into account, we might imagine, the constant retarding effect that these prescriptions exercised on the changes affecting production in the sense of the promotion of capitalism. Yet these “disposable” individuals may not immediately be susceptible of being enlisted. What is the place of the individual who, with reference to this organization of labor, is nominally “free” but deprived of everything? Initially and for a long time afterward: nothing at all.

Such is the fate of these individuals suspended on the precipice at this juncture where liberty befalls them like a curse that they might wish to give back. They find themselves suffering in a *double bind*, caught between the injunction to work and the impossibility of working under the established system of production. Their tragedy may be found throughout all these societies until the close of the ancien régime. It is enough that this formation must remain fixed, especially on the map of the transformations of production, which ever more insistently call for a more flexible organization of work. But

the code of work, or that which takes its place, even if it is not automatically repeated, nonetheless obstinately reiterates the same kind of prohibitions, with the same kinds of destructive effects on certain categories of the population. Various permutations of wage earners, we will see, will emerge and make themselves indispensable. But they will never manage to solidify themselves, before the nineteenth century, into a truly salaried condition.

Michel Mollat makes much of the appearance, at the close of the Middle Ages, of a rich vocabulary of errancy applicable to the forcibly miserable: there is much talk of “fugitives,” of “runaways,” or “escapees,” who “abandon” their territory, taking account of the “great poverty” in which they find themselves.⁴⁹ This flight undoubtedly appears, for it is no longer a promised land according to the boundaries imposed by the secular forms of occupying the land and of organizing the trades. Certain contemporaries themselves perceived the immense importance of this consubstantial drama for the birth of modernity: “Just as one sees naturally that beasts and birds follow the fat land and harvest and that they leave the desert land, so too is it for the mechanics and the tillers of the soil living off the sweat of their brow, for they follow places and sights where gains are to be found, and run away from places where people are aggrieved by servitude and subsidence.”⁵⁰

What will become of these disaffiliated?

The Useless of the World

First we shall trace the miserable fate reserved for the most marginal fringes of these disaffiliated: the vagabonds. In a social structure where the status of an individual depends entirely on his belonging to a narrow network of interdependencies, the vagabond faces a great struggle. Completely vulnerable by virtue of his being deterritorialized, the vagabond became the victim of an almost continual arsenal of cruel measures. These were seen as necessary to eradicate the paradigm of asociability of which he was doubly representative: first, with respect to his handicap of being outside the order of work because he was able-bodied, and second, his being outside the order of sociability because he was alien. Deprived of all resources he was unable to support himself. But, if it is true that the zone of assistance welcomed primarily those unable to work and those who were kindred according to the two criteria discussed above, then he was doubly excluded. “Useless to the world,” his

destiny exemplifies the drama of disaffiliation *par excellence*; those who are without a state enjoy no protection whatsoever.⁵¹

But first we must determine what is a vagabond? Efforts at defining the vagabond remain somewhat underdeveloped. Until the sixteenth century, most often the term was associated with a series of qualifications designating individuals of ill repute: *caymands* (that is to say, those who begged (*quémänder*) unjustifiably—the pejorative term for able-bodied beggars), scoundrels, rascals (beggars mimicking those with deformities), shiftless, ribalds, ruffians, peddlars, goufarins, loafers. To this enumeration were frequently added those of arts held in low esteem: jugglers, singers, exhibitors of curiosities, teeth-pullers, hawkers of patent medicines. In addition there were those of dishonorable professions such as dice players or pimps, confidence men or barbers. One of the first, if not the first, efforts at a systematic classification was set forth in an ordinance of Francois I of 1534 stigmatizing “all vagabonds, idlers, and others who cannot be spoken for or who have no goods to maintain themselves and who neither work nor labor in order to earn their livelihood.”⁵²

The two constitutive criteria of the category of vagabondage are both made explicit here: the absence of work, that is to say the “idleness” associated with a lack of resources, and the fact that they “cannot be spoken for” (*sans aveu*), that is as much as to say, without communal belonging. To be “spoken for” (*avoué*) is an old term borrowed from Germanic law, which in feudal society designated the condition of one who is the “man” of a *suzerain* for whom he had performed acts of allegiance and who protected him in turn.⁵³ Conversely, the vagabond escapes being embedded in a lineage and those bonds of interdependency that make up a community. This individual with neither work nor wealth is also a man without a master and without hearth or ties. “Dwelling anywhere,” to recall a phrase often used in accounts of vagabondage, he is consequently a being who belongs nowhere.

Whether we are dealing with the most elaborate or most rudimentary definitions of vagabondage, all make reference to these two variables, like that of a Lyonnais lawyer commenting in 1566 on an edict of Charles IX on the profession of the domestic: “Vagabonds are idle people, (*faitsneantz*), people without references, abandoned people, lacking homes, trades and attendance and, in the words of the Ordinance of the Paris Police, those who serve only to number as *sunt pondus inutilae terrae*.”⁵⁴ “They are the dead weight of the

earth”: the locution is admirable. By an ordinance of 24 August, 1701, the definition is set forward in juridical terms, which varied little and were virtually retained as such by the Napoleonic penal code: “We declare vagabonds and those who cannot be spoken for to be those who have neither profession, trade, regular domicile, nor bonds of subsistence and who cannot be vouched for and hence are unable to have their good lives and morals vouchsafed by credit-worthy persons.”⁵⁵

The important royal ordinance of 1764 cited in the previous chapter, however, ventured an interesting distinction. To the clause “all those who have neither profession nor trade” the ordinance added the clause “for more than six months.”⁵⁶ These few words gave rise to a multitude of problems. This is an effort to distinguish a “pure” vagabond, or an inveterate adept of the life of idleness, from those we would today understand to be in a condition of involuntary unemployment, or those who find themselves between jobs. But this question of the impossibility of finding work, which cleared the vagabond of the crime of being a voluntary idler, is clearly not resolved by the addition of this simple codicil. We will have to return to this.

If the vagabond is indeed so “useless to the world,” living as a parasite on the work of others, excluded from everywhere and condemned to errancy in a society where the merits of a person depends on his status or belonging, we have explained perfectly the pejorative image with which he is always associated, and the pitiless character of how he is treated.

There is abundant evidence that testifies to the stigmatization of the vagabond, who was portrayed as the terror of the countryside and responsible for the town’s insecurities. We can content ourselves with citing just a single representative account, if only for its relatively late date of composition, which demonstrates a secular repulsion that survives even the progress of the “Enlightenment.”

Vagabonds are the most terrible scourge of the countryside. They are voracious insects who infect it and who daily devastate and devour the substance of the cultivators. They are, if one can speak figuratively, like enemy troops spread out on the surface of the territory, who live as they like, just as in a conquered nation upon which they levy virtual taxes which they call by the name of alms.⁵⁷

The author of this obloquy, Le Trosne, in not for all this a pitiless person. Charitable and a good Christian, he laid claim, against the majority of the professionals of social assistance, to the right to give alms to beggars “who are domiciled, who have a dwelling, a fam-

ily.”⁵⁸ But at the same time, he sanctioned the pain of the galleys in perpetuity for vagabonds with their very first arrest. For him, as for the majority of his contemporaries and predecessors who have pondered this phenomenon, vagabondage is a social scourge analogous to famines and epidemics, even to the point that the least complacency—tolerated in the case of beggars—must be criminal.

Consequently we can appreciate that the repression of vagabondage was in its essence a “bloody legislation,” according to the appellation with which Marx stigmatized the English poor laws on the subject.⁵⁹ Insofar as the vagabond is placed far from the law of social exchanges, he cannot be treated mercifully and must be combated like a malevolent being.

Perhaps the most primitive and widely practiced measure against vagabondage is that of *banishment*. This stems directly and naturally from his quality of foreignness. The place of this banishment matters little, provided that it be somewhere else. However, banishment represents a sanction that is both punitive and totally ineffective. It is a grave measure in the sense that it condemns the vagabond to wander perpetually in a social no-man’s-land, like a savage animal driven away from human society. But, in this very way, the banished carries with him, unresolved, the very problem that he poses. Banishment represents an evasion by which a community seeks to rid itself of an irresolvable dilemma by laying it elsewhere. It corresponds to a local reflex of self-defense incompatible with the articulation of more general policies for the management of vagabondage. It is for no other reason than this that in 1764 the last royal ordinance of the French monarchy acknowledged the futility of such measures: “We have recognized that the penalty of banishment does not allow us to contain those people for whom life is a species of voluntary and perpetual banishment, and who, driven from one province, simply pass indifferently into another, where, without having altered their condition, they continue to commit the same excesses.”⁶⁰

Banishment exemplified the almost spectral disappearance of the vagabond more than has been realized. *Capital execution*, by way of contrast, accomplished in a concrete act the kind of social death already constituted by banishment. Putting this parasite to death represented the veritable “final solution” to the question of vagabondage. In France, the declaration of Henry II of 18 April 1556 (notice its proximity to the Ordinance of Moulin by the same monarch, instituting the notion of the domiciliation of relief) prescribed that vaga-

bonds be “brought to the prison of Chastelet, so that the lieutenant criminal and the officers of Chastelet can condemn them to the penalty of death if they are found to have violated our current ordinance and cry to this fact.”⁶¹

The sentence, without appeal, was immediately executed. The death penalty is the very essence of that “bloody legislation” brought to bear against vagabondage in sixteenth century England. The Council of the king appointed special functionaries whose task it was to pursue vagabonds and make use of the law to hang them. According to Alexander Vexliard, 12,000 vagabonds were hanged during the reign of Henry VIII, and 400 per year under that of Elizabeth.⁶²

Thus, not only was vagabondage in and of itself an offense, but it might very well constitute the supreme offense.⁶³ Yet this extreme solution was still not enough to solve the problem. Despite the large number of vagabonds condemned to death and executed, it was trifling with respect to the number of those who continued to “infest the kingdom.” *Forced labor* is not just a more moderate response, but also one that is more realistic, if it is in fact true that one can render useful the “useless of the world.” This constitutes the one great constant of all legislation pertaining to vagabondage. Since 1367, in Paris, vagabonds who were arrested tended to public works such as cleaning the ditches or repairing the fortifications, “chained two by two,” specified an ordinance of Francois I in 1516.⁶⁴ Inaugurated by Jacques Coeur in order to serve his businesses, the penalty of the galleys—for five years, ten years, or in perpetuity, depending on the era and the number of offenses—would remain an especially dreaded sentence for vagabonds until the end of the ancien régime, insofar as the need to increase the royal entourage might regularly unleash the hunt for vagabonds. Hence the municipality of Dijon, required in 1529 to outfit two royal galleys, responded by adding to the city’s prisoners some vagabonds “recruited” for the occasion.⁶⁵

Deportation to the colonies is another version of forced labor, determined by an ordinance of 8 January 1719. But the constables, who receive a bonus for every capture, were so zealous in the application of this measure that it fostered intense popular discontent and was repealed in July of 1722. Nonetheless it remained a frequent point of reference until the end of the ancien régime for many thoughtful “sponsors of projects” to “purge the kingdom of its beggarliness” altogether by making vagabonds “useful to the State.” The

problem has never been settled with any degree of clarity; for deportation met with the double hostility of partisans of mercantilism (Richelieu opposed it on these grounds) fearing the “depopulation of the kingdom,” and of some religiously devout, who were scandalized to imagine that such “dregs of the people” might serve as disseminators of the faith in the colonies.⁶⁶

Mandatory work by imprisonment was yet another measure often proposed to resolve the problem. Although it was never explicitly stated in those terms, this solution nonetheless acknowledged the problem. The community Hospital welcomed vagabonds. Within the context of mercantilism there arose the goal of fully mobilizing the entire workforce of the kingdom in order to maximize its power. Vagabonds are obviously a prominent target of this policy: “Well-regulated towns have houses where the needy who are not ill are taken in order to create nurseries of artisans and to hinder vagabonds and the slothful who demand nothing except to defraud or to steal.”⁶⁷ But for reasons to which we will later return, work in such closed institutions was always a fiasco. The public Hospital did little to resocialize the “libertine and slothful nation” of able-bodied poor. At its best it administered meager conditions of survival for the most miserable among the miserable: old men and women who no longer had any other recourse, madmen and madwomen, abandoned children, and reprobate deviants. Within these spaces where the most abject among the abject found themselves huddled together, serious work was simply out of the question.

Nonetheless, when the declaration of 1764 reiterated and enforced the condemnation of vagabondage, these very same sorts of provisions are reintroduced. The penalty of the galleys having revealed itself as unsuited to this stage of civilization, workhouses are introduced in 1767. The workhouse is an autonomous administrative-police structure, specially devoted to the goal of putting able-bodied indigents to forced labor. Vagabonds and beggars who are arrested can no longer appeal to hospital authorities or to the ordinary machinery of justice. Instead they are taken directly to the workhouse by the authorities entrusted with upholding this order. The remuneration for labor is to be calculated such that it is “greater than that of prison, less than that of a soldier,” according to one memorandum of 1778.⁶⁸

Hence, the close of the ancien régime is still characterized by an intense hunt for vagabonds and able-bodied beggars. The marshal

is motivated by a bonus of three *livres* for each capture. Necker estimated that there were 50,000 apprehensions in 1767. Between 1768 and 1772, 111, 836 persons were “placed in workhouses,” in contrast to the 1,132 sentenced to the galleys. They were set up in unhealthy buildings, lacking hygiene or medical care. Mortality rates in these places were bewildering: 21,339 died during those same four years of 1768-1772.⁶⁹ Strictly understood, as in the hospitals, work in these deathtraps was nothing more than a fiction.

Mercier, in his *Tableau de Paris*, weighs the costs of this period:

One treated the poor, in 1769 and the three following years, with atrocity, a barbarism that will be an indelible stain on a century otherwise reputed humane and enlightened. It has been said that if one wished to destroy the entire race of them, one need only do away with the principles of charity. These virtually perished altogether in the workhouses, species of prisons where indigence is punished like a crime.⁷⁰

Turgot saw to it that the majority of these workhouses were closed in 1775, but the measures were reintroduced after his dismissal, and they again saw a bright future when Napoleon proudly reestablished them in 1808.

England featured a similar battery of measures, with perhaps an additional degree of cruelty. It will be enough to cite the royal ordinance of 1547, which undoubtedly represents the most radical of those proposals to force vagabonds to work. As always there is the declaration that “idle persons and vagabonds are useless members of the community and enemies of the public thing.” Edward VI ordained that all persons should be seized who, having no means of subsistence, had been without work for more than three days. It made no difference what good citizen took the opportunity to drag this unfortunate individual before two judges who “must immediately mark the said idler on the front with the aid of burning steel the letter “V,” and pronounce the aforesaid living person, if declared an idler, to be the slave of the presenter [that is, the accuser] for him to possess and hold the said slave at the disposition of himself, his executors, or servants for the space of two years to come.”⁷¹ In the middle of the Renaissance, legislation against vagabondage reinstated slavery in the kingdom of England! Taxable and liable to forced labor without mercy, the vagabond could be whipped, enchained, imprisoned, rented out by his owner, and in case of the owner’s death, passed on like an asset to his heirs. If the victim fled even once, the penalty was converted into slavery for life, and to the death penalty upon the second attempt at escape.

Vagabonds and Proletarians

But who are these vagabonds in reality? Dangerous predators prowling at the outskirts of the social order, living by rapine and menacing the goods and the security of other persons? Surely they are widely represented as such, and it is this that justifies their extraordinary treatment: they have violated the social compact—work, family, morality, religion—and are enemies of the public order. It seems very possible that we can deconstruct this image of the vagabond, as we have attempted to do for the able-bodied beggar, and to substitute the sociological reality that it disguises. In this respect vagabondage appears less of a condition or state of being *sui generis* than *as the limit of a process of disaffiliation* that has been aggravated by the precariousness of the relationship to work and by the fragility of the networks of sociability that are the common fate of a significant part of the masses of both the countryside and the towns alike.

For example, at the end of the ancien régime, we must inquire into the sociological profile of interneés at the workhouse in Soissons. The poorhouses, it has been said, were ostensibly to house only vagabonds and others like them (able-bodied beggars). The poorhouse in Soissons counted 854 interneés at the time of the Revolution. Among them, 208 individuals were classified by the director as “very dangerous,” “the scum of the earth,” while there were 28 “withered” and 32 vagabonds “without refuge,” nearly fifty madmen and madwomen, 20 detained by order of the king, 32 soldiers “without refuge or deserters.” That is to say, only 60 vagabonds, according to the standards of the age. Yet two large groups made up roughly two thirds of the population of the workhouse: 256 “manual workers, with the exception of one notary,” and 294 “agricultural workers without resources.”⁷² Thus the great majority of the poorhouse’s population were represented, more or less equally, by the rural and urban underclasses. These workers were undoubtedly out of work. But did this necessarily make them beggars and vagabonds “by profession”? More accurately, the majority among them were representative of what we would today consider “underqualified” workers who were more or less earnestly in search of a job. In order to speak of unemployment in the strict sense of the word, we must wait for the rise of those conditions essential for the birth of modern wage-labor at the beginning of the twentieth century (chapter 7). Never-

theless it remains the case that there existed beforehand, as we will argue in the following chapter, certain instances of “non-occupation” that came about as the result of a productive system organized around the assignment of work, rather than on the liberty to work.⁷³ Vagabondage represents the extreme case of instances like this. Montlinot himself admitted as much when he said “We have observed in the previous accounts that tailors, shoemakers, whigmakers and weavers were the professions most likely to become vagabonds, and often risked losing their livelihood.”⁷⁴

Similarly, as for that other defining characteristic of vagabondage—namely, the deliberate installation into errancy, the rupture with respect to domicile and common rules of sociability—this seemed to be the case only in a minority of these unfortunates. Undoubtedly, if the ordinance of 1764 had been strictly applied, they would have arrested more of those “within a half-league of their home.” But how is it that the registry at the workhouse of Soisson distinguished thirty-two vagabonds “without asylum,” if the majority of the others are themselves to be found lacking a home, which they have undoubtedly been obliged to move away from by misery and the search for an occupation? In preindustrial society, vagabonds were essentially the equivalents of immigrants: foreigners, insofar as they sought their means of survival far from their “country.” Thus, in 1750, of 418 men sentenced to Bicêtre for vagabondage, only thirty-five were originally from Paris, and 58 were from the region of Paris. The others came from all provinces and often had only been in Paris for a few months.⁷⁵ They are far from assimilating to those “who cannot be spoken for,” at least that some honorable person sign a formulary of “submission” and answered for the incarcerated vagabond. For example, one such attestation was signed by his fellow citizens of Auvergne for a vagabond incarcerated at Meaux: “For several years, he had the habit of leaving his own province and venturing into foreign provinces in order to earn his livelihood by work and industry and to bring some relief to his wife Marie Auzany and his six children... The aforesaid Jacques Verdier took leave of his land every spring in order to cultivate his small wealth and to occupy himself as best he can by working the land. We believe him to be an honest man: we have never seen nor heard that he has practiced the trade of beggar.”⁷⁶

This poor soul was lucky enough to be able to get word to his village that he had been arrested, and fortunate also in that two distinguished citizens were willing to take the trouble to write Meaux in

order to appoint themselves his guarantors. But how many of his companions found themselves in the same situation without having been able to take advantage of this recourse? For many often existed in the same precarious situation with respect to work as this seasonal worker who regularly returned to his village of birth. Who will concern himself enough to make himself the guarantor of an unfortunate errant on the roads? Communal belongings are broken and relational supports become more and more attenuated as the distance grows greater. Thus a sociological profile of the vagabond, very different from his shady portrayal, has been emerging: we see instead a poor devil who has not been apprenticed into the body of “trades,”⁷⁷ without qualifications, an occasional worker who is often in search of temporary work, desocializing himself gradually throughout the course of his wanderings, and seized by the hand of the state at an unfavorable moment of his erratic pathway.

This reconstruction of the sociological reality of the vagabond seems to hold true for the bulk of the period from the fourteenth century to the end of the *ancien régime*. Here we have not yet seen those changes, or rather those significant displacements of the systems of organizing work that we will treat in the following chapter. But on the basis of what we can reconstruct or predict from the condition of vagabonds, we see first and foremost the geographical and professional mobility of those small artisans who “roll about the countryside in search of work,” in the words of a mason arrested in 1768 in Beaujolais.⁷⁸ In his extremely detailed analyses of the world of these common people in the neighborhood of Lyon whose destiny had gone poorly, Jean-Pierre Gutton describes several of these rocky roads taken by expert seamen, boatmen, porters, dockhands, hawkers, agricultural migrants, domestics in search of a post, veterans of war. Those detained as vagabonds almost always had a trade.⁷⁹ They often came from land that no longer sustained them, as did a peasant from Velay arrested in 1724 near Villefranche, as he had come to Beaujolais “to work the earth, to serve the massons, and to be occupied where he found himself, waiting until there was no work for him in the estate where his brother was planter.”⁸⁰

These dislocated rurals were often drawn to the city. There they made one or several failed attempts to integrate themselves before going back out onto the road. After several years, it is difficult to distinguish rural from urban components of a condition whose misfortune stems precisely from no longer having any belongings what-

soever. “The conclusion that one can take away from this study,” says Gutton in another work treating the same kind of givens, “is that vagabonds having no trade, living by deception, in reality constituted only a minority. The much greater number among them were recruited from the common people when individual and social circumstances thrust them out upon the roads.”⁸¹ This conclusion brings to mind that already drawn by Bronislaw Geremek for the Middle Ages: “The passage toward marginality comes about as if by a blurring of colors: there are no fixed boundaries between society and its marginal, between individuals and groups who observe the established norms and those who violate them.”⁸²

We must be able to analyze more closely these “individual and social circumstances” to which Gutton refers, which waver back and forth in the category of vagabondage. For this is a drama both of misery and of desocialization. The vagabond lives as if he has lost touch with this world. What can it be that caused the vagabond to lose touch with former belongings, and added to poverty the additional misery of being alone, without the support of others? Unfortunately, the available evidence does not allow us to explore adequately this other, more personal dimension of the fate of errancy that has led to disaffiliation. Even so, some significant historical indicators come to light when we review historical works while keeping this kind of question in mind. For example, Gutton analyzed in the case of Lyon those records of children abandoned by their parents who have “absented the town.” What he apparently discovered was the misery of couples “overburdened by children,” leaving with nothing to lose. But he also observed the large proportion of broken families, abandoned women, of widows and even widowers. “In 1779, of twenty abandonments of forsaken children, six are examples of impoverished married couples, two of widows, and eight of widowers.”⁸³

“Knowing no longer what course to take, I have taken that of abandoning everything.” The despair of this female worker, already deserted by her husband for more than four years, illustrates equally well this moment of vacillation, where common misery is transformed into absolute penury.⁸⁴ The “least fortunate,” to use an amiable euphemism of today, are effectively deprived of everything. Historiography yields only fragmentary data—interrogations of arrested vagabonds, documents recorded posthumously in the registers of the parish hall. But they often allow us to divine the drama of a whole way of life. “The 20 July deceased at the home of Jean Tho-

mas of the town, a man around 30 years old, from the environs of Saint Léonard near Limoges, coming from Grenoble to work at the craft of mason; was buried the 21 of the month after having received the Saint Viatique.”⁸⁵

This casual transcription dates back to harvest time in the year 1694 by the curé of the little parish of Saint-Julien-la-Vêtre, in Beaujolais, undoubtedly intended to be placed in exergue of hundreds of thousands of biographies of vagabonds. This shows the difficulty of reconstructing the personal lives of vagabonds, because for obvious reasons they have left few written traces. Again this unfortunate whose life was concluded in a barn was left to take leave of this world in misery and most certainly alone, but at least furnished with the sacraments of the church, that is to say, reattached to a spiritual community. More often, however, because vagabondage is reckoned as a misdemeanor and serves as the basis of other misdemeanors, the last testimonial of the vagabond is that of a condemnation. But even in this case, we must temper the negative connotation carried by the criminal fringe of the vagabond population. Analyzing the registers of condemnations carried out in Paris in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Bronislaw Geremek confirms this interpretation, which holds just as well for the entire period from the Middle Age to the end of the eighteenth century:

The categories that we find in the legal acts are characterized by movement, the abbreviation of bonds of dependence to a master, the instability of occupations, of the bonds of work and frequent changes of employers. This last group includes impoverished artisans and peasants; there one sees young men whose permanent condition is to hire out their labor.

And he adds that “the fluctuating border between the world of labor and that of crime” prevents us from seeing in this a structured “milieu,” in the sense that one can speak of a delinquent “milieu.”⁸⁶ Instead virtually all analyses confirm that this is a shifting entity of which criminality represents the extreme fringe, nourished by the fuzzy zone of vagabondage, itself supplied by an even larger zone of vulnerability comprised by the precariousness of the relationship of work and the fragility of social bonds.

Repression, Dissuasion, Prevention

The objective being sought here is not simply to exculpate the vagabonds. Among them there were certain dangerous elements, sometimes organizing themselves into pillaging bands and living by

plunder. Likewise, there were debauched vagabonds, lecherous, addicted to forbidden games and pleasures, and even those who “chose” an idle existence rather than being shackled to it by the harsh law of work—even if one may doubt this to be a matter of the “liberty” of a single choice, which often proved so costly. But the point that I think I have made is only this: the general impression of vagabondage, when seen as being completely misanthropic and dangerous, is a construction. This treatment demonstrates that this construct may be traced to the existence of an extreme fringe of destabilizing asociability, which in turn leads to the enveloping of a throng of poor “innocent” souls in the cloak of infamy. But the qualification “innocent” may be naïve. Can one really be innocent when one is completely impoverished, without resources, work or security? The treatment reserved for vagabonds proves that the answer is no.⁸⁷

The construction of a negative paradigm of the vagabond is embedded in a discourse of power. What I mean by this is that it is primarily an artifact created by those authorities entrusted with the administration of these populations, and furthermore, that it is the instrument of this administration.⁸⁸ Repressive policies toward vagabondage represent the “solution” to a situation that is not susceptible to any easy solution. What does one do with individuals who raise insurmountable problems because they are not in their proper place, but who have no place at all in the social structure? Condemning the vagabond is the only possible route between a situation that cannot be tolerated and the impossibility of seriously transforming it. In preindustrial societies, the social question posed by able-bodied and mobile indigence can only be treated as a matter for the police. For the responsible parties, this option has the presumptive virtue of simply existing, and suggesting guidelines for how to confront a situation, for no other such options exist. Even when repression repeatedly proves itself to be ineffective, it nonetheless remains indispensable. Yet at least a handful of responsible parties had some inkling that the repression of vagabonds was nothing more than a show of force in the face of what remained a complex, if not impossible problem. “Mons. Lieutenant Aubert said that it is difficult for people who are accustomed to one trade to find another, and that if they cannot find one, they can not always be reputed of bad nature and condition, and it seems that it is wise to warn them that they will have to find another means to live”: a town

counselor opposed himself in these words to the resolution to “rid the village of beggars, idlers, vagabonds, pilferers healthy and able-bodied, strangers.”⁸⁹ But how to contrive “another means to live” in the dominant framework of the division of labor, when at the time of this statement in 1524, due to the multiplication of Rouen’s artisanry, the entire system was in crisis?

There is other evidence that contemporaries occasionally glimpsed the more general social problems lurking behind the phenomenon of vagabondage. The lieutenant of the constabulary of Rhone declared in 1776: “It is invariable that all vagabonds are occupied or take pains to look occupied during the harvests, but this is only a temporary work that is nothing more than for the time being and can not be considered commensurate with the quality of worker.”⁹⁰ But for these persons what might be a job that was “commensurate with the quality of worker,” and on what conditions would they employ him? Advancing such policies seemingly goes well beyond the scope of both repressive entreaties and the power of the vagabond himself. Thus the policing of vagabondage is, by default, the only measure—albeit marginal given the magnitude of the problem—that weighs even slightly upon the course of things.

Yet there is a second rationale that might be invoked to justify the repressive alternative. The existence of such unstable populations, open to any venture, represents a potential threat to public order. The convergence between vagabondage and criminality is attested to by numerous sources. Not only do individual vagabonds commit misdemeanors; but the insecurity that they represent may assume a collective dimension as well. By forming bands that hold the countryside at ransom and occasionally unleash organized brigandage, by contributing to the “emotions” and even to popular disturbances, vagabonds, detached from everything and hence connected to nothing, personify the real or imagined threat of social destabilization. This idea is forcefully asserted in the synthesis of memoirs presented in 1777 to the Academy of Dijon: “Avid for novelties, audacious and similarly more enterprising insofar as they have nothing to lose and they are habituated to the idea of punishment that they merit each day; interested in the Revolutions of the State, which can alone improve their condition, they eagerly seize upon every possible occasion to excite troubles.”⁹¹

Seemingly anticipating that celebrated phrase about the proletariat “which has nothing to lose but its chains,” this judgment acknowl-

edges that the problem posed is irresolvable within the societal structure of the ancien régime, short of “Revolutions of the State.” It also recognizes the role of disaffiliation as a factor of social change: those who have nothing and are bound to nothing are committed to making sure that things do not remain in this condition. There is a real danger that those who have nothing to lose will wish to take everything. Vagabonds have already assumed the function of the “dangerous class” that one generally attributes to the proletariat of the nineteenth century. So too with the exaggeration of this danger: detailed analyses of popular disturbances and sentiments demonstrate that the role played by vagabonds and by the “masses” is usually overestimated.⁹²

Hence the global criminalization of vagabondage was imposed without anyone ever asking whether vagabonds were really criminals with power. The paradigm of vagabondage does not coincide with its sociological reality. In effect, once we realize that the majority of those individuals labeled beggars or vagabonds were in fact poor souls driven to it by misery and social isolation, a lack of work and the absence of supportive relationships, we must admit that there is no single, concrete policy for addressing this problem in the framework of preindustrial society. Conversely, by stigmatizing the vagabond to the greatest degree possible, one is given the means to regulate and police any troubles that may be caused by that miniscule proportion of truly dangerous vagabonds. Undoubtedly, we may also suspect that efforts to force the inactive to employ themselves at whatever price might be contrived in order to lower wages.⁹³ But the repression of vagabondage is first and foremost a matter of constructing a paradigm intended to dissuade and prevent other individuals from taking the same route, and thus is directed above all toward populations confronted by misery and instability. This goal of dissuasion is sometimes expressed with disconcerting cynicism. For example, the letter addressed by the Controller General to the intendants for the application of the ordinance of 1764 included the following advice:

As for the rest, I cannot very strongly recommend that you employ the greatest prudence in this operation [of arresting the vagabonds] so as not to overburden the prisons or the workhouses, and also in order to allow time for the greatest part of these people to leave behind the criminal life they now pursue. Pursuant to these observations, it is necessary that the constabulary arrest few vagabonds and beggars alike; perhaps even their steps should be directed more toward disabled beggars than toward the able-

bodied, because the former not having the ability to work, it is more difficult to hinder them from begging; and such that able-bodied beggars, who will see even the disabled being arrested, will be more alarmed and will be determined more than ever to find a profession.⁹⁴

By a deliberate reversal of the ostensible rationale behind these measures (neutralize the most dangerous elements, leave to make proof of tolerance, lack of means or of place in the workhouses, toward the most inoffensive), these imperative are turned toward the repression of disabled beggars who present no danger at all! This is to suggest clearly that the intended target is not the one who is struck, and that the dissuasive character of these policies drives them more than their immediate efficacy.

Yet of all the writers of the era, it is perhaps the Abby of Montlinot who aspired to the most profound sociopolitical understanding of this treatment of vagabondage. Montlinot is an enlightened spirit. He developed a truly liberal critique of forced labor in institutions that we will return to later. At the beginning of the Revolution, he will be associated with the work of the Committee for the Extinction of Poverty of the Constituent Assembly. Accordingly, in 1786, he wrote the following:

We have seen several individuals who, arrested in these vexatious circumstances [He refers to arrests undertaken in applying the same famous ordinance of 1764 that will give birth to a wealth of abuses], have agreed that one has saved them from a wealth of temptations. The lack of money announces an excessive need: all men, in these pressing circumstances, are on the verge of becoming swindlers or villains. The government must therefore accordingly prevent crime and guarantee the security of its citizens by any possible means. Those who, without asylum, without resources, can no longer pay for their subsistence, cease to be free: such a man is under the empire of force, he cannot take a step without committing a misdemeanor. Thus, to speak harshly, if one supposes that a man deprived of all relief for a long time cannot be anything but an unhappy man, and consequently that it would be unjust to arrest him; oh well, it will be necessary to commit this political injustice, and not allow to wander about on the roads those who having nothing can dare to do anything.⁹⁵

This “political injustice” from the point of view of a constitutional State is the accomplishment of all policies of the ancien régime with regard to vagabondage and the able-bodied beggar. But, from the point of view of *realpolitik*, is this not contrary to common sense? For by focusing repressive instruments on marginal and deviant populations, or those who are represented as such, one at least implicitly admits the impossibility of developing a universal and affirmative policy regarding the misery of the masses. One can, how-

ever, hope that these specialized policies will have a more general dissuasive effect.⁹⁶ Thus, the policies toward vagabonds and able-bodied beggars cannot be evaluated solely by reference to their explicit objectives, which are in reality utopian: to eradicate vagabondage. Evaluated from this point of view, they will prove a total failure, confirmed by the futility with which they are repeated, motivated every time by the increasing number of vagabonds. But our perspective changes if we surmise instead that these policies are also and perhaps more importantly addressed to that mass of people who are separated from this disaffiliated fringe by only the most fragile boundaries: the collection of those who find themselves in the zone of vulnerability. If we do not recognize that this dissuasive function is really what is at stake in these policies it is impossible for us to understand why they assumed such an importance for more than four centuries, and why they were perpetually mobilized with such energy, even despite their continual failure.

Can we call these policies “social”? “Yes” at least in the minimal sense that their objective was to uphold the public order and thus to maintain the social equilibrium. “No,” if we understand by this term that collection of practices that will be deployed beginning in the nineteenth century in order to narrow the gap between the economic order and the political order. This “social,” which presupposes the double revolution in both economics and politics at the end of the eighteenth century, that is to say the triumph of the market and of democratic representation, apparently does not yet have any place here. Nonetheless, we should not be misled into thinking that this is a sufficient reason for reducing these measures to a repressive policy that concerns only those populations in violation of the social order. For if vagabondage is really the leading edge of a process of disaffiliation menacing many vast sectors of society, it poses a problem that has implications well beyond these margins. The question of vagabondage is in its essence the manner in which the social question is *both formulated and mystified at the same time* in preindustrial society. It is *mystified*, because it displaces the social question to the extreme margins of society, even to the point of making it nearly a police matter. But it also allows its *reformulation*, if one pursues, in the rise of vagabondage, the line of fracture that it reveals. Consequently we find a kind of boomerang effect of vagabondage: the process by which a society expels certain of its members to the periphery must be interrogated with respect to those who,

at its center, set this dynamic in motion. It is this hidden relationship between center and periphery that we must now try to bring to light. The lessons of this may hold true even today: the heart of the problematic of exclusion is often not to be found by looking only at the excluded.

Notes

1. Cited in J.-C. Ribton-Turner, *History of Vagrants and Vagrancy, and Beggars and Begging*, op. cit., pp. 43-44.
2. In the middle of the fourteenth century servitude had decreased dramatically in Europe west of the Elb, but there were still wide contrasts, between regions where it was completely abolished, and others where it survived for a long time afterwards. The notion itself of "servitude" is far from having only one meaning. But these disparities are not significant here, because the only important fact here is that the measures taken in the middle of the fourteenth century do not account for this difference and treat on an equal basis all categories of labor – manual, rural or urban, serf and free labor.
3. J. – C. Ribton-Turner, *History of Vagrants and Vagrancy...*, op. cit., p. 60. The same decree of Richard II requires that students of transit status have a confirmation from the rector of the last university they attended, and that travelers who say they are pilgrims be able to prove that they are indeed going on a pilgrimage.
4. Jourdan, Decrouzy, Isambert, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises*, op. cit., t. IV, p. 577 et seq.
5. Ibid., t. IV, p. 700.
6. Jourdan, Decrouzy, Lambert, *Recueil des anciennes lois de France*, op. cit., t. IV, p. 701.
7. See J. – P. Gutton, *la Société des pauvres*, op. cit.
8. Liss and H. Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-industrial Europe*, op. cit., chap. II.
9. See M. Mollat, *Les Pauvres au Moyen Age*, op. cit.
10. C. Paultre, *De la répression de la mendicité et du vagabondage en France sous l'ancien régime*, op. cit., p. 1.
11. G. Duby, "les pauvres des campagnes dans l'Occident médiéval jusqu'au XIIIe siècle," loc. cit., p. 29.
12. See E. Fréville, *Des grandes compagnies au XIVe siècle, Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des chartes*, Série I, t.II, p.272. Fréville himself states the difference between the hierarchical and military structure of fourteenth century companies and groups of routiers from the twelfth century, whose members were mainly dismissed serfs, and which constituted popular groupings responsible for initiating disorganized and violent uprisings of the type jacqueries.
13. See J. Le Goff, *Marchands et banquiers au Moyen Age*, Paris, PUF, 1956. Henri Pirenne's extreme thesis (see *les Anciennes Démocraties des Pays-Bas*, Paris, Flammarion, 1910) according to which the merchants were originally vagabonds, "powder feet," is not defended under this form any longer (for the opposite point of view, which stresses the connections between the development of commerce and land property, see for example J. Heers, *le Clan familial au Moyen-Age*, Paris, PUF, 1974). Merchants, bankers, traders represent the most mobile strata. They are also those strata which, gradually increasing in significance, are becoming more and more accepted in medieval society. The merchant, the pilgrim, the student, the clergy in transit, etc., are mobile; but they are not *disaffiliated* because of that.

14. Saint Thomas D'Aquin, *Somme theologique*, Ia, 2, 105, a2, cited in M. Mollat, *les pauvres au Moyen Age*, op. cit., p.282.
15. Cited in M. Mollat, op. cit., p. 133.
16. For the analysis of pauperism, see below, chapter 5.
17. Marx, as we know, stressed the role of these floating populations in the development of capitalism, of which they constituted the "reserve army" (see *Das Kapital*, book I, eighth section, chap. XXVII, trad. fr. *Oeuvres*, I, Paris, La Pleiade, pp. 1171 sq.). At the same time, especially if it is true – as I am attempting to establish – that the phenomenon appears in the middle of the fourteenth century, then this interpretation leads to a difficulty. Capitalism at this time is still in a very primitive stage and accommodates itself with labor in the traditional territorial domain, especially through the development of a rural manufacturing industry (see below, chapter 3). The measures implemented in the fourteenth century thus effectively block the mobility of labor, and with it the possibility of its reorganization that will result in the genesis of industrial capitalism. My hypothesis is that this savage mobility is not an effect of the structural transformations of production in the sense of capitalist development, and that it appeared before it could be integrated in these "modern" structures. The social upheaval that took place in the middle of the fourteenth century was not determined by pressure from new economic forces. At the same time, for an orthodox Marxist interpretation of these questions, see M. Dobb. *Etudes sur le développement du capitalisme*, trad. fr. Paris, Maspero, 1969, particularly chapter VI.
18. For the importance one should attribute to the "full world," which is not only a trait of demographic density, but the condition for an intensification of all kinds of exchanges that have made possible the flourishing of "Latin Christendom," see the works of Pierre Chaunu, among others *le Temps des Reformes*, Paris, Fayard, 1975, t.I, "Le tournant du monde plein." The population of this Latin Christendom (Europe west of the Elba) probably encompassed some 80 million inhabitants in 1348 and fell to approximately 60 million at the end of the century. It had to wait for a century and half to fill this demographic void.
19. Gilles Le Muisit, cited in M. Mollat, *Les Pauvres au Moyen Age*, op. cit., p. 24.
20. Using the terms "salary" and "salaried" does not imply that a salary actually exists at that time, but rather that there was a range of different "salaried situations" of heterogeneous and ambiguous nature. For an elaboration of this point of view, see chapter 3.
21. B. Haven Putman, *The Enforcement of the Statute of Laborers during the First Decade after the Black Death*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1908.
22. R. Hilton, *Les Mouvements paysans et la révolte anglaise de 1381*, trad. fr., Paris, Flammarion, 1979, also notes that during the worker insurrection that makes the throne of Richard II vacillate, the revolts are aimed most of all at those exercising legal functions, many of whom were massacred – these "men of law" who, among other things, were supposed to apply the Statute of the workers. The responsibility claims for these revolts are also significant. They demand, reports a contemporary source, "that no man work for another unless he chooses to do so and the work contract is in written form."
23. M. Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution, European Society and Economy, 1000-1700*, London, 1976.
24. J. Favier, *La Guerre de Cent Ans*, Paris, Fayard, 1980.
25. M. Mollat, P. Wolf, *Ongles bleus, Jacques et Ciompi: les révolutions populaires en Europe aux XI^e et XV^e siècles*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1970.
26. R. Fossier, *Histoire Sociale de l'Occident Médiéval*, op. cit. cit., p. 343.
27. J. Froissart, *Chroniques*, L. I, t.x, Luce, Paris, 1874, p.95.

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28. P. Rieff, *The Triumph of Therapeutic: The Uses of Faith after Freud*, New York, Harper and Row, 1968.
29. P. Chaunu, *Histoire Economique et sociale de la France*, t. I, "L'Etat," PUF, Paris, 1977. On the "decomposition" of feudal society, see George Duby's synthetic exposé, *Guerriers et Paysans*, op. cit.
30. Henri Pirenne, the historian who has stressed most (and perhaps too much) those factors of innovation brought about by the development of the urban phenomenon, stresses at the same time the fact that the city reproduces or retranslates the hierarchical structure and agrarian society's interdependencies. He even compares the medieval city to a beehive. See H. Pirenne, *les Anciennes Democraties des Pays-Bas*, op. cit., p. 178.
31. The interpretation of these difficulties in purely demographic terms is in fact nothing but a reapplication of a neo-Malthusian schema (there are not enough resources available to accommodate demographic growth). See for example M. M. Postan, *The Medieval Economy and Society: an Economic History of Britain 1000-1500*, London, 1972. Liss and H. Soly criticize this preponderance of demographic factors, showing it is less a question of resource scarcity and more one of these resources' legal distribution (C. Liss and H. Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe*, op. cit.).
32. For France, see Robert Fossier, *La Terre des hommes en Picardie jusqu'à la fin du XIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1968; for England, E.A. Kosminsky, *Studies in the Agrarian Society of England in the Thirteenth Century*, Oxford, 1956; for Italy, C. de la Roncière, "Pauvres et pauvreté à Florence..." loc. cit.
33. G. Bois, *La Crise du féodalisme*, Paris, Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1976, p.344
34. F. G. Davenport, *The Economic Development of a Norfolk Manor, 1080-1565*, London, 1906.
35. See R. Hilton, "Qu'entend-on par capitalisme?," in M. Dobb, P. M. Sweez, *Du féodalisme au capitalisme*, trad. fr. Maspero, 1971, p.191; se also C. Liss and H. Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-industrial Europe*, op. cit., p.41 sq
36. R. Hilton, *Les Mouvements paysans au Moyen Age*, op. cit., p. 213
37. See B. Geremek, *le Salariat dans l'artisanat parisien aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles*, Paris-La Haye, Mouton, 1978.
38. B. Geremek, "Criminalité, vagabondage, pauperisme. La marginalité à l'aube des temps modernes," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, XXI, juillet-septembre, 1974, p. 174.
39. The term "residual population" is proposed by R.H. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, London, 1912. But if we want to date the emergence of the process, it seems legitimate to me to "postpone" the chronology Tawney Marx propose, by more than a century.
40. M. Mollat, "La notion de pauvreté au Moyen Age: position des problemes," in *Etudes de l'économie et la société de l'Occident médiéval*, op. cit., p. 16.
41. P. Chaunu, *le Temps des reformes*, op. cit., chap. 1.
42. M. Mollat, "la notion de pauvreté au Moyen Age," loc. cit., p. 16. On the notion of "paradoxical unemployment," see Philippe D'Iribarne, *le Chomage paradoxal*, Paris, PUF, 1990, and below, chapter 8. In an obviously different context, Iribarne sees also in this type of unemployment the effect of a disadjustment between the objective state of labor and cultural facts that do not bend to economic realities.
43. J. Habermas, *L'Espace Public*, trad. fr. Paris, Payot, 1978, p. 2 sq.
44. J. Heers, *l'Occident aux XIVe et Xve siècles*, Paris, PUF, 1970, p. 110 sq, stresses the importance of population dislocations to accentuate the quasi abandoned lands after the Great Plague, and the development of new cultures.

45. F. Simiand, *le Salaire, l'évolution sociale et la monnaie*, Paris, Alcan, 1932, t.I.
46. On the demographic conjuncture and the situation of salaries in the sixteenth century, see B. Bensusan, "Vers la Première ébauche de l'économie-monde," in P. Léon, *Histoire économique et sociale du monde. L'ouverture du monde, XIV-XVIIe siècles*, Paris, A. Colin, 1977. On the interpretation of this situation within the context of the theory of "primitive accumulation," see M. Dobb, *Etudes sur le Développement du Capitalisme*, op. cit.
47. Juan Luis Vives, *De l'assistance aux pauvres*, op. cit. The explanation is based on the fact that Vives is a "modern," "liberal" by virtue of the fact that he is playing with economic expansion, be it at the expense of social matters. On the other hand, politically responsible agents of the middle of the fourteenth century, generally, are "conservative" who want to preserve and stress the power they exercise over their dependants, keeping the traditional framework of this dependence. Significant in this respect is the policy of the Stuarts in England, who try with all their might, albeit without great success, to contain the movement of the enclosures (see K. Polanyi, *la Grande Transformation*, op. cit.).
48. P. d'Iribarne, *le Chômage paradoxal*, op. cit.
49. See M. Mollat, *les Pauvres au Moyen Age*, op. cit. , p. 292-293.
50. Cited in M. Mollat, *ibid.*, p. 293. The cited text is from 1443.
51. Condemnation of Colin Lenfant, smith aide, vagabond convicted of theft in Paris: "Estait digne de mourir comme inutile au monde, c'est assavoir estre pendu comme larron," criminal registers of the Chatelet, cited in B. Geremek, *les Marginaux Parisiens aux XIVe et Xve siècles*, op. cit.
52. Jourdan, Decrouzy, Isambert, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises*, op. cit. t. XII, p. 271.
53. See A. Vexliard, *Introduction à la Sociologie du vagabondage*, Marcel Rievere, Paris, 1956, p. 83
54. Cited by B. Geremek, *Truands et misérables dans l'Europe moderne*, Paris, Gallimard-Juillet, 1980, p. 349.
55. Cited in A. Vexliard, *Introduction à la Sociologie du vagabondage*, op. cit. p. 83.
56. Royal declaration from 1764, loc. cit., p. 406
57. J.F. Le Trosne, *Mémoire sur les vagabonds et les mendiants*, Soissons, 1764, p. 4
58. *Ibid.*, p. 37: "Tant qu'il enrestera sous nos yeux [des mendiants] la commiseration portera toujours à les assister, et ce sentiment d'humanité ne peut être l'objet de punition."
59. K. Marx, *Le Capital* , op. cit. book I, eighth section, chapter 28, p. 1192 sq
60. "Déclaration du Roy concernant les vagabonds et gens sans aveu," from August 3, 1764, loc. cit.
61. Jourdan, Decrouzy, Isambert, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises* , op. cit. t. XIII, p. 501-511.
62. A. Vexliard, *Introduction à la Sociologie du vagabondage*, op. cit. p. 73. See also M. Dobb, *Essais sur le développement du capitalisme*, op. cit. which proposes even more extreme evaluations.
63. It is also an associated factor and an aggravating circumstance for other offenses, especially theft and homicide. Because of his unstable life and his lack of resources, the vagabond is undoubtedly often led to break the law. But the status of vagabond already makes him suspect and when he is arrested, this aggravates the verdict, labeling him a "strong thief" (See B. Geremek, "Criminalité, vagabondage, pauperisme," loc. cit.). The examination of the Chatelet registries for the period between 1389 and 1392 thus shows that only 18 percent of those convicted of theft were born in the Paris region or had their legal residence there. The conviction records often contain words such as "person without status of master service,"

- “without riches, might or status,” “not native,” “residing everywhere,” ... “vagabond and lazy” people are on the list of public enemies among the “thieves, murderers, women’s kidnappers, church violators, espieux de chemisn dice players, cheaters, money counterfeiters, and other malefactors.” See J. Mistraki, “Criminalité et pauvreté en France à l’époque de la guerre de Cent Ans,” in M. Mollat, *Etudes sur l’histoire de la pauvreté*, op. cit. t. II, p. 543 and 546.
64. Jourdan, Decrouzy, Isambert, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises*, op. cit. t. XIII.
65. Cited in B. Geremek, *Truands et misérables dans l’Europe moderne*, op. cit. p. 87.
66. In fact, it seems that it was mostly women, preferably young, locked in the general hospitals, who were sporadically “requested,” for reasons that can be called demographic, to help populate Canada and Louisiana. The deportation and tragic death of Manon Lescaut in Abbé Prevost’s novel are a literary transcription of this practice (*Histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*, Rouen, 1733).
67. E. Cruce, *Le Nouveau Cynée ou le discours de l’Etat*, Paris, 1623, cited in J.-P. Gutton, *la Société et les pauvres*, op. cit.
68. Cited in J. Kaplow, *les Noms des rois: les pauvres à Paris à la veille de la Révolution*, Paris, Maspero, 1974, 1974, p. 221.
69. Numbers cited in A. Vexliard, *Introduction à la sociologie du vagabondage*, op. cit. p. 82. Numbers for Paris; 18523 arrests between 1764 and 1773, in J. Kaplow, *les Noms des rois*, op. cit. p. 218
70. See O. H. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France*, op. cit. p. 232.
71. Cited in A. V. Judges (ed.), *The Elizabethan Underworld*, London, 1965. We should add that, be it for its cruelty or because it was difficult to apply, this measure was suspended in 1550.
72. C. A. J. Leclerc de Mon linot, “Etat actuel du dépôt de mendicité de la généralité de Soissons, Compte, année 1786,” annexed to *Essai sur la mendicité*, Paris, 1786, p. 57-59.
73. The difficulty, but also the necessity, for an anthropological approach of salary work, to characterize with precision this type of semi-salaried relations preceding the establishment of modern salary relations, requires the developments in chapter 3.
74. C. A. J. Leclerc de Montlinot, “Etat actuel du dépôt,” loc. cit., p. 59.
75. See J. Kaplow, *les Noms des Rois*, op. cit. p. 222.
76. Cited by J. Kaplow, *ibid.*, p. 228. On the paperwork of “submission” that must be signed by honorable persons who pledge to find work for vagabonds, see C. Paultre, *la Répression du vagabondage et de la mendicité sous l’ancien régime*, op. cit. One could argue that this practice contributed to the constitution of a vague outlines of an employment market: by signing a submission letter, one can become the employer of a “vagabond” by making him work at one’s own expense. But as far as I know we have no means of evaluating the impact of this practice, which in any case did not leave any wiggle room for the “employee” in this strange work “contract.”
77. The situation is indeed different for those employed in the professions regulated by corporate structures, see next chapter. Although the tradition of the “tour de France” of the workers dates later in history, those in the recognized professions enjoy a geographic mobility that is better protected than had they been taken in charge in every city by the structures d’accueil du compagnonnage.
78. Cited in J. -P. Gutton, *la Société et les pauvres, l’exemple de la généralité de Lyon*, op. cit., p. 154 et seq.
79. From 278 vagabonds arrested in Lyon between 1769 and 1778, only four are labeled “professional beggars.” We find however eighty-eight land laborers, and

138 representatives of different branches of artisanship, plus nineteen servants, fourteen peddlers, five ex-soldiers, three seamen, three schoolmasters, one violin player, one hermit, one pilgrim, one ex-criminal... (J.-P. Gutton, op. cit. p. 162). Certainly the arrested vagabonds tended to pass for unemployed workers rather than "lazy" persons. But on the other hand, not every alibi could be accepted. Data for the Parisian region in M. Boulant, "Groupes mobiles dans une société sédentaire: la société rurale autour de Meaux aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles," *les Marginaux et exclues de l'histoire*, op. cit.

80. J.-P. Gutton, *la Société et les Pauvres*, op. cit. p. 170
81. J.-P. Gutton, *l'Etat de la mendicité dans la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle*, Centre d'études foreziennes, 1973, p. 198.
82. B. Geremek, "Criminalité, Vagabondage, pauperisme," loc. cit., p. 346.
83. J.-P. Gutton, *la Société et les Pauvres*, op. cit. p. 128. Indices of the same kind for other French cities in O. H. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France*, op. cit. p. 122 sq.
84. J.-P. Gutton, *ibid.*, p. 133.
85. J.-P. Gutton, *ibid.*, p. 163
86. B. Geremek, *les Marginaux Parisiens aux XVe et XVe siècles*, op. cit. p. 115. Data of the same kind in J. Misraki, "Criminalité et pauvreté en France à l'époque de la guerre de Cent Ans," loc. cit. J. Misraki's contribution confirms the inaugurative character we have to give in the middle of the fourteenth century to this mobility problem. During the first half of that century, the accused are generally residents of Paris or the surrounding region, and the blood crimes and violent acts are prevalent. During the second half of the century, the number of crimes increases significantly, with a prevalence of thefts, and the vast majority of the convicted are foreigners without family or local ties (only 18 percent locals).
87. I am not mentioning here the case of gypsies, who have posed problems ever since they appeared in Western Europe in the sixteenth century. Sometimes labeled "beggars" or "vagabonds of race," they have been particularly feared and discriminated against. But this nomadism is a result of the group's not being native to the land and the fact that they were never integrated in the local culture, unlike the vagabonds I am analyzing here. On nomadism, see M. Gongora, "Vagabondage et société pastorale en Amérique latine," *Annales ESC*, 1966, No 1
88. From the people's perspective, the representation of the vagabond seems ambivalent and frequently positive. There is abundant evidence of complicity in popular milieus, especially among those exercising the petty urban professions, taking the side of the vagabond or the arrested beggar (see A. Farge, "Le mendiant, un marginal?" loc. cit.). But there are also signs of an opposite attitude, especially in rural areas. Ferdinand Dreyfus notes that the cahiers from 1789 (but who wrote them?) unanimously denounce begging, "destructive plague, hideous leprosy of the kingdom," and the "bandits, scum of society that the vagabonds are" (*Un philanthrope d'autrefois. La-Rochefoucauld-Liancourt*, Plon, Paris, 1903, p. 144)
89. Cited by B. Geremek, *Truands et misérables dans l'Europe moderne*, op. cit. p. 168.
90. Cited in J.-P. Gutton, *la Société et les pauvres*, op. cit., p. 157
91. *Des moyens de détruire la mendicité en France*, op. cit., p. 17
92. For a critical analysis of certain such situations, see G. Huppert, *After the Black Death, a Social History of Early Modern Europe*, Indiana University Press, 1986. Along the same line, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie established the prevalent role of a certain type of urban and rural elites in the rebellion of a part of Dauphine in 1579 (*Le Carnaval des Romains*, Paris, Gallimard, 1979). Generally speaking, either the most marginal elements are causing explosions of violence, or they are the

first to be sacrificed during the more organized movements in which they are nothing but maneuverable masses, then scapegoats. The vagabonds don't seem to have left a deep mark on the social movements that have affected pre-industrial societies.

93. We have no way to measure this economic efficiency, and I am hypothesizing that it must have been rather low. Interpretations like those of Marx and of Simiand certainly rationalize pre-industrial capitalism, and they attribute to it the ability to determine at its profit the transformations of social legislations that occurred much later. On these points, see the next two chapters.
94. Cited in C. Paultre, *la Répression de la mendicité et du vagabondage*, op. cit. p. 397.
95. C. A. J. Leclerc de Montlinot, *Essai sur la mendicité*, op. cit.
96. This does not mean that only vagabonds were repressively watched by the authorities. The repression of revolts and popular uprisings was a constant factor in the ancien régime's social history, which still results in bloodstained incidents in the seventeenth century (for example, the repression of the peasant revolts in Brittany and Normandy by the chancellor Séguier). But these interventions are not continuous, they respond individually to popular uprisings. Policies regarding vagabondage and begging are probably the only long-term coordinated policies aimed at both repression and prevention.

3

The Indignity of Wage Labor

The development of the modern system of wage labor requires several specific conditions to come together: these include but are not limited to the possibility of encompassing the whole of the active population; a rigorous delineation of the different kinds of work and the clarification of ambiguous categories such as domestic work or agricultural work; a firm distinction between work and leisure time; and a precise account of the times of work.¹ In actuality all these criteria will not be unambiguously satisfied until the turn of this century—that is, the twentieth. This raises the question of whether we are even justified in speaking of the “wage-earning classes” in earlier epochs, and especially in distant periods like the Middle Ages, when virtually none of these preconditions for defining wage labor were present. The answer is a qualified yes, so long as we realize that we will find here only the embryos, or intimations, of this modern wage-earning relationship.

But this will be to subscribe to a kind of curious ethnocentrism that envisages the economic, social and anthropological significance of the wage-earning classes only in light of that which it has become in contemporary “wage-earning society.” Worse still, this would seem to deny the reality of situations of wage labor that do not correspond to this modern definition.² After all, such “intimations” as we find in pre-industrial societies have taken on many other forms than those modern “Fordist” relations of wage labor. Undoubtedly they have often lacked the coherence of these latter, and they have not exercised the same hegemony over relationships of work (although, we must also remember that even Fordist relations of wage labor have never been entirely hegemonic in industrial society). But this is precisely what we must take into account. We must reanimate these “intimations” of wage labor in pre-industrial society by drawing at-

tention to the great powerlessness of wage labor even back then. But this is also to re-ascend to its anthropological pedestal and find a driving thread that links these transformations to our own time.

But why must the question we are asking here—and, in reality, that which is posed by this entire work—be that of wage labor? Our conviction that wage labor was even then at the heart of the social question was slowly, albeit more and more forcefully imposed in the course of proceeding. We began by analyzing two specific kinds of “problem populations”: the miserable who take advantage of assistance on the basis of both their disability and communal membership (chapter 1); and the disaffiliated fringe of the masses, characterized by social isolation and their lack of embeddedness in the dominant relations of work (chapter 2). But we cannot restrict ourselves to these two “target groups,” upon which those who make social policy are focused. This is because the social question is not just a matter of poverty, nor even one of extreme misery. In a social system where the masses must content themselves with minimal reserves for survival, poverty is not really a problem. Indeed, it is acceptable, and even necessary. It is bound up with the designs of Providence and necessary to the functioning of the social machine. One testimony among hundreds:

There are some poor in a State a bit like shadows in a painting: they create a necessary contrast from which humanity sometimes groans, but which respects the views of Providence... It is also necessary that there are poor; but it is not at all necessary that there be miserable: those who are nothing more than the shame of humanity, those to the contrary enter in the order of political economy. For them, abundance reigns in the towns, all commodities they find there, the arts flourish, etc.³

But such a “State” can only embody a harmonious whole when both rich and poor form a stable pair whose positions are complementary, that is, when poverty can be integrated into the society. This is less and less the structure of pre-industrial societies in the Christian West. They are populated, in increasing numbers, by the vulnerable. This vulnerability of the masses makes it nearly impossible to draw a firm line distinguishing “the poor” from “the miserable.” For a significant portion of the poor are constantly faced with the threat of becoming miserable. One can, in the harsh expression of Boisguilbert, “ruin the poor.”⁴ This raises the question we have already treated, at least implicitly, in the preceding chapters: namely, the social question explicitly posed by the problem of which indigents or vagabonds to assist. We must seek the origins of the disturbances

affecting the social equilibrium in this process of creating a vulnerability that “ruins the poor.”

This difficulty is first posed by the question of wage labor. Nothing but the condition of wage labor—or rather, we will show, a collection of heterogeneous wage-earning situations which are never fully crystallized into a “condition”—can capture the totality of the conditions of misery. In the countryside there are small tenants who struggle for their survival even while remaining in principle independent producers. Similarly, the towns are home to a crowd of small shopkeepers, peddlers, porters, dockhands, trustees, etc., small entrepreneurs who work for themselves and who are, at least in principle, their own bosses. But having to make recourse to wage labor, either partially or for the whole of one’s existence, almost always signals that one’s status is deteriorating, even in those situations which are already the most miserable: the tenant who must let part of his time to the richer peasant or weave for the town merchant, the ruined artisan who must enter into the service of another artisan or a merchant, the apprentice who can never become master and remains a wage laborer for life. If we begin by seeing that the wage laborer occupies an inferior position, we are better able to understand the route he must follow in order to overcome these fantastic handicaps. How do we pass from a fragmentary system of wage labor, miserable and despised, to the condition of a “salaried society” from which the majority of social subjects will draw their guarantees and their rights? Retracing this odyssey of wage labor gives us the best opportunity to understand, even today, the main developments of the social question.⁵

The Corporatist Idiom

The point of departure for this odyssey is the paradox revealed by the analyses of the previous chapter: in pre-industrial society, *vagabondage represents the essential negation of wage labor*. Its existence as a limiting condition allows us to better distinguish the structural characteristics of the status, or rather the non-status, of wage labor. The vagabond is a “pure” wage earner, in the sense that he owns nothing other than the strength of his limbs. This is manual labor in its brute form. But it is impossible for him to enter into a relationship of wage labor in order to sell this manpower. Under the form of vagabondage, wage labor, if one can speak of it, “touches rock bottom,” which is ground zero of the condition of wage labor:

an impossible state (but which nonetheless existed in flesh and blood for some hundreds of thousands of individuals), which condemns one to social exclusion. But this limiting case highlights some traits shared by the majority of cases of wage labor in the era. Even when they were not reduced to the position of such an *outcast*,⁶ wage earners almost always occupied fragile and uncertain positions: half-wages, proportional wages, wages paid under the table, wages slighted altogether. Above that of the vagabond, but below all those who enjoy some legitimate status, wage earners inhabit those inferior zones threatened by the dissolution of social organization. We shall see why, in pre-industrial society, this is necessarily the case.

It has been said that Marx developed his theory of wage labor from the starting point of the condition of the modern proletariat. But the characteristics that he attributed to it were embedded in a larger anthropological perspective. For him, “the force of labor cannot present itself on the market as merchandise unless it is offered or sold by its own possessor. This latter must consequently have the power to dispose of it, that is to say, be a free owner of his labor power, by his own person.”⁷ Wage labor is the price of this transaction by which the owner of labor power sells it to a buyer.

One can endorse this characterization of wage labor, so long as we add that a worker can sell some part of his labor power even without being the “free owner” of his person. For example, a serf may already be a partial wage earner if, having satisfied his obligations of serfdom, he puts a portion of his “free” time in the service of the seigneur.⁸ He is already partly an agricultural wage earner. Properly understood, the wage earner can be paid in money or in other kinds of compensation. If a salary paid in money represents the most developed form of wage compensation, it is nonetheless tied to the development of a monetary economy, and, even after the advent of this, will remain associated with non-monetary forms of compensation.

Besides “industrial”⁹ work, the artisanry was formed by the extension of the domestic economy, according to Georges Duby:

The primary role of the towns was to provide the aristocratic court with artisanry and commerce. When it was developed, it came about under the form of an outgrowth of the workshops of the manor, the oven, the tannery, or women’s weaving rooms. Little by little these workshops produced more than the master’s household consumed, who then offered to supply these goods to an external clientele... However, it is only a bit later, in the middle of the twelfth century, that we find that moment in the history of the artisanry when the workers were completely disengaged from the seigneur’s household.¹⁰

In the town, the body of craftsmen were subsequently organized into autonomous communities that held a monopoly on production.¹¹ The artisans are not themselves wage earners, but they comprise historically the main womb from which the class of wage earners was born. The unity of the mode of production responsible for the vibrancy of these communities of craftsmen was best represented in the person of the master artisan, owner of his instruments of production; one or two “valets” or “fellows”; and one or two apprentices. These “fellows” were generally lodged and boarded in the master’s house and devoted their entire productive power to him. Only these fellows are wage earners since the apprentices are not paid for their apprenticeships. But, at least in its ideal functioning, this system made wage earning into a transitory state: apprentices are supposed to become fellows, and the latter are themselves to become masters in the future. At first glance, the form of wage labor represented by the fellows seems to form a relatively stable status insofar as they practice an activity plainly embedded in a stable and permanent organization of “trades.” But it is at the same time a transitory condition. The ideal of this situation of wage labor is its own abolition, when the fellow becomes a master and shares, only at that very moment, all the prerogatives of the craft.

A community of craftsmen has two distinct ends: to guarantee the monopoly of work in the town (the abolition of external competition), but also to prevent the development of internal competition amongst its members. The first objective is the most obvious. It consists of excluding strangers or “hawkers,”¹² demanding of them long apprenticeships—from three to eleven years, depending on the difficulty of the craft—and compounding the number of tests and controls. But the regulations guild just as severely proscribe the spirit of *competition at the heart of the craft*: limiting the number of apprentices and fellows (usually to one or two); prohibiting the practicing of multiple trades, even if all pertain to the same material, such as leather, whose working is divided up between tanners, harness-makers, saddlers, makers of sacks or boots; and finally, the restriction and regulation of the purchasing of primary materials, which must be equitably distributed between the masters.¹³ For example in Paris, at the end of the sixteenth century, each master in the leather trades could neither purchase raw leather from his own boss, nor sell his share of the material to another master.¹⁴ Hence every precaution was taken to make innovation impossible; the ambition to overtake

one's neighbor is forbidden. The ideal was to reproduce as closely as possible a traditional structure by relinquishing none of its privileges. Hence it was the case that this organization of labor allows no room for the development of a capitalist process of accumulation. In order to maintain the status quo, it is necessary to block both the ability of any particular entity to expand, as well as that of the whole profession and of industrial professions in general. In 1728 again, the Lyonnais master tailors expressed themselves in this way: "As for the mechanical arts, they must not have too many workers. They will only harm themselves and starve one another, rendering the civil society of members useless and despised, which is the greatest evil that can befall them."¹⁵

This structure, which enjoyed its golden age in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, corresponded to the system of "industrial" work in the medieval town. But the paradox is that, even as it showed signs of weakening when confronted by the rise of larger markets, it maintained itself, and even in some respects gathered strength, until the eighteenth century.¹⁶ The first artisanal communities were often the expression of franchise and privilege in the towns (in this respect they retained some part of municipal political power). But when royal power began to be asserted, principally in France, the kings supported the communities of artisans and encouraged their expansion. This was no doubt motivated by financial reasons (for example, the franchises they purchased), but above all it was part of an effort to control industrial production. The Crown thus multiplied the number of legal crafts in the body politic "by a tactical alliance between royalty and masters."¹⁷ The edict of Henry II in 1581, rescinded by Henry IV in 1597, sought to extend the corporative system throughout the entire kingdom. Richelieu and Colbert later stressed this same policy. It is this same spirit—the spirit of mercantilism—which inspired the creation of royal manufactures and the strengthening of traditional manufactures.

Hence, Poitiers, which had eighteen "legal" communities in the fourteenth century, found itself with twenty-five in the sixteenth century and forty-two in the eighteenth century.¹⁸ In Paris, the number of legal trades went from sixty in 1672 to 129 in 1691.¹⁹ Some new industries like that of papermaking were forced to conform themselves to the pattern established by the wardens of the guild. In England, albeit in a less systematic fashion, the Stuarts attempted to bolster and protect the urban corporations against the development of capitalist markets.²⁰

The “legal” trades, whose privileges were administered by the profession and guaranteed by royal power, had the most rigid systems of organization. Some historians like Henri Hauser have highlighted the fact that they represented only a minority, and thus that they were far from controlling the whole of production. Rural industry, for example, escaped their control, which we will see had enormous consequences. There also were a large number of “free” towns. For example, Lyon always vigorously defended the “right to work” against royal efforts at control. But what does this really suggest? In essence it means that it is the municipal agents, rather than the state, who should act as overseers, guaranteeing “visitations” and controlling the quality of products. Locally imposed constraints can be just as meddlesome and effective against free enterprise as those exercised by the jurisdictions sanctioned by royal patents. Even in the middle of the eighteenth century, a “medieval” quarrel broke out in Lyon between the shoemakers and cobblers (the former work with new leather, while the latter repair used shoes). The shoemakers denounced the “errant and irregular troop” of cobblers:

It would be unjust that adventures who have never undergone the trials nor discharged those obligations to which masters have been subjected should come to share their status; this would be as much as to destroy all discipline and all regulations, since the status of cobblers will be equal to that of shoemakers, it will no longer be necessary for one to submit to the guild statutes in order for one to be apprenticed, a fellow, or master.²¹

“Errant and irregular troop,” “adventurers” of one kind, estate, discipline, or status who are interloping on that of another kind. Deeper even than the economic interests protected by these regulations, there is the matter of the place of such craftsmen in a society of orders. Participation in a craft or in a corporation (this term appeared only in the eighteenth century) marks one’s belonging to a community that dispenses those prerogatives and privileges that lend a social status to work. Thanks to this collective dignity of which the trade, and not the individual, is the real bearer, the worker is not a wage earner who sells his labor power, but a member of a social body whose position is acknowledged in a hierarchical collectivity.

Hence, the regulations of the trades have not only the technical function of organizing production and guaranteeing the quality of products. They also preclude the existence of a market where mer-

chandise might freely circulate: they allow neither competition, nor the freedom to increase production. But they also deny the market for labor: neither liberty to hire nor the liberty of the circulation of workers. At least in this respect, there is little real difference between the various sorts of regulations: “Whether one confronts a legal craft, subject to royal power, or a regulated craft, subject to the municipality, or the free crafts, subject to the regulation of the police, we ascertain, as a result, that there is not even a trace of true liberty. There are only various forms of regulations.”²²

Thus, what William Sewell calls the *corporatist idiom* applies just as much to the technical organization of production as to the social organization of work.²³ It makes the trade into a collective property dispensing both jobs and status, reserved for a necessarily limited number of its members, and whose franchises rest on the defense of a single form of socially legitimate work. Thus a craft is defined as much with respect to its function of excluding outsiders as by the positive prerogatives that it dispenses.

Accordingly, underlining the importance of this *corporatist idiom* for the organization of work until the end of the ancien régime is not the same as saying that it dominated it completely. In particular, the most recent historiography shows a tendency to return back to the too rigidly developed conceptions developed by classical historians of corporatism, such as it has just been presented. A work like that of Michel Sonenscher’s *Work and Wages* established that in the eighteenth century there was already a fluidity of man-power from shop to shop, from town to town, stronger than one might have imagined.²⁴ Yet if the porosity of the corporatist system is much greater than one has generally imagined, this should really be nothing astonishing: the vaunted rigidity of this organization takes its bearings as a counterpoint to the profound trends of commercial and industrial development so that it cannot be applied to the letter. But even if a structure reveals itself to be porous in practice, this does not mean that its effects are negligible. It is mainly in this space between the rigidity of a structure and its constant challenges that the several difficulties constitutive of wage labor are to be found. The paradox we must take into account is this: despite being undermined from within and warped from the outside by the dynamic of nascent capitalism, the corporatist system continued to impede the rise of a free market for manpower and a reliable status of wage earning.

The Signature of the Craft

Undermined from within, the system of craft communities was in crisis from at least the fourteenth century. Around this time, the opportunities for becoming a master are rapidly vanishing and are being almost exclusively reserved to the sons of masters. More and more restrictive regulations and more and more oppressive conditions of access to the mastership, such as that of the generalization of the costly “chef-d’oeuvre” (who was rarely needed formerly), had the effect of blocking internal promotion and reducing external recruitment. This restriction figures prominently in the creation of two categories of workers. Deprived of the possibility of ever rising to the position of master, the fellows formed a virtual class of wage earners for life who attempted to organize themselves in order to defend their interests.²⁵ Strikes of long duration have been known since the sixteenth century, such as the printers of Lyon and Paris from 1539 to 1542. The fellows tried above all else to control hiring, and in the towns and workshops where they were best organized, they succeeded in instituting the position of “journeyman”—a fellow created by his peers in order to welcome workers in search of work and to place them with accepted masters—who exercises a semi-monopoly on jobs. Still other fellows deprived of the possibility of becoming masters tried to establish themselves on their own. These are the “*chambrelans*,” a word founded in the fifteenth century, which attests to the fact that this practice was already very widespread.²⁶

Nonetheless, these aspects that we have identified as perverse side effects of the trades system did not have the ability to transform in any significant way the organization of labor. The *chambrelans* are rogues who were mercilessly driven away. Even in the eighteenth century, such “seizures” increase in number, and a number of *chambrelans* are even imprisoned by letters of writ.²⁷ Fellows who attempt to organize are likewise suppressed. Yet even in opposing themselves to the masters, they shared the corporatist ideals. The wage earning fellows strove in reality to share the privileges of the craft, understood first and foremost in terms of their resistance to the opening of a free market for labor. They were organized in order to control this market by excluding “hawkers” who tried to come and hire themselves out in the towns, as well as others who have not passed through the traditional rules of apprenticeship in the trade.²⁸

Thus the internal pathologies of the corporatist idiom in no way suggested any alternative way of organizing work, which might be able to promote industrial capitalism on the basis of the free contract for labor power.

The artisanal system of labor is also outflanked by external dynamics tending to warp it. These transformations assumed three main forms: the hegemony exercised by merchants over production, the development of a rural "proto-industry," and the creation of manufactures by the initiative of royal power. But here again these important developments did as much to frustrate as to encourage the establishment of a modern condition of wage earning.

1. *The role of merchants* is dominant since the Middle Ages in certain sectors like textiles and draperies, which represented, especially in Flanders and in Northern Italy, the "great industry" of the era. Manufacturing a piece of cloth, for example, requires fifteen or twenty different operations—washing, combing, carding, drying, shearing, spinning, putting on a skein, weaving, threshing, treading, dying—and thus a compulsory division of labor. But this division is superimposed upon an essentially artisanal system of organization: the main operations are carried out by masters with their workshops, tools, fellows and apprentices.²⁹ They are consequently dependent on the merchants—the "drapery merchant" in Flanders or the English clothier—who in general furnish the raw materials, market the final product, and control the whole production process. The merchant alone can invest significant sums of money; he has sole access to the channels of distribution and can absorb the fluctuations of the market. He is thus a true capitalist. The direct producer himself is neither capitalist nor proletariat. Undoubtedly, he remains the owner of his instruments of production and pays his own employees. But he loses all control over his product, because he does not market it himself and because his craft is only one step in a chain that culminates in the finished and marketed product. Thus he cannot himself enter into the process of the accumulation of wealth.

This "capitalist" organization, source of the great commercial fortunes since the Middle Ages, was therefore cast, for better or worse, from the raw material of the traditional artisanal structure. Called into being first and foremost by the technical demands of the division of textile labor, it will shortly grown to the point that it curtails the independence of a number of crafts. For example, around the sixteenth century, Parisian haberdashers come to employ several

artisans of luxury products. These latter, however, retain control over the quality of the products. In the same era, in London, the leather crafts are dominated by the powerful Leathersellers Company of London. George Unwin has described in detail, for France as well as England, the secular struggle putting to the test the great merchants, who control commerce at the national or international level; the merchant-employers, who try to enlist the “independent” artisans in a logic of the subcontractor; these small artisans, the small masters, who try to maintain their traditional prerogatives by appealing often for support of them by the royal power; and finally, the fellows and apprentices, consigned for life to the category of pure wage earner.³⁰ The complexity of this transition takes account of the ambiguity of situations and of the cascade of compromises that were developed, made and undone over the course of years and even centuries. If commercial capitalism expressed its desire for hegemony, this was not imposed without compromises, and the tenacious defense of privileges continually put the brakes on free enterprise.

The complexity of these relations is illustrated well by the example of the great silk fabric of Lyon in the eighteenth century, undoubtedly the greatest industrial concentration of the era with 30,000 people devoted to the same activity.³¹ The silk industry was dominated by an elite group of merchant-employers, rich brokers who each often completely controlled as many as a hundred “master workers,” who had been reduced to the status of tailors. Other artisans fought to maintain a fragile and much-threatened independence.³² Many others have insisted upon the steady deterioration of the status of Lyon’s artisans: many are quasi-proletarians reduced to poverty, whereas the merchant class is opulent and domineering. In 1780 the master tailors themselves denounced the merchant’s “murderous liberty” of setting prices: “It is no longer at the expense of the foreigner, nor from the superfluity of opulence, that the merchant enriches himself. Instead it is from the subsistence of his poorest fellow citizens that he enriches himself... He makes to groan in poverty even those dignified men of a better sort when they are industrious, economical and active.”³³ There are undeniable suggestions here of “class struggle,” but this must be qualified by two comments. First, it is an ideal of artisanal independence that the silk-weavers of Lyon invoke, at least until the eighteenth century. Its proletarianization is in that respect more of a disgrace

than anything else; for he continues to want to live his life as a master. Second, the hegemony of the merchant is not yet that of an industrial capitalist. The decline of the artisanry has not given birth on a large scale to a single group that might assume both the status of employer and of the organizer of production, that is to say, a group of industrial capitalists.

This situation is not unique to the textiles of Lyon. The artisanal structure presented an obstacle to the rise of those producers who could invest in production itself in order to transform their enterprise and give it the character of full-fledged industrial capitalism. Undoubtedly there was a “capitalist spirit” which has been in existence at least since the fourteenth century, and in any case since the sixteenth century. This is in Sombart’s meaning of the term, characterized by a spirit of calculation and of rationality, and the desire to accumulate riches.³⁴ Christopher Hill also notes: “the businessman of the sixteenth century reveals a very different outlook than that of the feudal seigneur. He obsesses over the least penny one way or the other in order to force it to work for him. And when the workers choose ‘voluntarily’ to work for him, he has no responsibility for their regard when times are hard: if they are malcontent with that which is proposed to them, that they can go look elsewhere.”³⁵

Thus, the means for extracting surplus value is already at work in commercial capitalism. But it differs from the form that it will assume under industrial capitalism in two key respects: first, the profit does not go to the benefit of the producer, but rather that of the merchant who orders production and markets the product. Second, the worker lacks the recourse of “going to look elsewhere,” for there is no “free” market for labor. This form of capitalism rests in large part on the constraints of the traditional organization of work, which it does not completely subvert but instead turns to its own advantage. Whatever degree of mobility and modernity that merchant capitalism may have depends on maintaining traditional modes of production dominated by the artisanry.

2. *The extension of the rural artisanry* represents another strand of “industrial” development that reshapes the traditional organization of the crafts without destroying them. Because the corporative system is an essentially urban phenomenon, the rurals are not subject to its constraints, but neither can they avail itself of its protections. Most often they are available to work—during their spare time or especially during down times for agriculture—for the town mer-

chants who procure the raw materials. This is the *putting-out system*: the merchant furnishes the wool, cloth or metal—and often certain tools—and then reclaims the finished or semi-finished product that he subsequently markets.³⁶

It seems that this form of sub-contracting appears very early. A good part of the fortunes of Bruges or of Gand may be traced back to the fact that, since the Middle Ages, the peasants of the Flemish flat lands worked for the drapiers of its towns. But they are developed in considerable proportions in England as well, where because the urban artisans were only weakly protected, they formed the means of “industrial” production since the sixteenth century. On the Continent, they enjoyed their greatest expansion only in the eighteenth century.

Contrary to widespread reputation, this “proto-industry” is not an archaic precursor of industrial development. First, because it allows for a certain division of labor: numerous rural artisans can work on the making of the same piece which the merchant circulates and then reclaims the final product. But above all because it is embedded perfectly in the logic of the development of merchant capitalism. Consequently the rural artisanry offers many advantages: lower wages than the compensation for urban artisans, where there is usually an appointed wage for those holding a tenure; minimal requirements for investment, practically limited to furnishing the raw materials and the costs of merchandizing the products; the possibility of absorbing the fluctuations of the market without risks, for there is no fixed capital to recuperate. Hence these products could supply, to the great profit of the merchant, a national or even international market.³⁷ Production could be specialized, and exchanges intensified, without in any way transforming the underlying relations of production, which continued to be modeled on the system of a domestic economy, thus minimizing the need for large-scale industry.

Similarly, these very same aspects block the development of an industrial capitalism and the advent of the modern form of wage labor, which will be constituted initially by workers of large-scale industry. These quasi-wage earners, partial and miserable, are most often rural artisans who are obviously not embedded in a capitalist logic of accumulation. In general, they produce in order to supplement the profits from their small agricultural operations. Moreover, by continuing to base production in the household, this system upheld and supported traditional relations of dependency and the val-

ues of rural society. The rural artisan is a peasant more than a worker; his industrial activity remains circumscribed by the regulations of a domestic economy. Through the development of the rural artisanry, the great countryside could thereby participate in the development of the market, of the monetary economy, and industrial production: in sum, the promotion of modernity, but without being subsequently modernized to any great degree. It is not that this intrusion will have no effect on social relations in the countryside, but that these transformations are ambiguous from an economic and social point of view. The development of the rural artisanry permits the overpopulation of the countryside with respect to its strictly agricultural resources; a lowering of the age of marriage; a significant rural demographic surge; and a differentiation accruing to social relations in the country.³⁸ But it slowed or halted recourse to rural exodus, and maintained the preeminence of local guardianship. In sum, it prevented or slowed the formation of a proletariat in the modern sense of the word. This fundamental consequence, to which we will have to return, the development of proto-industry and its persistence even well into the nineteenth century largely makes sense of what we may call the “exceptionalism” of the modern proletariat. It is exceptional because it remained marginal for so very long, but above all because it presents a new social problem stemming from the fact that the workers of the earliest industrial conglomerates would often be completely cut off from their territorial belongings. Conversely, and even though it was developed in parallel and against the constraints of the urban artisanry, the rural artisanry, by keeping traditional authorities in place in the countryside, assumed a regulatory function analogous to that of the bodies of craftsmen in the cities.

Hence the relationship between the rise of proto-industry and the birth of capitalism is complex. It is no accident that England, where the Industrial Revolution first took hold, was also the country where the putting-out system had been entrenched for the longest time and no longer had the means to develop sufficiently to respond to the demands of the market. We can hypothesize that the industrial revolution was produced, at least in part, when England could no longer avail itself of the “Far West.” What I mean here is that rural industry could no longer conquer new territories, both because it had been implanted for so long and because the number of small land-holding peasants who were able to furnish it with manpower was more and more limited because of the consolidation of rural property and

the rise of “enclosures.”³⁹ There were two consequences, one after the next, of the precocious rise of the rural artisanry in England. First, it much earlier fostered a flourishing national—and even international—market, while the French countryside contributed less to markets for “industrial” products because of its less vigorous artisanal production. Then, when the market for the rural artisanry was saturated in England, it was opened in France and on the European Continent. There were still reserves of manpower in the countryside, which allowed the development of proto-industry in the nineteenth century and which greatly delayed the advent of a “modern” industry.⁴⁰ Thus the two distinguishing characteristics of the “industrial revolution” can be interpreted as responses to the inadequacies of proto-industry: the use of machines, which increased the productivity of work without having to multiply the number of workers; and the reconciliation of fabric workers, which allowed for a better division of labor, better oversight, a complete attachment of the worker to his task. This finally put an end to those counter-productive features of rural artisanship which included the geographic dispersion of laborers; the independence of the rural worker, who remained more attached to his land than to his craft; and its distance with respect to the demands of industrial culture.⁴¹ But this “revolution” is not just the extension of the previous system, but instead is brought to bear because of the limits of rural industry.

3. Despite their appearances, these first industrial concentrations, the *royal manufactures*, represent little more than intimations of modern forms of production and the kinds of wage labor associated with them. Begun in France by the Valois, developed by Richelieu and above all by Colbert, they indeed completely transcended the guild system of wardens. But they remained founded on privileges and thus were at odds with the modern liberty of work and free competition. By letters patent, the king himself founded an establishment that held a monopoly on the manufacture of certain products (royal manufactures strictly speaking, like Saint-Gobain, Aubisson for tapestries, etc.), or often he would grant the privilege to manufacture for a limited amount of time to some individual or group of individuals. These institutions came to be known as the system of mercantilism, driven by a political and commercial logic more than an industrial one. The idea was to be able to attain complete autonomy within the Kingdom, so as to avoid the disequilibrium of the balance of trade. Colbert himself expressed this with

clarity: "I think that one will attain this easily by means of this principle, that it is only the abundance of money in a state that makes the difference of its grandeur and power."⁴² Avoiding imports was an imperial duty of the State, especially the purchase of luxury goods, like silks or tapestries purchased by the nobility and the managerial class, or products for military use, such as naval constructions or armaments. Thus it was necessary to found new industries in order to meet national demands in these areas, while the augmented rural artisanry (royal power tried simultaneously to take the place of the guild wardens) would respond to the needs of the masses. Manufacturing was an instrument in the service of the foreign policy of the kingdom rather than an innovation that obeyed a strictly economic logic.

Hence, manufacturing "has its planning always subjected to control by the State, with its general staff, its overseers, its captains, its committees, its specialists, its intrigues."⁴³ We should notice that this is a hierarchical and closed structure. Discipline there is unforgiving; work is often preceded by prayers.⁴⁴ The employees include a small elite of highly qualified artisans, many of them foreign-born, who have been courted in order to monopolize their know-how, and what amounts to an underqualified staff, generally rebellious against this kind of structure, and whose recruitment conjures up images of the kind of conscription practiced by the army. Some galley slaves are taken from the shipyards, while one seeks to enlist some poor and to form a workforce of women and children, reputed to be more docile and less demanding.⁴⁵ These efforts run up against the opposition of local artisans, and it seems also that of the majority of the population: the decision to set up factories in several villages for lace-work in order to manufacture "French stitchwork," so as compete with the "English stitch" and the "Venetian stitch," set in motion a virtual riot in Alençon. It is almost totally impossible to recruit an adequate local workforce, hence the need to "import" Italian workers in order to bolster the autochthonous.⁴⁶ In addition, these factories rarely take the form of true industrial conglomerations. Most often, they are great "dispersed enterprises," or "nebulous" forms, uniting under the same direction many workshops that perform similar work, or a central establishment putting to work a throng of artisans dispersed throughout the town, suburbs or countryside.

This system is far from anticipating the modern factory and the rise of industrial capitalism. Its period of greatest expansion coin-

cided with the apogee of mercantilism. As an emanation of royal absolutism, it would have its conclusion with the waning of the latter, or at best would be maintained only as an atavism with little or no impact on economic development.⁴⁷ As for their recruitment and their internal regulations, these manufactures functioned more like institutions of forced labor than as schoolhouses for the liberty to work. This is moreover by the same rationale and at the same time that royal power lectured them and that it tried to overthrow the traditional guild wardens.

In a famous passage in *Capital* Marx writes:

The transition from the feudal to capitalist mode of production is accomplished in two ways: the producer becomes merchant and capitalist; he is opposed to the natural agricultural economy and to manual work organized in the corporations of urban medieval industry. Such is the effectively revolutionary path. Or the merchant directly avails himself of production. This latter process, which represented historically a transitional phase—the English clothier of the sixteenth century, for example, controls the weavers who are nonetheless independent, by selling them the wool and buying from them their cloth—does not lead to the revolution of the former modes of production, so much as maintain them to the contrary and safeguard them as its own condition.⁴⁸

One can debate exactly what Marx meant by the ambiguous expression “transitional phase.” But it is true that the path that represents a truly “revolutionary” rupture with respect to the previous modes of production is that of industrial capitalism, which is characterized by the fact that the producer himself accumulates the benefits of his own production, investing and producing himself for the market. But the main factors that foster the development of merchant capitalism, the reduction to the status of worker a significant part of the urban artisanry, just as the expansion of the rural artisanry, do not lead, at least directly, in this direction. While allowing for the significant accumulation of wealth, this model of production maintains the dependence of the producer with respect to the merchant and is assimilated to the traditional forms of organizing work. The production of royal manufacturing is not in that respect embedded in the logic of capitalism accumulation. Thus, even though they are both opposed to the regulations of the corporatist idiom, neither merchant capitalism nor mercantilism directly promote a “free” market of labor.

We should not forget that this is the point at issue here. It is not a matter of expounding on the notoriously sticky question of the preconditions for the rise of capitalism. But this digression was necessary in order to take account of a constant that at first glance seems

puzzling. Despite the extraordinary economic and social transformations intervening since the Middle Ages, we have seen that the relations of work remain dominated by a model that contradicts the demands of liberty: free enterprise, freedom to move about, to produce, to exchange, etc. What can explain the persistence of this model? Why did the advent of wage labor, in the sense that we understand it today, take so long to come about?

Regulated Labor, Compulsory Labor

Let us offer this response: before the industrial revolution, regulated labor and compulsory labor represented the two main ways of organizing work. Both of these two modalities exercise a compulsion whose persistence explains why “free” labor had such difficulty finding a place for itself. But this persistence itself is understood only if one apprehends—beneath and often against the strictly technical needs for the productivity of work—the extent to which constraint is deeply implicated in the ability of these societies to govern themselves.

By “regulated labor,” I mean here the whole system of craft regulations, whether of guild workshops or workshops administered by the municipality.⁴⁹ If their persistence is so often at odds with the demand for a “rational” organization of production, this is because they primarily respond to an imperative of a different kind, which one can formulate accordingly: “*under what conditions can work become an ‘estate’*”? This cannot happen on its own, especially if one appreciates the supreme contempt in which manual labor is held. “The artisans, or craftsmen, are those who practice the mechanical arts, and, in fact, we commonly understand by the term ‘mechanic’ one who is vile and abject. Artisans, plainly being mechanics, are reputed low persons.”⁵⁰

Loyseau confirms this hierarchy of orders formalized in the eleventh century, according to which service to God practiced by the *oratores*—or clerics—and armed service in the military practiced by the *bellatores*—or lords—were forbidden manual labor under punishment of contempt.⁵¹ The “third order” is that of workers (*laborantes*), which in that era meant essentially workers of the land. But this trichotomy corresponded to an economic system in which the town occupied only a marginal position. Yet the parallel development of the towns and the “bourgeoisie” are indicative of a growing disequilibrium at the heart of this framework.⁵² The “bourgeois”

are for the most part representatives of the “trades,” artisans both emancipated from feudal tutelage and economically independent. Importantly, Jacques Le Goff dates to the twelfth century, and primarily to the thirteenth, a kind of recognition of manual labor that was imposed on the men of the church themselves: professional categories became “estates” acknowledged as the basis from which the manuals of the confessors brought about a new category of sin.⁵³

This recognition does not come about without much reluctance: “Ambiguous work even where there is some acknowledgment of the uniquely medieval confusion between punishment, fatigue and the exercise of an economic task in the modern sense. Work is labor.”⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the debate was launched. The third order is in a good position to become a third estate endowed with positive prerogatives. But this will not be the case for the entire third estate. With its growing diversification, the question of having or not having an “estate,” that is to say, a status invested with a social dignity, will arise *even within the heart of this third estate*. Moreover: *this division is effected amongst the different categories of manual workers*. Certain manual activities, those associated with “crafts” or “trades,” correspond to “estates,” while others apparently enjoy no status at all. When on the eve of the Revolution the Abby Sieyès launched his famous pamphlet, it is not for the whole of the third order that he expressed the demand of “being something.”⁵⁵ Near the same time, a more obscure author published the *Cahiers du Quatrième Ordre*, “that of the poor day-laborers, the infirm, the indigents,” of all those who have nothing and are nothing.⁵⁶ *The third order was split in two*. The rise of the third estate will not be that of an entire group of people. Its lesser fringes, denied social and political recognition, are composed of “the populace who has nothing but its arms by which to live.”⁵⁷

Much is at stake, then, in determining this exact line of bifurcation, all the more so because there is no real consensus on where it should be drawn. Loyseau has expressed the most restrictive option, by which are excluded as “vile and abject” all manual trades, reserving “dignities” to the “arts” because only in the arts does “the concept, the work of thought overshadow that of the material.”⁵⁸ To the contrary, for the corporatist tradition in its entirety, obviously even a “mechanical” job must find a place, subordinate but nonetheless legitimate, in the system of social honors. But this is to be granted on the express condition that the worker submit to strict

regulations, namely, those which are given by the corporatist idiom itself. Hence this latter has an essential function of placement and classification. It wrests manual labor from insignificance, from the social inexistence that is to be its lot so long as it remains a private activity practiced by men without honor. By way of contrast, the trade is a social activity endowed with a collective utility. Thanks to this, but thanks to this alone, some manual laborers can be rescued from their deep-seated indignity.⁵⁹

Hence the corporatist idiom controls access to that which we might call “social citizenship,” the fact of occupying a recognized place in the system of hierarchical interdependencies that make up the communal order. This organic belonging of the trades to the organizing pattern of dignities, which also corresponds to that of powers, is explicitly acknowledged by the Parliament of Paris when it opposed the 1776 edict of Turgot suppressing the guilds. The Parliament justified its position by its sacred mandate of the duty to “uphold the traditional status of the orders.” For the bodies of the trades form part of “a chain whose links are joined to the highest chain, to the authority of the throne which it is dangerous to break.”⁶⁰ The regulations of work are stretched across a complex series of steps that ascend to the summit of the social pyramid. Hence to lay seige to them is to shake the whole edifice.

Thus it is the trade which sketches out the dividing line between the included and excluded for an entire social system. On the other side of this there is chaos, the total indignity of those people of “vile estate.” Conversely, the privileges of the craft are prerogatives, undoubtedly miniscule, but of the same essential kind as the privileges of the great recognized bodies. Thus, even and perhaps above all because they are so trivial, these privileges are essential: for by constituting certain manual trades into an *estate*, they distinguish them both from other, more highly privileged estates and from the masses without any status at all, the “populace” or the “rabble.”

Thus we can well imagine that the restrictive character of these regulations—constraints are shared by all the privileged ones, even the greatest, as obligations and restrictions are always the flip-side of a privilege—might appear less onerous when seen in light of the imagined benefits of the power to accede to a real social existence.⁶¹ In this regard the alternative is not between constraint and liberty. To be free of these regulations does not signify real freedom, but rather it means that one finds one’s self confronted by an even crueler system of constraints. What is the effect of this, of finding one’s self

outside the system of trades? This alternative is much less a matter of *free* labor than of *compulsory* labor. For an organization of labor dominated from top to bottom by the paradigm of obligation, there are the *beneficiaries of constraint*, and these are the tradesmen. For the majority of other manual workers, however, release from the more exacting system of obligations is not linked with any such privilege. Without the collective regulations of the craft, the lone and impoverished individual finds himself face to face with the more general regulations of the police, which one must understand in the meaning of the times: that is, anything which is deemed necessary for the protection and maintenance of the inhabitants of a town or nation, and for the promotion of the public welfare.⁶²

Those professions escaping the regulations of the trades consequently fell under the *policing of the poor*: “the lone police of the poor comprised all the other cares and all other objects of the public good.”⁶³ It includes discipline of morals (the struggle against idleness and libertinage), concerns for health and safety (the struggle against infections and epidemics), social assistance (above all, the organization of hospitals for the disabled) and the regulation of work for the able-bodied: “It thus concerns the safety and public tranquility, for commerce, for the Arts and for Agriculture, that the cessation of this disorder, in reducing the number of vagabonds, furnishes the State with a new relief of laborers and artisans.”⁶⁴ If work is a police matter, the function of a good police power in the case of those poor who do not work is to force them to work. The treatment of vagabondage, we have seen, represents the extreme form of this demand that expresses itself as pure constraint, the categorical imperative to work without even the possibility of voluntarily acceding to work. But the paradigm holds for the mass of workers not embedded in the system of trades and is expressed in the form of that which is known by law as a *coercive code of work*.

It is in England that this set of provisions took on its most systematic and coercive form. Because the system of trades was least systematically implanted there and found itself most constrained by merchant capitalism, and also because the transformations of agricultural society there had been, as we have said, more rapid and more radical,⁶⁵ the traditional forms of the organization of work had been more profoundly shaken there, and hence the need to reinstate them was made more insistently than on the continent. We have already highlighted the importance of the Statute of Workers pro-

mulgated by Edward III in 1349. He began a coherent set of provisions which mainly included the Statute of Artisans in 1563; the Elizabethan Poor Laws; the Settlement Act of 1662 and the Speenhamland Act of 1795.

The *Statute of Artisans* restated the obligation to work for all subjects of the kingdom from the ages of twelve to sixty; it set the minimum number of years for an artisanal apprenticeship at seven years, even for the most basic arts; it forbid rural youths from coming to the cities to undertake their apprenticeships; the crafts of the artisans were reserved only for sons of artisans; and rural artisans were not allowed to have apprentices, for it was necessary that “several persons should not be under the direction of a single man.”⁶⁶ Peasants without land or qualifications were not allowed to leave their parish without a certificate from an officer of the police, without which they would be treated as vagabonds. The royal power sought here to reinforce the organization of urban artisanry, which had been threatened by the development of merchant capitalism and the putting-out system, and to hold the rural populations in their traditional occupations. This was crowned by the Poor Laws that succeeded it between 1531 and 1601. They sanctioned, we have seen, the hunting of vagabonds. But this was under the banner of the call for an obligation to work for “all men and women healthy of body and capable of working, who have no land, are employed by no one, practice no recognized commercial artisanal trade.”⁶⁷ Each parish must acquire the raw materials for putting this unqualified manpower to work “such that these rogues have no excuse to say that they cannot find a job or a service to perform.”⁶⁸ Work offered, work imposed: the terrible menace of being condemned as vagabonds weighs upon these idlers. By the Settlement Act of 1662, the local authorities could even expel any new arrivals who had no funds to guarantee that they would not become in the future a burden on the parish. The poor were consequently forced to remain in their parish of origin, in principle forever.⁶⁹ The Speenhamland Act of 1795 was the last stone in this imposing fortress of legislation. Inhabitants of a parish in need were to be relieved in the locality, and a compliment of wages was even conferred to them in proportion to some threshold of income tied to the price of grains. A minimum income before it was known as such, this provision nonetheless was accompanied by strict demands for residency and prohibitions against the geographical mobility of manpower.⁷⁰

From Adam Smith to Karl Polanyi, commentators on these work codes have generally denounced their disastrous influence on the development of a modern economy. George Unwin similarly observes: "Throughout the collection of social legislation promoted by the Tudors, one sees the England of the past vainly erecting barriers to the England of the future."⁷¹ Yet these judgments surely pose a problem, for these provisions obviously did not prevent England from taking a decisive lead on the road to modernity. Undoubtedly this is because, even if these provisions contradicted the demands of that which was to become industrial capitalism, they were in no way counterproductive with respect to the period that preceded it. England's "lead" derives, at least in part, from the fact that it exploited to the greatest extent the possibilities of organizing pre-industrial labor, specifically, the *linkage between the obligation to work and residency*. The putting-out system in particular assumed in England its most precocious and most systematic forms of organization. For it presupposes the existence of a captive and somewhat needy workforce, whose permanence allows for the absorption of the fluctuations of the market. It was poorly kept up in times of underemployment by the most sophisticated social legislation of the era. The liberals at the beginning of the nineteenth century, who made the English version of "legal charity" the special target of their attacks,⁷² undoubtedly could not or would not realize that the very system they denounced had effected the transition between merchant and industrial capitalism. This is well it seems because it succeeded in making the maximum number of poor to work in a given locality, and in bringing to bear both a particularly cruel legislation against vagabondage and the provision of minimal relief for the resident poor. England was thereby able to mobilize an important part of its underqualified workforce, even before the industrial revolution. This happened at the beginning of the second half of the seventeenth century, when the resources of this kind of territorialized mobilization of manpower seemed on the road to exhaustion.⁷³ Machinery and industrial concentration then played the role of a double slow-down of manpower.

On the continent, especially in France, the situation is somewhat different. First, because small-scale agriculture was still practiced there: the small tenant farmer was undoubtedly miserable, but he depended less, or less soon, for his survival on industrial labor to make up the difference. Second, because the urban crafts are more

strongly entrenched there. Interventions into the organization of work in France may thus be understood as following three main thrusts: the suppression of vagabondage and of able-bodied beggars; the strengthening and extension of the guilds; and efforts to mobilize the workforce which finds itself outside the traditional corporatist regulations. We have already described the first two strategies. The third consisted in a whole gamut of interventions by the royal power that, while limited and too little effectual, manifested accordingly the constant aspiration of making the question of work into an “af-fair of State.”

This intervention by the royal power is more precocious than in England: we saw that the policies of Jean the Good were involved in this effort, which was displayed on a European scale, to strengthen traditional structures for the organization of work. Gradually and in proportion to the royal power being asserted, this intention was revealed. But it wavered uncomfortably back and forth between purely repressive initiatives, which were content with trying to eradicate vagabondage and beggary, and those much more ambiguous efforts to make the State itself responsible for leading a general mobilization of the productive capabilities of the kingdom. This second face of a policy of work appeared for the first time with unarguable clarity in a declaration of Francois I on January 16, 1545:

Having been well and deument avertis than several able-bodied beggars, men and women inhabitants of the aforementioned village, and also several strangers from the lands of Picardy and Champagne, and elsewhere, present themselves in the aforementioned village, saying themselves to have fallen in such poverty and necessity that they are forced to be chased from place to place, in order to be participants in the alms, are excusing that they cannot find who will employ them nor put need of them. Having wished, declared and ordained, be it wished, declared and ordained, that the said able-bodied beggars, whether men or women, will be by the provost of merchants and eschevins of oursaid city of Paris, employed in the most necessary works of the city, and their salaries will be paid the first in clear monies of the aforesaid city and such that the said able-bodied poor make good and whole days, laboring at said public works as if they are laboring in private work.⁷⁴

If we look beyond its letter, this declaration implies that the State has a duty to procure work for all those who lack it, even at the risk of forcing recalcitrants to submit to this obligation. In point of fact, this declaration of intention will lead to nothing more than derisory applications. But it should not be ignored as a consequence of this. Insofar and to the extent that royal power was imposed as examples of centralized regulation, we see an increase in the number of decla-

rations stating the need to exploit the “seedbed” of workers who lay fallow and to mobilize accordingly all the living forces of the Kingdom. This image of the seedbed reappears conspicuously in texts inspired by mercantilism, and hence by the most ardent of its ideologues, Barthélemy de Laffemas, who unveiled a complete plan for structuring the entire universe of work. For workers outside of the trades, Laffemas proposes the creation in the outskirts of each village of two “public houses,” one for men and the other for women, which will also take in abandoned children so as to make them into apprentices.⁷⁵ Backsliders “will be forced by chains and prisons to work so as to prevent begging and to make them learn discipline, for which they will be addressed by the chief of police and the dozen townsmen who will set the rules for the communities.”⁷⁶

Richelieu similarly declared in 1625: “We desire that in all towns of our realm there should be established order and rules for the poor, such that not only all those of the aforesaid village, but also of the neighboring areas being surrounded and nourished, and the able-bodied employed in public works.”⁷⁷ And Colbert in 1667 observes: “Insofar as abundance always proceeds from work, and misery from idleness, your principal effort should be to find the means to enclose the poor and to give them some occupation by which to earn their livelihood, toward which you should hasten to initiate wise provisions.”⁷⁸

This inspiration may be found, we have seen, in the creation of the royal manufactories and in that of the public hospital. The ordinance of 1662 “holding that one will establish public Hospitals in all the cities and large towns of the kingdom” specifies that one “will find these seedbeds amongst soldiers, sailors in the maritime provinces, and young men healthy, docile and of good morals.”⁷⁹ The actual results will prove to be more than disappointing. Is it because there was some apprehension, as was stated by an anonymous *Etat Sommaire des Pauvres* in 1662, of “earning the displeasure of the artisans”?⁸⁰ We can well imagine that the bodies of craftsmen could not help but be opposed to this outrageous competition for their privileges which would put its products on the market more cheaply. Yet in all respects the mediocrity and ill-will of the manpower, the weakness of the methods and of the imprisonment might lead one to doubt that labor could ever assume a truly productive character in such a framework. The rectors of the Charity of Lyon, who were

among the few authorities to invest themselves truly in these “hospital manufactures,” drew this dispirited balance sheet in 1732: “the work of the manufactory is less a good with respect to the profit that one can take from it than with respect to the benefits of occupying usefully some able-bodied poor imprisoned in the aforesaid hospital.”⁸¹ The beautiful project of bringing to fruition the workforce of able-bodied beggars of the kingdom was consequently changed into a kind of ergotherapy for many harmless residents of the hospitals.⁸²

The most revealing fact is that nonetheless, despite repeated failures, the goal of compelling all the poor to work by force remains unswerving in its aspiration. In 1724, the Abby of Saint-Pierre, who passes for an enlightened specialist on such issues, insists anew on the loss sustained by the State in being deprived of this power “capable of a prodigious amount of work” that the unemployed poor represented.⁸³ The same year, a new solemn declaration, undoubtedly motivated by the disappointing results of the policy of enclosure, no longer recommended the systematic employment of the poor. However it reiterated the injunction for all the poor, “men and women alike, able-bodied and capable of earning their livelihood by work, of taking a job in order to subsist by their labor, will be put in condition of serving or working toward the cultivation of the earth, or other works and crafts of which they are capable.” Those who are unable to find work for themselves will be “assigned to companies of twenty men each, under the direction of a sergeant who will drive them all day to work...they will be employed to work on the Bridges and Dams or other sorts of public works, which are deemed fitting.”⁸⁴

One finds no traces of the work of such “brigades.” Nonetheless, the employment of able-bodied poor on Bridges and Dams and other public works will enjoy a new life at the end of the ancien régime, marked by the multiplication of “charity workshops.” Turgot first developed the model for these in the area of Limousin, with what would seem to be a certain measure of success. They were generalized to the whole by the *pays d’élection* between 1775 and 1789, and the Committee on Poverty of the Constituent Assembly took them up again, before learning of their failure, under the name of “relief workshops.”⁸⁵ Above all else they seem to have worked best in the most rural provinces, where they offered a supplementary resource to tenant farmers too poor to subsist by their own endeavors alone.⁸⁶

These latter innovations are not on a sufficient scale to address the problems posed by the underemployment of the masses. It is

nonetheless significant that they represent, along with the creation of the workhouses for the poor, the other initiative of the waning ancien régime for addressing the question of work at the level of the State. Charity workshops and workhouses represent two variants, one relatively gentle and the other harsh, of a single common paradigm of the duty to work. Between these two possibilities the monarchy was unable to choose. But did it really have to do so? They are, after all, complementary. The workhouses are intended to address the most desocialized fringes, or at least those who are perceived as such, of the able-bodied poor: beggars and vagabonds. The imperative here is one of pure repression, and whatever remaining reference there is to productive work is a poor sort of alibi, as it was in the English workhouse, for punitive practices of pure intimidation. Charity workshops, like certain opportunities for work targeted at a local level by the English Poor Laws, raise the larger specter of indigents excluded from work, and even in principle the whole category of those who have been unable to find a job by their own means. Thus in theory some opportunities will be offered by the public power. But, besides the fact that they are notoriously inadequate, the “offer” is biased from its very beginnings. It is crucial that these workers should not enter into competition with the common forms of work, such that, as the Intendant of Poitiers said in 1784, we have “taken care to reduce the price and to admit to this kind of work only the very neediest.”⁸⁷ This is the principle of *inferior eligibility* that reigns without exception in social policies (and not only in pre-industrial societies): relief and the allocations of resources must always be inferior to the lowest compensation that an individual could draw from a “normal” activity. Thus, in order to enter into this system, one must be reduced to the most extreme necessity, to be held there by an external force or by fear. Consequently these examples of “proffered” work are not so different from the compulsory work of the kind found in workhouses, or even the royal galleys. These two opportunities complement one another. It is necessary that a particularly repressive policing of work loom above this menace in order for the unfortunate “choose” some forms of compulsory work. Here the constraint is more euphemistic, but not without attraction. This also confirms the exemplary function played by the treatment of vagabondage: it represents the paradigm of the regularization of a system of work dominated by the principle of duty or obligation. In

pre-industrial societies, the discipline of work for all the poor exists beneath this constant overhanging threat.

The Lost of the Earth

We have spoken of the two alternatives of regulated work and compulsory work: between the two, “free” labor has found its place only with difficulty. Free labor signifies that labor power is exchanged as such, being bought and sold as a function of the demands of the market. But the paradox of these societies before the industrial revolution is that, even if they have known and developed various particular examples of wage earning, they have never allowed a full-fledged condition of wage labor to come into being. Bronislaw Geremek has already noted this in the case of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: “The study of kinds of wage earning and of the market for manpower allows us to conclude that, in the urban economy of the Middle Ages, manpower entered similarly in the circulation of merchandise, without yet disturbing the fundamental economic and social structures. The processes remain marginal, because this economy only weakly felt the demand for a free and non-artisanal manpower.”⁸⁸

It is not the case that wage labor represents a secondary component of which the organization of production can avail itself when the limit is passed. To the contrary, this “demand” is acknowledged as the thread of time: as one nears the conclusion of the *ancien régime*, one ascertains a considerable increase in the number of wage earners and a diversification in the kinds of wage labor. But even if it becomes *quantitatively more and more important*, wage labor remains *structurally marginal* with respect to the legitimate forms of the division of labor. Short of those recognized trades whose interconnectedness holds together the social order, wage labor is lodged in those peripheral zones which are barely legitimate. But it is not only inferior in status. It is at this point fragmented such that this atomization only compounds its weakness. We must take an inventory of those domains where we can find the earliest forms of wage labor.

1. Its most stable core is composed of the fellows in the crafts or trades. For the era they represent a kind of highly qualified “aristocratic worker.” These fellows, even “condemned” to the status of wage earner for life, are the most likely to keep or to find another job, for they are the best trained and the most competent. But this elite worker confronts his condition as a disgrace, or at least as a barrier with respect to the ultimate

accomplishment represented by the status of the master artisan. These fellows for life are the left-behinds of a corporatist system that is blocked, and hence they cannot be taken as representative of a “modern” alternative to that system. Their ideal remains access to the mastership, that is to say, the abolition of their permanent condition of wage earning. By default, their “cabals” are undertaken in order to try to monopolize for their profit, especially at the level of hiring, the corporatist privileges.

2. Akin to that of the fellows is the situation of masters who have been ruined or forfeited their position, reduced as a consequence to working for a third party, and most often for a merchant. This involution toward wage earning is widespread in crafts like fabric or silk, for which merchant capitalism most easily and quickly dictates its law. But even many other independent artisans run the same risk as a consequence of the frequent crises in this kind of society. For these crises of subsistence in pre-industrial societies have strong repercussions for artisanal production. The “dearness” of food prices, distorted by one or several bad harvests, carry with them a decreased demand for “industrial” products.⁸⁹ The expansion of the national and international market is another factor that undermines the position of direct producers: their savings are often too small to absorb the fluctuations of these markets. In both cases, they fall under the power of the merchants. The process of the irpauperization and of putting under guardianship does not emerge so much as a condition of honest wage earning, for what this ruined artisan sells is the merchandise that he makes and not his labor power.
3. If the position of those, like master or fellows, who belong to a system of trades is never completely secure, that of workers who labor at its margins is even more treacherous. So it is for the “*chamberlains*,” fellows or masters who are not recognized by the official guilds, or the “hawkers” who try to establish themselves on their own. They are condemned to a kind of netherworld, and their situation is consequently every bit as hazardous as the organization of the trades is solid. Even in 1789, some master wig-makers demanded in their journal to forbid the formation of a local “to chamberlain workers who carry off from the masters all their work and who, in reducing them such that they find themselves without work, make it impossible for them to live and pay their duties.”⁹⁰ For them as well, working for a merchant as a fitter or tailor might represent one recourse, but it comes at the cost of the loss of their independence.
4. Domestic and servants were a social group whose status was particularly ambiguous. These have been as little studied as they were numerous: around 10 percent of the population of the towns.⁹¹ This was a heterogeneous group, as some domestics were strongly integrated into the “houses” and might even occupy honorable positions in the case of the “great houses.” Even the lower servants could enjoy a stability that was rare in the midst of the people, because the satisfaction of their basic

needs was guaranteed. Thus, Vauban, in his *Projet de dime royale*, wished to tax them, for, in his words, “this is strictly speaking one of the conditions of the happiest of the low people. They are never lacking in their drinks or sleep, not just of their habits, to sleep and rise, there are the masters who are entrusted with them.”⁹² However, we can observe a gradual evolution in the condition of domestics in the sense of the salarization and growing precariousness. Numerous testimonies from the seventeenth century demonstrate that domesticity became an especially vile condition, and takes on the appearance of the turbulent, unstable, dishonest and slothful of the low people.⁹³ In the last years of the ancien régime, Mercier laments the end of the golden age of domesticity: “We despise them; they sense this, and have become our worst enemies. Formerly their life would be laborious, hard, but one counted them for something, and the domestic would die of old age next to his master.”⁹⁴ If the former bond of tutelage is attenuated or broken, the condition of domestics reconciled itself with this by becoming that of an employee of the house.

5. In the towns there was also a group, or several groups, who were difficult to describe. These were jobs whose situation anticipates the modern categories of employees: office boys and administrative assistants, clerks of the court, “shorts of boutiques,” etc. They did not work with their hands, or only to write, and undoubtedly looked down upon manual workers. However, they were poor, often even more so than certain specialized laborers, and their professions lacked both prestige and often even stability. Georges Lefebvre classed these non-manual workers among “the people,” of which they appear to share the reactions.⁹⁵ This is not that of the Directory, or above all that of the Empire, which indicated a veritable administrative organization, with a system of grades and of classes.⁹⁶ Still it was very hierarchical, dictating nothing more than a very mediocre status to the clerks and office boys. Thus, until the middle of the nineteenth century at least, the majority of “public servants” represents nothing more than a limited and badly paid category of all the small wage earners. The condition of employees of the “private sector,” of commerce and the “liberal” professions comes to be even more uncertain.
6. But the low people of the towns mainly consisted of workers in certain trades which are not subject to apprenticeship, such as in construction, and its countless occupations, porters, stevedores, water-bearers, haulers of goods, day-laborers, etc. These “men of toil and of limbs” were generally let out by the day, for work of whatever sort. As a testament to the power of the corporatist idiom, some of these professions mimicked the rules and hierarchies of the respectable trades.⁹⁷ But, on the whole, they represented the bulk of the “dregs of the people,” the “masses,” the “rabble.” “Those who have neither trade nor goods to sell and who earn their livelihood with the sweat of their limbs, that we call above all men of arms or mercenaries, like porters, aids to masons, carters, and other day laborers, are all the most vile of the common people. For it is no longer

the worst vocation to have no vocation at all.”⁹⁸ Many of these unqualified laborers were women: seamstresses, scrubwomen, dressmakers, and hat makers.

7. This sort of underclass of the towns had its equivalent in the countryside: miserable masses of agricultural workers who had no other recourse than to be employed in foreign exploitations, to be like domestic farmers in the outdoors, to be—and undoubtedly even more miserable—intermittent or seasonal workers. The manual worker must thus be employed at piecework and survive the hazards of the seasons, the harvests, and the good will of the proprietor who employs him, such that this location of his person is the condition of his survival. He can no longer “integrate himself” in the sense of forming familial bonds and maintaining stable relationships with a community. He testifies to that which was evident in the condition of the vagabond, a status into which he is constantly in danger of falling: namely, that mobility is the negative side of liberty for those who have nothing to lose.
8. The small farmer, himself, is situated, but the exigencies of his enterprise often oblige him to supplement his income with artisanal work.⁹⁹ Pierre Goubert has analyzed in great detail the complex situation of the “worker/serge-weavers” of Beauvaisis, “manual laborers in the summer, serge-weavers in the winter, cultivators always.” These were often owners of their houses, cultivating their few acres of land, with a cow and some fowl.¹⁰⁰ But these circumstances might be found, albeit with minor variations, in almost all the countryside, fueling the immense production of the rural artisanry. One must distinguish this condition of semi-wage earners, for these peasants sold their labor through the merchandise that they had transformed, but which did not belong to them, the merchant having furnished them with the raw materials. The role of women, spoolers, spinners, lace-makers, etc. is equally important, as is that of children, who assist the father within the framework of a domestic division of labor. Under the extreme diversity of forms that this rural artisanry takes on, it seems that one can derive from it this basic law: the fact of having recourse to it always signals a condition of economic dependency, the impossibility of maintaining the life of the family solely on the basis of agricultural endeavor. The rural artisanry are the very poorest of the rural tenants.¹⁰¹ And like the agricultural workers who are even poorer, but also more completely wage earners, one can hazard this additional generalization: in the country at least, the recourse to wage labor always indicates a grave precariousness of conditions, and the more one is a wage laborer, the more one is impoverished.
9. These were “peasant-workers,” to employ a modern terminology that applies loosely to this period of proto-industry, but there were also “worker-peasants.” The forerunners of industrial concentrations—mines, forges, paper mills—were very often situated in the countryside. They

were also generally of a very modest scale: a dozen or perhaps two dozen workers for a forge or a mine.¹⁰² They recruit their low-level employees from the surrounding rural areas, and this semi-proletariat consequently remains solidly attached to the land. They continue to cultivate their small plots and to participate in field work at the time of harvests or gathering. This mixed condition offers some advantages for the employer: wages can be particularly low, as the worker had additional revenues at his disposal. It also presents some inconveniences, as the worker is less dependent on the manufacturer, can withdraw his labor, and follow his own rhythms of work. The docility of the worker in the face of the exigencies of industrial production and his dependency on the factory only took hold belatedly in the nineteenth century (cf. chapter 5).

10. Seasonal workers are yet another hybrid category between country and urban workers. These are independent wage laborers and cultivators, with many variations even amongst themselves. Seasonal work is necessary for survival in regions of small peasant tenants. Thus arise the countless "Auvergnats," "Savoyards," etc. who arrive each year to sell their specialized services for several months in the town, before returning home to cultivate their plot and bring their family some additional resources. Another category is that of workers who hire themselves out in the country for seasonal work, such as masons, grape-pickers, etc. Owen H. Hufton has described in great detail the widespread custom that he calls "eating outside the region."¹⁰³ At the extreme, the operation is profitable only if the migrant can maintain himself several months elsewhere without depleting the familial resources. Like the rural artisan, he can thereby accept wages very low and compete advantageously with those autochthons who must support a family or completely hold together a hearth. Otherwise it is impossible to understand how, for example, Auvergnats can manage to be employed even in Andalusia, where a chronic underemployment reigns. However these ventures are uncertain. Often, there is very little distance between a seasonal worker and a vagabond.
11. Finally there exists a true, nascent proletariat in some industrial centers: manufacturies, arsenals, mills, forges, mines, etc. The beginnings of something already resembling the nineteenth century factory are already discernible in the eighteenth century. For example, Anzin employed 4,000 workers in 1789. In Hyanage, with the Wendel, to Creusot, at Montceau-les-Mines, began to establish themselves as grand industrial powers. But these businesses nonetheless were exceptional (Anzin captured for itself only half of the French production of coal). Above all, the personnel who were employed remained very heterogeneous. They often included, as in the royal manufacturies, a highly qualified elite worker who was well paid, often "imported" from abroad. Germans and Swedes for metallurgy, Italians for silk, English for certain textile products, Dutch for linen, etc. They also included some rural artisans, according to the for-

mula of “dispersed business” whose perpetuity is not a survival. For example, in metallurgy, in the factory of Dietrich of Niederbronn, in Alsace, a “modern” facility, for which, of a total workforce of 918 employees, only 148 labor in the workshop.¹⁰⁴ At the heart of the nascent factory, those who represent the equivalent of the proletariat, or the under-class in modern terminology, represent the roughest section of the workforce, the most unstable, composed of those who are completely impoverished and who have no other recourse to survive other than what were known in England as the “satanic mills.”¹⁰⁵

Thus we are left with eleven forms of wage labor or of pre-industrial semi-wage labor. I have no pretense of having created an exhaustive typology. Indeed the fact that it remains nebulous only calls for us to refine the analysis. For example, one might wonder whether the recruitment of troops into the army does not correspond to one of these forms of salarization. The *Encyclopedie* of Diderot and d’Alembert suggests as much, as they propose in their entry on “wage labor”: “This is said mainly of the price that one gives to the journeymen and mercenaries for their labor.”¹⁰⁶ But my goal here is only to bring to life the extraordinary heterogeneity of these conditions. This approach also shows that the most significant economic and social transformations that followed upon several centuries and are acknowledged in the eighteenth century did not have a uniform effect on the condition of wage labor. Exactly the contrary. Disclosing at the end of the ancien régime “an important socioprofessional mutation,” Ernest Labrousse adds “It remains, in some numerous cases heterogeneous and equivocal. It is not yet accompanied, as it must necessarily be—outside of a class of wage labor, relatively reduced—by a full-scale salarization. Nor, above all, as will be the case with industrial capitalism, by the fabrication of a new kind of worker.” And Labrousse insists on the determinative force of what he calls “fractional wage earners.”¹⁰⁷

Notwithstanding the scarcity of reliable statistical evidence, one can still hazard a few quantitative assessments that confirm this sense of profound heterogeneity. Primarily in the country—a fact rarely emphasized—these “fractional wage earners” are virtually the majority of the population. “We can at the very least know that at the end of the eighteenth century...the composite group of wage earners come to a head, relatively or absolutely, in the population of the countryside.”¹⁰⁸ This assessment holds not only for France, but for the group of European regions that had been put to use for the longest time and are the most populated, that is the most “developed.”

Thus in the Netherlands, in the eighteenth century, one of the richest regions of Europe:

“With a secondary and temporary activity, with miserable wages, the Netherlands looked like an immense textile factory, archaic, precious little industrialized, but an example nonetheless of a synergy, essential for survival, between an industry in its ancient form and a highly productive agricultural economy, upon land too precious, burdened with a population too large.”¹⁰⁹

But this constant preponderance of a “composite wage earner” in the countryside implies that “pure” wage labor is still in embryonic form there: “The outdoor laborer, living only from the sale of his manpower, constitutes only a minority amongst peasant wage earners.”¹¹⁰ It is similar in the towns, both with respect to the wide range of conditions as well as the minority of “pure” wage earners. This does not represent a novelty tied to the development of industrialization. Bronislaw Geremek observes that already “in the artisanry at the end of the Middle Ages the category of wage earners assumes a permanent and well-defined character.”¹¹¹ This salaried class issuing from the artisanry comes gradually to be augmented, without us being able to chart with accuracy its progression. But it continues most often to become embedded in the body of small enterprise. In Paris, at the dawn of the Revolution, the proportion of workers with respect to employers was of the order of five to one.¹¹² It is not only in some very confined spots that we find the outlines of industrial concentration giving birth to the masses of “pure” wage earners. For example, in Sedan, the population of workers (counting families) would grow from 800 in 1683 to more than 14,000 in 1789—but this is an extreme case. For the land as a whole, “France recorded perhaps 500,000 ‘pure’ workers on the eve of the Revolution,” whereas there were between 150,000 and 200,000 at the beginning of the eighteenth century.¹¹³

Hence we find a rapid increase in the number of full-time wage earners, but in proportions that still remain in the minority; a preponderance of a mixed condition pertaining to roughly half of the population; and the miserable character of those who must resort to complete or total wage earning. The vicissitudes of wage labor, its subordination and social indignity did not even betray hints, at the end of the eighteenth century, of its ultimate destiny. It was then still deeply embedded in—or circumscribed by—a kind of relationship of interdependence upon which feudal society had left its imprimatur. In this respect, we are justified in speaking of the “long Middle Ages,” in the sense that Jacques Le Goff intended the term.

The Model of the *Corvée*

Since the industrial revolution, wage labor is immediately conceived of in terms of the models of liberty and contract. Even if one has here unmasked the monstrous character of the contract and the fiction of the freedom of a worker often compelled by his wants to sell his labor power, one must still confess that the market for labor brought into being two persons who are theoretically independent when considered from a juridical point of view, and that the social relationship that they bring into being by this transaction can be discontinued by either party. This liberal conception of wage labor represents however an extraordinary revolution with respect to the forms which have historically preceded it, and which were perpetuated even after their formal abolition. In order to understand the late advent of modern wage labor, and also the difficulties it confronted in establishing itself, we must propose *that wage labor is neither born from liberty nor from contract, but from tutelage*. It is undoubtedly in the perpetuation of the model of the *corvée*, prototype of the obligatory form of exchange whereby a manual worker is discharged from his task, that we must search for the reason at the heart of resistance to the dawning of the modern system of wage earning.

The imposition of labor primarily took place *within the framework of a personalized dependency rooted in an ascribed locality*. The *corvée* is that which a tenant owes (or perhaps some part of what he owes) to his lord: it consists of the tenant putting his person at the disposal of his lord by working a certain number of days for the latter's enterprise.¹¹⁴ In this sense, the *corvée* is opposed to wage labor: it is unpaid labor, it represents a personal dependence in keeping with the kind of servitude that replaced slavery.¹¹⁵ However, parallel to the movement for the exemption from servile manual labor, with the development of the monetary economy beginning in the twelfth century, the *corvée* is more and more frequently repurchased: from an obligatory payment in labor, it becomes an obligatory payment in money. The conversion of the *corvée* is the repurchasing of a submission: the tenant becomes "free" to organize his labor, which must ensure his survival as well as that of his family, despite the payment of the rent (and the other obligations) that he owes to the lord. But it can come to pass (and this will frequently be the case) that the product of his own endeavors will prove insuffi-

cient to cover the whole of his obligations. He “liberates” thus a part of his time that he puts at the disposal, without reparation, of the lord or another wealthier neighbor. *This would prove to be the origin of rural wage labor.* Specifically, this meant that the tenant would go, some number of days per week or per year, without pay, for the service of another and another enterprise. The wage earner is thus “free” from work, but more importantly from the place that he occupied in a territorialized system of dependency, and the work that he accomplishes is exactly of the same kind as that of the *corvée*.

Thus these two forms of work, the *corvée* and wage labor, can coexist side by side, not only in the same era, but even in the same individual.¹¹⁶ For example, in England, where slavery is still widespread in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, some tenants owed their masters the “Monday *corvée*,” also known as the “*lundinarii*.” But Georges Duby notes with respect to them: “In certain locales, the *lundinarii* presented themselves every Monday in order to work there for free. Returning there another day, one gave them a wage.”¹¹⁷ Thus these English “cottiers,” are themselves the same week, and who at is more for the same master, sometimes serfs satisfying the *corvée*, others the partial wage earners paid by an employer. The same man, apparently, works in the same way on Monday, Wednesday, or any other day. Put differently, his wage-earning activities cannot be distinguished in their material form from his servile activity. It is still a putting of his person at the disposal of another, but it no longer carries the legal status of a personal subjection. Legally, the *corvée* and wage labor are antithetical, and historically, wage labor has progressively driven out the *corvée*. But existentially, if you will, with respect to the kind of work that is performed and the conditions under which it takes place, what is it that distinguishes “free” wage labor from a *corvée* that takes place as a relationship of personal submission to a master? Nothing, that is to say, it is only that in the first case he receives some recompense, a wage.

This arrangement is not unique to these partial wage earners who hire out only a fraction of their labor power. It is undoubtedly so even for the majority of full-time agricultural workers. Thus these countless rurals with no land came often to live upon the enterprise of an owner, at his exclusive service, totally dependent and totally miserable though maintained. These domestics or wage earners (how does one establish the difference?) are in possession only of the force of their arms, they are proletarians. They live solely off of the

wages of their manpower, they are wage earners. But the wage that they receive is largely limited to the payments appointed by the nature of their endeavor, the food on their common table and a bed in the stable, hardly more than a pittance. So far as their labor, it is performed in a relationship of utter dependency with respect to the employer, who is a master or landowner.¹¹⁸ The journeymen and seasonal workers are surely more “free,” in the sense that they are not permanently tied to a master, but their circumstances are perhaps even less enviable, for they are never certain about the next day, and the vagaries of vagabondage await them. With respect to the semi-wage earners who are the rural artisans, we have already said that they are caught up in the narrow network of dependency based on territoriality.

The different kinds of rural wage labor, or of those which take place there, therefore remain prisoners of traditional systems of constraint. Can we say that urban wage labor is completely absolved of them? Certainly the artisanry—who also have roots in servile work as a form of personal dependency—would appear to have broken the bonds of feudal subjection in acquiring his franchise in the town.¹¹⁹ But these privileges are the prerogatives of the *craft itself*, and not those of the worker as an individual. The artisan is hardly free in his work; he is independent only within the framework of the rigid system of the subjections of the trade, whose regulations limit his initiatives in every conceivable way. His independence is in fact the usufruct of his participation in the collective constraints of the guild. Moreover, insofar as he inaugurates a fundamental form of wage labor, that of the fellows, the urban artisanry transposes there a form of the employer-employee relationship that remains stamped by feudal tutelage. Bronislaw Geremek observes that the term “valet,” which preceded that of fellow, bears traces of this subservience.¹²⁰ Certain aspects of this master-servant, or master-fellow, relationship retain in a euphemistic sense the idea of feudal law that makes the valet the “man” of a master. Not only does the master command, but he forbids the fellow to work outside the shop of the employer; the worker is often lodged and boarded in the dwelling of the master, etc. In the golden age of the urban artisanry the fellow did not even have the right to marry without the authorization of his master and he often had to wait to become a master himself in order to acquire this prerogative of independence.¹²¹ This wage-earning relationship is thus undertaken in a relationship of strict dependency

with respect to the master, and, according to Geremek, for the fellow, “wage-earning is more a matter of the location of his person than the sale of his labor power.”¹²² Is it only a coincidence that “the Edict declaring the suppression of the wardens and communities of commerce, arts and crafts” and the “Edict declaring the suppression of the *corvée*”¹²³ (which remained until the eighteenth century in certain provinces for the upkeep and building of roads) are both promulgated simultaneously in 1776? In explaining the rationale for both measures, Turgot employed the same argument: the new liberty of enterprise must abolish traditional constraints.

Admittedly there did exist some wage-earning relationships that were more “free,” but they were also less secure. Thus we are left with the following paradox: the kinds of wage-earning that were undoubtedly the most enviable in society, such as was enjoyed by the fellow, were also those which retained the very traits that we would consider archaic. It is in no way certain then that these other forms of wage earning would ever be totally liberated from this heritage. Those which most closely approximate a labor market of the time, these are the jobs most scarce in the towns where the laborers without work must present themselves in the lane in order to search for an employer.¹²⁴ This is the case of the unqualified and insecure manual laborer, who escapes from the system of regulated trades. But Geremek observes also that throughout this institution manual labor is displayed in person on the place of enlistment, just like other merchandise, agricultural products or artisanal goods are showcased for the market.¹²⁵ Hiring is consequently a regular form of the appropriation of persons more so than it is a juridical contract for the sale of one’s labor power. The purchaser of labor “buys” the worker in that fashion which, in the case described by Duby, the *lundinarii* who offered themselves another day to the manorial court were able to satisfy the *corvée*, this time without pay.

Attempting to reconstruct what might be seen as wage labor in this kind of society is thus to refer one’s self to a whole range of conditions that have in common only a kind of indignity. Wage labor connotes not only material misery, situations of poverty or near-poverty, but also the status of dependency that implies a kind of sub-citizenship or quasi-citizenship with respect to criteria which, during this era, grant one a recognized place in the social collectivity. Surely, it is consequently because in all these kinds of wage labor it is a matter of persons of “vile estate” or of low status who

have nothing to exchange but their capacity for manual labor, often underqualified even by these conditions. But, in truth, wage labor can hardly offer a model more prestigious than that offered by this part of the population constituting “the people,” and obliged to work with their hands in order to live or survive. The services which have a social dignity—and which come to be multiplied and are diversified when and to the extent to which the state is structured and the “liberal” professions, lawyers, doctors, etc. are developed—do not support wage labor. Consequently these offices—primarily given by the sovereign as a kind of gift—are more and more bought in proportion to the venality of the charges. They are not to be identified with a condition of wage earning, neither with respect to the manner of their exercise, nor with respect to the mode of compensation. The office corresponds to the possession of a business of producing riches and honor for the benefit of the holder and his family. It resembles a kind of commerce more than a public service. Undoubtedly it is through the development of the machinery of the state that one can find the germ of a wage-earning condition invested with prestige and power: the bulk of public servants whose upper echelons would become the “nobility of the state.”¹²⁶ However, in this era, this group was still embryonic, and its representatives must have been difficult to distinguish from the traditional dignitaries arising from the logic of privilege, and not of that of the salarization of services.¹²⁷

Undignified wage labor: although it pertains to an extreme diversity of circumstances, these social activities are almost always imposed by need and enveloped in relationships of dependency. The definition given in the *Encyclopedie*, notwithstanding the “progressive” orientation of this work, suggests this pejorative connotation: “wage labor: payment or wage given to someone in consideration of their effort or in recompense for his pains or services that he has rendered on some occasion. It is said mainly of the price that is given to journeymen and mercenaries for their labor.”¹²⁸ On the basis of its evolution at the end of the ancien régime this gives us little cause for optimism. If it is entering a phase of spectacular expansion, its most rapidly increasing sectors—like the rural artisanry and the nascent industrial proletariat—are also among the most miserable segments of society. If it only comes to be extricated with difficulty from ancient forms of dependency, it is only to serve as a replacement for them. In fact, it is typical that the appearance of an

embryonic industrial proletariat is accompanied by new authoritative forms of surveillance and enclosure, which are subsequently reinstated in the nineteenth century. An ordinance of 1749 forbids workers from leaving their job without a “permit of dismissal” signed by the owner, and beginning in 1781 the worker must be the bearer of a “book or notebook” that he must show to administrative authorities when he is displaced, and which must be presented upon hiring.¹²⁹ Surely this cannot be a mere coincidence. These wage earners of nascent modern conglomerates are among the first to be released from traditional forms of tutelage. Nonetheless, as noted in 1788 by an inspector of paper-mills in Thiers: “As the majority of these workers are no longer residents and belong no more to one land than to another, they depart at the first whim that takes hold of them, and the loss of one alone stops the work of three.”¹³⁰ Thus it is necessary to try to hold them by means of new regulations. But these in effect extend the ancient examples of coercion to work in Royal Manufactures, as we saw before in the General Hospitals, the charity workshops, and the poorhouses.

The former paradigm of compulsory work is thus not so much abandoned as reformed as the basis for “modern” wage labor. Even more so, it supports and tries to encompass its initial developments. This is perfectly understandable: the conditions of work are such in the earliest industrial factories that one must find one’s self in dire need in order to accept these “offers” of employment, and the unfortunate so recruited aspire only to leave these scenes of horror as quickly as possible. Once again we are confronted by the figure of the vagabond. Indeed it is from amongst these nomadic populations of dislocated persons that the first industrial conglomerates appear to have recruited a significant number of their workers (as well as amongst women and children, more passive or at least less able or disposed to escape from these working conditions). It is therefore “normal” that the uses of constraint were especially merciless there.

The great mass of workers still expected compulsory labor. The great works and mines of Antiquity, as well as the system of colonial plantations, rested on slavery. The riches of the New World were extracted thanks to the forced labor of the indigenous populations, who very often died in doing so. Deprived of slaves, at least in their capitals, and also lacking similar reserves of natives whose labor power they might exploit, Western societies, Christian no less, were confronted by a difficult problem: to find and mobilize workers for

jobs that no one would accept if they were able to do anything else or even had nothing to do at all. Above and beyond the moral motivations that always incite the punishment of those allegedly vicious and dangerous poor souls, we can understand the attention focused on certain kinds of *outcasts*, vagabonds, convicts, galley-slaves, etc. in order to accomplish this kind of work that any man of means could only refuse. Unfortunately for the employers, these marginal populations, often particularly rebellious to work, were simply not available in sufficient numbers to respond to the increasing demands of industrialization. From whence arises the recourse to “free” indigents, who must nonetheless be coerced. As emphasized by Max Weber, the earliest industrial concentrations “never appeared without invoking the constraint of the poor.”¹³¹ But even misery itself was not always enough to impose these jobs. Weber reports that in the eighteenth century some workers were enchained by iron collars in the mines of Newcastle.¹³² This is undoubtedly an extreme case. Nonetheless it shows that the gulag was not an invention of the twentieth century. Compulsory labor also cast its shadow over the rise of industrial capitalism from its very origins.

The proof: it is in this context that Jeremy Bentham developed his *Draft of a Work in Favor of the Poor*, less known but undoubtedly more revealing than the *Panopticon*. For the audience in question is not a delinquent population, but the whole of the “poor,” that is to say, “all persons who have no presumptive or apparent property, or some honest or sufficient means of subsistence.”¹³³ Such individuals will be arrested upon the denunciation of “notables of good reputations,”¹³⁴ and placed in workhouses “distributed equally throughout the territory of the country.”¹³⁵ The system will be administered and financed as a private company in possession of a monopoly in this activity, on the model of the British East India Company. In these establishments, the panoptical technology and a division of tasks that anticipate Taylorism will be employed in order to guarantee the output of work. Both able-bodied and invalids alike will be compelled to work in proportion to their abilities. This utopia for organizing labor eradicates misery and social deviance and at the same time maximizes production: the imposition of the *total institution* comes as the dark shadow carried along with the liberation of work.

All this came to pass as though, at the end of the eighteenth century, two archaic models of the exercise of power still stood in the

background of the relationship of wage labor. It concerns two very different kinds of groups. The first (consisting of the disaffiliated) is characterized by a liberty lacking in both attachments and supports, who must be tied down by force. The others (the legatees of the *corvée*) are embedded in traditional tutelage which must be maintained. Admittedly, these two models fall short of covering the whole system of wage labor, and even less of responding to the demands for a rational organization of labor. However, the promotion of a modern and unified system of wage labor cannot be portrayed without drama in proportion to its contractual structure, expression of the individualist philosophy and legal formalism which was imposed by the Enlightenment, returning to a completely different system of social relations.¹³⁶ We must resist the urge to read a continuity in the history of the growth of wage labor. To be sure, during the centuries leading up to the eve of the ancien régime it was augmented, diversified, and one might even say that it “developed.” It became more and more indispensable, and it had become more and more poorly reigned in by the traditional forms of organizing work. In addition overrunning these in all respects. However, the arrival of liberal modernity marked a fundamental break with respect to these “developments.” It would insist on free access to work *against* former regulations: making it such that “free” labor could no longer be conceived of by default, as that which escaped from recognized or imposed status, but itself became the status of wage labor at the basis of which the entire social question would be formulated.

Notes

1. See R. Salais, “La formation du chômage comme catégorie: le moment des années 1930,” *Revue économique*, vol. 26, Mars, 1985, and the file on “Histoire et statistique” compiled in Genèse, no 9, October 1992, articles by Alain Desrosières, Olivier Marchand and Claude Thelot, Bernard Lepetit, Eric Brian, Christian Topalov. See also Christian Topalov’s synthesis, *Naissance du Chômeur*, 1880-1910, Paris, Albin Michel, 1994, which I could not use due to its publication date, but which goes along the same lines of analysis.
2. I am here reminding the reader that the historians studying the Middle Ages, like Georges Duby and Jacques Le Goff, speak of salary and salaried work. Bronislaw Geremek is even giving this as the title of one of his richest works, *le Salariat dans l’artisanat parisien aux XIIIe-Xve siècles*, Paris-La Haye, Editions Mouton, 1978. The expression “se louer” is also found in the texts of this epoch, for instance in Jean Le Bon’s already cited order from 1351: “Les femmes qui se loueront pour aucune besogne faire en la ville de Paris ne pourront prendre par jour que douze deniers” (Jourdan, Decrouzy, Isambert, *Recueil des anciennes lois de la France*, op. cit. III, p. 620). This is already a form of day labor, and a form of wage blocking.

3. P. Hecquet, *la Médecine, la chirurgie et la pharmacie des pauvres*, Paris, 1740, I, p. XII-XIII, cited in J. Kaplow, *les Noms des rois*, op. cit. p. 60.
4. P. Le Pesant de Boisguilbert, *Mémoires*, cited in A.M. Boislisle, *Correspondance des controleurs généraux des Finances avec les intendants des provinces*, Paris, 1874, t. II, p. 531: "Enrichir ou ruiner un pauvre, c'est-à-dire un manoeuvrier, sont la chose la plus aisée: elles ne tiennent qu'à un filet."
5. It is true that the question of land and agriculture prevails throughout the nineteenth century, in a still predominantly rural society. It is also true that its treatment during the revolutionary era, the abolishment of feudal rights and sale of national goods, were of decisive importance for the restructuring of French society. Also, until the Third Republic, and perhaps even after that, the main concerns of the rapidly changing regimes were the peasantry, the maintenance of rural society, the prevention of rural depopulation. But these essential data are perfectly compatible with the position here defended, namely, that the attention accorded to agricultural matters did not resolve the "industrial question," which will become more and more pressing as society becomes increasingly industrial and "salaried."
6. I am borrowing this term from Garreth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, Oxford, 1973, who establishes an analogy between the position of the untouchables in Indian society and that of the completely disaffiliated fringe of the people making up the modern city. The vagabonds occupy the same position in pre-industrial society. As to Great Britain, for an interpretation of vagabondage that supports mine, see A. L. Beir, "Vagrants and Social Order in Elizabeth Century," *Past and Present*, no 64, August 1964.
7. K. Marx, *le Capital*, op. cit., Book 1, 2bd section, chapter 4, p. 715
8. See I. Joshua, *la Face cachée du Moyen Age*, Paris, Le Breche, 1988; see also the "modèle de la corvée," p. 150 sq.
9. The terms "industrial" and "industry" designate primarily the transformation and production of objects by manual labor. They are applied then to small-scale activities, mainly in the form of artisanship. Only with the "industrial revolution," in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these terms are also applied preferentially to forms of labor concentration, "the great industry," industrial factory labor.
10. G. Duby, *Ouvriers et paysans*, op. cit., p. 265.
11. There exists a predominantly industrial artisanship (production of objects by smiths, shoemakers, carpenters, saddle makers, weavers, etc.) and a predominantly commercial artisanship (sale of products by bakers, butchers, wine merchants, merciers, etc.) But the two functions interfere frequently: the producing master often commercializes his products, and sells in his workshop.
12. Thus, in the Châtelet civil registry of July 23, 1454: "Condamné Jehan Lhuissier, foulon de draps, en l'amende envers le Roy, pour ce qu'il a confessé avoir mis en besogne ung estrangier et a laissé les ouvriers de Paris contre l'ordonnance" (G. Fagnier, *Documents relatifs à l'histoire de l'industrie et du commerce en France*, Paris, 1898, t. II, p. 239).
13. G. Unwin, *Industrial Organization in the XVIth and XVIIIth Centuries*, Oxford, 1904, and M. Weber, *Histoire Economique*, op. cit., chapter II.
14. G. Unwin, *Industrial Organization...*, op. cit., p. 149.
15. Cited in M. Garden, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, Flammarion, 1975, p. 189.
16. See E. Cornaert, *les Corporations en France avant 1789*, Paris, 1941. On the organization and history of the "corporate" regime, see also E. Martin Saint-Léon, *Histoire des corporations de métiers depuis les origines jusqu'à leur suppression en 1797*, Paris, 1909, and F. O. Martin, *l'Organization corporative de la France de l'ancien régime*, Paris, 1938.

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17. H. Hauser, *Ouvriers du temps passé*, Paris, 1913, p.2.
18. H. Hauser, *les Débuts du capitalisme*, Paris, 1913.
19. G. Lefranc, *Histoire du travail et des travailleurs*, Paris, Flammarion, 1957, p. 176.
20. See G. Unwin, *Industrial Organization...*, op. cit.
21. Cited in M. Garden, *Lyon et les Lyonnais*, op. cit
22. E. Dolléans and G. Deboue, *Histoire du travail en France*, Paris, 1953, p. 61.
23. W. Sewell, *Gens de métiers et révolutions*, trad. fr. Paris, Aubier, 1983.
24. See M. Sonenscher, *Work and Wages, Natural Laws, Politics and the Eighteenth Century French Trades*, Cambridge, University Press, 1989, and Alain Cottereau's commentary, "Derrière les stéréotypes corporatifs: la grande flexibilité des métiers en France au XVIIIe siècle," *le Mouvement social*, 4e trimestre 1993.
25. See B. Geremek, *le Salarariat dans l'artisanat parisien aux XIIIe et XVe siècles*, op. cit. . It is doubtful that artisanship was ever a "democratic" structure in its recruitment policies. Thus apprenticeship, which was long, is not compensated and will only gradually become paid. Thus, young rural people are excluded who cannot live in the city without being paid.
26. H. Hauser, *Ouvriers du temps passé*, op. cit., p. XXIX
27. See A. Farge, *la Vie fragile. Violence, pouvoirs et solidarité à Paris au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, Hachette, 1986, 2nd part, chapter II.
28. On the clandestine organization of companions and the first "cabales" strikes, see H. Hauser, *Ouvriers du temps passé*, op. cit.
29. J. Heers, *le Travail au Moyen Age*, Paris, PUF, 1975. Some of these operations, like drying, *filage*, *mise en echeveau*, require very little qualification and are generally allotted to women whose situation is particularly precarious. Wine-pressing and weaving, though, were always done by artisan masters.
30. G. Unwin, *Industrial Organization...*, op. cit. Max Weber analyzes this practice under the name of "commanded undertreatment," see *Histoire Economique*, op. cit., chapter II.
31. Lyon, which is described by the comedian Benard as early as the eighteenth century as a "grande marchande de modes dont le coeur semble battre comme un coffre-fort" (cited in E. Mayet, *Mémoires sur les fabriques de Lyon*, Paris, 1786, p. 615).
32. See J. Godart, *l'Ouvrier en soie: monographie du tisseur lyonnais*, 1466-1791, Paris, 1899. Godart's evaluation for 1786: 500 merchants, 7,000 masters, and 4,666 master's wives, 9,700 salaried workers (4,300 companions, 3,100 apprentices, 2,300 servants) all make up the "great fabric" (p. 189 sq).
33. Cited in M. Garden, *Lyon et les Lyonnais aux XVIIIe siècle*, op. cit., p. 341.
34. W. Sombart, *le Bourgeois*, trad. fr. Paris, Payot, 1966.
35. C. Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution*, London, 1968, p.217.
36. One must distinguish between the putting-out system (*Verlagsystem* in German), production for merchants who commercialize the products, and domestic production used mainly at home (*Kaufsystem*). Since F. Mendels' works, ("Proto-Industrialization: the first phase of the Industrialization Process," *Journal of Economic History* [3], 1972), the terms "proto-industrialization" and "proto-industry" tend to designate these practices, and to mark the decisive importance in the developmental process of European capitalism. See A. Dewerpe, *l'Industrie aux champs. Essai sur la proto-industrialisation en Italie du Nord, 1800-1890*, Ecole française de Rome, 1985.
37. See D. Landes, *l'Europe technicienne. Révolution technique et essor industriel en Europe occidentale de 1750 à nos jours*, trad. fr. Paris, Gallimard, 1975, p. 84 sq.
38. See R. Braun, "The Impact of Cottage Industry on an Agricultural Population," in D. Landes, *The Rise of Capitalism*, New York, Macmillan, 1966.

39. The role of the enclosures has been reevaluated several times since Marx's famous analyses in *Das Kapital*. Let us summarize a complex debate by saying that the most devastating phase only occurs in the eighteenth century, but since the sixteenth century the social landscape of the English countryside was profoundly transformed, making the renter's situation more and more difficult. On the concentration of landed property in England, see G. Unwin, *Studies in Economic History*, and R.H. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, op. cit.
40. What we know of these forms of development of urban industry in Great Britain seems to confirm this analysis. In the sixteenth century, this industry was rather belated compared to advanced European countries, and even by end of the seventeenth century it hardly caught up (see D.C. Coleman, *Industry in Tudor and Stuart England*, London, 1975). It is this situation of the countryside that played a crucial role in developing the English industry.
41. See D. Landes, *l'Europe technicienne*, op. cit.
42. Jean-Baptiste Colbert, "Rapport au premier Conseil du commerce," August 3 1664, in *Lettres, instructions et mémoires*, t. II, first part, cited in P. Léon, *Economies et sociétés industrielles*, t. II, Paris, A. Colin, 1970, p. 120.
43. M. Bouvier-Ajam, *Histoire du travail en France*, t. I. Paris, Librairie générale du droit et de la jurisprudence, 1957, p. 475.
44. See G. Lefranc, *Histoire du travail et des travailleurs*, op. cit.
45. See M. Bouvier-Ajam, *Histoire du travail...*, op. cit., G. Zeller, "L'industrie en France avant Colbert," in *Aspects de la politique française sous l'ancien régime*, Paris, PUF, 1964.
46. E. Levasseur, *Histoire des classes ouvrières et de l'industrie en France*, Paris, 1900.
47. Doubtlessly we can see in the royal manufactures an anticipation of directed economic forms preceding the state enterprise, which was implemented through planning and nationalizations (see chapter 7). But even if this phenomenon exists, the emergence of liberalism will still represent a major rupture.
48. K. Marx *le Capital*, III, 4th section, chapter 13, op. cit. p. 1103. Along the same lines, Max Weber stresses that "the factory was not born in artisanship and did not develop at its expense, but at first, parallel to it" (*Histoire économique*, op. cit., p. 196). Moreover, "it was not born out of the system of *commanded* undertreatment; here *again it developed parallel*." (ibid., p. 197, the italics are from Weber).
49. Certain authors (H. Hauser for example, *les Débuts du capitalisme*, op. cit.) underline the difference between the "sworn professions," the privileges of which are guaranteed by the royalty, and the "regulated professions," the regulations of which emanate from municipal authorities. This distinction helps analyze the differences between the modes of regulation for the different professions, but it is not pertinent when we want to trace the functions of these regulations inasmuch as the status they generally confer upon the professions.
50. C. Loyseau, *Traité des ordres et simples dignités*, Paris, 1610, rééd. 1666, p. 43.
51. See G. Duby, *les Trois Ordres, ou l'imaginaire du féodalisme*, Paris, Gallimard, 1988. We recognize the tripartite schema, the presence of which Georges Dumézil saw in all Indo-European societies, and which is expressed the most rigidly in medieval feudalism.
52. On the emergence of a bourgeoisie, see for example R. Pernoud, *Histoire de la bourgeoisie en France*, t.I, Paris, Le Seuil, 1960. The word "bourgeois" (*burgenis*) appears for the first time in 1007 in a charter conceded by the Comte d'Anjou for the foundation of a city. Analogously to the development of the cities, the increasing differentiation of rural society also contributed to invalidate the one-dimensional and contemptuous conception of the *laborantes*.

53. J. Le Goff, "Métier et profession d'après les manuels des confesseurs du Moyen Age," in *Pour un autre Moyen Age*, Paris, Gallimard, 1977.
54. J. Le Goff, "Métiers et professions..." loc. cit., p. 179. Note that this relative recognition of labor is at the same time a recognition of a wage. Le Goff notices a shift in thirteenth-century exegeses of the Matthew Evangelium: "The worker is worth his nourishment" (Matthew, X, 10), which becomes then "The worker is worth his wage." The accomplishment of a licit job deserves a wage which also implies the recognition of a monetary economy. Le Goff's commentary: "The necessary and sufficient condition for a job to become licit, for a wage to be appropriate, is the job's completion [by the worker]" (p. 179).
55. "What is the Third Estate? Everything. What had it been until now in politics? Nothing. What does it ask? To be something" (E. J. Sieyès, *Qu'est-ce que le tiers état?* Paris, 1789, rééd. Paris, Flammarion, 1988, p. 31).
56. L. Dufourny de Villiers, *Cahiers du quatrième ordre*, Paris, April 1789.
57. "J'entends par le peuple la populace qui n'a que ses bras pour vivre. Je discute que cet ordre de citoyens ait jamais le temps ni la capacité de s'instruire. Il me paraît essentiel qu'il y ait des gens ignorants... Ce n'est pas le manoeuvre qu'il faut instruire, c'est le bon bourgeois" (Voltaire, letter du 1 avril 1766, cited in E. Labrousse, F. Braudel, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, op. cit., t. II, p. 676).
58. C. Loyseau, *Traite des ordres et simples dignites*, op. cit., p. 43. Loyseau is far from being the only one defending this position. Thus, in 1789, the provost of the merchants of Lyon expresses himself as follows regarding silk artisans: "The workers insist on producing thus much per measure the materials furnished to them by the merchants. Labor is for workers, industry for merchants. It is they who invent our beautiful cloths and who, corresponding with the entire universe, make their riches flow into our city" (cited in J. Godart, *l'Ouvrier en soie*, op. cit., p. 96). These workers are failed artisans who work for "merchants." They are nothing but simple laborers. The conception of manual labor influences, even beyond the eighteenth century, those who elaborated sociological theories on it. Thus, Maurice Halbwachs and François Simiand consider manual laborers as merely executing entities attached to their material, and thus inferior even to the most modest employee (see chapter 7).
59. See W. Sewell, *Gens de métiers et révolutions*, op. cit.
60. Cited by M. Bouvier-Ajam, *Histoire du travail en France*, op. cit., t. I, p. 655.
61. This is why the revolts of the "petty folk," workers employed in the "minor arts," were often incited both for "economic" reasons and in order to gain a place in the established social order. Thus the revolt of the Ciompi in Florence in the fourteenth century, whose aim was to participate in the city's government and "be men" (see M. Mollat, P. Wolf, *Ongles bleus, Jacques et Ciompi*, op. cit.).
62. N. de la Mare, *Traite de police*, Paris, 1703.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
64. *Ibid.*
65. For a synthesis of the English countryside's transformation, which also allows us to see its contrast to French peasantry, see H. J. Habakkuk, "La disparition du paysan anglais," *Annales ESC*, juillet-août 1965, and B. Moore, *les Origines de la dictature et de la démocratie*, trad. fr., Paris, Maspéro, 1969.
66. Cited in G. Unwin, *Industrial Organization in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries*, op. cit., p. 138. Note also the argument to justify that apprenticeship of urban professions be reserved for artisan's sons: "It is easier for the son of a rural artisan or the son of a peasant to become a rural artisan than for the son of an urban artisan to become rural artisan or peasant, so that if rural artisans could send their children to town, the children of urban artisans would become vagabonds" (*ibid.*, p. 138). All

these measures are inspired by the intention to fight against disaffiliation, which happens through the deterritorialization of urban and rural populations.

67. Cited in A.V. Judges, *The Elizabethan Underworld*, op. cit., p. XXXIV.
68. Cited in R.H. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem in the XVIth century*, op. cit., p. 269.
69. See. D. Marshall, "The Old Poor Laws, 1662-1795," in E.M.C. Arus-Wilson, *Essays in Economic History*, London, 1954.
70. See K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, op. cit.
71. G. Unwin, *Studies in Economic History*, op. cit., p. 135.
72. See J. R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism, English Ideas on Poor Relief, 1797-1834*, London, 1969. We will get back to this lack of comprehension of the liberal thinkers with respect to previous labor organization and the associated forms of social protection in chapters 4 and 5. In fact they go along the lines of a completely different model of economic development and social organization, which is distinguished mainly by its opposition to the preceding model. The liberal conception of liberty based on contract emerged against the system of traditional tutelage. The militant perspective they adopt did not allow the liberals to comprehend the utility of this system for the preservation of social cohesion.
73. There are of course other "causes," especially the rapidity of demographic growth in England starting with the second half of the eighteenth century. During this period, the English population rose from 6.25 million to 8.89 inhabitants, which represents a growth of 42.2 percent (and from 8.89 million to 17.92 million between 1801 and 1851, which represents a growth of more than 100 percent). See G. Chapman, *Culture and Survival*, London, p. 34 sq.
74. Jourdan, Decrouzy, Isambert, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises*, op. cit., t. XII, p. 900-901.
75. See H. Hauser, *les Débuts du capitalisme*, op. cit. chapter V, "Le système social de Barthélemy de Laffemas."
76. B. de Laffemas, *Avis et remontrances à M.M. des Députés du Roy*, Paris, 1600, p. 7.
77. Cardinal de Richelieu, *Lettres, instructions diplomatiques et papiers d'Etat*, cited in J.-P. Gutton, *la Société et les pauvres*, op. cit., p. 318.
78. J.-B. Colbert, *Lettres, instructions et mémoires*, t. II, cited by J.-P. Gutton, p. 338.
79. Cited in A. Vexliard, *Introduction à la sociologie du vagabondage*, op. cit.
80. Cited in J.-P. Gutton, *la société et les pauvres*, op. cit., p. 468.
81. Ibid.
82. The same illusion stains the more or less concomitant creation of royal invoices, of which Colbert said: "Besides the advantage that will be brought by the income of a large sum of cash into the kingdom. Certainly, the manufactures will help a million people who languish in idleness earn their living; a considerable number of people will make a living with navigation and on sea; the multiplication of sea vessels will increase the grandeur and might of the State" (*Lettres, instructions et mémoires*, t. II, 4e partie, cited in P. Léon, *Economies et sociétés industrielles*, t. II, op. cit., p. 121). In fact the royal manufactures have had little impact on labor market, and even less on the "people who languish in idleness."
83. Abbé de Saint-Pierre (Charles Irénée Castel), *Sur les Pauvres mendiants*, Paris, 1724, p.8.
84. Cited in J.-P. Gutton, "Etat de la mendicité dans la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle," op. cit., annexe I, pp. 226-227.
85. See C. Bloch, *l'Assistance et l'Etat en France à la veille de la Révolution*, Paris, 1909.
86. See O.H. Hufton, *The Poor of the Eighteenth Century France*, op. cit., chapter VI. For Turgot's policy in the Limousin, see M. Lecoq, *l'Assistance par le travail et les*

jardins ouvriers en France, Paris, 1906. Turgot's relative success is due to the fact that he took the pains to draft a classification of the concerned populations, and tried to match them with corresponding types of work.

87. Cited in Pierre Léon, "La réponse de l'industrie," in Fernand Braudel, Ernest Labrousse, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, op. cit., t. II, chapter II.
88. B. Geremek, *le Salariat dans l'artisanat parisien aux XIIIe-Xve siècles*, op. cit., p. 147.
89. The mechanism of these crises is well described in P. Goubert, *Cent Mille Provinciaux au XVIIe siècle, Beauvais et le Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730*, Paris, Flammarion, 1968. Goubert shows how the absence of cash, mobilized for buying cereals, lead to under-employment and unemployment in industrial professions. This process hits with all its implications, a town like Beauvais, specialized in the production of manufactured goods for "popular" usage. If solvable demand decreases, it also touches the production of luxury.
90. Cited in J. Kaplow, *les Noms des rois*, op. cit., p. 75.
91. J.-P. Gutton, *Domestiques et serviteurs dans la France de l'ancien régime*, Paris, Aubier, 1981.
92. Vauban, *Projet de dime royale*, Paris, 1907, p. 66. A contemporary of Vauban says: "Their life is practically guaranteed: their land is not subject to hail, and their goods are not subject to bankruptcy" (C. Cordier, *la Sainte Famille*, Paris, 1700, cited by J.-P. Gutton, *Domestiques et serviteurs...*, op. cit., p. 171).
93. See N. de la Mare, *Traité de la police*, op. cit. A police decree from 1720 renewed in 1778 stipulates that Parisian servants who change their master must be given a certificate from their former employer (see J. Kaplow, *les Noms des rois*, op. cit., p. 94).
94. L.-S. Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, op. cit., I, p. 161. In the same epoch, des Essarts declares after a charge against the servants. "Thus we can conclude that the class of servants is composed of countryside scum" (*Dictionnaire de la police*, Paris, 1786-1798, t.III, p. 485).
95. G. Lefebvre, *Etudes Orléanaises*, t. I. *Contribution à l'étude des structures sociales à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1962. See also, in particular on the ambiguities of the notion of "people" at this time, François Furet, "Pour une définition des classes inférieures à l'époque moderne," *Annales ESC*, May-June 1963.
96. See Pierre Rosanvallon, *l'Etat en France de 1789 à nos jours*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1990, chapter V.
97. Thus, the penny-earners, who are, according to Savary's *Dictionnaire du Commerce* (1761), "strong and robust men who are used in Paris for carrying burdens and merchandise, and they are paid a certain sum negotiated with them," are divided into four groups: the strong men from the Halls and customs, specialized carriers for certain types of merchandise like wood, salt, grains, ... those who discharge certain products from boats on the Seine, and those who work on demand. The first three groups were organized into monopolies recognized by the municipal authorities after having paid a "profession entrance" fee (see J. Kaplow, *les Noms des rois*, op. cit., p. 61 sq).
98. C. Loyseau, *Traite des ordres*, op. cit., chapter VIII, p. 80.
99. The kind of artisan work depends on the relation between the peasant and the land and the size of the plots. We know that the number of the "alleutiers," that is, those owning their land, is rather low, and that at the wake of the Revolution 80 percent of French lands are still subject to feudal rights. But the various kinds of "tenures" have, depending on their size and attached charges, varying degrees of social and economic independence. For a synthesis of these complex situations, see P. Goubert,

- “Les paysans et la terre; seigneuries, tenures, exploitations,” in F. Braudel, E. Labrousse, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, op. cit., t. II, chapter 5.
100. P. Goubert, *Cent Mille Provinciaux au XVIIe siècles*, op. cit., p. 189.
101. Thus the post-death inventories in a Flemish village indicate that the possession or non-possession of a weaving chair was strictly correlated with the size and richness of the land plot: as soon as the plot permits the family to lead a certain standard of life, there is no weaving chair anymore. See F. F. Mendels, “Landwirtschaft um bauerliches Gewerbe in Flandern im 18. Jahrhundert,” cited in P. Léon, *Histoire économique et sociale du monde*, op. cit. t. III, p. 22.
102. P. Léon, “La réponse de l’industrie,” in F. Braudel, E. Labrousse, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, op. cit., t. II, p. 260 sq.
103. O. H. Hufton, *The Poor of the Eighteenth Century France*, op. cit.
104. P. Léon, op. cit., t. II, p.260.
105. See K. Polanyi, *La Grande Transformation*, op. cit., p. 59.
106. *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des techniques*, t. XIV, p. 532.
107. E. Labrousse, “En survol de l’ouvrage,” in F. Braudel, E. Labrousse, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, op. cit., t. II, p. 711-712.
108. P. Léon, “Morcellement et émergence du monde ouvrier,” in *Economies et sociétés industrielles*, op. cit., t. II, p. 495.
109. M. Garden, “L’industrie avant l’industrialisation,” in *Histoire économique et sociale du monde*, op. cit., t. III, p. 27.
110. P. Léon, op. cit., t. II, p. 495.
111. B. Geremek, *les Marginaux parisiens aux XIVe et Xve siècles*, op. cit., p. 279.
112. F. Brasch’s census from 1791 indicates a proportion of 16.6 employees per patron, but it takes into account neither the small enterprises with one or two employees, nor the chamber employees and the *travailleurs à façon* (see A. Soboul, *Paysans, sans-culottes et jacobins*, Paris, Ed. Sociales, 1966).
113. P. Léon, in *Economies et sociétés industrielles*, op. cit., t. II, p. 378.
114. The régime of the *corvée* (hard work), which occurs in many forms, is probably best represented in the Carolingian epoch in the regions between the Loire and the Rhine. It supposes the separation of the master’s domain into the “reserve,” directly exploited by the master, with the serfs and eventually slaves, who live there, and the “tenures,” exploited either by the serfs, or by the “free” tenants (*ingenuiles tenures*). The servile tenants generally have to work three days a week on the reserve. The free tenants are rarely subjected to the weekly *corvée*, but they must nevertheless perform heavy manual duties: chariot driving, building construction and reparation for the master, participation in agricultural work, harvest... These services, which imply a direct personal subjection obligating to perform manual labor, represent the main duties attached to the position of tenure. On these points, see I. Josuah, *la Face cachée du Moyen Age*, op. cit., See also M. Bloch, *la Société féodale*, op. cit.
115. The *corvée* is characteristic of serfdom and is very much like slavery, complete freedom of disposition of the person.
116. We must remind the reader that compensation for work is not necessarily in cash. This was probably even exceptional in these primitive forms of wage labor. But the “fee,” whatever its nature, represents a form of wage inasmuch as it compensates work performed for a third party within the framework of a dependence on the latter.
117. G. Duby, *l’Economie rurale et la vie des campagnes dans l’Occident*, 1962, t. I, p. 424. The same type of relationship between personal subjection and a “salaried” relationship can be found in other cultural areas, and even in epochs not too remote from ours. Thus the sugar plantations in Northeast Brazil were exploited, after the abolishment of slavery, by *moradores*, workers who had permanent residency on

the plantation, shared their working hours between their own plot and the master's plot, and could perform certain tasks on certain days for compensation. When the establishment of the workers in the plantation was implemented in the fifties and sixties – largely because they could “choose” to go and work in the city, where a labor market was developing – the moradores became salaried peasants (See Afranio Garcia, *Libres et assujetties, marché du travail et modes de domination au Nordeste*, Paris, Editions de la MSH, 1989, and the works of the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro).

118. We could ask ourselves about the difference between the condition of the peasant servant and that of the family members who work the master's land. The difference can be blurred at times, since the women and children can be in the same dependent relationship with regard to the master. On the other hand, the relation with the property is substantially different. The family members constitute an economic unit, a production and goods transmission unit. The “servants,” on the other hand, are in a merchant-type relation, even if it not really monetarized and formalized in a contract. Servants are strangers to the family economy. Moreover, they can be abandoned when unable to serve any longer, when they are too old, for instance; whereas there is what we call an “alimentary obligation” between family members, a transgenerational exchange mode based not on commerce, but on family membership.
119. The fact that until the end of the ancien régime the king, certain masters and even rich bourgeois had “their” artisans working only for them, can be seen as a heritage of this “archaic” situation. But these were particularly qualified and privileged artisans who elicit the envy of their colleagues who were subject to the profession's constraints.
120. B. Geremek, *le Salarariat dans l'artisanat parisien*, op. cit., p. 36.
121. See M. Weber, *Histoire économique*, op. cit., p. 174.
122. B. Geremek, *le Salarariat dans l'artisanat parisien*, op. cit., p. 145.
123. Jourdan, Decrouzy, Isambert, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises*, op. cit., t. XXII, p. 358-370 and 370-386.
124. Thus in Paris the Place de Grève is at the origin of the term “gréviste.” This is based on a misunderstanding: workers used to assemble on the Place de Grève, but they were seeking employment (and not striking).
125. B. Geremek, *le Salarariat dans l'artisanat parisien*, op. cit.
126. See P. Bourdieu, *la Noblesse d'Etat*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1989.
127. Thus, apart from the commissaries, the intendants and the state counselors nominated by the King, the corps des Ponts et Chaussées is created in 1754, and that of the Mines in 1783. This is reminiscent of a public function, and recruits are drawn by competitions. But (See Rosanvallon, *l'Etat en France de 1789 à nos jours*, op. cit.) only after the Revolution did the public function receive its final structure and start following an attractive and “noble” salary model.
128. Article “Salaire,” *Encyclopédie*, op. cit., t. XIV, p. 532.
129. See S. Kaplan, “Réflexions sur la police du monde du travail, 1700-1815,” *Revue historique*, 261, Janvier-Mars 1979. This type of measure is not unique to France. In Gand and Anvers, at the end of the eighteenth century, municipal regulations provide for the punishment of women and poor children circulating on the streets during daytime as vagabonds, because they should be at work at this time. See C. Liss, *Holy Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe*, op. cit., p. 164.
130. Cited in F. Braudel, E. Labrousse, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, t. II, p. 660.
131. M. Weber, *Histoire économique*, op. cit., p. 198. See also L. M. Leonard, *The Early History of English Poor Relief*, London, 1900.

132. M. Weber, *ibid.*, p. 198.
133. J. Bentham, *Esquisse d'un ouvrage en faveur des pauvres*, trad. fr. Paris, an X, p. 40.
134. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
135. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
136. See E. Cassirer, *la Philosophie des Lumieres*, trad. fr. Fayard, 1966, especially chapter VI, "Le droit, l'Etat et la société."

4

Liberal Modernity

“Commerce and industry are everywhere invoked, and their introduction produces an astonishing fermentation with the remainder of the ferocity of the feudal constitution.”¹ This judgment is representative of the growing exasperation of the liberated minds of Europe in the eighteenth century with the resistance exerted by the inherited structures of the past in the face of this profound dynamic that energized the economy and shook existing social relations. It also represents the commonly received wisdom about the sources of these antagonisms that tore society apart. Two worlds were pitted against one another before being brutally overcome, as the forces that drive modernity were being shackled by the chains of the past. This story is often told as a conflict between the ancients and the moderns, between the adepts of progress and the defenders of archaic privileges.

This portrayal is nonetheless grossly oversimplified. The processes that underlay this transformation are much more complex—as we will see when considering the revolutionary struggle explicitly—than is suggested by this dramatic face-off between the forces of innovation and tradition. This is largely because the “new” is not really so novel as it appears. It has been developing for some time, and its seeds were already planted in the “feudal constitution.” Nor was it so homogeneous as we might imagine. This dynamic driven by “commerce” and “industry,” to invoke the two aspects mentioned by Steuart, has neither the same rhythm nor the same amplitude. This is mainly because this dynamic does not have the universality that he attributes to it. The triumph of modernity embodies the interests and values held by a subset of particular groups, and they were not simply and unequivocally opposed to the privileges of the ancien régime’s defenders. Eighteenth-century Europe undoubtedly had

its “progressives” and its “conservatives.” But it also included the mass of those who found themselves at odds with this entire opposition. In particular, with respect to the transformation in question, the standing of those who form the base of the social pyramid is highly ambiguous. Surely they have little to lose, and little in the way of privileges. But what have they to gain? It is really so self-evident that they simply can’t help but to benefit from the destruction of the status quo?

We must inquire as to what stakes they will come to have in the new society. What will become of these diverse groups who live essentially by their labor and whose unhappy destiny we have portrayed in the “old society”? Will their condition necessarily improve? It will be demonstrated here that everything that eighteenth-century society understood as “progressive” will conspire to make the free access to labor the new formulation of the social question. But we will also attempt to understand why this solution is limited, operationally difficult, and fraught with contradictions such that it will become a source of division rather than the basis for a strong social consensus. This demand for the free access to labor, which contributed to the unanimity amongst the partisans and architects of the Enlightenment, represents in reality an unstable and fragile danger. More precisely, it supplied the principle for the *economic* system of organization that was to be put in place. But it also brought along with it, largely unbeknownst to those who formulated it, a number of socially devastating consequences. Thus, while it strove to be both a universal and definitive answer to the social question, free access to labor historically represented only a step toward its reformulation in the nineteenth century in the form of the question of the integration of the proletariat.

Mass Vulnerability

Beginning at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, two new variables modify how we approach the question of the place occupied by the least favored groups in society. On the one hand, we witness a new awareness of the vulnerability of the masses, which increasingly shows how fictional is our sense of having resolved the social question with regard to the treatment of two extreme groups: those indigent incapable of work who are receiving assistance, and vagabonds who are being repressed. On the other hand, we see a transformation of the concept of labor,

which is no longer just a duty imposed by religious, moral or economic demands. Instead labor now becomes the source of all wealth, and, in order to be most socially useful, it must be reorganized and reconceived in light of the principles of the new political economy.

On the first point, the transformation is not obvious. If we content ourselves with measuring the proportion of the population who find themselves living on the verge of poverty, we are first struck by a surprising constancy across time and space, that is to say, for at least five centuries and across the entire face of Europe west of the Elb River. Obviously, if it is difficult even today to define the “baseline of poverty,” this is an even more elusive task for more remote epochs.² It appears no less so because in any given society at a given moment, there exist irreducible constraints—even if they are often collapsed together—in matters of nutrition, clothing, housing with respect to which each individual close to a state of subsisting by his own means. We will thus accept as a satisfactory approximation in pre-industrial societies the definition proposed by Charles de La Roncière at the beginning of his analysis of the condition of the lower classes in fourteenth-century Florence: “Those who lack the basic fundamentals of survival, who are unable to supply themselves with resources so as to be nourished (at an essential minimum); clothed (however simply); and housed (provided with a place to sleep in an individual or collective lodging).”³

With respect to the example of Lyon at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Roger Gascon calculated, beginning with the cost of wheat, staple products and rent, that this baseline would be exceeded when a family of four had to devote more than four-fifths of its resources to the purchase of grain for bread.⁴ What fraction of the population found itself, at any given moment, below this poverty line? In the absence of reliable statistics, we can only venture a rough estimate. But the data available on recipients of relief allows us, however, to deduce some interesting constants across time and locality. In Orvieto, at the end of the thirteenth century, beggars and indigents receiving relief—that is, those who found themselves below the “threshold of poverty,” such that they could not survive on their own—represented around 10 percent of the population of the city.⁵ The percentages are in the same range in rural Picardy in the same era,⁶ and in Florence in the fourteenth century.⁷ Henri Pirenne likewise estimated the proportion of indigents in the urban population of Ypres to be around one-tenth.⁸ Relief dispensed by the mu-

nicipalities of numerous European villages in the sixteenth century appeared also to range from 5 to 10 percent of the inhabitants. Thus, in Lyon, “between 1534 and 1561, a little more than 5 percent of the total population received a weekly distribution.”⁹ For the seventeenth century, Pierre Goubert discovered that the bureau of the poor in Beauvais relieved in the average year between 700 and 800 persons, or 6 percent of the population of the village.¹⁰ The 14 Germinal An II, the report addressed by the administration of the hospitals to the General Counsel of the Commune of Paris listed 68, 981 recipients of relief, or one Parisian in nine.¹¹

We can cite sources such as these endlessly, but all are more or less the same. They allow us to conclude that in the average year between 5 and 10 percent—perhaps closer to 5 percent given the frequent tendency to overestimate the most dramatic situations, but conversely we must also take into account the situation of the “shamed poor,” as well as those who avoided all forms of detection—were dependent for their survival on various forms of relief, whether it be as the ward of a hospital or “charity,” or as the recipient of partial relief in the form of a regular or periodic distribution of food or of occasional subsidies. In the country, where there were no such specialized institutions, it is somewhat more difficult to determine the number of indigents. But we may surmise that they existed there in the same proportions, supported by networks of kinship, at least so long as they were not forced to “pack off” and become vagabonds. Thus, a significant *structural poverty* is one undeniable trait of these societies. This was maintained at what appears to be a more or less constant level for several centuries, affecting the whole group of countries then composing “wealthy” or “developed” Europe.

Nonetheless, *circumstantial poverty* was an equally important characteristic of pre-industrial societies. For example, in Florence in the middle of the fourteenth century, the number of beggars could, in some years, quintuple.¹² All historians of assistance have disparaged, throughout and over the long term, the towns assailed by swarms of beggars in years of “scarcity.” Roger Gascon has documented, for the region of Lyon, twenty-nine critical years between 1470 and 1550.¹³ During the worst of these, impoverished peasants flowed into the towns in search of relief. At the same time, because the dearness of grain brought along with it a decrease in industrial production and unemployment, a segment of the lower classes of the town also fell into poverty. If the poor of Beauvais typically

represented only 6 percent of the population, in December of 1693 the abbey nonetheless recorded 3,584 “poor” unable to support themselves in a town of 13,000 inhabitants, or between a fourth and a third of the town’s total population.¹⁴

Hence in addition to the problem of structural poverty, a large segment of the people lived a precarious existence, and it required only the conjunction of circumstances for them to plunge into dependency. But this term “circumstantial” does not mean unusual, for these crises of subsistence were a constant feature of the economies of such societies, and an adult with an expected life span of fifty years must have lived through several of them. What is the proportion of the population susceptible to becoming impoverished in this way? This is even more difficult to establish than for structural or “chronic” poverty. The consensus of the various scholars and monographs on the subject, as well as reconciliation of numerous indices (accounts of “poor” or “indigents” who perished, or those of *nihil habentes*, or those homes too poor to pay their taxes, or even the study of marriages or inventories after deaths, the study of eating habits and budgets of poor families, etc.) allow us to propose that between one third and one half of the entire population, depending on the locality and era, find themselves in this position of having to live from day to day, perpetually threatened and finding themselves living just above the threshold that allows for a minimal autonomy.¹⁵

So rather than a matter of poverty, strictly speaking, the question thereby underscored is not one of the general level of economic wealth in these societies, which might very well increase while a significant portion of the populace continues to live in penury. Incontestably, from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries European societies were “developing”: the productivity of the land and industry increased; commerce enriched bankers and merchants; a powerful bourgeoisie was established; and a growing social mobility allowed certain groups to improve their condition.¹⁶ But poverty remained an essential structural precondition for these new social developments. A simple neo-Malthusian explanation of the scarcity of resources with respect to population is insufficient. If these societies were not opulent by contemporary standards, neither were they confronted by a generalized scarcity. All this came to pass as if the pressure exercised by the direct producers of this new wealth had pursued the augmentation of those who maintained themselves only

at the level of resources barely sufficient for their survival. Although the consumption of food and certain other elements of one's lifestyle had changed, the economic circumstances of the Norman peasant of the seventeenth century varied little from that of his analogue in the fourteenth century. Nor did the condition of a Flamand miller of the low Middle Ages differ much from that of a miserable Lyonais weaver of the eighteenth century. It has been estimated that at the eve of the Revolution, 88 percent of the budget of the poorest Parisian workers were still spent to purchase bread.¹⁷

The existence of mass poverty may be traced back to sociopolitical reasons at least as much as to strictly economic ones. No less than an actual scarcity of goods, it is the cruel system of sufferances weighing on direct producers that is responsible for the persistence and magnitude of the conditions of penury. The permanence of this system of constraints—the “ferocity of the feudal constitution”—might justify us to treat as diverse but nonetheless distinctive a period of close to five centuries. Despite considerable innovations, the continuities are greater than the differences, at least with respect to the most disadvantaged members of this sociopolitical system. Earlier exactions of landed rent, fiscal pressures, the controls exercised over wages may change without calling into question the fact that during this entire period, in a Europe which is “unhinged,” or “unenclosed,” to borrow the terms of Pierre Chaunu, one third of Europe's population still stands facing the poverty line.¹⁸

Nonetheless, a change comes about in the seventeenth century and even more distinctly in the eighteenth. It is not easy to characterize this with precision, as it is true that the objective parameters of poverty remain more or less constant. This enterprise is even more difficult in that I wish to deny myself facile discussions of changing “representations” or “images” of poverty or the poor. Such phrases mean little and explain nothing, unless one relates them to changing circumstances and practices. Nonetheless, we must begin here by examining the discourse pertaining to the poor in order to try to illuminate the social transformation that they represent.

What should strike us as new in this discourse on poverty, beginning at the end of the seventeenth century, is its insistence on the *massive* or widespread character of the phenomenon. It is not as though the recognition of the fact that there are many poor is a novelty. To the contrary, literature on poverty has been burdened for several centuries with descriptions of the “hordes” of beggars and

vagabonds. Almost all the police regulations dealing with the poor—and there are multitudes of these—are prefaced on the increase, often described as “prodigious,” of these disorderly populations who threaten to subvert the established order. But, as numerous as they are, the poor have long been seen as atypical. The terms “beggar” and “vagabond” serve to signify this marginality. They designate people *far from everyday life*, that is to say, the quotidian reality of poverty. According to the model we have proposed, these groups occupy two peripheral zones of social life with respect to the principal zone of integration. However numerous these individuals may be—to be indigents, reintegrated by social assistance, to be disaffiliated, residing within the social space—their existence does little to disturb the representation of a stable society, even if this stability rests on the preponderance of “mediocre” conditions. The new element, beginning at the close of the seventeenth century, would seem to consist in the recognition of a *mass vulnerability*, as distinct from *a secular consciousness of mass poverty*. The unacceptable character of misery and the risks of social dissociation that the poor bring with them accordingly cease to be associated only with these marginal elements of the assisted and the disaffiliated. They become a risk affecting the everyday lot of people *per se*, that is to say, life as experienced by the majority of people both in the towns and in the country. The social question becomes a question posed by the conditions of a large segment of the people as they are, rather than by its most marginalized fringes.

In France, this consciousness appears to have been awakened by the tragic situation of the royalty at the end of the reign of Louis XIV. We shall give voice to the Intendants, delegated functionaries of the State, and thus hardly likely to be found guilty of an exaggerated solicitude for the welfare of the people. As the Intendant of Normandy wrote in 1693 to the Controller General of Finance:

Misery and poverty are beyond anything you can imagine...An infinity of people perish frequently from famine...The people, who most often die of starvation, who eat only grass[it must be understood that they] neither cut nor ruin all the wheat before they are to perish. And the Intendant adds: Do not think, I beg you, that I am exaggerating.¹⁹

The Intendant of Normandy is disturbed by this situation in the region of Caux, an agricultural area. But Trudaine, the Intendant of the Generality of Lyon, similarly wrote to the Controller General in these same years as follows:

There are in the town of Lyon and the outskirts at least 20,000 workers who live from day to day; if one ceases to make them work, the town will be inundated by the poor who, finding nothing to earn their livelihood, will be carried away to all the most violent extremes.²⁰

Trudaine well appreciated the nature of the risk, that of *vacillating* from one condition into another, the shift from a poverty that posed no social problems so long as it remained in check, to a form of total destitution that threatened to explode into violence. The majority of workers find themselves located on this fracture line. Those responsible for the public order are no longer simply disturbed—as they always have been—by the proliferation of those who *do not* work (vagabonds and beggars on relief). Instead they are alarmed by the precariousness of the status of those who *do* work.

Perhaps it is Vauban, a great servant of the State, but also an attentive observer of the miseries of the people and a courageous man (he paid dearly by his disgrace for this overly lucid analysis), who gave the first clear expression to that which we have called mass vulnerability:

During all the studies I've conducted over the several years I've devoted to them, I have often strongly remarked that in recent times, nearly the tenth part of the people are reduced to beggary, and really must beg, and of the other nine parts, there are five of them who are in no position to give alms to them, because they themselves are very nearly reduced to this miserable condition.²¹

Vauban is aware that there exists no solution to this problem due to the continuum between that segment of the people, in the neighborhood of one-tenth, who have fallen into total indigence, and the vulnerable majority of this same people who are constantly threatened with the same fate because of the perpetual uncertainty of conditions. But Vauban goes even further in his analysis by attributing this overall precariousness of conditions to the system of labor itself. It is not only meager wages that seal the fate of working-class misery, but also the instability of jobs, the search for temporary work, and the alternation between periods of work and unemployment:

Among the lesser people, especially those of the countryside, there are a very great number of them who, having no single profession of their own, must needs have recourse to several of them...Such are those we call manual laborers, the majority of whom have little more than their arms, or scarcely more than that, work by day, or on a farm, for whoever wishes to employ them...And this Vauban correctly anticipates as the fate of this proletariat even before the fact: He will always have difficulty in reaching the end of the year. From whence it is manifest that so greatly will he be overtaxed that he must inevitably succumb.²²

With Vauban the main idea is given expression. One can effectively, to borrow the phrase of Boisguilbert, “ruin a poor,” for the difference between poverty and indigence “rests only by a thread.”²³ This vulnerability became a collective dimension of the condition of the masses. The circumstances of the “tragic seventeenth century” probably made this kind of analysis possible, but this does not explain it entirely. In fact, this awareness of social vulnerability persists and even reasserts itself, even during times of social and economic improvement. During the years 1720-1730, for example, French society appeared to have left behind the drama that had characterized the end of the reign of the “Great King.” This was a time of economic, social and demographic improvement. It was the end of the great famines, strictly speaking, and the mastery of the worst epidemics (the Plague in the Midi in the 1720’s was the last great attack of the scourge). In sum, it was the end of what had been since the Middle Ages the great force in reinstating economic and demographic equilibrium: *regulation by death*.²⁴

But herein lies the paradox. We witness an economic take-off: in certain sectors, primarily finance and trade, industries in the path of centralization, development is extraordinary and comes to benefit, albeit unequally, almost every social group. Wage earners, however, are the only losers in this whole affair. According to the calculations of Ernest Labrousse, from 1726 to 1789 the average salary increases by 26 percent, but the cost of living grows by 62 percent, resulting in a net loss of income of around a quarter. This is because the poor, no longer dying *en masse*, continue to have children, and consequently become both more numerous and poorer. This may also be expressed in more scientific terms: “A proletariat or quasi-proletariat with no takers rapidly floods the labor market...There is no doubt that the demographic explosion of the eighteenth century considerably aggravated the condition of the worker, already aggrieved, by multiplying the number of workers.”²⁵

Consequently, a period of demographic growth that is not self-regulated by death tends to weigh heavily on all workers. At the same time, the intensification of commercial exchanges, while massively enriching the financiers and merchants, made direct producers more vulnerable to the hazards of the market whose fluctuations only intensified. The result was *that mass vulnerability increased even as the most extreme cases of misery undoubtedly became less numerous*. This is the paradox that Hufton has formulated accord-

ingly: “Relative freedom from the horrors of famines and epidemics yielded a greater number of poor than previously.”²⁶

This situation is not unique to France, even if France paid the highest price for the triumph of absolute monarchy. In England, in this respect more fortunate, and where famines had been defeated even earlier, recent works have confirmed the analyses of Gregory King, establishing that at the end of the seventeenth century between a quarter and half of the population lived in conditions near poverty.²⁷ For Flanders, Catharina Liss and Hugo Soly similarly affirm that in this era “the term ‘poor’ becomes virtually synonymous with that of ‘worker.’”²⁸ These conditions are not just limited to the towns, although it will undoubtedly be these urban sites where they are most resented. But the exhaustion of the rural artisanry in the eighteenth century is one of the responses to the breakdown of conditions. More generally, Hufton speaks of the countryside as a “makeshift economy” which must multiply the number of subsidiary activities. These “expedients” or “subsidiary activities” are not however simply dispensable.²⁹ They are absolutely essential for the survival of a majority of workers and their families, never long secured.

That the “image” of poverty would no longer be focused only on the beggar or the vagabond is more than a simple change of “representation.” This shift captures the paradoxical spectacle of the simultaneous improvement/decline of the life of the lower classes at the end of the ancien régime. Thus, mainly when, after the period of economic expansion that culminated in the 1760’s, a recession came to pass, there was increasing evidence of this consciousness of the overall precariousness of the condition of the masses.³⁰ To cite just a single testimony:

It is obvious that the gain of a worker, however sober he may be, is so limited that it cannot suffice to maintain him and his family for long, and when the weakness of old age no longer allows him to work, he finds himself entirely deprived in the midst of the inevitable infirmities of old age...It is no less true that a worker who has no other resources than his limbs cannot feed a large family, pay for several months of nourishing the young children, and procure the necessary relief for his wife in those critical moments when she gives birth to a new fruit of their union, and thus often, this unfortunate, cursing her fecundity, perishes in need in the midst of a laborious childbirth, or afterwards by the lack of an adequate period of confinement.³¹

From amongst dozen of texts I have chosen this extract from the bulletin of the Philanthropic Society because, in this same year of 1787 when it produced this tearful but lucid portrayal of the condi-

tion of workers, it chose to relieve 1,100 indigents. These would be selected from amongst octogenarians in possession of a birth certificate, those who were born blind, expectant mothers who are legally married, widowed mothers with six children of whom the oldest must not be more than fifteen years.³² Never more evident than in such a piece of evidence is the conceptual slippage between the manner in which the social question is now posed and traditional assistance, which has no other recourse than to marshal once again the most threadbare categories of “handicapology.” One can say of them, as of earlier efforts to repress vagabondage: that it is not the poorhouses or the galleys that can significantly change the condition of the people. It becomes evident at the eve of the Revolution that the borders between the four zones of integration, vulnerability, assistance and disaffiliation must be redrawn on new foundations.

The Freedom of Labor

Paralleling this newfound consciousness of mass vulnerability is a corresponding transformation in the way labor itself is perceived. This would have a profound influence on the working condition as a whole. Labor comes to be recognized as the source of social wealth: “For many years we have sought the philosopher’s stone: we have found it, it is labor.”³³

The discovery of the requirement to work is certainly not an eighteenth century innovation. It has its roots in the Biblical curse, and the condemnation of idleness is a constant in all religious and moral teaching, at least for those who have risen above that kind of labor, who literally “make others sweat”—“you will earn your bread from the sweat of your brow,” by manual labor. And the exemption enjoyed by the dominant classes of society, far from contradicting this obligation to work, only reinforces the necessity of it. Being exempt from manual labor is the privilege *par excellence*, whereas to the contrary, the compulsion to work is the only way in which all those who have nothing more than the force of their arms can discharge their debts to society. Yet the fact that labor would become the incontrovertible law for the people does not necessarily mean that it would be seen as the ultimate foundation of wealth. Indeed, until modern times, labor is coterminous with the fact of finding one’s self *outside* the order of wealth.

This was primarily a consequence of thinking along the model of the gift or the previous donation, of land given by the sovereign to a

vassal who pays him homage (fiefdom), eventually transmitted through a social relationship of dependency, down to a tenant, who cultivates it for him, because he has nothing to offer in return beyond his physical labor. Similarly, commissions and offices, concessions granted by or purchased from the royal power, are social honors more than the analogues of work.³⁴ Commerce, that other great source of wealth along with land and the privileges accruing to public offices, is conceived on the model of an unequal exchange according to which profit is not a direct recompense for productive labor. Commercial wealth comes into being from an operation wherein one imagines, as in the case of mercantilism, that wealth is gained at the expense of the person with whom one trades. The great international trade—in spices, silks, sugar, coffee and even the distant export of manufactured products—this is the origin of all the great mercantile fortunes, and generally takes place under conditions of unequal trading partners and operates in practice as a euphemistic version of conquest. At the threshold of modernity, the exploitation of the New World illustrates anew the fact that the extraction of wealth rests on the systematic seizure of resources from the conquered indigenes, and thus is the very antithesis of productive labor. In these sorts of extractions of wealth, reminiscent of the *razzias* of earlier nomadic conquerors, the actual contribution of labor, properly speaking (for example, extracting silver from the mines of Peru, carrying it to the ports, and shipping it to Seville) appears almost negligible in light of the enormous benefits received. In addition, this labor is consigned to those in the most miserable conditions, such as the indigenous peoples who have been reduced to a kind of semi-slavery.

The amount of labor expended thus does not appear to be the real source of the value of the goods. Labor has no discernible relationship to wealth, and even less so has wealth any connection to labor: for in general, the wealthiest labor the least, or not at all. To the contrary, labor is most often the lot of the poor and the itinerants reduced to the necessity of working with their hands or cultivating the land in order to survive. It is both an economic necessity and a moral imperative for those who have nothing, the antidote for idleness, a corrective for the vices of the people. Thus it is “naturally” embedded in the disciplinary systems of a society. As we have already seen there is an organic relationship between labor and constraint. It is not that the economic value of labor is null, for it repre-

sents the necessary means to satisfy the needs of all those who are not socially endowed, and we have already seen that the Church itself, since the twelfth century, recognized the economic function of labor. But this economic utility of labor has not yet been distinguished as an autonomous property of labor itself. The necessity of labor is enmeshed in a complex that we may call *anthropological*—which is indissolubly religious, moral, social and economic—that defines the “popular” condition in terms of its opposition to the conditions of “privilege.” This model is still very much alive in the sixteenth century when, as we have seen, modern capitalism began to take root. Consequently Juan Luis Vives, whom one frequently credited with having imported the demands of capitalism into the old world of “medieval” assistance dominated by religious values, effectively sought to make all the indigents work, even the invalids. But this was above all due to the fact that “occupied and devoted to work, they refrain from having those evil thoughts and habits that inactivity will give to them.”³⁵ Labor, like the religious exercises with which it is always associated in the houses of forced labor, exists at least as much for its moralizing capacities as for its economic utility. The extreme example of this disciplinary function of work is given by the Rasphaus of Amsterdam, founded at the end of the sixteenth century as the extension of those municipal policies whose generally “bourgeois” and “rational” character we have emphasized. Recalcitrant idlers are enclosed in a flooded cave and must furiously pump the water to avoid being drowned: here we find the maximum redemptive value of labor but with virtually no discernible economic benefit whatsoever.³⁶

Mercantilism marks a step in our recognition of the value of labor, but it still remains veiled in the disciplinary model. In its desire to maximize all the resources of the Realm, mercantilism is committed to mobilizing its entire workforce. From this point of view the unemployed potentiality of idlers must be treated as a scandal that must swiftly be put to an end. But if labor thereby becomes an essential value, understood as such for its economic value, it nonetheless is little more than a means to achieving this fundamentally *political* objective. That is, its mobilization is driven by the need to place the kingdom at large in a position of power vis-à-vis the international competition which plays itself out on a commercial scale (industrial policy is a means in the service of commercial policy, which in turn is driven by the regal demand to increase the power of

the Kingdom). Labor was never justified as valuable in and of itself. We can see from afar that mercantilist production was perfectly wedded to the religious conception of labor as redemption, and with the moral conception of the necessity of labor to combat the evil tendencies of human nature, and all this under the auspices of *forced work*. In the community hospital, the royal manufactory or factories specially conceived for the poor, the maximum yield of labor is obtained by rigorous enclosure and iron discipline, whereby religious exercises reinforce the technical operations. In order to promote labor, mercantilism reactivated the disciplinary powers of closed institutions, just as it similarly reinforced corporatist regulations.

Whether it was a matter of mercantilism or of earlier forms of regulating labor by moral or religious imperatives, the economic value of labor was consequently always subordinated to other objectives. One result of this was that labor was unable to develop “freely.” It must always be circumscribed within *external* systems of constraint. It is only with liberalism that the representation of labor will become “free,” and the imperative of the liberty to work will be imposed.

Hannah Arendt thus summarizes the main steps of this promotion of the modern conception of labor:

The sudden, spectacular rise of labor, passing from the lowest rung, from the most scorned position, to the place of honor and becoming the most respected of human activities, began when Locke discovered in labor the source of all property; it continued when Adam Smith affirmed that labor was the source of all wealth; it reached its culmination in the “system of labor” described by Marx, where labor became the source of all productivity and expression of humanity unique to man.”³⁷

At the heart of this trilogy Adam Smith occupies a strategic position:

The value of any commodity, therefore, to the person who possesses it, and who means not to use it or consume it himself, but to exchange it for other commodities, is equal to the quantity of labor which it enables him to purchase or command. Labor, therefore, is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities. . . . It was not by gold or by silver, but by labor, that all the wealth of the world was originally purchased. . . .³⁸

Admittedly, this position is not without a certain amount of ambiguity. Adam Smith made of the quantity of labor the foundation of the exchange value of a product, without going so far as to say, as would Marx, that this quantity of labor makes up truly and exclusively the value of all products.³⁹ For it is the case that Smith—like Locke, concerned less with labor itself than with the foundations of private property—wished to establish the existence of a *market* per-

mitting the free circulation of merchandise and the unlimited accumulation of wealth. In order to constitute such a market it is necessary that the products of labor may be exchanged there in proportion to their cost.

Trade thereby promotes the just equilibrium of interests between partners, and it ceases any longer to be an unequal exchange, or one in which one party takes advantage of the other. But this is premised on the condition that this will be a free market upon which products will be exchanged in proportion to their labor value, *itself produced by free labor*. “The utility of industry holds essentially in its liberty, and without this liberty not only does this utility itself evaporate, but will even degenerate into monopolies and will be replaced by disorders whose necessary effect will be the ruin of the state.”⁴⁰ Monopolies not only blocked the free circulation of products but also the free deployment of their conditions of production. It has its roots in feudal privileges that capture wealth and impose unequal exchanges. Thus the very same movement that postulates labor to be the source of all wealth also sees economic exchange as the foundation of a stable social order ensuring the harmony of interests between partners. Adam Smith wishes to found political economy on the basis of the liberty of exchange in the market. But the actualization of this liberty of exchange presupposes the freedom of labor, and hence the liberalization of the worker’s labor:

The most sacred and inviolable of all properties is that of his own industry [the worker’s], because it is in the force and the direction of his own limbs; and to prevent him from employing this force and direction in the manner he deems most appropriate, such that he no longer succeeds as a person, is a manifest violation of the primitive property. It is a horrid usurpation upon legitimate liberty, as much of the worker’s as of those who will be disposed to offer it to him.⁴¹

The veritable discovery that fuels the eighteenth century is not so much that of the necessity of labor, but rather *of the necessity of the liberty to labor*. It implies the destruction of the two systems of organizing labor heretofore dominant: regulated work and forced work. The work of Turgot is exemplary in this regard. He is one who, in the court period of Louis XVI, appeared to be determined to take the initiative, trying to suppress at the same time the guilds, workhouses and even the last remnants of the *corvée*. But previously, in the article “Foundation” in the *Encyclopedie*, he has set forth the philosophy of his enterprises. He unfurled on this occasion the essence of the political philosophy of liberalism that completely redefined the

functions of the state: “That which the State owes to each of its members is the destruction of the obstacles that trouble them in their industry or disturb them in the enjoyment of the products which it has yielded them.”⁴² A *minimal state* must content itself with suppressing obstacles to the market and ensuring that those who are freely devoted to their industry will not be deprived of their rewards. As for Adam Smith, the concept of *interest* is for Turgot the true regulator, capable of energizing society. The role of the State is to make sure that the interplay of these interests will be freely expressed: “Men are powerfully interested in the goods that you wish to offer them, to leave them alone: this is the great, the only principle. You would seem to them to bear with little difficulty only that which you would desire, to augment their interests.”⁴³

In order to achieve these objectives there are two main obstacles to overcome. The foundations and hospitals, those charitable institutions intended to assist the poor, and for some among them, to force them to work, are at the end of the *ancien régime* wholly discredited by all the followers of the Enlightenment.⁴⁴ But these institutions do not only become places of terror where—in the heart of misery—promiscuity, filth and arbitrary power reigned. At least with respect to the moral and political scandals, these newly closed institutions represent a crime against the new principles of liberal political economy. It is not enough that they mistreat the poor. But they negate the potential wealth that these poor represent by annulling their labor power.

Montlinot is certainly among those who gave most lucid formulation to this new sensibility. He is not content to express, like all the enlightened spirits of his age, his opposition to forced labor. The reason that he gives for this hostility is uniquely profound:

All new manufacturing which is not the fruit of industry and which does not have personal interest as its guide can never succeed: it is emulation, it is desire of a better sort that drives, albeit slowly, all arts, all trades from one extreme to the other; now I ask what courage, what industry can one find in a troop of men in which we will find only the pain of laziness, and that a lack of talent has rendered neither wealthy nor honorable.⁴⁵

We see the entire “liberal” ideology embodied in these few lines: liberty of work must also liberate private initiative, the relishing of risk and effort, and the spirit of competition. The desire to better his condition is an engine whose industry cannot be surpassed. We have reached the antithesis of the traditional conception whose the social norm was to be embedded in a fixed order and to remain content

with this. The break with the society of orders, status, estates, all regulated by tutelage, is complete. But in the intersection between these two worlds lies a new definition of labor that will permit the dawning of a new regime opposed to the “ancien régime.”

By virtue of these principles Turgot decided in 1776 to abolish the poorhouses, which perpetuated the tradition of forced labor (this policy was without much success, as they were reinstated after his fall). But the second thrust of this same policy, the abolition of regulated work, the guilds, proposed the same year, was even broader. This suppression must reconcile the demands of both natural right and economic efficiency. Just as for Montlino, the traditional regulation of work is seen by Turgot as akin to bridles on the expansion of that which is the very basis of production: the energy of a free individual to pursue his own interest. “We seek to repeal arbitrary institutions that do not allow the poor to live by his labor [and which] stifle competition and industry.”⁴⁶

The foundation of these proposals is always the solemn affirmation of a true right to labor: “God, in giving man needs, in making him dependent on the resource of labor, has made the right to work the property of all men, and this property is the most sacred and inviolable of all.”⁴⁷ One wonders if Turgot is fully aware of the momentous consequences of these words on the order of the right to work, which will feed the bitter struggles of the nineteenth century. Undoubtedly he is not. But he already initiates a revolutionary reversal by founding the obligation to work in nature and not in society. The liberty of labor has its legitimate basis in the law of nature, even as the historical forms of its organization are contingent. Thus it follows that although, until now, its forms have been subject to a whole range of constraints, these constraints are arbitrary and despotic. History has obscured a rational demand to labor (because it is natural) by opposing “particular interest against the interest of society.” The society traditionally organized on the basis of privileges is particularistic. It has legitimated the growth of intermediary bodies inspired by the spirit of monopoly. Thus it is imperative to abolish this heritage of the former world in order to allow the free reign of natural laws. Free access to labor, and the concomitant establishment of a free market for labor, marks the beginning of a rational social world through the destruction of the arbitrary social order of the former society.⁴⁸

At the same time this restitution of the liberty founded in natural law offers the advantage of harmonizing the concrete interests of

those groups whose activity is socially useful (and not parasitic, as are those of the holders of privileges). This first and foremost pertains to the two categories of employers and employees, whose positions appear from this point of view complementary, before later revealing themselves as antagonistic. The workers have an absolute need to labor, for it is a matter of their own survival: "We must above all protect this class of men, who having no other property than their labor, consequently have the most need, and the right to be employed offers them the only resource they have to subsist."⁴⁹ But employers are just as dependent on the ability to marshal all available labor resources in order to develop their businesses: "All classes of citizens are in possession of the right to choose those workers they would like to employ, and the advantages that this will give them are the consent for the lowest price and the perfection of labor."⁵⁰

We can imagine that this apparent convergence of interests does not necessarily mean a complete reciprocity between the advantages that employers and employees will draw from the establishment of freedom of labor. Leaving them head to head, without any mediation, the different interests must compete or confront one another, is nevertheless the main precondition for the fundamental transformation of the organization of labor that it must bring with it. Consequences follow, which are not yet fully deducible from the principle itself.

But already the fact that wealth will be produced by labor and maximized by the freedom to labor is capable of bringing with it a profoundly changed attitude with respect to the masses, ordinarily miserable and scorned, who make up the labor force of a nation. This is because the wealth of the nation will hereafter arise from the rational deployment of this labor force. Even when impoverished, the worker is wealthy in his capacity to labor, such that it is enough for him to make use of it. As was foreseen by mercantilism, the true policy of the state must consist of developing to its maximum the nation's labor force. But to this constant of the overall social utility of labor it is now possible to add an essential qualification that bears directly on the treatment of workers. Mercantilism had enveloped this discovery in a kind of controlling and repressive rationalization of work that had ultimately proven counterproductive. On the eve of the Revolution an author whose name merited passing to prosperity expressed in all its force the new strategy to adopt toward the working classes:

If all social enjoyments are founded on labor, it is imperative, in the interest of the beneficiary classes, to look after the welfare of the laboring classes. This must be done, surely, to prevent the disorder and unhappiness of society. Among these is the need to attend to the immense and precious nursery of subjects destined to labor in our fields, to transport our provisions, to man our factories and workshops.⁵¹

We can see in this text the fusion of different attitudes toward the laboring classes. The old repressive stance has not been altogether repudiated. It still remains in the passage by the allusion to the dangers to which excessive misery can drive those who have nothing to lose. But for the majority of the poor—the majority of the population—the image of the “nursery” nevertheless captures all these meanings. The working classes represent a mass to be looked after with care, to be “cultivated” in the literal sense of the word. That is, to work in order to make them work, so as to create, drive and reap that which labor brings along with it: namely, social wealth. The people are the genuine source of the wealth of nations—but only so long, apparently, as they work.⁵²

Notice, however, that all this is “in the interest of the beneficiary classes.” One is here just as far from the sentimental outpouring of philanthropy as from the secular attitude that makes looking after indigent beggars a matter for the police. The practices of assistance pertained only to some very specific categories of poor, mainly those who could not work. But the problem now posed is that of the condition of the mass of people, and its resolution *demand*s a new collective organization of labor. The lessons of the economy, and not the whims of the heart, are sufficient to foster a new attitude toward the unfortunate: the interests, properly understood, of the national collectivity, and in the first place of the possessors, urgently demand a new policy toward the least advantaged masses. Assistance and also its converse, repression, are displaced from their privileged position in promoting the welfare of the suffering.

Undoubtedly, the attitudes of the “beneficiary classes” are not entirely homogeneous on this question. Philanthropy is in vogue in the Parisian salons and at Court. Above all, the official policy preserves secular prohibitions against vagabondage and begging. We have emphasized that the great ordinance of 1764 and the manner in which it was applied did little more than systematize earlier provisions. This would be the dominant policy of the royalty until its collapse. But Turgot, who was enamored of the new attitude, was not altogether ineffectual. During his short passage to power as Con-

troller General of Finance, he shook the two main pillars upon which the traditional organization of labor rested: the guilds and the institutions of forced labor. In disavowing this alternative, the ancien régime perhaps allowed the last chance for a “reformist” option to slip away.

Thus it is obvious that two models of governability are affronted by problems tied to poverty, labor, begging and vagabondage. They do not have the same significance, however. The awareness of mass vulnerability and of the preeminent value of labor insofar as it is the producer of social wealth both serve to discredit traditional policies of the distribution of relief and forced labor, and fortify them in a secondary role. This is for one basic reason: because they can affect only the margins of the social question. Assistance works only in the zones of assistance and of disaffiliation; and forced labor, given over to a larger dissuasive role, but one whose effectiveness comes to be seen as highly dubious. If it is true, however, that labor is at the heart of these problems, because misery or mass vulnerability contributes to a profoundly defective system of organizing labor, then the social question may be formulated as the question of the reformulation of labor. The buzzword of the *free access to work* transcends the sectarian character of the multitude of earlier measures linked only to particular categories of the population, such as beggars, vagabonds, elderly, indigents, abandoned children, etc. Insofar as it concerns the whole of the laboring classes, it may have a direct effect on mass vulnerability, especially on the matter of wages. Free access to labor is a general political objective that entails a structural reform of the entire society of the ancien régime. We may therefore comprehend why everything that partakes of the “progressive” must be rallied by this watchword. Tawney’s assessment captures precisely the impetus shared by all these men, and which makes them essentially liberals: “The great enemy of the era was monopoly; the battle cry in the name of which the men of the Enlightenment fought was the abolition of privileges; their ideal was a society in which each man would be free to take advantage of the economic opportunities available to him, and to enjoy the wealth that these efforts could create.”⁵³ The liberalization of labor represented the essential component for realizing this program.⁵⁴

One can certainly raise questions, as has recent historiography, about the fidelity of this portrayal with respect to the actual organization of labor, for it has been demonstrated that labor has already in large measure begun to circumvent these traditional constraints.⁵⁵

As was the case with vagabondage—and will be soon with pauperism—early liberals sets their crosshairs on a labor system ostensibly dominated entirely by privileges and monopolies, which is undoubtedly a social construction that grossly underestimates what is already a great diversity of concrete relationships of work. But if its impact was indeed so revolutionary, this was because it took place in the context of the fundamental transformation of the eighteenth century that overthrew the very foundations of how the social order was understood. In the thought of the *Philosophes*, society ceased to refer to a transcendent order. Rather it found the principle of its own organization within itself. For the market and the contract are *agents* of this passage from a transcendental foundation to the imminence of society itself. Recourse to contract—for example, the social contract of Rousseau, foundation of the social order produced entirely by the will of the citizens—signifies that it is the social subjects who themselves unite together collectively, rather than being overshadowed by an external Will that directs them from above. Thus it marks, in the words of Marcel Gauchet, “the emancipation of society from the schema of subordination.”⁵⁶ Almost simultaneously, Adam Smith discovered the preponderant force of the market, an “autonomous principle of social cohesion independent of the will of individuals and functioning rigorously to their insulation in the way to reassemble them.”⁵⁷

Thus to impose this new connection (contract for labor—free access to the market) against the old linkages (corporatist tutelages, commercial monopolies) mirrors, at the specific level of the organization of production and commerce, the era’s more general attitude of liberation. This is a liberation with respect to a system of constraints based on the subordination of subjects in relationship to all (God or his representative in the here-and-now, the King) and with respect to their embeddedness in a hierarchy of orders, estates, and statuses that are holdovers in the midst of a modernity that will triumph over everything that remains “holistic” from the former society.⁵⁸ Above and beyond even strictly economic interests, how could such a battle fail to unite the entire group of *Philosophes*?

“An Inviolable and Sacred Debt”

At the very moment when the *ancien régime* was being dismantled, a text of astonishing lucidity synthesized virtually the entire current of ideas that we have attempted to reconstruct. *The Procès verbaux*

et rapports du Comité pour l'extinction de la mendicité de l'Assemblée constituante clarified the alternatives to the former system and sketched for modern times a collective program for the distribution of relief and the organization of labor.⁵⁹

This was a description of a primarily secular movement:

In considering this long train of laws [the whole of regulations dealing with vagabondage and begging] it is apparent that they were mainly directed against beggars whom misery forced to be vagrants. The administration, almost always powerless to offer work to the people, had no other resource than to amass in hospitals an inconvenient misery or to arm the law with the power to enclose all those who frustrated society.⁶⁰

What that old system failed to understand was that poverty posed at its essence a question of right: "We have always thought to give charity to the poor, but never to give the poor man rights against society, and those of the society upon him."⁶¹ Thus we did better to direct relief to those most deserving amongst the poor; and similarly, we denounced as criminals all those whom poor administration left without resources or work. In a twofold fashion, then, by a condescending form of assistance or by police measures, the question of poverty was detached from that of citizenship: "No State has considered the poor in its constitution."⁶² In place of these former errors, a simple principle, but of universal significance, allows the dual edifice of the distribution of relief and the reorganization of work to be reconstructed on more solid foundations:

All men have a right to subsistence: the fundamental truth of all society, and which imperiously reclaims a place in the Declaration of the Rights of Men, appeared to the Committee to be the basis of all law, of all political institutions which are proposed to relieve begging. Thus, each man having a right to his subsistence, society must oversee the relief of all those of its members who have need of it, and this relief must not be regarded as a good deed. Undoubtedly it is the need of a sensitive and humane heart, the vow of all thinking men, but it is the strict and indispensable duty of all men who are not themselves in poverty, a duty which can no longer be depreciated, neither by the name nor by the character of alms-giving. Henceforth, it is for all society a sacred and inviolable debt.⁶³

But what kind of right will this be? We see here a distinction at work that will have decisive importance in the future. Man has an unarguable right to subsistence. The right to life is a fundamental prerogative of humanity against which no society may transgress, for this is a matter of its very unity: "Where there exists a class of men lacking subsistence, there exists a violation of the rights of humanity, there the social equilibrium is destroyed."⁶⁴ But the actualization of this right is distinguishable based on whether or not these

“men without subsistence” are capable of working. The Committee falls back upon this distinction that we have already emphasized as structuring all discussions of poverty for the last several centuries. There are two kinds of unfortunates, who have always benefited—and who must even now continue to benefit—from completely different treatments.

Those who are unable to work are beneficiaries of a right to relief. These are “those whose age does not yet, or no longer, allows them to work; as well as those who are condemned to permanent inactivity by the nature of their infirmities or to a momentary inactivity due to a temporary illness.”⁶⁵ The Committee studiously provided an exhaustive list of such people, ranging from abandoned children to widows without resources. Thus, the new right to assistance is cast in the old categories of handicapology. Its restrictive character is cautiously underscored.⁶⁶ But, in keeping with this “sacred and inviolable debt,” this relief will accordingly be financed and administered largely by the public power. The outline of the decree on public relief drafted by the Constituent Assembly declares that the revenues of hospitals, almshouses, and all institutions formerly entrusted with the distribution of relief will henceforth be national goods. In their place, a national fund is set up, and the National Assembly must itself portion out the funds between the departments, who will then distribute them through intermediary agencies to the beneficiaries listed on the charity rosters. Thus the whole system of relief must be internally organized and financed like a public service: “The administration of relief will be assimilated to other parts of the public administration, of which none will have place with the revenues of particular goods.”⁶⁷

The twin conditions for availing one’s self of relief should be familiar to us by now: to be incapable of working, and to be a resident, that is to say to justify one’s self by establishing a “domicile of relief.” The beneficiary “must provide evidence of his real need for public relief by the testimony of two eligible citizens residing in the canton,”⁶⁸ whereas the alien, “without asylum,” “against whose danger society must oppose itself by means of strong force,” will be dismissed from the kingdom.⁶⁹ The principle of territoriality is retained, as is the principle of disability, but now it is the nation that constitutes the community of reference guaranteeing the right to relief. Assistance is a prerogative of citizenship. Notwithstanding these two conditions, the Committee urges the legislature to ratify solemnly the constitutional status of the right to relief:

The National Assembly declares that it ranks amongst the most sacred duties of the nation the assistance of the poor of all ages and in all circumstances of life, and that it will be overseen, in the same way as expenditures for the eradication of begging, by the public revenues, in whatever measure they shall judged necessary.⁷⁰

By way of contrast, able-bodied poor receive an entirely different treatment: “We have admitted as an irrefutable principle that the able-bodied poor must only be aided by the means of labor.”⁷¹ Thus, while maintaining this secular distinction between able-bodied and disabled poor, the Committee completely redefined at the same time the policy toward them. Rather than punishing the able-bodied poor or forcing them to work, we will now look to the possibility of them working. Free access to work replaces the disciplinary obligation to work. Concretely, this means that it is necessary, as well as sufficient, just to eliminate all barriers raised up by tradition by opening up the labor market: “The most sacred rights of man will not be upheld if the worker encounters obstacles when liberty or his own circumstances determine that he should seek profitable work in places where he would like to carry himself.”⁷² Breaking up the system of professional guilds and abolishing the protectionist regulations that impede the free circulation of workers will at the same time ensure the liberalization of the economy and the development of national wealth. The Fourth Report follows immediately:

The political interest of the realm still imperiously demands this liberty. It is by this alone that labor is distributed naturally in those places where need calls for it, that industry will receive its greatest encouragement, and that thus the level of the manual laborer, the condition so desirable for the prosperity of the State, is established in all parts of the Empire.⁷³

Thus we must follow the celebrated formula: “The misery of the people is an error of governments.”⁷⁴ A new political will can completely eradicate poverty by suppressing the archaic structures of the organization of labor, the inherited baggage of a system of privileges. Not only did the “old government” fail to vest the rights of the disabled poor upon the nation as a whole. But it nourished the special interests and monopolies whose effect was to forbid each from “freely” laboring. But we must stress one fact: free access to work is not in and of itself the same as a right to work. The responsibility of making the effort to find work falls squarely upon the job-seeker.

“If work is offered to the able-bodied poor each time that he presents himself, and in the nearest place and some fashion that is most

convenient, society releases him by this from the necessity of searching himself in order to procure work; what befalls is the inconvenience that he would wish to avoid of being refused free relief: it privileges the indolent, the negligent.”⁷⁵ The Fourth Report refutes at length the thesis according to which a “wise government” would be expected to “manage in ordinary times to procure work for everyone by means of a clairvoyant legislation, by some general views well combined, it must be burdened to encourage, to multiply the means of work.”⁷⁶ This is to transpose onto the system of labor the very form of governability that Turgot had articulated. But the State cannot in every case guarantee the employment of workers: “Its intervention must be indirect; it must be the engine of work but must avoid, so to speak, seeming to do so.”⁷⁷

This is a subtle formula—perhaps too much so. It includes lifting the traditional regulation of work. But what happens if these measures alone are insufficient to ensure work for everyone? The Committee did not explicitly pose this question. Rather it states that guaranteeing to find the worker employment under all circumstances would be contrary to the interests of employers as well as State power, for it would make workers too demanding about the kinds of work offered to them:

The proprietor, the manufacturer would be exposed to the danger of losing workers just when their businesses demand a great number of arms...This assistance will be injurious to industry, to the lowest jobs, to the true national prosperity; it will have, in this report, the most fatal consequences, and those most radically impolitic; it will place the State so governed at a disadvantage with respect to all the States who do not pursue this dangerous system.⁷⁸

As for the rest, all this comes to pass as if the faith in the immense possibilities of the market, once the constraints of the traditional system of labor are lifted, bolster the optimism of these liberals. Montlinot, upon becoming a member of the Committee on Poverty, had already declared in 1779: “We establish as an incontestable principle that it is almost never the case that the able-bodied poor, given sufficient time, cannot earn something.”⁷⁹ The juxtaposition of “incontestable principle” with the qualification of “almost never” is a bit jarring. Is it really so self-evident that he who wishes to work is assured of finding a job, such that this needn’t even be argued? History will soon give proof of the contrary. But the earliest liberals simply could not, or would not, envision the possibility of a structural disequilibrium between offers of and demand for work, and

thus they underestimated the tension between employers and employees that would soon revive the social question anew.

The new form of the social question will necessarily revolve around this fundamental ambiguity. But the opening of the labor market already carries with it some immediate consequences. Begging and vagabondage can now become by law what they were de facto during the previous era: crimes carrying justifiable legal sanctions. Idleness is criminalized at the very moment when it comes to be seen as voluntary. Just as the “old governments” dishonored themselves by condemning innocents deprived of work, the new one would work toward justice by punishing those parasites who fled the stern law of labor when potential work was available to them. Accordingly the Committee on Poverty could uphold the most heartless condemnations of begging and vagabondage, which become the *quintessential social offenses*:

This state of idleness and vagabondage, necessarily conducive to disorder and crime and their encouragement, is thus truly a social offense. It must therefore be curbed and the man who engages in it must be punished just like all those others who disturb, by other more or less serious offenses, the public order. This punishment no more contradicts the exercise of the rights of man than does the punishment of a swindler or a murderer.⁸⁰

The veiled contradiction that threatens to undermine this position—namely, the danger of condemning those who would like to work but who cannot do so—is raised only once and in passing: “It is useless to recall here that, in order for this truth to be fully applicable to begging, it is necessary that the able-bodied beggar would have been able to procure work for himself. Without this condition being met, repression will be in his case an injustice, and consequently a crime against humanity.”⁸¹ Sympathetic readers will be appalled. The “it is useless to recall here” sounds like a denial. But this stipulation “that the able-bodied beggar would have been able to procure work for himself” is supposed to have been effected by a simple ovation to the free market for labor. It is now justifiable to speak of the “bad poor,” even if they are virtually indistinguishable from those previously condemned by “bad governments”: “Those who, known by the name of professional beggars or vagabonds, excuse themselves from all work, disturb the public order, are a scourge on society, and merit this severe justice.”⁸²

We must examine the main arguments of this exceptional document for at least three reasons. First, by articulating the link between

the right to relief and free access to labor, it offers a formally coherent solution to the incoherence of previous policies. Second, it inspired the legislative work of those Revolutionary assemblies that will come to adopt its proposals more or less literally. And finally, it suggests, as much by its silence on certain points as by the reforms that it promotes, the fundamental stakes of social policy that will wrack the nineteenth century.

Meanwhile, the Revolutionary assemblies will ratify the views of the Committee on Poverty. On June 14, 1791 the Legislative Assembly votes almost unanimously to approve the Le Chapelier Law. According to the terms of its preamble:

There are no longer corporations in the state. There are only the particular interests of individuals and the general interest. No one is permitted to inspire the citizens toward an intermediary interest, to separate them from the public thing by a corporate spirit.... We must return to the principle that it is up to the free conventions between individuals to set the day for each worker; thus it falls to the worker to uphold the conventions that he has made with those who employ him.⁸³

Consequently, labor is a commodity sold on a market that obeys only the laws of supply and demand. The relationship between the worker and his employer becomes a mere “convention,” that is to say, a contract between two parties known as a wage. But this transaction is no longer governed by systems of constraint or other guarantees external to the exchange itself. The universe of labor will fundamentally change. This is a revolution within the Revolution.

On March 19, 1793 the National Convention proclaimed: “All men have a right to subsistence by his labor, if he is able-bodied; or by free relief if he is beyond the condition of being able to work.” This dual principle is solemnly inscribed in Article 21 of the Constitution passed on the 24th of June, 1793: “Public relief is a sacred debt. Society owes subsistence to its unhappy citizens, to be procured for them by work, to consist in procuring them work, or to consist of ensuring them the means of subsistence, for those who are beyond the status of work.”⁸⁴

Thus the laws of the Revolutionary assemblies mirrored the essentials of the agenda of the Committee on Poverty, which itself expressed the fundamental aspirations of the Enlightenment with respect to free access to work and assistance. We must add that, contrary to a widespread opinion, the Revolutionaries are not disinterested in the matter of applying these “principles.” Under extremely difficult circumstances, pressed by numerous tasks, they would seize

upon some concrete measures. We will return in a moment to a discussion of the free access to labor and the political vagaries that will give birth to it. But with regard to the right to relief, a law of the 28th of June, 1793 defined the conditions that must be met by its beneficiaries: the elderly, infirm, sick, abandoned children, families burdened with children. Two months before Thermidor, the law of the 22nd Floreal year II (May 11, 1794), based upon the report of Barère, establishes the Book of National Goodwill and organizes relief in the countryside. Contrary to precocious evaluations made after the fall of the Convention, this program had nothing of the grandiose about it. It limits those who can be listed in the Book to three categories of indigents, with quotas limited by department for each category: aged or infirm farmers (in fact, elderly manual laborers unable to work); aged or infirm artisans; and mothers or widows “burdened with children.”⁸⁵ But the Barère report is also a particularly revealing testament to the kind of political utopianism underlying this republican strategy of managing poverty. After proclaiming that “begging is incompatible with popular government,” and recalling the sentence of Saint-Just—“the unhappy are the powers of the earth”—Barère foresees the organization of a civic ceremony each year in order to “honor misery.”⁸⁶ On this day, the beneficiaries of relief will receive their allowances while surrounded by their fellow citizens:

The two extremes of life will be reunited with the sex that is the source of them. There you will see elderly farmers, disabled artisans, and next to them you will also find mothers and unfortunate widows, burdened with children. This spectacle is the most beautiful that politics might present to nature and that the fertile Earth can offer to the consoling sky.⁸⁷

This is nothing less than an attempt to reverse the stigma of misfortune. The pageantry of the new republican religion will rehabilitate the miseries of poverty. The suffering, surrounded by local elites, good citizens and schoolchildren, will be reinstated into the community of men. In the grandiloquent phraseology of the era, this ceremony will embody a profound intuition. It is the nation, one and indivisible, that will guarantee the universal right to relief. But indigence is drama experienced in everyday life, and threatens to disrupt primary sociability. Thus it is within the local community that the repatriation must take place and the social bond must be re-woven. The right to assistance as royal prerogative and constitutional guarantee finds its counterpart in this ceremony, both intimate and

solemn, that takes place in the district capital, as the local community exhibits its solidarity by celebrating its fellow citizens in need. This “festival of the unfortunate” symbolizes the Republic’s power of guaranteeing everyone both the universality of the rights of man and concrete support, guarantees of citizenship in the public sphere, and recognition of status in the private sphere. This seems to be the substance of “fraternity” in the republican trilogy. The nation is not content just to help unfortunate citizens. It also reaffiliates them by staging a public spectacle celebrating their return to a communitarian home. Through the symbolism of this festival, misfortune ceases any longer to be a factor of exclusion and is transformed by being recompensed. Our modern minimum wage of rehabilitation probably pales in comparison to these civic feasts of the newly born Republic. But the contemporary notion of “insertion” derives its genuinely social and political aspect from this. What could this be, indeed, other than the actualization, as stated in the December, 1988 law instituting the RMI (Minimum Wage of Insertion), of “a national imperative” of solidarity—the right of integration acknowledged by the national community—through the mobilization of the resources of local communities to rebuild the social bond in a newly rediscovered relationship of proximity? Assistance, we have said, functions as a surrogate for primary sociability. Even when it becomes a national debt, its duty is that of restoring particular community supports.

The Dissociation of Law

This story was perhaps too good to be true. However, we might wonder why this program has never been applied, and indeed will be virtually forgotten for an entire century, until its rejuvenation by the Third Republic, which will give it a milder version.

The reasons for this should hardly escape us: a devastated France, torn apart by foreign war and intestine divisions; a changing political climate after Thermidor, which effected a veritable restoration, before the fact, in the realm of social assistance.⁸⁸ It is, however, too hasty just to dismiss the idealism of these principles as something that could only have been inspired by “ideological” goals. To the contrary, they were thoroughly considered, discussed at great length, their financial sources studied with care, and their mode of application analyzed in detail. Their main sponsors were no longer dangerous “extremists.”⁸⁹

The hypothesis offered here is not that these measures are never applied because of their economic cost, their philosophical abstraction or their political radicalism. Instead, they failed to be applied by virtue of their internal economy. But understanding the reasons for this “inapplicability” leads us to consider the specific variations of polity, economy, and the social that the end of the eighteenth century sought to promote, and to appreciate also why this vision collapsed even before it could be applied. To sum up this problem: why did the solution to the social question proposed by the architects of the Enlightenment and forgotten by the time of the Revolution—that is, the link between liberalism governing the question of work and state regulation of the question of assistance—immediately reveal itself as obsolete? This answer has two parts. First, it failed because it embodied two different and incompatible visions of the State’s role in society. Second, and primarily, the linkage between a political agenda and laissez-faire economics unleashed social antagonisms that its sponsors were powerless to control and that they were probably unable to foresee. Because this construction, in fact, obscured the very social dynamics to which it gave birth. The partnership of economy and public policy so established “overlooks” the perverse effects of the very system that it puts in place. This is what will feed into the history of the nineteenth century, that is, the return of this version of the social that is both liberated and energized by the Revolutionary liberal synthesis.

First point: the juxtaposition of two incompatible notions of the State. Bringing into being a true policy of public relief entailed building a strong State. The agenda of the Committee on Beggary and some revolutionary assemblies, even if it is carefully considered, is ambitious. It assumes a public system of financing and of distribution that excludes the participation of private and faith-based sectors. This is the logic of what will much later come to be known as the Providential State: mandatory withholding, the establishment of a social administration, with the inevitable bureaucratic and technocratic features that it brings along with it. This charge threatened to become even more substantial, for between the collapse of the Girondins and Thermidor, the Montagnard Convention foresaw even more audacious measures: not only generous support for single mothers and children in need, a system of familial allocation widely open to families, insofar it concerns families who are forced to ten days of work (Law of June 28, 1793); and then the relaunching of a

system of public works at the departmental level (Law of October 15, 1793). Such a vision of the State appeared incompatible—and all the polemics that continue through the nineteenth century and up to this day tend confirm this—with the presuppositions of pure liberalism and the kind of “minimal” State that it implies.⁹⁰

By way of contrast, the conception of public power that underlies free access to work is nothing more than the minimal, liberal State whose formula Turgot has provided. Indeed, the State claimed by liberalism must learn how to make itself interventionist, and in revolutionary times it will not be able to refrain from doing so. The activity of the Committee of Public Welfare in particular is a limited case of state-led *dirigisme* that few saw as an anticipation of totalitarian regimes. But it is, in principle, supposed to put forth a counterforce sufficient to break the resistance of the previous political system.⁹¹ Ironically, the State, in the name of minimizing the role of the State, must make itself even stronger so as to put an end to the abuses of the absolutist State! The justification for this interventionism is to fight despotism, which will simultaneously allow for the liberation of economic processes and the eradication of social injustice. This is akin to wedding the political theories of Adam Smith and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The Revolutionaries believed in something like an “invisible hand” that would guarantee a balance between the supply and demand for labor, between production and consumption, in such a way that the liberalization of the economy must necessarily bring with it the de facto end of unemployment and the reduction of mass suffering. At the same time they adhered—and with little sense of how it might be contradictory—to a Rousseauian, that is to say, virtuous, conception of politics. Submission to the general will dissolves particular interests in such a way that the individual recognizes himself as sovereign by abandoning his individual point of view and putting himself above conflicting interests.⁹² Rousseau accomplished his policy by means of civic virtue, and in this sense Robespierre is his faithful disciple. Like later justifications for the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Reign of Terror may be seen as a convulsion by which the State energetically promotes its own disappearance.

So is the conception of the State that is necessary to free the economy from artificial barriers, or the State mobilized to combat despotism, any different than the one required for statism or the control needed to achieve a full-fledged policy of public assistance?

Probably not. The articulation, at first glance harmonious, of the right of relief and free access to work thus disguises the antagonism between two different principles of governance: that of the social state, and that of the liberal state. This juxtaposition would probably have revealed these two aspects as incompatible in practice had there been enough time to deploy all the practical aspects of the revolutionary programs; or, even if these two principles are not totally antagonistic, the elaboration of a compromise (such as Keynesianism will realize, for example) will require a long “labor of history” that has not yet been engaged at the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed modern social policies rest on the idea of “social partners” whose identities are based on a stabilized system of wage-labor. But, in the Revolutionary moment, there was no possible room for negotiation between the political will of the State and the requirements of the economy.

One might object to such an interpretation: these two plans of governance are not contradictory because they do not operate on the same level. Why not associate a juridical obligation at the level of law (a right to relief extended into a right of labor, and also into various other social rights) with the liberalism of a free access to work on the economic level? But—and this is the second problem in trying to understand the failure of efforts to articulate the economic and the social attempted at the end of the eighteenth century—the way in which the idea of “free access to labor” is conceived is intrinsically ambiguous. Instead of bringing a solution to the problem of the able-bodied poor, it opens up a Pandora’s Box of future social conflicts.

Formally, however, the solution is elegant. It is expressed with maximum clarity in the preliminary report of Jean-Baptiste Bô, who introduces the Law of October 15, 1793 on the abolition of begging: “By imposing upon them the necessity of laboring [to able-bodied poor who do not work] you return them to the necessity of being useful and virtuous citizens. You establish between them and society a reciprocity of duties.”⁹³ But this reciprocity goes only one way, and thereby risks ending up as a trap. The indigent is reintroduced into the political pact if he works: he becomes “a useful and virtuous citizen.” But there is no social pact with him in order to guarantee him the possibility of working. What follows from this is that the obligation is only borne by the indigent. He must labor, in the strong sense of the term, and the new criminality established by laws against

begging and vagabondage is there as a constant reminder to him. But the government is not responsible, in the strict sense of the word, for giving him work. “To impose upon them the necessity of laboring”—this may also refer to forced labor, at the very same moment one is proclaiming the liberty of labor. Public powers, for their part, have satisfied their responsibility by positing the principle of free access to work, and they owe nothing more.⁹⁴ In other words, the State can assure itself of the essentials simply by taking political measures, such as the destruction of monopolies and corporations. This political will seems to draw its force from an arena where economic *laissez-faire* will be applied. Between the two, there is no room to develop a social policy.

The heart of this ambiguity arises from the very notion of the French word “*droit*.” The word “*droit*” does not mean the same thing when it comes to matters of assistance or labor. In the first case, it is really a matter of a debt that the indigent owes to society. The State “must,” and perhaps may, put in place a system of public relief, levy taxes, hire personnel, create special institutions, etc. Things are otherwise when it is a matter of “finding subsistence by labor.” The State explicitly refuses to take responsibility for ensuring work for everyone. We have already commented on the subtle casuistry, if a bit shameful, developed by the Committee on Beggary between “a general legislation” for “multiplying the means of work,” that one must “encourage”; and those “special” guarantees of finding work for everyone, which would lead to the negligence and laziness of workers who are guaranteed a job without having to search for one, and which would have “the most radically wasteful and impolitic consequences.”⁹⁵ This active State, as one would say today, is not a “legal” State that imposes a reciprocity of obligations between individuals and the collectivity.

However, the Law of March 19, 1793 proclaims of a single movement: “Each man has the right to his subsistence by labor if he is able-bodied; by free relief if he is beyond the condition of working.” But the impassioned discussion that preceded this vote shows that some at least of the protagonists were conscious of what was at stake in this ambiguity. These stakes were indeed fundamental, if it is true that this is really a matter of determining whether it is possible to combine the general civic and political rights of citizens and the social rights from which even the most unfortunate might benefit; or even, to reconcile liberty and the right of property, on the one hand,

which will be to the advantage of the wealthy, or equality and fraternity, on the other hand, which are desired by those who live mainly on hope alone.⁹⁶

Romme expresses himself accordingly: “I propose an additional paragraph thus conceived: all men have the right to demand of society, for their needs, work or relief.” But the conclusion of the session recorded in the Parliamentary Archives notes: “*Interruptions, murmurs.*”⁹⁷ The vast majority of the Assembly share the “reasonable” opinion of Boyer-Fonfrède, which is also the one already defended by the Committee of Beggary:

It would be very dangerous to decree that society owes the means of existence to individuals. What does one say, however, when one affirms that society owes this relief to those who have no means to subsist? What kind of poor are we talking about? Are these able-bodied or disabled poor? But the society owes relief only to the disabled, to those who have been disgraced by nature, and who can no longer survive by their labor. Under this relationship society, perhaps, owes subsistence to individuals; but you would make society poor and miserable, you would kill initiative and labor, if you guaranteed subsistence to those who have nothing but nonetheless are able to work.⁹⁸

Indeed, the establishment of an effective right to work would be no small affair. It would require that the State intervene in the system of production, and make itself entrepreneur, for example (“nationalizations”), or at least immerse itself in the employers’ policies of hiring workers. This would require a socialist or socializing State, and the right to work will in fact become a major assertion of future socialist platforms. But such a power given to the State, inasmuch as it has clearly shown its implications, appeared exorbitant even to the Montagnard Convention.

This accounts for the conceptual fuzziness surrounding the status of free access to work, and its difference with respect to *the right to work* is significant. This is representative of the position of the majority of Revolutionaries. But they have given a formally irreproachable expression to this ambiguity. Thanks to their application of the old dichotomy between “able-bodied” and “disabled” they were able to juxtapose, without any apparent contradiction, *a maximalist position with respect to the question of the right to relief, and a minimalist position with respect to the right to work*. Their program of assistance is perhaps unequaled to this day, whereas they established no regulations pertaining to labor.

Must we interpret this impasse on the question of the right to work as a deliberate calculation? Obviously, for employers it was advan-

tageous to pretend “as if” free access to labor was worth just as much as a right to work. This was to put economic development under their own control, whereas the right to work would be primarily a right for workers and would subordinate economic interests to the realization of social objectives. And, in fact, the claim of free access to work seems to have been espoused only by particularly “enlightened minds,” and not by the workers themselves. Indeed the few testimonies that we have on this opinion—even less numerous than those reported in the books, tracts, journals, and parliamentary debates, which expressed the position of the owners of cultural and economic capital—seem to indicate that workers did not “understand” the freedom of labor in the same sense as those who appointed themselves the promoters of it.

Thus, just before the ratification of the Le Chapelier Law, in April 1791, the Parisian carpenter fellows “petition” the Paris city hall in order to obtain a minimum wage of fifty sous a day, arguing that the wage that is given to them does not allow them to survive. They politely address themselves to new authorities, in the name, they thought, of Revolutionary principles: “The Assembly, by declaring the rights of men, has certainly wished that the Declaration of Rights would offer something to the indigent class, which has been for so long the toy of the despotism of these masters.” The mayor of Paris, Bailly, admonished them in this way: “All citizens are equal in rights, but they are not in their faculties, talents and means...A coalition of workers formed to drive their day-wages up to a uniform price and to force those of the same condition to submit themselves to this established wage, would thus be apparently contrary to their true interest.”⁹⁹

Thus, workers must be made to understand that their “true interest” lies not in being guaranteed against poverty by a set minimum wage, but rather in espousing the liberal ideology that puts them in competition with one another, rewards “faculties” and “talents,” and penalizes the mediocre and weak. But why would they enter willingly into this logic of competition, which they must sense will deliver them over to the discretion of employers? Another testimony, this time after the ratification of the Le Chapelier Law: in August, 1792, delegations of workers come to the city hall of Le Havre to demand an increase of “prices.” Like Bailly, the mayor refuses them, and by lecturing them “workers must be suffused with respect for the law that intends that one who gives to labor, like those who labor themselves, must be free to give and receive the price that pleases

him... In principle, wages of working people are the result of a free treaty between the boss and the one who works."¹⁰⁰ Here again workers collectively appealed for support from public powers, and instead each is thrown back upon himself as an individual, face to face with his employer. In actuality the "free contract of labor" appears to have been imposed upon workers through a relationship of political domination.

More broadly, the liberal critique of the traditional system of trades does not appear to have been, as such, a popular movement. Sydney and Beatrice Webb characterized in this way the attitude of workers in the face of corporatist constraints: "What has happened when the effects of capitalist competition were felt everywhere was that the journeyman and often even the small artisans petitioned for the situation to be redressed, demanding the interdiction of new machinery, the application of former laws strictly limiting the number of apprentices for each artisan."¹⁰¹ Even before "Luddism," which in England will assume the character of a mass revolt against machinery,¹⁰² reaction of workers to the liberalization of labor appeared mainly to have weighed in on the side of protectionism¹⁰³. Thus, at the end of the ancien régime, a bitter conflict in Lyon pits the silk merchants against their workers, including the master artisans. They demanded a homogenous "price" for merchandise and denounced the "deadly" liberty of prices, because it is "the freedom, in a word, to eradicate those who feed it and support it."¹⁰⁴ During the Revolution, the demands of the sans-culottes and revolutionary crowds are not directed against the system of labor. Instead they have demanded price controls and, to a lesser degree, decent wages, that is to say, a regulation of the cost of goods (laws on the maximum which were effectively imposed by popular pressure) and a better remuneration for their labor.¹⁰⁵ We may suppose that as a general rule they felt more protected by traditional forms of regulated labor than by this new savage freedom, and in the absence of these protections they appealed to public powers to obtain new regulations, and not to the liberty of labor.

Utopian Capitalism

Thus, free access to work would undoubtedly have benefited the "bourgeois" classes who were to assume power. The words of Marat, one of the few opponents of the Le Chapelier Law, retrospectively appear prophetic: "What will we have gained by destroying the aristocracy of nobles if they are replaced by the aristocracy of wealth?"¹⁰⁶

Can one conclude from this that the ambitious projects of the Committee on Beggary or the legislation of the Revolutionary Assemblies were only masks to conceal and bolster the economic hegemony of industry? There is little merit in interpreting history in the light of what came to pass afterwards. My interpretation is rather that the ambiguity constantly running throughout these positions was in fact evidence of an authentic ambiguity present as much as in the ideas as in the economic reality of the times. This is why, in contrast to a cynical reading (the ascendant bourgeoisie manipulated everything as a function of his interest), I prefer another that allows us to place this revolutionary episode in a broader historical context and to introduce a more refined understanding of future permutations of the social question. The hypothesis is that these constructions have a “*utopian*” character, in the sense that Pierre Rosanvallon speaks of “*utopian capitalism*.”¹⁰⁷ These reformers merely extrapolated, at the limits, the most dynamic characteristics of the economic and social development that they observed at the end of the eighteenth century. They imagined its final completion without seeing, that is to say, without anticipating at the same time, the social side-effects of this actualization, which were not yet fully visible based on the conditions of the eighteenth century. In so doing, however, they serve only to mirror the greater tendency of the whole “*progressive*” critique of the century described so well by Reinhart Kosellek, to know how “*to proclaim true reality by what is demanded by rationality*.”¹⁰⁸ But if this is an illusion, is it not maintained by the social and economic realities of the time?

Indeed, what is capitalism in the eighteenth century? Fernand Braudel has shown that a form of capitalism already constituted the dynamic sector of premodern societies. “*Modernity, mobility, rationality...It is the leading edge of modern economic life*.”¹⁰⁹ And it has been this way “*since its remote beginnings*,” when it imposed itself in the Middle Ages in some Italian and Flemish towns. But this nascent capitalism reigns only in certain very limited sectors of commerce, such as finance or international trade, only the miniscule surface of what Braudel calls “*economic life*,” which remains circumscribed by traditional regulations and is fed only by weak currents—and even more profoundly by “*material life*,” the routines and habits that structure the long span, virtually unshakeable, of history.

But in the eighteenth century, compared to these “*remote beginnings*,” this capitalist leading edge was considerably developed.

However, its structural position with respect to “economic life” and “material life” has not been substantially altered. We are justified in speaking of the strikingly rapid progress of finance and large-scale commerce, of an admittedly slow but nonetheless substantial growth of industry, and even slower still in agriculture. However, this dynamic sector that “fuels growth,” as we would say today, is still extraordinarily limited. In an argument comparable to that of Braudel, Pierre Chaunu distinguishes three concentric circles of economic and social communication.¹¹⁰ In the first sphere, within a few kilometers radius, nearly 90 percent of all that is produced and consumed is exchanged (including women on the matrimonial market). The second circle of some hundred square kilometers corresponds to a “country” in the old sense of the term and includes the markets of one or two small towns. Nearly 10 percent of additional exchanges take place within this zone. Finally, the third circle of massive transfers, large-scale trade, exchanges of manufactured products, assumed a more and more international dimension, mainly with the “opening” of the former Christian Occident in the sixteenth century. This allows for the accumulation of immense commercial and financial fortunes. But it represents scarcely 1 percent of all commercial exchanges. Although it does seem to exercise a “global weight” on the entire structure, its place remains marginal. In the same vein, Carlo Cipolla has calculated that during the “pre-industrial” centuries, in order for ten persons to eat, it was necessary for seven or eight of them to remain attached to the land.¹¹¹ This requirement, a consequence of crude manufacturing technologies, suggests not only the preponderant influence of agriculture on the economy, but also the extensive territorialization of the population, and the geographically limited and closed character of most economic and social exchanges.

The eighteenth century, and largely its second half, represents the moment when ancestral balances come to be shaken.¹¹² This is a moment of “transition” that comprehends everything that could have happened, for any other reason, or on an entirely different scale, in the middle of the fourteenth century. An economic, commercial and even industrial dynamic hurls itself ever more aggressively against the colossal immobility of the entire society. For contemporaries, it must not have been obvious that some major signs (an acceleration of demographic, industrial and especially commercial growth, early machinery, and the first factories, however modest...) culminating in a new kind of economic and social system would still face the

crushing weight, in all domains, of secular constraints. The apostles of modernity proposed to extend the benefits of the transformation that they observed in these limited sectors to the whole society. They extrapolate based on a dynamic still in its formative period. Herein lies precisely the “utopian” character of their vision. They do not describe an overall condition. Rather they project to world historical dimensions the culmination of a process which, even if it is no longer marginal, remains stifled by traditional inheritances, whether these be political structures, legal regulations, methods of exploiting the land or of making people work.

Can they be reproached for not having anticipated the extensive social side effects of transformations not yet accomplished? How could they know that the destruction of regulations that seemed outmoded in their eyes would also revolutionize basic social relations, in particular, the relationship to land and to work? The analysis of Karl Polanyi clarifies two essential details that the industrial revolution brought along with it: first, the exceptionalism of the “self-regulating” capitalist market with respect to all previous systems of economic exchange; and second, the fact that, in order to impose itself, the whole society must be remade in its image under the reign of commodities.¹¹³ However Polanyi, and others before him, including Marx, would offer this kind of analysis from the point of view of the nineteenth century, when the social consequences of these developments, particularly the specter of new kinds of poverty, were now evident on a large scale. But was this possible from the vantage point of the second half of the eighteenth century? A “progressive” discourse very close to that kind might then take place without too much bad faith on the part of anyone: the kingdom remains poor, and the majority of subjects are suffering because society is blocked. By putting an end to these blockages, agricultural and industrial production will be increased, commerce will prosper, elastic demand will increase, restoring production and ensuring the unlimited progress of national wealth. The worker himself will partake of the fruits of this wealth, his lot will be improved by virtue of the augmentation of the common fortune, and quasi-full employment will be guaranteed thanks to the growth of elastic demand.

This is a modern “Keynesian” reading, if you will, of several texts of the era. For example, the following:

The able-bodied poor are thus nothing other than day-laborers without property. Open up public works, open up the workshops, facilitate the ease of the sale of manual laborers:

those in need of work, who do not apparently recognize this need, if they beg, they shall be punished; and if they don't beg, they will probably find other ways of living.¹¹⁴

We should, however, underscore the word “probably”: this betrays the tacit ambiguity of this policy and reveals that the optimism of repeated declarations celebrating a better future is not pure naiveté. But neither is it pure cynicism. None of this has yet been played out. The relative sharing of the benefits of growth, the spontaneous reequilibration of demand allowing for semi-full employment are not yet certainties, just as the future exploitation of the proletariat is not yet a certainty. Yet in order for this all to be revealed in its full amplitude, it would require not only that the generalization of the market should be *proclaimed*, but instead that it already would have been *realized* on a large scale. However, the eighteenth-century version of this liberal optimism is fragile, for a fundamental reason that is now apparent to us. Building a policy whose primary support is the free access to labor is to rest it upon a shaky foundation. It makes the manual worker bear the burden of this new freedom, that is to say, its costs must be borne by an individual without resources or dignity, and whose status—we should again stress—remains close to that ascribed at the time to the “rabble.”

The Abbé Sieyès was, we know, the main inspiration behind the Declaration of the Rights of Man. He also wrote, however, that:

Among the unfortunate who are dedicated to tedious labor, producers of the enjoyment of another and receiving barely enough to sustain their suffering and needy bodies, in this immense crowd of two-legged instruments, without freedom or morality, owning only their unproductive hands and an absorbed soul, are these what you call men? Are such souls as these even capable of entering into society?¹¹⁵

The opinion of Sieyès is nothing exceptional. Three days after the ratification of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the National Assembly adopts the distinction between active citizens and passive citizens, which excludes from participation in political life two million seven hundred thousand French males who do not pay taxes equal to three days of labor, that is to say, the majority of wage earners and more than third of the men of voting age.¹¹⁶ The journalist Loustalot declares on this occasion: “No citizen must be deprived of the ability to vote by the law, and this means that in reality all proletariats, all citizens capable of being corrupted are being deprived of it.”¹¹⁷

To clarify the paradox of the argument: in the name of the law that must be imposed by all, the proletariat must be *de facto* ex-

cluded from complete citizenship. The presupposition is one of independence; and, like the domestic who is subject to the will of his master, the proletariat is subject to need and is thus a corruptible being, incapable of civic life. One does nothing more than evade serious question by simply dismissing these positions as “rightist” or “bourgeois.” Saint-Just, who can hardly be accused of moderation, makes his contempt for “industrial” work equally obvious: “A trade suits the true citizen poorly: the hand of a man is only made for land and weapons.”¹¹⁸ This is not only Saint-Just, but also, a notch even higher in terms of revolutionary radicalism, Gracchus Babeuf, who was executed, we know, for having fomented the conspiracy of the Equals. The same passion that drives him to put an end to scandalous inequalities of conditions does not, however, lead him to glorify the condition of wage earners. To the contrary: “Make it such that laborious man enjoys, in exchange for very moderate work and without receiving any wage, an honest and unalterable ease, and the blindfold will soon fall from the eyes of citizens lost by prejudice and routine.”¹¹⁹ Babeuf absolutely condemns idleness, source of the parasitism of property owners and of social injustice. But, as an accompaniment for “moderate” labor, he foresees a kind of social rent, and not a salary, whose degrading character he is well aware of.

The crushing weight of the indignity of wage-labor, whose secular roots we have shown, cannot be annihilated simply by affirming the principle of the free access to labor. The Achilles tendon of liberalism—at least in terms of its aspiration to be the bearer of an agenda for social justice—has probably been the social stigma attached to this condition. “It is to the worker to maintain the convention that he has made with the one who holds it,” declares the Preamble of the Le Chapelier Law. But in practice, what can be the actual manifestation of this contractual ideal if the wage earner is only in possession of the “negative” or “formal” aspects of freedom? Promoting the contract of labor quickly culminates in the discovery of the powerlessness of a contract as a basis for a stable social order.

Faced with most of the liberal declarations we have already mentioned, whose ambiguities lean in the direction of optimism, it was probably necessary to be extraordinarily lucid in order to take from the second half of the eighteenth century a discourse without equivocation. But at least there was one man, Turgot, who already anticipated the “iron law” of wages and the industrial “reserve army”:

The common worker who has only his arms and his industry has nothing other than what he manages to sell his sorrows for to others. He sells it more or less dearly; but this more or less high price does not depend on him: it is the result of the agreement that is made with the one who pays for his labor. This latter pays him as cheaply as he can: for as he has a choice between a great number of workers, he prefers the one who works for the lowest price. Workers are thus obliged to lower their prices at each other's expense. In all lines of work, it must come to pass, and indeed it does come to pass, that the price of the labor of the worker descends to that minimal level which is necessary in order to maintain his existence.¹²⁰

How prophetic is Turgot on this point? In fact, Malthus is not far away from this, and even before English political economy had already begun to reflect on *needs* in a way that was capable of subverting the idea of nature and of revealing the perversity of contract.¹²¹ If one abolishes traditional protections, one risks conjuring up not only the rationality of natural laws, but the biological power of instinct: the abject will be driven by natural necessity, that is to say, by hunger.¹²² Lurking in the background of the idealized juridical reciprocity of the labor contract is the shadow of the fundamental otherness of the social positions occupied by the contracting parties; and the peaceful space of mercantile relations is transformed into a battle-field for life once one reintroduces the *temporal* dimension of the labor contract. The employer, for his part, can wait; he can contract "freely," for he does not live under the empire of necessity.¹²³ On the other hand, the worker is biologically driven to sell his labor power because he is in urgent need; he needs his wage immediately in order to survive. Edmund Burke, as "reactionary" as he was, or rather probably because he was such a defender of traditional tutelage against the liberal logic, understood this perfectly well:

Labor is a commodity, and, as such, an article of commerce. When a commodity is brought to the market, the necessity that the price is raised does not depend on the seller, but on the buyer. The impossibility of subsistence of the man who sells his labor on the market is completely out of the question according to this way of seeing things. The only question is: how much is it worth to the buyer?¹²⁴

In France, however, it almost seems as if the theorizing of those who call themselves spokespersons of progress at the time when the industrial revolution has begun was politically overdetermined.¹²⁵ Or, to say it more simply, their analysis of the political system is lucid, whereas their reading of the social situation remains blurry. Political voluntarism catches their eyes, for this is necessary to liberate the potentialities of the economy. But the social effects of this break remain uncertain. Won't the social costs of this free enterprise prove exorbitant?

Thus this situation is already pregnant with conflicts between those who will not be content with a regime that limits itself to liberating the laws of the market without improving their miserable condition, and those who pretend to have resolved the social question once they have removed obstacles to economic development. However, we should recognize a certain coherence in this response to the social question by the liberation of the labor market. It serves as a counterpoint to previous systems of constraint in order to promulgate progress. Thus it espouses, at the same time, the need for political revolution and economic rationality. It effects the dual modernization of both the state and the economy. But it will be unable to resist the dynamics of the industrial revolution, because this new economic order will prove to be a factor of social disorder.

At the end of the eighteenth century, however, there remains a metamorphosis yet to come.

Notes

1. J. Steuart, *An Inquiry Into the Principles of Political Economy*, 1767, trad. fr. Paris, 1789, t. I, p. 454, cited in Pierre Rosanvallon, *le Capitalisme utopique*, Paris, Le Seuil, p. 49.
2. Poverty lines that are better termed “indigence lines” to respect the contrast between an admitted and even desired poverty and an indigence “shame of humanity,” to repeat Doctor Hecquot’s expression cited at the beginning of the previous chapter. This distinction dominates social reflection in the eighteenth century, including that of many “advanced” thinkers. “There will always be rich men, so there must be poor too. In well-governed states, the latter work and live; in the others, they become beggars and gnaw at the state with their idleness. Let us have poor, but never beggars; this is what a good administration should yearn for” (J. –P. Brissot, *Théorie des lois criminelles*, 1ere edition, Berlin, 1781, p. 75). Brissot became a pivotal figure in the revolutionary era and the era preceding it, which proves that this position is in no way “reactionary.” He was the founder of the Society of Friends of the Black, which began agitating in 1786 for the abolishment of slave trade and the softening of slavery.
3. C. de la Roncière, “Pauvres et pauvreté à Florence au XIVE siècle,” loc. cit., p. 662.
4. R. Gascon, “Economie et pauvreté aux XVIe-XVIIIe siècles: Lyon, ville exemplaire et prophétique,” in M. Mollat, *Etudes sur l’histoire de la pauvreté*, op. cit., t. II, p. 274 sq.
5. M. Mollat, *les Pauvres au Moyen Age*, op. cit., p. 212.
6. R. Fossier, *la Terre et les hommes en Picardie, jusqu’à la fin du XIIIe siècle*, op. cit.
7. C. de la Roncière, “Pauvres et pauvreté à Florence au XIVE siècle,” loc. cit.
8. H. Pirenne, *Histoire économique de l’Occident*, op. cit., p. 487.
9. N. Zenon Davis, “Assistance, humanisme et hérésie: le cas de Lyon,” in M. Mollat, *Etudes sur l’histoire de la pauvreté*, op. cit., t. II, p. 800.
10. P. Goubert, *Cent Mille Provinciaux au XVIIe siècle*, op. cit., p. 342.
11. Cited in A. Soboul, *les Sans-Culottes*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1968, p. 45.
12. C. de la Roncière, “Pauvres et pauvreté à Florence au XIVE siècle,” loc. cit.

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13. R. Gascon, "Economie et pauvreté..." loc. cit.
14. P. Goubert, *Cent Mille Provinciaux au XVIIe siècle...* op. cit., p. 343.
15. C. Liss and H. Soly's work, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe*, op. cit., is doubtlessly the most complete synthesis of the data that illustrate this situation long-term and in all of pre-industrial Europe. See also M. Cippola, *Before the Industrial Revolution*, op. cit., which also estimates at 50 percent the rate of those Europeans who qualify as "poor in the sense that they have no reserves."
16. For an analysis of the mechanisms of this social promotion, see for example J. Bourgeon, *les Colbert avant Colbert*, Paris, 1973. Louis XIV's grand commission's success is the achievement of a strategy for a family of laborers and traders to progressively accede to large-scale commerce, public offices and the banking sector.
17. P. Léon, *Economies et Sociétés préindustrielles*, op. cit., t. II, p. 376.
18. See P. Chaunu, *Histoire, science sociale: la durée, l'espace et l'homme*, op. cit.
19. *Correspondances des contrôleurs généraux des Finances avec les intendants des provinces*, t. I, Paris, 1874, lettre du 4 mai, 1693, cited in P. Sassier, *Du bon usage des pauvres*, Paris, Fayard, 1990, p. 126.
20. Cited by J.-P. Gutton, *la Société et les pauvres*, op. cit., p. 94.
21. Vauban, *Projet de dime royale*, op. cit., p.3.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 77-78.
23. See below, p. 111.
24. The efficiency of this secular regulator is confirmed at the end of the seventeenth century. During winter 1693, Beauvais has 2,584 "poor" inhabitants who need assistance to live. Most of them are unemployed or textile workers whose labor does not nourish adequately. But thirteen months later, factory owners complain of labor shortage "because of last year's mortality": 3,000 persons, out of 13,000 inhabitants, had died in one year (P. Goubert, *Cent Mille Provinciaux au XVIIe siècle...*, op. cit., p. 343). Marcel Lachiver estimates overmortality punctation at about 1.5 million (famines, diseases, epidemics) caused by the crisis of 1692-94; the parish registers held by clergymen frequently say "dead of weakness and hunger," "dead of poverty" (M. Lachiver, *les Années de misère. La famine au temps du Grand Roi*, Paris, Fayard, 1991, p. 157 sq).
25. E. Labrousse, *la Crise de l'économie française de la fin de l'Ancien Régime au début de la Révolution*, t. I. Paris, PUF, 1954, p. XXIX.
26. O.H.Hufton, *The Poor of the Eighteenth-Century France*, op. cit., p. 15.
27. P. Léon, *Economies et sociétés préindustrielles*, op. cit., t. II, p. 90.
28. C. Liss and H. Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe*, op. cit.
29. O. H. Hufton, *The Poor of the Eighteenth Century France*, op. cit., p. 16. The term "annex activities" is used by G. Lefebvre, *les Paysans du Nord pendant la Révolution*, Paris, 1924, to designate "usage" of rural artisanship, employment with rich peasants, usage of communals, hunting, etc.
30. On the extent of the recession that occurred at the end of the ancien régime, see Ernest Labrousse's substantial analysis, *la Crise de l'économie française de la fin de l'Ancien Régime au début de la Révolution*, op. cit.
31. *Calendrier philanthropique*, Paris, 1787, nr. XXXIV, cited in J. Kaplow, *les Noms des rois*, op. cit., p. 170. The calendar is the bulletin of the philanthropic society, founded in 1780 with Louis XIV's protection. Of freemason origins, its members include many dignitaries of the regime and even the Count de Provence and the duke of Chartres, the future Louis XVIII and Louis-Philippe. During the Restoration period it became a center for legitimism (see A. Gueslin, *l'Invention de l'économie sociale*, Paris, Economica, 1987, p. 123 sq).
32. J. Kaplow, *les Noms des rois*, op. cit., p. 171.

33. R. de Coppans, in *Des moyens de détruire la mendicité en Europe en rendant les mendiants utiles sans les rendre malheureux*, op. cit., p. 323.
34. See F. Fourquet, *Richesse et puissance, une généalogie de la valeur*, Paris, La Découverte, 1989, chap. II.
35. J. L. Vives, *De l'assistance aux pauvres*, op. cit.
36. This attitude survived the triumph of capitalism. In the nineteenth century, the edifices erected (and later, destroyed) by indigents who benefited from the distribution of potatoes, are called "hunger towers": "Rather than distribute potatoes for free, as we have received them, we required them to perform some work to be entitled to these potatoes. We could not find any suitable work, so we make them build towers in the middle of the countryside. These useless towers were called "famine towers." And since these towers were completed before the famine ended, we finally made the unemployed demolish them" (J. Duboin, *l'Economie distributive s'impose*, Paris, Leedis, 1950, p. 81).
37. H. Arendt, *Condition de l'homme moderne*, 1ere edition 1958, trad. fr. Paris, Calmann-Levy, 1983, p. 114-115.
38. A. Smith, *Recherches sur la nature et les causes de la richesse des nations*, 1ere edition, 1776.
39. For a discussion on this point, see L. Dumont, *Homo aequalis, genèse et épanouissement de la logique économique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1977.
40. F. Quesnay, *Ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques*, Paris, 1767, cited in E. Labrousse, F. Braudel, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, op. cit., t. II, p. 225. We cannot discuss here the relations between Adam Smith's economic liberalism and the Physiocrat's position. Let us retain at present that in spite of their attachment to land as the true foundation of wealth, they are fierce advocates for exchange liberty ("Liberté, liberté totale, immunité parfaite, voilà donc la loi fondamentale," says Abbe Baudeau in *Journal de l'agriculture*), and they stress the value of labor as a necessary mediation for the utilization of land. "Le travail agricole rend les couts avancés, payé le travail manuel avancé dans la cultivation et de plus produit le revenu de la propriété foncière" (F. Quesnay, article "Grains," *Encyclopédie*, op. cit., t.VII, p. 813). Thus, in spite of certain doctrinal divergences, the Physiocrats and the first liberals are equally determined to fight against monopolies and privileges.
41. A. Smith, *Recherches sur la nature et les causes de la richesse des nations*, op. cit., p. 252, cited in P. Rosanvallon, *le capitalisme utopique*, op. cit., p. 104.
42. A. R. H. Turgot, "Edit portant suppression des jurandes et communautés de commerce, arts et métiers," in Jourdan, Decrouzy, Isambert, *Recueil général des anciennes lois francaises*, op. cit., t. XXIII, p. 372.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
44. See for example V. Mirabeau, *l'Ami des hommes*, Paris, 1774, t. II, p. 349, and Telles-Dacosta, *Plan général des hospices du royaume*, Paris, 1789: "Les noms d'hôpital ou d'hôtel-Dieu sont devenus avilissants et ne servent qu'à éloigner par un sentiment naturel tous les sujets qui ont le plus besoin de secours et d'assistance" (p. 4).
45. C.A.J. Lèclerc de Montlinot, *Quels sont les moyens de détruire la mendicité, de rendre les pauvres utiles et de les secourir dans la ville de Soissons*, Soissons, 1770, p.18.
46. C.A.J. Leclerc de Montlinot, *Quels sont les moyens de détruire la mendicité, de rendre les pauvres utiles et de les secourir dans la ville de Soissons*, Soissons, op. cit., p.4.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 375. Adam Smith also says in the framework of his criticism of the artisan's statute of 1563: "The most sacred and inviolable of all properties is that of one's own industry," *Recherches sur la nature et les causes de la richesse des nations*, op. cit., p. 252, cited in P. Rosanvallon, *le Capitalisme utopique*, op. cit., p. 104.

48. On this conception of history as source of irrationality rather than natural and rational societal order, see G. Procacci, *Gouverner la misère*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1993, chapter 1.
49. A.R.J. Turgot, "Edit portant suppression des jurandes," loc. cit., p. 376.
50. Ibid.
51. C. P. Copeau, *Essai sur l'établissement des hopitaux des grandes villes*, Paris, 1787, p. 142. This requirement is all the more urgent, as the seventeenth century has lived on the belief of a diminished population. See, for example, Quesnay, article "Population" in the *Encyclopédie*, or Montesquieu: "According to a calculation as exact as possible, there are ten times people living today than before [...]. What is surprising is that the planet is daily being depopulated, and if this continues then within ten centuries it will be empty" (*Letters Persanes*, letter 112, first edition; Amsterdam, 1727). That same Montesquieu is the author of the famous sentence: "A man is not poor because he has nothing, but because he does not work" (*De l'esprit des lois*, premiere edition, Geneve, 1749). We also understand that this double "wake of consciousness" of the value of labor and the scarcity of laborers, results in making labor seem wealth per excellence.
52. At this time the will emerges to "save the children" and take in charge abandoned children, in order to "populate the kingdom" (see M. Laget, "Note sur les réanimations des nouveau-nés, *Annales de démographie historique*, 1983). For a holistic point of view on policy regarding abandoned children, see B. Assicot, *l'Abandon d'enfant, étude de sociologie*, thèse pour le doctorat de sociologie, University of Paris VIII, 1993.
53. R.H. Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society*, Collins, 1961, p. 23 (first edition, 1926).
54. This does not mean the free access to labor is the only possible reform, or that its scope is universal. Concerning above all the salaried workforce, it will have little impact on peasant misery. But the suppression of feudal rights is certainly related to the abolishment of labor regulations by the Le Chapelier law: both abolish archaic privileges and make land and labor freely accessible. Fiscal reform is another option. Commending a proportional taxation mode, the royal dime, instead of a taxation that weighs more and more on the poorest, Vauban also wanted to fight mass misery. But this project and other attempts at fiscal reform elaborated in the eighteenth century encountered the same opposition from the privileged few, as those reforms concerned with land and labor.
55. See M. Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, op. cit.
56. Marcel Gauchet, "De l'avènement de l'individu à la découverte de la société," *Annales ESC*, May-June 1979, p. 463.
57. Ibid. According to Gauchet, the market accomplishes better than contract the rupture from the traditional, "transcendant" social order, because it avoids reference to conscience or will.
58. See in Louis Dumont, *Homo aequalis*, op. cit., the analysis of the role played by the market in the destruction of holistic norms and a promotion of an individualistic society.
59. Edition C. Bloch, A. Tuetey, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1910. Put in place by the Assemblée Constituante and chaired by the Duke de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, the Committee for the extinction of begging becomes the Committee of public assistance under the legislative Assembly and the Convention: the vocabulary also indicates the passage from ancien régime to modern times. But the works of the Comité de l'Assemblée constituante are by far the most intense and original, and they inspire directly the legislative work of the Convention. In this domain at least, the opposition of a "moderate" period and a "radical" period of the Revolution is not really important: the Montagnard-based Convention adopted the policy commended since the start of the Revolution.

60. C. Bloch, A. Tuetey, "Deuxième Rapport," p. 353.
61. Id., "Premier Rapport."
62. C. Bloch, A. Tuetey, "Premier Rapport."
63. Id., "Plan de travail," p. 310.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. This restrictive character limits not only the categories of the beneficiaries, but also the amount of assistance granted: "It is hard to say, but it is nevertheless a political truth—the poor must not, by the assistance he receives from the government, be as well off as he would be did he not need this assistance..." That is why the "sums the government must allocate for poverty relief should be below rather than above necessity" ("Proposition pour un ordre du travail," annexe à la session du 26 février 1790, *ibid.*, p. 3).
67. C. Bloch, A. Tuetey, "Troisième Rapport," p. 369.
68. C. Bloch, A. Tuetey, "Troisième Rapport," p. 383. For an elaboration on the notion of assistance based on residence, see "Quatrième Rapport," p. 438 sq.
69. Id., "Sixième Rapport," p. 514-516.
70. Id., "Troisième Rapport," p. 380. The fact that the Committee gives it a certain clarity and solemnity does not, of course, mean, that it creates it *ex nihilo*. Here as elsewhere, it just puts together coherently the principles elaborated during the eighteenth century. The notion of right for assistance can be traced back to Montesquieu: "A few alms given a man on the street do not replace the obligation of the State, which owes its citizens a guaranteed subsistence, adequate clothing and a lifestyle that does not harm health." (*De l'Esprit des lois*, op. cit., XXIII, chapter XXIX, first edition, 1742), and mainly to the Abbé Baudeau; "As long as you did not give the real poor all the help they had the right to demand, you had to suffer from begging" (*Idées d'un citoyen sur les besoins, les droits et les devoirs des vrais pauvres*, Amsterdam, 1765, p. 98). For Baudeau, the "real poor" include the old, sick and disabled persons, children, and those stigmatized by vagabondage and begging.
71. Troisième Rapport," p. 38.
72. "Quatrième Rapport," p. 438.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 438-439.
74. "Premier Rapport," p. 7.
75. "Quatrième Rapport," p. 427
76. *Ibid.*, p. 431.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 428.
78. "Quatrième Rapport."
79. C. A. J. Leclerc de Montlinot, *Quels sont les moyens de détruire la mendicité, de rendre les pauvres utiles et de les secourir dans la ville de Soissons*, op. cit., p. 84.
80. "Sixième Rapport," p. 513.
81. "Plan de travail."
82. Assemblée nationale, session of June fourteenth 1791, *le Moniteur universel*, t. VIII, p. 661.
83. See in L. Parturier, *l'Assistance à Paris sous l'Ancien Régime et pendant la Révolution*, Paris, 1897, p. 222.
84. See L.-F. Dreyfus, *l'Assistance sous la législative de la Convention, 1791-1795*, Paris, 1905.
85. Barère de Vieuzac, "Rapport sur les moyens d'extirper la mendicité et sur les secours que doit accorder la République aux citoyens indigents," *le Moniteur*, no. 234, 24 floreal an II (May 13, 1794), p. 54.
86. Four days before, the 8th floreal, Robespierre had formulated as follows the goals of the Fête du malheur: "Slaves adore fortune and power; let us honor misfortune,

misfortune that humanity cannot entirely banish from Earth, but which it relieves and consoles with respect" (*Discours sur les rapports des idées morales et religieuses avec les principes républicains sur les fêtes nationales*). eighteenth floreal an II.

87. Barère de Vieuzac, "Rapport sur les moyens d'extirper la mendicité..." loc. cit., p. 56.
88. One of the first actions of the Thermidorian Convention was the organization of a sale of hospital goods before the hospitals were restituted on the 16th vendemiaire an V (7th October 1796) their civil character and possession of their goods. The Directory practically reestablished the congregations in their ancient prerogatives. The main measure of the Empire in this domain was the reestablishment of begging tax, that is, of the repressive version of treatment of the indigents who are not disabled. For the return of the confessional, the private and paternalist philanthropism, which is apparent with the Restoration proper, see the next chapter.
89. The main inspiration not only of the Committee on begging, but also of the social legislation made by the revolutionary assemblies, was the Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, great liberal master, loyal to Louis XVI, who went into exile after the execution of the king and came back to France, where he remained until the end of his life "the banal patron of all philanthropy on earth," to cite a police report from the period of the Restoration (cited in C. Pautras, *Guizot sous la Restauration*, Paris, 1949). On this unusual fate, see L.-F. Dreyfus, *Un Philantrope d'autrefois, le duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt*, op. cit. Barère himself, the main spokesman of the Convention's social legislation and author of that great text, his report from the 22nd floreal an II, is a long-time collaborator of Rochefoucauld-Liancourt in the Committee on begging. We remark with Barère a radicalization of revolutionary discourse – "make the revolution turn to the profit of those who support it, and to the ruin of those who fight it" – but the measures taken mainly reflect the propositions of the Committee on begging.
90. This is where I disagree with Catherine Duprat's imposing work, *le Temps des philanthropes*, t.I. Editions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, Paris, 1993, published after the composition of this chapter. About the works of the Committee on begging (the revolutionary assemblies take up these propositions to a certain extent)—according to her, "it is clear that this manifest of social liberalism is completely contrary to the provider-state, which according to an insistent legend, is supposed to have been initiated by the Committee" (p. 317). But the author does not sufficiently take into consideration the essential distinction, founded in multi-secular tradition, between the treatment of people who are not able to work, and people who must work. The stoke of genius, but also fragility, of the Committee on begging and the Convention itself lies with the novel reinterpretation they make of this opposition, which permits them to make coexist a "statist" and "liberal" position. This decisive distinction made by the Committee prohibits placing this "revolutionary philanthropy"—if we want to call it this way—in the continuity of the previous philanthropy operated by the Société philanthropique, many members of which were nobles and notables connected with the ancien régime. It also prohibits making it appear close to the paternalist philanthropism that imposed itself starting with the Restoration. See next chapter.
91. And also to defeat the enemies from the outside.
92. "Each man, giving himself to all, does not give himself to anyone; and as there is not one associated person over whom one does not acquire the same right that one cedes regarding oneself, one gains the equivalent of one's loss, plus more force to keep what one has," J.-J. Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, livre I, chap. VI. To say it differently, the citizen who belongs to the state has no right to ask anything more

than what he already disposes of within the framework of the state. This is where the deep implication, which is the motive for the revolutionary Terror, stems from: a citizen must be virtuous, by will or by force.

93. J. B. Bô, *Rapport sur l'extinction de la mendicité présenté à la Convention nationale au nom du Comité des secours publics*, 22nd vendemiaire an II, Bibliothèque nationale Paris, p. 4.
94. Apart from the fact that this law from the 24th vendemiaire an II provides well for the organization of seasonal labor on the basis of assistance domicile in order to establish the indigents, which was compensated at 75 percent of the local average salary (see *ibid.*, p. 6). But, in addition to the fact that this measure was never implemented, it abides by the principles of less eligibility for assistance, which evokes the English Speenhamland Act (1797) rather than make the labor market more dynamic.
95. C. Bloch, A. Tuetey, "Quatrième Rapport," *op. cit.*, p. 428.
96. See M. Gauchet, *la Révolution et les droits de l'homme*, Paris, Gallimard, 1989, Second part, chapter VI.
97. *Archives parlementaires*, session of April 22nd, 1793, t. LXIII, p. III.
98. Cited in M. Gauchet, *la Révolution et les droits de l'homme*, *op. cit.*, p. 232. I will get back to this debate in chapter 6, because it expresses for the first time with total clarity the goal-setting of the opposition between property and labor, which the social state in the beginning of the twentieth century attempted to overcome by installing a kind of social property founded on security and public services.
99. Cited in G. Debove, *Histoire du travail en France*, *op. cit.*, p. 129-131.
100. Cited in J. Leroy, *le Peuple du Havre et son histoire*, Le Havre, 1962, t. I, p. 221.
101. S. and B. Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism*, London, 1920, p. 53.
102. E. P. Thompson, *La Formation de la classe ouvrière anglaise*, *op. cit.*, chapter XIV. For a synthesis on this question in France, see M. Perrot, "Ouvriers et machines au XIXe siècle, in *Recherches*, # 32-33, September 1978.
103. Note however that Arlette Farge displays manifestations of popular joy in Paris at the occasion of the suppression of the jurors by Turgot in 1776 (*la Vie fragile, pouvoirs et solidarités à Paris*, Paris, Hachette, 1986). But the sense of these popular reactions is doubtlessly not simple. Is it about celebrating the liberty of labor as such or a victory over old privileges and the Court party?
104. Cited in M. Garden, *Lyon et les Lyonnais*, *op. cit.*, p. 341.
105. See A. Soboul, *les Sans-Culottes*, *op. cit.*, and G. Rudé, *les Foules dans la Révolution française*, trad. fr. Paris, Maspero, 1982. The Comité du salut public ceded to the popular pressure on the maximum of food, to the regret of the moderates, but instituted at the same time the maximum salary. This last measure explains to some extent the lack of enthusiasm among the revolutionary crowds when defending the Montagnard left during Thermidor, and Robespierre's failure.
106. Cited in M. Bouvier-Ajam, *Histoire du travail en France*, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 707. Note however that Marat's argumentation is not economic, but political. He certainly denounces the employers who "took away from the innumerable class of workers and laborers the right to assemble with the goal of deliberating on their interests, under pretext that these assemblies could revive the corporatism that had been abolished." But this is because "they wanted to isolate the citizens and prevent them from tackling together public affairs." (*l'Ami du peuple*, 18 juin 1791). In fact the goal of the Le Chapelier law was political as well as economic: to ban the societies and clubs whose action was preventing the stabilization of the new regime, and history will confirm the gravity of this danger. But I am only concerned here with the economic and social effects of the Le Chapelier law.
107. P. Rosanvallon, *le Capitalisme utopique*, *op. cit.* See also D. Meuret, "A Genealogy of Political Economy," *Economy and Society*, London, vol. 17, no. 2, May 1988.

108. R. Kosellek, *le Règne de la critique*, trad. fr. Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1979.
109. F. Braudel, *Civilisation Matérielle, économie et capitalisme, Xve-XVIIIe siècle*, t. III, "Le temps du monde," Paris, A. Colin, 1967, p. 11.
110. P. Chaunu, *l'Histoire, science sociale*, op. cit.
111. C. Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution*, op. cit
112. Remember that most historians today agree that the industrial revolution occurred in the 1700s in England. Which, of course, does not mean that it happened at once, since it had been prepared by centuries of slow transformations. It does not mean either that it imposed itself with hegemony over its geographic location. The "industrial revolution" even occurs simultaneously with a development accrued from the "proto-industry"; see previous chapter. The future is hidden. This is why it is so difficult for contemporaries to decipher it under the permanences.
113. K. Polyani, *la Grande Transformation*, op. cit., 2nd part, chapter I.
114. C. Bloch, A. Tuetey, *Procès-verbaux et rapports du Comité de mendicité*, op. cit., "Troisième Rapport," p. 381. In the same spirit, Leroy d'Allarde, author of a February 1791 report which formulates the propositions taken up by the Le Chapelier law, writes: "the soul of commerce is industry, the soul of industry is liberty. Would one fear the multiplication of workers? Their number is always a function of the population, or, which is the same thing, of the consumption needs" (cited in M. Bouvier-Ajam, *Histoire du travail en France*, op. cit., t. II, p. 25).
115. E. J. Sieyès, *Ecrits politiques*, op. cit., p. 81. Individuals who have no support and no resources are not able to "enter into society," to make up a collective; they are nothing but a collection of "bipeds"; this is doubtlessly one of the first explicit formulations of the theme of "negative individualism," whose importance will be stressed in the conclusion.
116. On the consequences of this political discrimination, see O. Lecour Grandmaison, *les citoyennetés en révolution, 1789-1794*, PhD thesis in political science, University of Paris I, 1991, and P. Rosanvallon, *le Sacre du Citoyen*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993.
117. Loustalot, *les Révolutions de Paris*, nr. 17, cited in J. Bart, "Le prolétaire présent/absent," papers of the colloquium *la Revolution française et les processus de socialisation de l'homme*, University of Rouen, Editions Messidor, 1988, p. 402.
118. Cited in A. Olivier, *Saint-Just ou la force des choses*, Paris, 1954, p. 18.
119. Reported by I. Buonarotti, *la Conspiration pour l'égalité dite de Babeuf*, Editions sociales.
120. A. R. J. Turgot, *Formation et distribution des richesses*, Editions Schelle, Paris, t. II, p. 537, cited in H. Hauser, *les Debuts du capitalisme*, op. cit.
121. T. R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, first edition, London, 1798.
122. "Those who earn their living by daily work have no other motivation than their needs, to make themselves available for service; needs that would be wise to assuage, but wrong to want to heal completely. [...] In a free nation which prohibits slavery, the most secure riches depend on the multitude of the working poor" (B. de Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, 5th edition, London, 1728, p. 213 and p. 228).
123. A. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Vol. I, Ch. 5.
124. E. Burke, "Thoughts and Details" (published in 1795), in *Works*, Vol. V, Boston, 1869, p. 142, cited in R. Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry*, New York, 1956, p. 75.
125. Two complementary hypotheses to account for this difference: in England, the industrial revolution, more advanced, makes it easier to perceive sooner some of its social consequences; more flexible political and social contexts thwart less openly the promotion of the new regime of exchanges.

Part 2

From Contract to Status

Introduction to Part 2: From Contract to Status

The upheavals at the end of the eighteenth century liberated access to labor, but they did nothing, or at least precious little, to improve the conditions of wage labor. The worker must subsequently, in the passionate words of Turgot, “sell his suffering to others,” for what precious little goodwill it will bring him. The commodification of the relationship of labor does not remedy the indignity of wage-labor so much as to lower it even further, such that if it is not the lowest status in society, then at least it ranks among the very lowest. In truth, there does exist beneath it an even more despised class of people, who live by their wits and crimes alone, but the line separating them is difficult to draw: we will speak presently of these “dangerous classes,” as one segment of the laboring classes comes to be known. The birth of a new status of wage-labor, beginning with the commodification of work, must therefore be seen as the absolute ground zero in terms of the condition of wage-labor, at least if one understands by this the acknowledgement of a status to which rights and guarantees are attached. Deprived of these tutelary supports, the condition of wage-labor is not only one of vulnerability. Indeed it will rapidly become altogether unlivable.

Consequently, that which was proposed after the ancien régime as the modern response to the social question does not prove to be any real answer at all. Indeed the principle of the free access to labor gives way to a new era of conflict and turmoil. The social question is reformulated in response to the new seeds of instability that hover like shadows over economic development. Left to its own devices, the process of industrialization engenders a monster: pauperism. How does one find a compromise between the market and labor that can maintain social peace and remedy the disaffiliation of the masses created by industrialization? This problem will become that of integrating the working classes. But the solutions offered will not prove

so unambiguous. All the systems that are suggested—ranging from individual initiative to the liberty of exchange—will be, at least initially, proposed as ways of keeping public power out of these matters. They institute new forms of tutelage in order to bolster the contract, reconstruct from the extra-salarial something other than wage-labor itself. Patronage, whether philanthropic or patriarchal, not only imposes forms of personal dependency. It represents a veritable model of political governability that seeks to reconstruct the entire universe of work on the basis of a system of moral obligations (chapter 5).

Only after its relative failure and discredit do new strategies tied to the state come to be imposed. The welfare state assumes responsibility for the perverse effects of a purely economic logic and the insufficiency of moral regulations. It is forced to uphold a conception of security (social) whose protections partake less of property than of work. However this is not the expression of a political voluntarism. To the contrary, the specific provisions instituted in the name of solidarity are as much means to avoid the directly political transformation of the structures of society. They ensure both that each stays in his place, but at least that everyone has a place. In terms of making the social, or making the social economy: the welfare state, both in its philosophy as well as in its practical implications, represents a kind of compromise.

It is a compromise between the interests of the marketplace and the demands of labor: the bargains struck between these different “social partners” are a function of the different positions they occupy with respect to one another. Consequently, these have taken on two very different forms before the contemporary period. The first is a minimalist version under the Third Republic, corresponding to a wage-earning condition that remained extremely vulnerable to the pressures of a free market that was largely left to regulate itself according to its own logic (chapter 4). The second was a more extensive version, after the Keynesian compromise that sought to incorporate economic growth, semi-full employment, and the development of the right to work into the structure of industrial society. Its margin of error is thus much greater than a “virtuous circle” that seemed to make compatible the interests of production and those of the producers. Almost all the means of growth, on the dual levels of productivity and “social settlements,” allowed for the belief that even those who obtain the means will nevertheless have more of them in the future.

These conditions are no longer those we live under today. Alongside labor, and beside social protections, a process of deterioration appears to have taken place, and the effects of this stem additionally from the vicious circle of the time. Probably we have not even realized the extent to which our conception of security is a product of the kind of organization of the conditions wage-labor imposed by industrial society. Moreover, at what point is labor more than just labor: when it is scorned, the modes of socialization that are associated with it and the forms of integration that it nourishes risk being shattered? What becomes of the welfare state at this new juncture of time? It can no longer merely content itself with filling in the residual “gaps” in social protection, nor continue its integrative policies of regulating inequalities and equalizing opportunities. This is the conclusion we must draw from the transformations in progress on the map of organizing—or disorganizing—work, as well as the structuring—or even “destructuring”—of sociability. Today they demand the reformulation of the social question in terms of the repudiation of mass vulnerability that we will attempt to describe in this work (chapter 8).

However, the welfare state remains our inheritance, and it is undoubtedly our future. Our heritage: we still live in the midst of its powerful systems of protection, and it lends uniqueness to our condition. This vulnerability even in the midst of social protections, and alongside social protections, is no longer the same as the vulnerability we witnessed in the first half of the nineteenth century. But the welfare state is also our future. Putting it in historical perspective will reveal that it is the form—if indeed the mutable form—assumed by the compromise between that economic dynamism demanded by the quest for profits and the sentiment of protection necessary for social solidarity. Can one even imagine a society without such a compromise, and what would distinguish it from that which has prevailed until now? Could we tolerate a return to the kind of permanent social insecurity existing before its protections arose? If not, we must renegotiate the relationship between the market and labor developed in the matrix of industrial society when it became hegemonic. We must demonstrate the following: that this social history has developed unnoticed since the nineteenth century, that it is at least the partial disconnect between security and property, and the subtle connection between security and work. Unless we are able to imagine that we are beyond work altogether, and consent to return

to a world lacking in social security, then a new version of this spectacle must now be invented.

5

Politics Without a State

The ancien régime deployed active public interventions in the social realm: these included policies that struggled against begging and vagabondage, royal supports for the traditional organization of work, initiatives led by royal power to create asylums, public hospitals, “charity workshops,” poorhouses, and so on. In England, these public initiatives allowed the construction of a virtual system of relief sustained by a mandatory tax. Even in England, the political scene during the first third of the nineteenth century is animated by a great debate for or against the abolition of the “poor laws,” that is to say, “legal charity,” which in principle guarantees a minimum income to all indigents. And just when, motivated by the critique of the economists, Malthus first and foremost, those parties in favor of abolishing these laws appeared poised to win out, it was in fact a new public system of relief that was put in place by the reformist legislation of 1834. This enacted a very strong system, centered on the workhouse—that is to say, on the forced work by the poor under what were often inhumane conditions. But it was a national, centralized system, which appeared homogenous, and which was to be financed by public funds.¹

No such thing came about in France. Indeed there was hardly any great public debate at all, before 1848, on matters of poverty and work.² Indeed there were constant references dismissive of the “legal charity” of the English, accused both of being an exorbitant financial expense and encouraging a mentality of dependency amongst the poor. This situation is paradoxical. For the first half of the nineteenth century is in effect marked by a growing awareness of a form of misery that appeared to accompany the rise of wealth and the progress of civilization. The social question is posed anew because these “new poor” are now situated at the heart of society;

they form the spearhead of its productive capacity. Can a society therefore remain indifferent to the threat of its breakdown?

Society in the first half of the nineteenth century was not oblivious to this. It marshaled some novel strategies that bear clear signs of their “social” aspirations. Thus one can “make the social,” and go sufficiently far in this sense, without meaning by this “the state” or even, to the contrary, invoking its intervention. Paralleling the contracts that regulate market relations and the social relationships between equals, some new tutelages and notable dependencies must recreate networks of interdependency between superiors and inferiors, between the lower orders and the solicitous guardians of the common good. An independent fault, however, and undoubtedly a contradiction, at the heart of these provisions comes from their remaining sophisticated: their moral efficaciousness presupposes the obedience of those whom one expects to moralize, and thus perpetuates the condition of a social minority of subjects. This is such that the history of a social “policy without a state” also includes the misadventures of a moral conception of the social that will be taken up by the state.

The Miserable

The social history of the nineteenth century opens onto an enigma, the strange worry over a novel situation:

When one surveys the various countries of Europe, one is struck by an extraordinary and apparently inexplicable spectacle. The nations that appear the most miserable are those who, in reality, contain the fewest indigents, and amongst the peoples whose opulence you admire, a part of the population is obliged to live by having recourse to the gifts of others.³

Alexis de Tocqueville—who, like almost all the social thinkers of the era, also produced his obligatory “Report on Pauperism”—pursued his thesis by means of a comparison between Portugal and England. Portugal is what we might call a pre-industrial society, or *ancien régime*, the antithesis of an opulent society, but where massive poverty is scarcely visible because it is an integrated poverty, taken care of by the primary networks of peasant sociability or by the crude forms of charity directed by the Catholic Church. England is closer to the America or Japan of its day. The industrial revolution fantastically multiplied its wealth and gave it a considerable head start in Europe, and thus over predominantly agricultural

countries like Portugal. Nonetheless, poverty is widespread, massive and nagging.

Tocqueville did not prove wholly original in this regard. Eugène Buret, for example, indulges in the same observation, and proceeds to the same historical conclusion: "In reality, it is too unfortunately true that poverty follows precisely the different peoples in their wealth and civilization. If one consults the statistics, it is apparent that nations occupy virtually the same rank in the scale of misery as in that of wealth." And he adds that the word "pauperism" expressing this new poverty is "borrowed from England, which undoubtedly deserved the honor of naming this new evil that it possessed before any other nation."⁴

"New poverty," in fact, and which we had forgotten. Its discovery could appear literally staggering, for it marked an absolute contrast with respect to "utopian capitalism," in the optimistic liberal perspective of the eighteenth century. This indigence, which "under the new and sadly energetic name of pauperism overruns entire classes of the population," said Villeneuve-Bargemont, "tends to progressively increase even as does industrial production. This is no accident, but the forced condition of a great segment of the population." This is why "pauperism is a menace to the social and political order."⁵ In fact, it poses the social question anew.

Two main characteristics of this pauperism allow us to grasp the novelty of this reformulation. On the one hand, it finds itself as the counterpoint of the liberal thought developed throughout the entire eighteenth century, for which "a man is not poor because he has nothing, but because he does not work" (Montesquieu). Thus we must "open the trades," "direct the means of work" (La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt). This is the result. We are now confronted with an indigence that is not due to the absence of work but rather stems from the new system of work itself, that is to say, from "liberated" labor. This is the dread spawn of industrialization. In the words of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, who also proposed his own program for exterminating pauperism:

Industry, that source of riches, has today neither rules, nor organization, nor an end. It is a machine that functions without a regulator; it does not matter by which motor strength is being used. Industry crushes in its wheels men as well as resources, depopulates country sides, fills airless spaces with population, weakens mind as well as body, and later throws out on the street when it does not know what else to do with them, men who have sacrificed their strength, youth, life to enrich it. True Saturn of work, industry consumes its children and lives from their deaths.⁶

Pauperism challenges modernity to overcome its infantile disease. But we must wonder whether it is really an infantile disease or the future destiny of industrial societies? Beyond their numerous condemnations of the phenomena, authors who attempted a precise analysis, such as Eugène Buret, demonstrate that pauperism is the direct consequence of the new organization of labor, which will become a permanent factor of social insecurity: “these populations of workers, more and more harried, do not even have the security of always being employed, industry which has appointed them, asks them to come when it needs them and as soon as it can do without them, it gives them up without any guilt.”⁷ Literally, it is the precariousness of employment that is in question here. Buret also underlines the importance of unemployment, which he calls “unemployments” and analyses specific situations, such as that of hand weavers, for whom “unemployments are more frequent than any other industry, and, at the first signs of economic disturbance, the hand weavers no longer have any work.”⁸ Society also denounces the lack of qualification: “Most industrial functions do not constitute professions, but only temporary services that the first to arrive can accomplish, and this is so true that a six year old child is hired for the use of his body upon his first entry into the factory.”⁹ He also underscores at the same time the significant precariousness—the term employed—which is caused by this lack of skills and the important consequences of using this kind of labor: “Mechanical industry multiplies unskilled workers, it is unskilled workers who are preferably recruited, and this is encouraged mainly for production.”¹⁰

In this matter, Buret has engaged in the comprehensive analysis of the vulnerability of industrial workers. What makes the situation serious is that there is nothing accidental or random about it. It does not confine itself to archaic or marginal groups of the labor system, but stems from modern demands of productivity themselves. Precariousness of labor, a lack of skills, alternations between periods of work and non-work, unemployment—all these characterize the overall condition of the nascent working classes: “At least, one will not dispute that, in this actual regime, work is without any security, any guarantee like without protection.”¹¹

Another characteristic of pauperism is its novel character. It historically represents an entirely new category of the people’s misfortune, not only the effect of material poverty but also of an even deeper moral degradation. It is the king of this new anthropological

condition that emerges as one product of industrialization: a kind of new Barbarism, which is less the savagery that antedated civilization than the invention of a state of de-socialization unique to modern life, and particularly urban life.¹²

Buret, nevertheless very critical of the processes of industrialization, talks about people who “rot from filth,” “who regressed into savage life through exhaustion.” In this way they inspire “more disgust than pity,” for “they are barbarians.”¹³ These judgments are mainly informed by descriptions of the lifestyles of working families who are packed into the suburbs of industrial towns, or by the promiscuity of all sexes and ages, the total lack of hygiene, constituting what we might call an etiology of this new moral depravation. One must conjure up these images of “miasma,” “ghettos,” spaces without any differentiation, virtual swamps of poverty in which, like manure, are nourished such vices as violence and alcoholism for men, illicit behavior and prostitution for women, and perversity among children. They give the reader a sense of standing in contemplation of an entirely new historical condition:

Misery and the subversion of intelligence, poverty and relief and the soul, the weakening and decomposition of will and energy, a torpor of consciousness and personality, in one word the moral element, sensibly, and often even mortally affected. Here is the essential, fundamental and absolutely base character of the new pauperism.¹⁴

Thus pauperism represents a sort of natural immorality created through the complete degradation of the lifestyle of workers and their families. Emile Morel even goes so far as to construct a novel concept of “degeneracy,” which shall have a promising future, by observing textile workers and members of their families institutionalized at Saint-Yon, near Rouen. Degeneracy expresses a degradation of the human species, hereditary but not intrinsic to humanity. Rather, it is created by a social environment whose deplorable effects on working populations Morel is the first to notice.¹⁵

Such an attitude is not automatically or uniformly the reaction to poverty at beginnings of industrialization. Still, in 1892, in the *Dictionnaire d'économie politique* of Leon Say and Joseph Chailley, which was the authority of the time, the article “pauperism,” written by Emile Chevalier offers the following judgment:

Pauperism is a new condition, as much for its causes as in its character. Its origin stems from the industrial organization of our contemporary environment; it resides in the ways of being and living of manufacture workers [...] It assumes the destruction of morals, a decrease and corruption of mental capabilities.¹⁶

In these assessments we may find what might be called an anti-worker racism, widespread amongst the bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century. “Laborious classes, dangerous classes.” Louis Chevalier quotes numerous texts—from Lecouturier: “Paris is nothing more than a camp of nomads”; from Jules Breyniat: “the bourgeoisie shall be the victim of these barbarians”; from Thiers: “the vile multitude which has overturned every Republic”; from Hausmann: “this sod of nomads,” etc.¹⁷—which place these populations “outside society, outside the law, like *outlaws*” (the word is this time from Buret).¹⁸ However, Louis Chevalier shows very well that this dominant theme of the “laborious classes, dangerous classes” is not only that of criminality, even if criminality represents its extreme limiting condition: “the danger is not one of crime, it lies in the relationship between the lower echelons and the working world.”¹⁹ Compared to the secular portrayals of “beggary,” its novelty holds in the consciousness of a working condition so degraded that it pushes entire populations to the very threshold of asociability.

In his work *Les Misérables*, Victor Hugo set forth a vivid image of this condition that alone is probably worth several works of social history.²⁰ Jean Valjean, Gavroche, Thenardier, are “miserables”: a continuum of behaviors that runs from heroism to abjection, but which also share one thing in common, namely, poverty. They all partake of this new, “modern” condition, as men of the people, which is no longer simply a matter of an integrated poverty nor “of the primitive poverty of Corsicans or lower Bretons” evoked by Eugène Buret. According to the fitting observation of Louis Chevalier, the word “miserable” comes to “be applied more and more frequently, more and more totally, to all those who live on the uncertain and constantly shifting border between poverty and crime. He [Hugo] not only distinguishes the two different conditions, but [he also and more importantly] shows the path from one to the other, this social deterioration which we are describing: an intermediate and dynamic condition, rather than a fixed state.”²¹

But all the ‘bourgeois’ see the “miserables” as through the eyes of Victor Hugo. They would rather have those of Javert. This mixture of contempt and fear that shapes their attitudes toward the poor is the expression of a fundamental social antagonism that may very well assume the form of a struggle to the death. We see this attitude reflected in, among many others, this text published by *Le Journal de Debats* after the revolt of silk workers in Lyon in 1831:

Each resident lives in his workshop like planters living in colonies amidst their slaves; the sedition in Lyon is of a similar kind to the insurrection of Santo Domingo... Barbarians threatening society are not all to be found in Caucasus, nor in the steppes of Tartary. Rather, they are in the suburbs of our manufacturing cities... It is necessary that the middle classes know where things stand; they must know their position.²²

Class struggle was not an idea invented by the “collectivists” alone. It is also formulated by conservatives and moderates who, at the beginning of the 1830’s, became aware of the existence of an imminent risk of social dissociation, for industrial workers form “a nation within the nation, which we begin to designate with a new word: the industrial proletariat.”²³

This shock experienced by contemporaries when confronted by pauperism, as well as the reactions that it causes, must in and of itself cause some astonishment on our part today. First, because in reality the phenomenon does not have the monumental character attributed to it in these descriptions and fears. Approximately, in 1848, the working population of France may be estimated at 4.4 million persons. But the majority of these workers remain inscribed in rural or semi-rural environments where traditional social regulations are still in place. We must remind ourselves that at the time, three quarters of the population live in the country. Even for those who are already urbanized, “France is, in the first half of the nineteenth century, a country of small towns where urban life is scarcely distinguishable from rural life, and indeed is maintained by it.”²⁴ Geographical mobility is very limited: even by 1856, only 11 percent of the French reside in a Department other than the one they were born in.²⁵

Not only do we find the persistence of traditional ways of life. But labor itself continues to be organized by means of a decentralized system. The processes of industrial concentration were extremely slow, and most large-scale agglomerations of workers date only from what one is sometimes called “the second industrial revolution,” at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁶ Until then, workers in large-scale industry remain minorities compared to those employed by small businesses employing no more than ten persons.²⁷ Even in these industrial regions, such as the major textile centers of Reims, Mulhouse, or Roubaix, at least 75 percent of the weaving is done beyond the factory walls. In the case of mining, as for example in Carmaux, determined efforts in this direction throughout the nineteenth cen-

tury will not succeed in eliminating the fact that the majority of miners are rural workers.²⁸ We should recall here (cf. chapter 3), that the “proto-industry” of the rural artisanry is not an atavism or survival from an age long past; rather, these proto-industries continue to expand even at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Consequently, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the tentative emergence of large-scale industry had not yet displaced the two earlier systems of organizing labor: the rural artisanry and the urban organization of labor in small workshops. We may estimate at only 1.2 million the number of full time “industrial workers,”²⁹ of which only roughly half work in those large-scale industrial concentrations that have done so much to inspire the colorful descriptions of pauperism.³⁰

Was pauperism then simply a fantasy created out of the fears of the wealthy? Recent historical works have reconsidered the catastrophic portrayals of pauperism in the nineteenth century: they might be the effect of a kind of ethnocentrism of class, with their authors – elites for the most part—expressing through these descriptions their incomprehension of popular mores and behaviors, which are reduced in these portrayals to monstrous perversions. This amounts to a double revisionism: of the people who are not as bad as has been alleged, and of the wealthy, who are exonerated from being ruthless in exploiting a situation which was at the beginning not even so bad. Such a rereading of the history of the dawn of industrialization is not new. It appears as early as the middle of the nineteenth century, especially in circles defending the purist principles of economic liberalism, such as the *Journal des Economistes*:

What have we done for fifteen years, if it is only to be presented continuously with gloomy portrayals of the condition of workers, by accusing first the government and then the middles classes of oppressing and exploiting workers and constraining them to an endless poverty? It is not with such declarations that we can arrive at social reforms.³¹

But even if they invite us to moderate certain extreme portrayals of pauperism, these reevaluations are not entirely persuasive. All “exaggerations” aside, it is indisputable that hundreds of thousands of men, women and children worked in the earliest industrial concentrations for up to fourteen or sixteen hours per day, during their short lives, for a meager salary, entirely abandoned to the arbitrariness of their bosses and reduced to the condition of machines re-

tained to make money, only to be thrown away as soon as they ceased to produce. Moreover, one can only be struck by the similarity of descriptions offered by all observers who took the time to see—ranging from “moderates” like Doctor Villermé or Eugène Buret to “radicals” like Robert Owen or Friedrich Engels.³² They also cite numerous testimonies by health officers, religious officials, or even official reports from investigations whose authenticity is in no way suspect. Observing the start of these processes in England, Jean-Baptiste Say, who is certainly not to be suspected of political extremism, already wrote in 1815: “In England, a worker, according to the family he has and despite all his most estimable efforts, can not make three quarters and sometimes only half of his expenses.”³³

Incontestably, pauperism is a social construction. But any social reality is a social construction. It is also incontestable that extreme descriptions of pauperism are only applicable to a minority of workers during the first half of the nineteenth century. But this observation does not refute the historical importance of the phenomenon. Before the industrial revolution, vagabonds also represented only a minority when compared to the mass vulnerability of the working people. Before as well as after the process of industrialization, the social question is formulated in terms of the condition of a single, ostensibly marginal sector of the population. Nevertheless, the question itself encompasses the whole society.

Indeed, to take seriously the social question of pauperism allows us to make sense of one of the fundamental themes of social history during the first half of the nineteenth century: *the competition between two different models of industrialization*. The former appears “soft,” in the sense that it is part of a movement of secular transformations that seems to unfold without any dramatic side effects. So, in the city, it comes to pass in the context of the small enterprises of an artisanal variety, and William Sewell has clearly revealed the vigour of this system well before the nineteenth century. In the countryside, proto-industry similarly appears to reconcile economic development with the maintaining of traditional tutelage. Its familial and rural embeddedness perpetuates intimate networks of social protection and primary sociability and seems to be able to avoid the problem of disaffiliation. Alain Dewerpe speaks in this matter of a “proletarianization within the family”³⁴: the passage to complete wage-labor often takes place in the context of a domestic economy where the division of tasks is effected within the famil-

ial cell. This system of labor prevents in this way familial dissociation and slows down the exodus from the countryside. Industrialization seems possible in the protective framework of family and village, apparently without calling into question their traditional systems of social regulation. This paradoxical condition was emphasized by Hans Medick, who unveils “the Janus-face of proto-industrialization”³⁵: on the one side, these workers remain affiliated to the rural community; but they are at the same time virtually deterritorialized, insofar as their salary is determined without reference to local prices, but rather as a function of that national or even international competition which defines the values of their production. Up until Le Play (or even until the Vichyist state) numerous social reformers will entertain the dream of returning to the countryside a significant number of workers who would rediscover, upon their re-inscription into the rural patrimony, the values of family, morality and religion.

It is with respect to this model that modern forms of large-scale industrial concentration assume the form of a tragic innovation. As Eugène Buret complains:

Modern industry introduced into the condition of the laboring classes a shift whose significance is that of a horrible innovation: it replaced work in the family with factory work; it brusquely interrupted the silence and peace of domestic life to give it the agitation and noise of life in common. No provisions were made for this transition, and generations who were raised only for the quiet existence of family life were thrown without any preparation into workshops; men, women and children are piled up by the thousands into large-scale manufactories where they will have to work side by side and mixed together for fourteen or fifteen hours each day.³⁶

This is obviously an idealized conception of work among family members and amidst the charms of rural life.³⁷ Yet it is no less the case that this opposition between a domestic economy and a “Manchesterian model” of industrial concentration represented to the eyes of contemporaries a virtual crossword puzzle to be uncoded in order to cast light on the novelty and uniqueness of the new forms taken on by the process of industrialization. In 1829 this opposition is formulated by *Annali universali di statistica*, in terms that do not just apply to Italy alone:

Italy has a calling for one kind of industry, for example silk weaving. But this sort of industry is not the same as the workshops of Birmingham, Manchester or Paris. One has to distinguish between industry and industry. That one which is closest to agricultural functions, and which does not permanently condemn a multitude to the precarious

fate of factories and workshops. This one will always be the most innocent, the least disagreeable for the State and the least burdensome to bear for the populations.³⁸

In the first half of the nineteenth century, proto-industry has begun its slow process of decline,³⁹ and will shortly be supplanted by large-scale industry. After the fact, what appears to us as self-evident is for contemporaries merely a future threat. This eventuality—that the new organization of labor with its new social consequences might become the future of the world—frightens them:

The widespread diffusion of manufactures throughout the entire country generates a new character within its inhabitants, and since this character is formed according to a principle which is totally against the happiness of industry, and against happiness in general, it will produce the most pitiful and most enduring pains, unless laws intervene and give a contrary direction to this tendency.⁴⁰

One can now appreciate why pauperism should be the crystallizing point of the new social question. First and foremost pauperism is an immense deception that justifies a check on the liberal optimism of the eighteenth century. Despite its quantitatively limited character, it does not just present a sectorally confined problem, because it represents the new historical given of the beginning of the nineteenth century, a veritable break with respect to the past. This is obviously a change in the organization of labor. But at its worst this is also something that seems capable of generating a new-model man. In this sense, it may represent the most obvious feature of modernity. In reality, it does in fact raise the problem of the meaning of modernity and the fundamental threat that it brings along with it: the danger that—unless one renounces industrialization—economic progress will lead to complete social dissociation. In that sense, if it seems to be the target as previously was vagabondage—taking one part as the whole, one particular population as the point of crystallization of the entire social question—then the problem appears more significant. The vagabond was like a prowler who remained at the periphery of social space, and his misfortune was that he found himself living outside of the productive order. With pauperism, however, we find the danger of a mass disaffiliation inscribed *at the very heart* of the wealth-creating process.

Perhaps pauperism was indeed a fantasy. But such a fantasy carried with it a profound historical, social and anthropological truth. We might digress about how many were really victims of industrialization, or try to temporize their misfortune with statistics on the

growth of wages. Such a discussion may be necessary, but arguments over numbers do a poor job of capturing what's really at stake in this human drama. To complement the scholarly speeches that I've tried to interpret, I'd also mention, after Hugo and Dickens, a poet who was also a serious political man. Alphonse de Lamartine draws from the modern condition of disaffiliation a sketch that may appear a bit too "lyrical," but which nonetheless has the evocative power of a scene out of Abel Gance. As in a Napoleonic epic, his speech of December 14, 1844 to the Chamber of Deputies, on the work law:

Armies of workers whose labor, as immense as the captains who employ them, as daring as the speculation that commands them, as mobile as the fashions that consume them, has none of the steadiness of the domestic economy. The major factories of the Loire, Rhone, Alsace, Vosges, North call or recruit 6 or 700,000 families, instruments of the great industries such as silk, cardboard, sheets, iron; a people outside of the people, a nation within the nation, a displaced race which has for its sole capital its arms, for land its trade, for a home only a borrowed roof, for homeland a workshop, for life a wage. It is a floating caste whose frameworks are broken, who only know one thing to do and which, when its only special skill and livelihood are lacking, spreads itself, effusing itself upon the nation in the form of conspiracies, riots, vagabondage, vices, leprosy, poverty. These are what one rightly calls proletarians, a race destined to populate the land, a species of slaves to industry, who serve under the most difficult master, that of hunger.⁴¹

In the midst of these "exaggerations," a paradox, even in this day, merits some comment: the desire to construct a competitive and productive apparatus puts in a condition of quasi-exclusion those who are at the very heart of the dynamic of modernization. The weight of the question of pauperism not only obtains in what we might observe, whether in the nineteenth century or even today, as the "pauperization" of certain social categories. More specifically, it invites us to ponder the relationship between the reconstruction of the order of labor and a mass de-socialization. Pauperism is a tragedy that vividly illustrates this boomerang effect, whereby what appears to be simply at the margins of a society weakens its overall balance.

A Return to Tutelage

What should we do when confronted by the dereliction of the wage-earning condition? Or when faced with other forms of indigence and other risks of social dissociation, such as increasing rates of illegitimate births, numbers of abandoned children and infanti-

cides?⁴² According to Villeneuve-Bargemont, in 1834 France records 198,000 beggars and 1,600,000 indigents,⁴³ numbers that potentially underestimate the seriousness of the situation because not all indigents are reported. Still, according to Villeneuve-Bargemont, 22,000 out of 70,000 inhabitants in Lilles would be incapable of meeting their needs. In Paris, a report from the prefect of the Seine estimates in 1836 the number of indigents to be one out of every twelve inhabitants. Buret contests this number, and after elaborate calculations using death rates in hospitals ends up with a figure of one indigent out of every 4.2 inhabitants of Paris and one out of nine for the rest of the country.⁴⁴ All these estimates are debatable. But Louis Chevalier, who also discusses these numbers, nevertheless concludes,

Monstrous and permanent poverty: exacerbating at the worst moments of the crisis, and leading to starvation, disease and the death of nearly half the population of Paris, that is to say, almost the entirety of the laboring population, but also striking in ordinary periods and without ever falling lower than a quarter of the total population, which is to say a sizeable part of the laboring population.⁴⁵

Faced with these conditions, the responses initiated in the first half of the nineteenth century appear at first glance to be merely derisory. The ambitious programs of the Revolutionary Assemblies remained a dead letter. In their place, the former systems of confessional assistance are reconstituted and revamped, virtually to the position that they occupied before the Revolution: in 1848, 25,000 religious persons manage 1,800 charitable associations (there were 27,000 in 1789). Besides this older system of charities, there are two dimensions to that which takes the place of public services. First, the system of hospitals and nursing homes, with a very complex administrative system, but placed under the control of municipalities, is mainly concerned with disabled indigents.⁴⁶ It is poorly organized and archaic: even by 1869, 1,224 out of 1,557 hospitals and nursing homes date back from the *ancien régime*. Second, what social services exist beyond the hospital are mainly the charitable offices founded in 1796. Usually put under the authority of the prefecture, they are in fact communal organizations with precarious sources of funding (a 10 percent tax on shows and, of course, individual donations). In 1871, a study reveals that charitable bureaus exist in only 13,367 of the 35,389 French communes, with a wide disparity according to their local circumstances.⁴⁷ Recall also the

existence of a dozen or so special organizations, sort of institutions for deaf, blind or mute, orphanages and asylums (ostensibly one in each Department, according to the law of 1838). This is how we may assess the public actions taken on behalf of the indigent. This assistance remains, with two exceptions (the insane and abandoned children), remedial and under the responsibility of local authorities (the Communes). Such a system has its defenders even throughout the nineteenth century. In the *Nouveau Dictionnaire d'économie politique* edited by Léon Say and Joseph Chailley (1892), Emile Chevalier, after having underlined the complementarity of a hospital system and charitable offices, and admitting their deficiencies in practice, nonetheless feels obliged to add, "This system would be adequate if only it were generalized."⁴⁸

Thus we find an extremely paltry public or para-public system of relief, which contrasts vividly with the extensive "legal charity" existing at the time in England. However, this system is very far from guaranteeing the entirety of provisions for looking after the problem of social indigence. Obviously, one has to add the nebulousness of private or faith-based assistance, religious institutions of good works organized at the parish level. However, a new and wholly original conception of social relief mobilizes many social elites to bring to bear a tutelary power toward the unfortunate and to take upon themselves a charitable vocation that minimizes state intervention. Thus, France's virtual opposition to the development of "legal charity" has as its counterpart certain complex strategies rooted in the concomitant search for non-statist answers to the social question.

The first spokesman for this attitude, which will predominate until the end of the nineteenth century, is probably the Conventionaire Delecroy. He managed to obtain, immediately after Thermidor, a suspension of the law of the 23 Messidor An II on the sale of hospital goods. Under the Directorate, he abolishes it definitively and offers on this occasion a general plan for organizing assistance. This is a brief but dense text, which already contains all the essentials of the liberal position in social matters.⁴⁹

The plan starts with a condemnation of "the profound morass that an exaggerated philanthropy has left us in since the Constituent Assembly," which is to say, the imposition of the right to assistance, an expression of a "mania for leveling and generalization in the distribution of relief."⁵⁰ Thus exits the "inviolable and sacred debt"

of the nation toward citizens in need. Above and beyond the fact that this provision has been financially costly, it contradicts the liberal principles of government. "Government owes nothing to those who do not serve it. The poor have no right other than to a general commiseration."⁵¹ A principled position indeed, and one that will be frequently called upon by liberal thinkers as a concerted strategy for limiting state involvement in matters of social relief. Adolphe Thiers says nothing more than this in his famous report of 1851 on assistance and foresight:

It is crucial that this virtue [charity], when it becomes through its collective character, a public rather than a private virtue, does not lose its character of a virtue, that is to say, that it remains voluntary, spontaneous, and still freely done or not done, for otherwise it would cease to be a virtue and become instead a constraint, and indeed a disastrous constraint. If in effect, an entire class, instead of receiving, could demand, it would assume the role of the beggar who "asks" with gun in hand. This would give occasion to the most dangerous examples of violence.⁵²

However, this position is far more complex than might appear at first glance. For his part, Delecroy continues in this vein: "Supposing, as a principle, that the government can not itself be in charge of maintaining the poor; but rather, puts this under the safeguard of general commiseration and the trusteeship of the wealthy."⁵³ Thus, even in the context of a refusal to develop public policies, practices of "charity" are not excluded but to the contrary are recommended, even on the part of the government. What might their status be? François Ewald has argued that the adamant refusal on the part of liberals to provide relief as a matter of right was accompanied by a concern with putting in place some other means of regulating social problems.⁵⁴ The law is the guarantor of reciprocal relations between responsible and equal individuals in exchanges sanctioned by contract. On the other hand, practices of assistance take place in a framework of unequal exchanges. The indigent asks but cannot offer an equivalent counterpart for what he receives. His relationship with the benefactor is *beyond the sphere of law*. To legislate in these matters would be to meddle with the organization of civil society, or, in the language of the time "to legislate on morals." It would be to make of the whole of social relations a system of mandatory obligations, which offers a rather precocious definition of totalitarianism. Portalis says this almost explicitly, during preparatory discussions for the development of the Civil Code and Penal Code: "laws can do nothing without morals. But everything that is a matter of

morals ought not to be regulated by laws. A legislator who wished to comprehend in his code that which properly belongs to the sphere of morals, would be forced to confer too arbitrary a power upon those who would execute its regulations; he would imagine himself protecting virtue, but he would only be establishing tyranny."⁵⁵ And Portalis proposes this formula: "One governs poorly when one governs too much."⁵⁶

Nonetheless, the fact that the sphere of the law must be strictly circumscribed does not mean that the rest of social life could simply be left to the whims of the fantastic or arbitrary. Instead these matters should be entrusted to another kind of obligation altogether, just as strict but of a qualitatively different nature: that is, to the realm of *moral obligations*. The "moral" is not confined to the private. There is a *public morality* as well, that is to say, certain moral obligations that regulate our social relationships but which do not have behind them the sanction of the law. The task for liberalism will be to try to construct a complete social policy within an ethical environment, but not a political one. The moral, as Kant emphatically observed, represents the synthesis of freedom and obligation. The sphere of moral duties is extensive; it encompasses private relations, certain relationships between moral equals, familial relationships, and so on. But it also contains a specific domain, *relationships with the inferior classes*, which is to understand the whole collectivity that will constitute the "social" sector. This duty is a duty of protection, and this is made possible through the intermediary of that moral virtue of the public utility that we know as *charity*. As Duchâtel observed, "charity is a sort of tutelage."⁵⁷ Members of the inferior classes, such as children, are minors who do not have the capacity to take care of themselves. This is why "One must establish between the enlightened classes and the unenlightened, between people of quality and those of imperfect morality, certain protective relations which, in a thousand different forms, assume the character of a solicitous and voluntary patronage."⁵⁸ What is needed is a moral policy; or, in what amounts to saying the same thing, a social policy is necessarily of a moral nature, insofar as it addresses itself to groups in a position of minority. The analogy between peoples and children is the leitmotif of all those concerned with the fate of the lower classes: "the worker is a robust child, albeit an ignorant one, who needs as much governance and advice in proportion to the difficulty of his position."⁵⁹

The only positive sort of conduct is the exercise of a moral tutelage. In the words of Gérando, “poverty is to wealth what childhood is to maturity”:⁶⁰

It should not be, at least in our eyes, a matter of imagining a general system of industrial organization, as certain minds have called for, which is to say, a plan of developed established by the State. [...] We have more confidence in measures whose object will be to spread enlightenment, to encourage work by directing it, to establish friendly relations between capitalists, consumers and producers, and to provide by good faith alone patronage to the powerless or weak.⁶¹

Tutelage, patronage, “capacities” (Guizot) or “social authorities” (Le Play): these are the basic conceits of a plan of governmentality directed toward the lower classes. An answer to the social question that is at the same time both *political and non-statist* is feasible, if it is possible to tease out of these notions an order sufficiently powerful to avert the risk of dissociation which haunts society at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

This fear of social dissociation is entertained by virtually all the minds of the post-revolutionary era. There is a widely shared sentiment that the Revolution, in one sense, succeeded too well, and that by abolishing all intermediary bodies, it left a dangerous emptiness between the state and atomized individuals.⁶² The major question at the dawn of the nineteenth century is that of finishing the Revolution by repairing these broken social bonds. Napoleon, whom one would little expect to find in the company of Saint-Simon, Madame de Stael, Benjamin Constant, Remusat, Royer-Collard, Auguste Comte, etc., already expresses this: “There is a government, power, but what has become of the rest of the nation? [They are but] grains of sand. We are scattered, without any system, without concourse, without contact.” And in his forceful language he adds: “One must thrust onto the earth of France some granite masses.”⁶³ He will accomplish this in his own way: by the effort to construct an imperial nobility, to establish a new nobility of merit with the Legion of Honor,⁶⁴ as well as the even more developed effort to build a solid administrative organization. These are just as much attempts to distinguish the “government” from what it has left alive, or rather what one must resuscitate, in civil society. But the Napoleonic effort at rehabilitation essentially rests on an administrative centralism that looms over particular relations among individuals, and above all else, the collapse of the Empire will increase the confusion even further. In this sense Royer-Collard encapsulated the general feel-

ing at the time of the Restoration: "The Revolution left standing only individuals; the dictatorship, which ended it, only consummated its work."⁶⁵

In other words, former tutelages were broken, which allowed the Terror and political despotism, and which is now perpetuated in a general state of social instability.⁶⁶ If one refuses the literally reactionary option of reconstituting, as such, these former subjections of "status," then one must rebuild, in a universe where in principle the idea of "contract" now reigns, new regulations which will be compatible with liberty while maintaining at the same time those relationships of dependency without which a social order is impossible. Pierre Rosanvallon demonstrates in a convincing way that the theory of "capacities" developed by Guizot is the answer, in the *political* realm, to this conundrum. It establishes the legitimacy of a system of suffrage based on qualified voters, that is to say, a representative regime which protects itself from the power of numbers, of the tidal wave of men lacking in real quality. But this solution is valuable even beyond a strictly political context. It corresponds with the desire for rebuilding a social order. Guizot says this, which is essential at several levels: "Superiority felt and accepted, this is the primitive and legitimate bond of human societies; it is at the same time both fact and right; this is the true, and only social contract."⁶⁷

Against the Rousseauian ideal of a voluntary contract ratified among sovereign individuals, *the true social contract is a contract of tutelage*. Once there were traditional tutelages, such as the feudal relationship, or work regulated by the former system of labor. In the name of a liberty that has triumphed over the arbitrary and the absolutist, it is simply out of the question to reconstitute these traditional tutelages as such. But a *new tutelage* might very well arise whenever there exists between social subjects a difference such as might prohibit them from concluding a contract of reciprocal exchange: for example, between the rich and the impoverished, between the competent and the ignorant, between the doctor and the lunatic, between the civilized and indigenous populations. These tutelages may be temporary or permanent, depending on whether the relationship of inequality is transitory or permanent in character. But what is most significant is that they no longer express the irrationality of an archaic heritage, when society was governed by principles of despotism and cast in ignorance. Rather they are expressions of the legitimacy of knowledge, an authority founded on competence,

in brief, they are the exercise of the best justified by reason in an historical age when everybody is not reasonable.⁶⁸ According to Guizot, this applies at the political level. But one may very well extrapolate from his formula in order to construct an overall plan of governmentality, which “extracts from society all that it has in the way of reason, justice, truth in order to apply them to its government.”⁶⁹

Thus, what was probably the very essence of the social ideal of the French Revolutionaries, at least according to the Montagnards, is being challenged. On the other hand, in a formulation well expressed by Barère, as a counterpoint to Guizot’s expression: “Anything that might establish a dependency of man upon man must be forbidden in a Republic.”⁷⁰ Henceforth, there are legitimate dependencies of man to man. Indeed it is important to foster new ones, and to inscribe them solidly in the social fabric.⁷¹

It matters little here that the preferred means of “collecting, concentrating all the reason that exists scattered throughout society”⁷² meant in practice giving political power to a small oligarchy of proprietors. But is it even possible to establish criteria for “capacity” that would not be overshadowed by wealth? On this point Guizot seems to have been overwhelmed by a Chamber more conservative than he. Yet even beyond this reduction of social merit to money, it is the overall model of a “government of the best,”⁷³ establishing a new social authority, which must be examined, because it will soon be deployed in several other domains.

Guizot’s contribution is salient here not just because he is the man who most deeply shaped French politics and society from the Restoration to 1848. He was also one of the most representative partisans of the liberal approach to the social question. A key member of the liberal opposition under the Restoration, he is even then an active militant of this current of thought that will designate itself as “philanthropic,” and whose main object is to deploy charity in the direction of the “lower classes” of society. He is one of the founding members of the Society of Christian Morals, in 1821, its vice-president in 1826, and its president in 1828. At the time, this society is the most important pressure group bringing together the intelligentsia preoccupied with social problems. The society is “Christian,” but not for that reason Catholic, at least with regard to Church policies hostile to the Congregations and faithful to traditional understandings of charity. The Society of Christian Morals brings together numerous Protestants, bankers and industrialists uneasy with

the dangers of social dissociation that the progress of industrialization carries along with it; disciples of Sismondi who want to develop a “social economy” to balance the most inhumane effects of economic development; enlightened Catholics like Villeneuve-Bargemont, whose former position as Prefect of the North made him sensitive to the poverty of laborers; liberal aristocrats such as the Duke of La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, back from America where he was in exile after the condemnation of Louis XVI, and so on.⁷⁴ These are the “men of quality” that the Baron of Gérando exhorts to moralize the people. Their philanthropic activities exemplify the social version of the model of “qualified” governmentality that was deployed by Guizot at the political level. Indeed, at the social level more explicitly than the political level, this ideal will remain virtually hegemonic until the Third Republic.

Above and beyond the activities of the Society of Christian Morals, which mainly characterize the Restoration years and the beginnings of the July Monarchy, this attitude is maintained throughout the entire nineteenth century, mainly by adapting itself to circumstances and acquiring considerable nuances. It is difficult to subsume all the streams that compose it under a single concept. “Philanthropists” perhaps, but the word begins to sound tired even before the end of the 1850’s; “Social Christians,” as many in fact were, but this expression is ambiguous because it encompasses very different sensibilities: for example, those of Frédéric Ozanam, who defends democratic positions in 1848;⁷⁵ to Armand de Melun, a legitimist, but nonetheless perhaps the most important of all these social reformers whose tireless activism keeps up until the beginning of the Third Republic.⁷⁶ Besides its “Ultra” and strictly reactionary version of Legitimism (resting purely and simply on the tutelages of the ancien régime), there exists a softer version, deeply concerned with transposing the traditional relationships of protection which notables exercised toward their dependents into the new context created by industrialization. In this way the tendencies of legitimism may be seen as compatible with the attitudes of those among liberals who are concerned with dispelling the most devastating effects of economic development.⁷⁷

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Frédéric Le Play and the “Leplaysians” pursue the same course. They are no longer liberals, but they are obsessed with the “wound of pauperism.”⁷⁸ Le Play also wants to gather together all “social authorities”

in order to exercise a new “patronage” over these de-socialized masses. “Voluntary patronage is just as efficient as the ancien régime of constraints in fighting pauperism.”⁷⁹ From whence we find the paradoxical character of his school: a montage of archaic nostalgia and modernist aspirations that captivates circles of engineers and managers of dynamic enterprises.⁸⁰ Le Play, a polyvalent technician himself, was creator of an original method of observing social facts (monographs of working families). He will be the trusted counsel of Napoleon III and the overseer of the Exposition of 1867 that popularized “social economy.” His influence will even survive the collapse of the Second Empire and his death. However, the Laplaysian school is not so homogenous, from Le Play himself, more and more enthralled by the Catholic reaction, to technocrats before the fact, such as Emile Cheysson, inventor of the role of “social engineer.” However, all these men see one another, work hand in hand, and their influence is cumulative. In this way Le Play’s Society of Social Economy opens itself widely to “social Catholics,” and Armand de Melun will even become a member of his administrative council.⁸¹

A strictly political characterization of these reformers is no easier to establish. Most of them, as they grow older, will traverse different political regimes, less preoccupied with fidelity to a party moniker than with defending their “centrist” position between the excesses of reaction and the cynicism of pure economism, on the one hand, and the “outburst” of socialism, on the other. They are “social” in the sense that Littré’s *Dictionnaire* gives to the word: “as distinguished from politics, the [social] refers to conditions which, left beyond the form of governments, pertain to the intellectual, moral and material development of the popular masses.” The “social” is a collectivity of practices aimed at minimizing the deficit afflicting not just the material—but even more so, the moral—conditions of the lower classes of society. By “as distinguished from politics” we should understand not the political policies in which most reformers were adept believers, but in opposition to a policy that would make of the State the chief organizer of these social practices. The social policies that they recommend are not the responsibility of the government, but that of enlightened citizens, who must willingly take charge of exercising this patronage toward the popular classes.

In this sense, one might say that these attitudes remain within the orbit of liberalism, or at least they do not contradict it. There has been a major shift between the “utopian” liberalism of the eigh-

teenth century and the one that imposed itself on industrial society. The former as largely triumphant, iconoclastic and strictly revolutionary in its conception of society: one had simply to destroy all obstacles to the accession of liberty. Without necessarily changing values, the prevailing liberalism of the nineteenth century has become conservative, or more precisely restorative, of the social order. It is not so much its values as its position that has changed. No longer is it confronted by systems of privileges, but by factors of disorder; no longer by an excess of burdensome and archaic regulations, but by the threat of social dissociation. Overshadowing its critical ideal with the obsession of preserving social peace at any price renders liberalism compatible with different variants of social philanthropy.

Of course, there does exist a pure and hard-edged liberalism that regards with suspicion any intervention, of whatever sort, capable of exerting even a small influence on the laws of the market. This variant also has its partisans like Naville,⁸² Bastiat,⁸³ or Dunoyer.⁸⁴ If they are not altogether blind to the poverty, some openly claim, in the tradition of Malthus, that it is a necessary and useful affliction.⁸⁵ There are also some purely conservative positions. Such are espoused by the Catholic Church, most rural elites, and all those nostalgic for the *ancien régime*. For these conservatives, if any intervention on behalf of the poor is to be made, this must be undertaken through traditional charitable practices under the auspices of the Church and Congregations. But between these two extremes several intermediary positions may be distinguished, forming a rather confused nebula of policies, but which nonetheless ultimately come to be implemented. It is out of this rather ill-defined center that the first modern version of social policy arose at the end of the nineteenth century.⁸⁶

Despite its heterogeneity, this indeterminacy may be characterized under two main headings. First, by a “*ban on the State*” which has already been suggested, but whose practical manifestations we will see grow in number; or rather, because the prohibition against public intervention will be increasingly difficult to maintain in its purest form, a heightened determination at least to minimize or limit state intervention as much as possible. Simultaneously, we see, as an apparent contradiction, a *denial of the policy of laissez-faire*, that is to say, efforts to distance oneself from the “pure” logic of political economy. This is why the least unsatisfactory way of attaching a name to what these positions share in common would be to say that

they offer several variations of a *social economy*. They raise the question of the inevitable effects on producers themselves which have been unleashed by the capitalist mode of producing wealth. But they restrain themselves from directly intervening with respect to the causes that give birth to these perverse effects. "To make the social," this is to work to ameliorate the misery of capitalism, or more precisely, the perverse effects of economic development. It tries to bring to bear some correctives against the most inhuman side effects of the capitalist organization of society, but without touching its underlying structure.⁸⁷

Patronage and Patrons

Among this nebulous array of social reformers the social question receives its first nineteenth century formulation: the question of improving the working classes who are "gangrened"⁸⁸ by the wound of pauperism. To my knowledge, this expression appears for the first time following the uprising of the Lyon silk-weavers in a legitimist journal *La Quotidienne*, which followed after the government of the 28th of November 1831: "One should ultimately understand that beyond parliamentary conditions for the exercise of power, there is a social question that one must satisfy.... A government is always mistaken when there is no end of refusals against people asking for bread."⁸⁹ This formulation already offers hints of how the question will be posed up until the Third Republic. The social question exists "beyond parliamentary conditions for the exercise of power," which is to say, outside the political sphere. It bears most directly on the condition of people, and these political opponents who are legitimists incorporate the government in their name so as to "lean on" popular poverty. But the question does not yet imply a more general recomposition of the domain of the political. It is simply a matter of relieving poverty, and not of rethinking "the conditions for the existence of power" itself. This is why, in this entire series of events, up until the question of solidarity is reformulated in political terms, we are confronted only by a "policy without a state," which does not entail the structure of the state at all.

Afterward this formulation finds its way throughout Social Catholic circles. On March 13, 1833, Frédéric Ozanam writes to his friend Falconnet to thank him for initiating him to "the great social problem of the amelioration of the laboring classes."⁹⁰ In the same context, at meetings of the Société Saint-Francois-Xavier, a Catholic endeavor for the education of young workers, Theodore Nizard

states: “Nowadays, the great social problem is unequivocally the amelioration of the working classes.”⁹¹ Villeneuve-Bargemont intervenes in the Chamber during the discussion of the law of 1841 for reducing children’s working hours, and he is the only one to attach such importance to the discussion: “The restoration of the lower classes, the working classes, is the major problem of our age. It is time to seriously begin working toward its resolution and to enter at last into the truly social economy, too often neglected in the midst of our sterile political agitation.”⁹² And it is perhaps Armand de Melun who gives the most pointed formulation to this question: “What is the duty of society with respect to pauperism, its causes and its effects; and this duty, by what measures and means should it best be accomplished. This is the social question in its entirety.”⁹³

Moreover, in the years from 1830 to 1840, this social question begins to be raised, albeit in wholly different ways, by socialists and workers who recommend an alternative system of labor: namely, the association of producers and the abolition of wage-labor altogether.⁹⁴ We shall return to this. But for now we must confine ourselves to the perspective of the dominant classes. From this point of view, what we must pay close attention to—notwithstanding their adamant dual denial both of any recourse to the State and of any ability on the part of the “lower classes” to influence their own destiny—is the fact that they managed to bring to bear a systematic network of provisions for dealing with the social question. These moralizing strategies play a key role at three distinct levels: first, the relief of indigents by technologies that anticipate “social work” in the professional sense of the term; second, the voluntary development of institutions for savings and foresight that laid the groundwork for an “insurance society”; and finally, the establishment of patronal oversight by employers, intended to guarantee both the rational organization of work and social peace.

1. Baron de Gérando lays out in *Le Visiteur du Pauvre*, what amounts to a new technology of social assistance. His main goal is not to offer relief to indigents. Indeed, it is still dangerous to distribute material goods to the poor, unless one can be certain of controlling how they are used. Indeed the practice of blind charity only helps keep the assisted in his dependent condition and multiplies the number of poor. A plan for relief thus begins with a meticulous examination of needs and the needy: the “foundation of the entire work that an enlightened charity is called upon to build.”⁹⁵ Among

our “needs,” some are permanent, such as those caused by disability; others are temporary, like those caused by disease; and still others may be attributed to working conditions, such as “unemployment,” or to a bad moral constitution or the improvidence of indigents. Each “cause” has its own remedy. But essentially, one must supervise the delivery of relief as a way of encouraging good behavior on the part of the beneficiary. The service provided must be a tool of moral elevation, and at the same time must forge a permanent relationship between the parties of the exchange. The relationship of assistance may be likened to a flow of humanity that runs between two persons. To be sure, this relationship is unequal, but that is its entire point. The benefactor serves as a model of socialization. Through his mediation, virtue is passed along to the beneficiary. This latter, for his part, reciprocates with his gratitude, and contact is re-established between people of quality and the miserable. A positive bond is recreated, where before there was only indifference, or even outright hostility and class antagonism. This relationship of moral tutelage fosters community of and by means of dependency. The benefactor and his beneficiary form a society, whose moral bond is also a social bond. The miserable comes to be released from his indignity and re-attached to the universe of common values. In effect, there are wicked poor only because there are wicked rich: “Rich, confess the dignity with which you are invested! But acknowledge that it is not to a vague and indefinite patronage that you are called...You are called to a free tutelage, and of your own volition, but one that is authentic and active.”⁹⁶ The righteousness of the wealthy is a kind of social glue that re-affiliates these new barbarians, as represented by the modern poor, who are otherwise demoralized by their conditions of existence.

Undoubtedly, when confronted by the massive scale of widespread poverty, the effects of this kind of intervention can only be limited. The “visitor of the poor” consists of a personal relationship (but not an intermittent one: some follow-up must be guaranteed). Indeed, it serves as no more than a *crisis intervention* on individual situations, almost like a social clinic. However, this reflective use of charity is not naive at all. Rather it constitutes a core of expertise out of which something like professional social work might arise: evaluating needs, supervising how relief is used, personalized exchanges with the client, etc. The current of *scientific charity*, which is so conspicuous in Anglo-Saxon countries during the second half of

the nineteenth century, will cultivate this approach toward social relief on a large scale.⁹⁷ The tradition of *case work* may also be seen as following in this tradition.⁹⁸ And we may even wonder if the efficacy of the clinical model in social work doesn't arise in great measure from this double exigency, whose first theoretician was the Baron of Gérando, of offering both a "scientific" investigation of the needs of the client and of establishing a personalized relationship with him.

Being matters of the nineteenth century, in any case, one must see that, in the mind of their promoters, these practices *take the place of the right to relief*. It is the exercise of this scrutiny, guided by the virtue of goodwill, which determines both access to relief and also the forms that this relief must take. In this way one will escape the pitfalls of English "legal charity," whose image, or rather caricature, is used as a bogeyman to discourage the temptations of state-led intervention in matters of assistance. On top of that, everybody agrees, or almost everyone, first and foremost the great leader of the liberals, Alexis de Tocqueville:

I am deeply convinced that any regular, permanent administrative system, whose end will be to provide for the needs of the poor, will give birth to more misery than it can possibly relieve; will corrupt the very population that it wishes to relieve and console; will reduce over time the wealthy to the level of being no more than farmers of the poor; will exhaust the sources of savings; halt the accumulation of capital; compromise commercial endeavours; stifle human activity and industry; and conclude by bringing about a violent revolution in the State, wherein the number of those who receive alms will become almost as great as those who give them, and such that the indigent, no longer able to draw from the impoverished rich that which he requires for his needs, will find it easier to despoil them all at once of their wealth than to ask relief from them.⁹⁹

Adolphe Thiers and the "great fear" of property owners are not too far removed from this. Today we have difficulty understanding how a thinker as profound as Tocqueville could deduce such catastrophes from the mere existence of a right to relief for some impoverished groups. But what haunts all these spirits is the danger of opening up the floodgates that might lead to a Leviathan-State, or worse still, to socialism.¹⁰⁰

2. However, these techniques for improving the conditions of the poor, proceeding step by step, by means of face-to-face relationships, cannot stand up in the face of the magnitude of the problems posed by pauperism. To these must be added collective practices, which are institutionalized. An emphasis on the *institutional* dimensions of social intervention is for this reformist current what consti-

tutes its essential difference with respect to traditional forms of assistance. As early as 1824, the Secretary of the Society of Christian Morals concluded its report of activities as follows:

One might add, Sir, that philanthropy, that is to say, the philosophical way of loving and serving humanity, is more your banner rather than charity, which is the Christian duty to love and to help his kindred...Charity is satisfactory when it relieves misfortune; philanthropy can only be so when it prevents it...the improvements, his work [the philanthropist's], far from ceasing with himself, must sooner or later be transformed into institutions.¹⁰¹

Indeed, the Society of Christian Morals—where one could find, you will recall, people as different from one another as La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, Guizot, Constant, Dufaure, Tocqueville, Gérando, Dupin—represented a forum for reflection and for initiatives out of which several different institutions emerged. It supported savings banks and mutual help societies. It included a committee for the moral redemption of prisoners, another for the placement of orphans, a committee of public hygiene, one for assisting the insane, etc., and several regulations will emerge from its deliberations.¹⁰²

At the heart of this collectivity, occupying a special pride of place, are institutions capable of *preventing* the evils caused by poverty. It is one thing to attempt to repair the damage once it has been done; a better thing would be to avoid these evils in the first place. From this point of view, two institutions—savings banks and mutual assistance societies—are best suited to realizing philanthropy's essential goal of morally improving the lower classes. "Of all services that charity might provide the lower classes, there is none greater than to develop in them feelings of foresight."¹⁰³ Improvidence is in effect the main cause of the people's misfortune. The worker, like a child, is unable to anticipate the future and thus to take control over his own destiny. He lives from day to day, drinking on his payday his entire week's salary, with no worry of what is to come: disease, accident, unemployment, familial duties, old age, which might leave him without any resources. To give money to a fund is to inscribe in the present the worries of the future, to learn to discipline his instincts and to recognize a value of money that exceeds the satisfaction of his immediate needs. It is also to establish savings, in order to be ensured against the unforeseen vagaries of existence.

The first savings bank is founded in Paris in 1818. It is presided over by the Duke of La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, who, at the time

of the Committee for the Extinction of Begging, had already foreseen the creation of such a bank in each department to contribute “to the advantages of the useful and laborious class.”¹⁰⁴ After 1830, Villermé observes a significant development of these banks.¹⁰⁵ However, keeping in mind just how modest were the workers’ salaries, the strictly economic impact of these savings banks remained limited. This kind of economy is mainly valuable for its moralistic aspects, in terms of the pedagogy of foresight.¹⁰⁶ Whereas the pawnshop symbolized popular irresponsibility and misfortune demanded by immediate needs, the savings bank teaches the people the merits of rational calculation and the value of money as a source of productive investment.

But the moralistic effect of societies of mutual assistance is even greater. Indeed, they will, along with the patronage of employers, be the main bearers of aspirations for ameliorating the misfortunes of the popular classes that are compatible with the strictures of liberal political economy. Here conditions in England served as a model—even while, ironically, England is used as an example for warding off the right to relief! The development of *friendly societies* seems to indicate that there might be some way—by guaranteeing entire professions against certain risks (such as illness, accidents, or even unemployment and old-age)—of combating the fundamental insecurity of the wage-earning condition.¹⁰⁷ This foresight may be collective even while remaining at the same time voluntary. This lends a truly “social” dimension to philanthropic practices. Societies for mutual assistance, however, present two great pitfalls. Workers may subvert this option by associating themselves only in order to assert revolutionary or subversive claims, thereby making these societies of relief into societies of resistance. This risk is even greater insofar as workers associations may have roots in the former corporatist traditions of the trades that survived, in a more or less clandestine manner, the Le Chapelier law.¹⁰⁸ There is also a danger that in becoming mandatory the contributions cease any longer to be moralizing. Such contributions would seem to have no more foresight than voluntarism. Obligation can only be guaranteed by the State, such that mandatory deductions would then be the Trojan Horse through which public power would insinuate itself into matters of work.

Mutuality must then be overseen and regulated, and participation must remain optional. It is under these two conditions that it will be launched; and, likewise, it is also the difficulty of maintaining these

dual demands that may explain the tormented pathway of these societies before they culminate, if only much later, in mandatory insurance (cf. the following chapter).

Liberty under supervision, then. One encourages the creation of voluntary societies of assistance, but they are to be very carefully supervised. Under the Restoration, they can, in principle, only meet together in the presence of the mayor or the police commissioner. Following the labor agitation at the beginning of the July Monarchy, a law of 1834 reduces to twenty the number of their members and worsens the penalty (up to two years in prison) in cases of violation.¹⁰⁹ As one approaches 1848, the number of associations is multiplied. But they are caught up in a broader movement that encourages the workers to see in the principle of association a complete reorganization of the sphere of work. In the eyes of moderate observers, the mutual help association is in danger of being contaminated by this movement. However, the allure of the model of foresight is so strong for social reformers that, even after the return of order that follows the insurrection of June 1848, the Assembly again seeks to give legal status to relief associations, on the condition that they respect liberal principles. Armand de Melun makes himself into an ardent proponent of this. The majority of the Legislative Assembly rejects the idea of mandatory obligation, which was supported by the Republican "Mountain." By virtue of the law ratified on the 15th of July, 1850, membership in mutuals remains optional, and societies are subject to preliminary authorization and controls that will create obstacles to their development. Similarly, a law of 18th June, 1850 creates a "pension bank or annuities for old age." But here again membership is strictly optional, and these banks function in effect just like regular savings banks for the rare contributor of good will.¹¹⁰ Thus, relief societies must combat pauperism by foresight, but only so long as they remain circumscribed by the tutelary complex. The reporter of the law to the Assembly, Benoît d'Azy, expresses this with perfect clarity:

Mutual relief societies are truly families, which must have almost all the features of private families....If these societies cease to be gathering of people who know one another, they are no longer societies in the sense in which we understand them, they are general associations: they cease to be fraternal, they are something else.¹¹¹

This interpretation is confirmed by the following episode. When Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte came to power, he wished to re-institute

these relief societies and to give them a general and mandatory character. The author of the *Extinction of Pauperism* thus seems to be tempted by the model of the authoritarian protection of workers, along the lines Bismarck will achieve in Germany more than a quarter of a century later: mandatory mutualism sponsored and guaranteed by the State would insure most workers against major social risks and would discourage them from asserting themselves in pursuit of social justice. Louis-Napoleon calls upon Armand de Melun, who, in order to avoid the introduction into France of a “veritable State socialism,” dissuades him from giving a mandatory character to mutualism. Societies will no longer give relief in cases of unemployment. Armand de Melun writes the organic law-decree of 28 March, 1852, which encourages the creation of relief societies “under the care of the mayor and the priest.” In addition, “societies approved” by the Minister of the Interior must be carefully supervised by “honorary members,” that is to say, by social elites. Thus the High Commission for the Encouragement and Supervision of Mutual Relief Societies, whose spokesman is Armand de Melun, can congratulate itself in its newsletter of 1859: “Each must applaud the idea, both Christian and political, which knew how to derive from workers associations an element of order, dignity and moralization.”¹¹² “In 1869, 6,139 societies counted 913,633 members, of whom 764,473 were active members, and 119,160 were honorary members.”

Thus the Second Empire would bequeath to the Third Republic a mutualist movement already structured and quite widely established among the working classes. But thanks to the militancy of social reformers such as Armand de Melun, this movement would continue to be circumscribed within the context of the “philanthropic” program for the moralization of the popular classes.

3. It is rather in the private business firm that the idea of patronage gained its strength, largely by virtue of the almost undivided power of the head of the company over its workers. Le Play, who is the voice of industrial patronage, elevates it to the dignity of a veritable principle of wise governance:

The name of voluntary patronage seems to me to be applied with all convenience to this new organization [of industrial labor]; the principle of hierarchy will be maintained there; nonetheless, the military authority of lords who were entrusted with defending the land will be replaced by the moral ascendancy of bosses who will manage the factory floors.¹¹³

But we must still hope that the heads of corporations are willing to assume responsibility for this moral patronage, that is to say, to be willing to depart somewhat from the purely liberal and contractual conception of the relationship of labor, which may be summarized as follows: “The worker gives his labor, the master pays an agreed upon wage, this is the sum of their reciprocal duties. From the moment that he [the master] no longer needs his laboring power [the worker’s] he disposes of him and it is up to the worker to fend for himself.”¹¹⁴ By way of contrast, “this solicitude toward the worker, which means that the boss is interested in him beyond what he strictly owes him and strives to be useful to him, constitutes patronage.”¹¹⁵

The difference between a political economy and a social economy here takes on a clear and distinct meaning. It is true that in merely contractual justice, the employer owes the employee only the wage. But he may come to appreciate that it is equitable, and also in his own interest, to offer some benefits which are not in conformity to a strictly market logic:

Behind the labor force, this economic abstraction, there is a worker, a man with a life and with needs. If one contents one’s self with the idea that labor will be a commodity, it is in reality not a generic commodity, resembling no other and having very special laws of its own. With it, it is the entire human personality that is at stake.¹¹⁶

For example, the worker with a family does not have the same needs as one who is single; he has additional expenses in feeding, lodging his family, educating his children, etc. Thus such a worker experiences a loss of equity in a purely contractual system of justice, which gives to the married and the single man the same wage, inasmuch as the first is socially more useful and less dangerous: he reproduces the labor pool and is tied to a home, whereas the single man is often a factor of social instability and moral disorder.¹¹⁷ Likewise, the worker may be temporarily deprived by sickness or by accident of the capacity of surviving without being personally responsible for this. However, the determination of wages obeys the laws of political economy, which do not take these impediments into account. Thus, it is through the intermediation of *services* that these “social provisions” can take shape without coming into contradiction with economic imperatives. Health care, improved housing, relief in desperate situations, and even means of education, healthy forms of recreation, and also pensions for disabilities, support for widows and orphans of workers, etc. can be given out of a

different logic than that of maximizing profits without being in contradiction to this logic. The patron thereby makes himself the bestower of the security of the worker, of which the worker himself is incapable. "Is it not [the patron] who is given the duty to do for the worker that which he cannot do for himself, that is to say, to plan ahead for him, to save for him, to care for him?"¹¹⁸

On this rationale, in some of the major industrial factories of the time, the Alsatian textiles mills, the mines of Anzin, Le Creusot, Monceau-les-Mines, etc. we witness the development of an almost complete infrastructure of social services. For example, under the iron authority of the Schneider family, Le Creusot offered medical services with a pharmacist and infirmary, an office of welfare that dispensed relief to sick and injured workers, but also to widows and orphans of workers, a savings bank for which the factory contributed 5 percent interest on the sums deposited, a society of insurance to which workers had to contribute up to 2 percent of their salary. The company also develops a lodging policy: including the construction of standardized housing, the sale of lots at reduced prices, and loans giving workers access to properties. Similar policies were established at Montceau-les-Mines with the Chagot.¹¹⁹

The idea is to realize a perfect osmosis between the factory and the daily lives of workers and their families. "The factory is in reality a community; both have so far obeyed the same hand, and have done well so far...This is the secret of Le Creusot, and how it makes so much with little cost, the town and the factory are two sisters which grew up under the same tutelage."¹²⁰ In effect they achieved a "total institution," in the literal sense of the term, unique places in which man fulfills the totality of his needs, lives, works, lodges, feeds, breeds and then dies. On the subject of Anzin this time, Reybaud marvels anew: "Literally, the Company takes the worker from the cradle and leads him to the grave, one will see with what vigilant care and at what cost."¹²¹ This first actualization of a kind of social security is purchased at the price of the absolute dependency of the worker.

These examples contribute at the same time to resolving the most serious problem that capitalism had to confront at the dawn of the industrial era: settling the instability of the worker, to achieve at the same time, in the words of David Landes, the "discipline of labor and the discipline to labor."¹²² Indeed the "sublimity" of workers forms the leitmotif of an entire social literature of the nineteenth

century.¹²³ It corresponds to a kind of geographical nomadism (workers go from mine to mine, from site to site, leaving their employer at unpredictable times, attracted by higher wages or repulsed by working conditions) and to an irregularity in their work habits (the celebration of “Saint Monday” and other popular customs, stigmatized as additional symptoms of their unpredictability).

Patronal oversight is a powerful factor in destroying this mobility of workers; for the workers lose all these “social advantages” if they leave the company. Such rigid scrutiny can only be imposed to its perfection within the confines of the conglomerations of large-scale industry. In small workshops, or when he lives in the city, the worker risks falling prey to the “evil influences” of the cabaret and other low influences, of abandoning himself to bad habits.¹²⁴ But even under these least auspicious of conditions, patronal tutelage is exercised through two institutions whose importance was enormous in the nineteenth century: the worker’s booklet and the workshop regulation.

Instituted by the Consulate on the basis of grants dating back to the ancien régime (cf. chap. III), reiterated in 1850 and 1854 and abolished only in 1890, the *booklet* (*livret*) had as its goal the control of the mobility of workers. Necessary for hiring, serving as a passport for police and authorities, it also contains within it a record of whatever debts the worker has contracted from his former employer. As “guarantor of a very special, but very stern social order, created in the interest of the employer and only the employer,”¹²⁵ the workers booklet destroys the reciprocity of the two contracting parties in the eyes of the civil law. Such is “an industrial law” that gives to the employer a discretionary power over hiring. It is also a law that has a police function: two ordinances of April 1, 1831 and of December 30, 1834 enjoined every worker coming to Paris in search of work to present himself and his booklet to the police within eight days.¹²⁶

Even more derogatory with respect to common rights are workshop regulations. These clearly express the desire to collapse the distinction between public and private that is the very essence of patronage. As owner of the factory, the employer pronounces rules having the force of law and whose transgression gives way to punishment. From the private space of the factory, conceived upon the model of the family, whose patriarch is the employer, arise compulsory systems of regulations whose function is to moralize the worker.

Above and beyond those regulations in conformity with the technical demands of safety and hygiene, workshop regulations include provisions such as those ordained to the Saint-Edouard glassery in 1875, article 30: "All workers employed in the glass factory whose conduct is not that of the honest, sober and industrious man, desiring first and foremost the interests of the masters, will be fired from the establishment and denounced to the police, if this should prove necessary."¹²⁷ Alain Cottureau observes on this subject that, in contrast to the "factory police" of the ancien régime, and contrary to the spirit of the civil code, it is the employers, private persons, who decide the criminal regulations of the workplace, and thus take upon themselves the capacity of public officials.

This is an especially revealing example of the triumph of the tutelary order over the contractual order, but the majority of these impositions assume a systematic form. The whole of the dependencies constructed by the patronal order are representative of a model that should be extended to the whole of society in order to guarantee social peace. Even above its contribution to resolving the problem of class antagonism, the tutelary concept is elevated by Le Play to the status of the civilizing principle *par excellence*: "Voluntary employers of the new regime have more rights than the ancient feudal lords in the estimation of the public...They are thus eminently suited to guide the vicious and improvident classes, to create useful relationships between the civilized nations, and to protect the savage or barbarous races."¹²⁸

A Negative Utopia

These strategies reveal, however, a certain paradoxical quality. Their spokespersons accept, essentially, economic liberalism, industrialization, and the contractual system of justice both in general and with respect to the system of wage-labor in particular. However, in this universe of modernity, they are forced to reintroduce a model of tutelary relations that evokes what Marx and Engels referred to with bitter irony as "the enchanted world of feudal relationships."¹²⁹ What we seem to witness is a kind of reactionary utopia, that is to say, an effort to translate that which history attempted to leave aside into categories that served to conceive of and to manage earlier forms of social organization.

These paternalistic techniques are primarily rooted at the heart of the great industrial conglomerates, in those sectors at the cutting

edge of production. Nonetheless, in the body of literature written to justify these kinds of practices, one finds some curious texts, such as the following:

The word 'patron' is only to be applied to employers who guarantee peace and security to their subordinates. When this role is no longer fulfilled, the patron falls under the category of masters and is no longer anything more than a mere 'employer,' following the barbarous term that tends to be substituted for that prevailing in areas where insecurity reigns.¹³⁰

The true patron is one who maintains his workers in a relationship of subordination. In contrast, the "employer" who operates in "areas where insecurity reigns," that is to say, in those new well-springs of employment that escape tutelary regulation, is nothing more than a "barbarian." This conception of management of personnel remains that of the "visitor of the poor" that the Baron of Gérando applied to this other category of minors who are the indigent: to appeal to the emotions, to await gratitude in exchange for goodwill, to dissolve the different roles and the conflicts of interest into a personalized dependency. But isn't such a patriarchal or familial model perfectly compatible with the development of the division of labor, the more and more technical hierarchy of tasks and the awareness of the conflict of interest? Hence, Eugène Schneider never missed a chance to remind his workers that Le Creusot is one large family. But when these latter decided in 1870 to manage for themselves the savings bank of the company, Schneider admonished them along these lines: "Take care, you create opposition, admittedly politely so, but it is opposition nonetheless, and I do not like opposition."¹³¹ The workers took back their grievance.

The most self-conscious and recent representatives of employer patronage understood well this difficulty of rendering compatible with one another the contradictory goals of moral tutelage, technical efficiency and social peace. Emile Cheysson, who was director of Le Creusot from 1871 to 1874, later created the notion of "social engineering," which sought to link technical competency and the concern to guide workers toward the good. But his position remains ambiguous:

In our day, when workers have feelings of pride and jealousy by virtue of their independence, the patron should associate them by means of institutions that he will organize for them, even if he does not completely entrust them with their management, except by giving them discrete advice and support or advances. He will do well to anticipate the strain of "paternalism" on those spirits who are easily offended, and thus to make his patronage more acceptable and efficient.¹³²

Will this be enough to disarm the “feelings of pride and jealousy” of worker’s independence?

The strategies of patronage have underestimated two factors that will play a more and more decisive role in large-scale industry. The first is of the technical order. The demands of organizing labor on a large scale will necessitate relationships that are objective and defined by the tasks to be accomplished, rather than relationships of personal dependency dictated by moral imperatives. The “disenchantment of the world” characteristic of modernity implies—so too in the organization of labor—the growth of relationships that are “formal” or “bureaucratic,” in Max Weber’s sense of the word, in the place of clientelism and personal subordination. This is the orientation that will be imposed by Taylorism. The very least that one can say is that the ideology of patronage is simply not prepared to deal with this decisive transformation in the organization of labor.

The second impasse is even more serious. It consists in underestimating these “feeling of pride and jealousy” that workers have of their independence; or better said, they overlook the impossibility of taking into account in this context the workers own assertions and their own unique ways of organizing themselves. Patronal tutelage may be able to exercise its dominion over working populations composed of recent immigrants, alienated in their new industrial environment, but still in possession of the values of their rural origins.¹³³ In contrast, insofar as the working classes are rooted and organized, they become susceptible to socialist and communist doctrines which exalt their own importance and denounce their exploitation. They cannot help but be opposed to forms of paternal management that demand workers to be happy in their misery and to feel gratitude toward those who profit from it. The empirical proof of the incompatibility of these interests would soon become apparent. It is significant that it is in the very midst of the bastions of paternal tutelage, during the end of the Second Empire, that the great workers strikes were to arise.¹³⁴ It is also revealing that they arose at this particular time, that is to say, when a second or third generation of industrial workers had succeeded in creating a culture of their own, and had begun to give themselves their own forms of organization. Previously, they were rustics still accustomed to tutelary nostalgia. Henceforth we shall witness the embryonic growth of a working class.¹³⁵

By the end of the nineteenth century little would remain of this patronal tutelage. However, Louis Reybaud declares in 1863: "There remains little room, one can imagine, for direct patronage and officious tutelage. Such poetry hereafter belongs to the infancy of factories; it disappears inasmuch as they aspire to their maturity."¹³⁶ But the journal of the Committee of Ironworkers still assumes in 1902: "The employer has not entirely retired his debt when he has paid his employees the stipulated wage, and he must bear toward them, insofar as possible, the oversight of the father for his family."¹³⁷

Indeed, large sectors of the labor system even today bear traces of the legacy of patronage and paternalism.¹³⁸ These represented an initial effort of collective struggle against the instability of the working condition. They also proposed the first systematic form of social protection. But these innovations arise out of very archaic forms of domination. Patronage attempted the impossible goal, as Louis Bergeron observes, "of casting the new industrial order in the mold of the former rural society," or even of "disguising the urbanization and proletarianization in progress."¹³⁹ In this sense, one can speak in his words of a "reactionary utopia," or of "a negative utopia": this is a utopia for which reference to the past is used as a scheme of organizing the future and which strives, in sum, to put new wine into old casks.

The inability or the refusal to conceive of the existence *sui generis* of "the social" seems thus to constitute the common base of this nebulous position occupied by the social reformers. One is satisfied in general with combining the kind of state intervention that discourages social intervention with the liberal conception of the minimal state. But these attitudes, are they not more deeply rooted in the ideal of a *minimal society*, which is also maintained by liberalism? Liberal man is a rational and responsible individual who pursues his own interest on the basis of contractual relations that he enters into with others. This is "methodological individualism," before the fact. But all men are not up to this ideal. The discovery of poverty must have presented a challenge for this conception of society composed of rational individuals. Yet it simply presupposed it, or even skirted around this problem altogether, thanks to the notion of the minority of these lower classes that allowed this relationship of tutelage to be imposed on them. Liberalism deploys two models of social organization that are not necessarily contradictory to one another, even though the tension between them remains strong: the

register of contractual exchanges between free, equal, reasonable and responsible individuals, and the *register of unequal exchanges*, of the patronage exercised toward those who cannot enter into the logic of contractual reciprocity. Benjamin Constant: “those whom poverty holds in an eternal dependency and who are condemned to daily work are no more enlightened than children on the subject of public affairs, nor are they more interested than strangers in the prosperity of the nation.”¹⁴⁰ The “social” interventions are thus inscribed in an almost anthropological zone of difference that is no longer governed by responsibility between equals, but by the exercise of an enlightened tutelage toward minors. An alternative version of the social for some, which forms a bond between superiors and inferiors that do not form a true society.

From this point onward the gap can only widen between this paternalistic *Weltanschauung* and a working class that becomes progressively conscious, to use the language of Proudhon, of its own “capabilities.”¹⁴¹ We know for a fact that industrial patronage does not prevent strikes. But its repudiation is even more widespread. As early as the 1840’s, the journal *L’Atelier*, which develops a coherent ideology of the worker’s autonomy, regularly expresses its scorn for “philanthropy”: “Philanthropy is a veritable nightmare that places an enormous weight on the shoulders of the working classes...Who consequently will deliver us from such philanthropic paternalism?”¹⁴²

This condemnation of patronage is even more vividly expressed when the workers movement forges an alternative mode of organizing labor—one which seeks to abolish the exploitation of wage-labor—namely, the workers association: “We are certain, by the principle of association, of being able to own ourselves and no longer having masters.”¹⁴³ Association brings with it another conception of the social, whose realization comes through the creation of collectivities that forge relationships of interdependence between equal individuals. We know that the explosion of 1848, as well as the later Paris Commune movement, gave birth to an extraordinary proliferation of associations, for consumption as well as production.¹⁴⁴ Typical is the reaction of elites in the face of these efforts. Thiers sees in the 26th of July, 1848 “the most ridiculous of all utopias that have been produced among us.”¹⁴⁵ Villermé regrets that “workers do not understand that there are two possible classes of men in industry, the bosses and the wage-earners; and that, no matter what they do, whether they are associated or not, they will always have

bosses or, as we say today, patrons.”¹⁴⁶ The height of class arrogance is probably reached by Leroy-Beaulieu: “Having neither regrets nor impatience with the uselessness of these attempts; the role that workers would like to seize is fulfilled in a more satisfactory way, in the best interest of all, by the bourgeoisie. With respect to the working populations, there are more secure ways to improve its destiny.”¹⁴⁷

We should hardly be surprised that the representatives of the dominant classes condemned this system of organizing labor, the workers association, which would dispossess it.¹⁴⁸ But more revealing are the arguments they bring to bear, and especially the conception of social activity that underlay them. It is not only “collectivism,” as such, which is stigmatized, in the sense of the collective will of the appropriation of the means of production (association is extolled by the whole of the working classes, including the anti-collectivist libertarians). The goal of non-proprietorship is based on *the existence of the collective itself*, that is to say, on all efforts to take charge collectively, beginning with the involvement of the interested parties, the misery of workers and the subjection of the workers. The “most secure way to improve the destiny” of the working population that Leroy-Beaulieu diagnoses excludes all forms of organization and even any initiative by the involved. The remedies rest in the hands of “gentlemen,” and they consist of strategies that they deploy by their own leaders over subordinated groups. The only beneficial activity for the people is a respectful allegiance to a system of values constructed for them but not by them. What holds in place social policy consists of generalizing a moral attitude at the level of collective action. The end of these strategies is such that “the new social order is entirely experienced as a collection of moral obligations.”¹⁴⁹

There is a curious paradox in all this. All this discourse is provoked by the discovery of poverty from the 1820’s onward, mainly through the investigation of popular lifestyles shaken or destroyed by industrialization. These insights make up the original core of the social sciences.¹⁵⁰ But the practical use that is made of this knowledge returns it back to the level of moral instrumentalization. Coexisting among the majority of these authors is the realization that the new poverty is a mass phenomenon, an inevitable effect of industrialization on an aggregate of individual weaknesses, and ongoing efforts to treat this poverty by techniques that, whether individual

or collective, compulsory or voluntary, are derived from *institutionalized morals*.

But this ambiguity may be clarified by taking into account the political goals of these strategies. Subtle interpretations are not necessary to decode them. Their intentions are clearly advertised:

Rather than dividing society under the odious names of the categories of owners and proletariat, which provoke one to hate another, or indeed to mutually destroy one another, we should strive to the contrary to show the least fortunate men how abundant are the sacred sources of sympathy and goodwill running in their favor from the fortunate classes. For every misfortune that might touch a working family, a generous charity puts forward a foundation that attempts to prevent them, or at least to assuage them.¹⁵¹

This declaration merits consideration because it originates with a man who was perhaps, with Armand de Melun, the most representative figure of this movement for a “policy without a state.” Charles Dupin, elected deputy of the liberal movement in 1827, then peer of France, grand officer of the Legion of Honor, member of the Institute, member of the Society of Christian Morals presided by Guizot, of the Society of Charitable Economy founded by Armand de Melun and of the Society of Social Economy founded by Le Play, etc. is a bit dubious of all the debates and conflicts concerning the social.¹⁵² But if such a syncretism of different and outmoded philosophical positions escapes any precise conceptual system, his political intention is obvious. Just as obvious are the shortcomings of this position, or rather, they will soon become so. What was required was that the “least fortunate men” be particularly virtuous, or at least unduly naive, in order to be content with this “generous charity.” Also, as a rejoinder to this soothing speech, we must only imagine the coarse voice of Proudhon, nearly his contemporary:

Vainly you speak to me of fraternity and love: I remain convinced that you hardly love me, and I know very well that I do not love you. Your friendship is only faint and if you do love me it is out of interest alone. I demand all that is coming to me, nothing more than belongs to me. Devotion! I deny this thing devotion, it is a specter, Speak to me of right and of possession, the only criteria to my eyes of justice and injustice, of good and evil in society. To each according to his work first.¹⁵³

This is indeed a matter of two irreconcilable positions. On the basis of these two positions, the construction of a policy without a state risks leading to an impasse. While morally essential, their success rests in the last analysis on the allegiance of the people to values offered to or imposed upon them. Yet insofar as the universe of

work is structured, it develops its own systems of organization and its own programs, which can only come into conflict with such conceptions based on the denial of the other. The discourse of social peace further deepens in that way the very preconditions of class struggle that it wishes to alleviate. By its refusal to make the state a tacit partner in the social game, it leaves the dominant and the dominated face to face with one another, without mediation. From that point onward, these relationships of power might be reversed, as those who have nothing to lose become enamored of the idea that they want to win everything. Who might be able to keep them from doing so? Most likely the State, but a liberal State is limited to the role of a policeman who intervenes from the outside in order to put an end to popular disorders—as in June 1848 or during the Paris Commune—without having the power to act on the underlying causes of these disturbances, or to prevent them. Even in the name of social peace alone, the state will need to be charged with a new function if it ever hopes to overcome these destructive antagonisms.

Notes

1. See J. R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism, English Ideas on Poor Relief, 1795-1834*.
2. Except the parliamentary discussion that preceded the code of the law limiting child labor in March 1841. An exception the sense of which will be said later: it was more about the reproduction of the worker's life, than an improvement of working conditions.
3. A. de Tocqueville, *Mémoire sur le paupérisme* read at the Académie de Cherbourg in 1835. It was reproduced in *Revue internationale d'action communautaire*, NR. 16/56. Autumn 1986, Montreal, pp. 27-40.
4. E. Buret, *De la misère des classes laborieuses en France et en Angleterre*, Paris, 1840, t. I, p. 120. Buret opposes "the misery which is a phenomenon of civilization; it presupposes the awakening and even an advanced development of conscience," to "the populations which remained in their primitive indigence, like the Corsicans and the Britons."
5. A. de Villeneuve-Bargemont, *Traité d'économie politique chrétienne ou recherches sur le paupérisme*, Paris, 1834.
6. L. -N. Bonaparte, *l'Extinction du paupérisme*, in *Oeuvres*, Paris, editions napoleoniennes, edition of 1848, t. II, p. 256 (the original edition is of 1844).
7. Buret, *Misère des classes laborieuses...*, op. cit., t. I, p. 68.
8. *Ibid.*, t. II, p. 25.
9. *Ibid.*
10. E. Buret, *Misère des classes laborieuses*, op. cit., t. II, p. 35. Buret translates as "unadept workers" the expression "unskilled workers," which he borrows from English authors and which denotes, in fact the unqualified or under-qualified workers.
11. *Ibid.*, t. I, p. 70. This diagnosis has been globally confirmed by more recent historical works. Thus, E. J. Hobsbawm marks the importance "of structural and cyclical

unemployment” at the onset of industrialization and specifies that at times, as during the crisis of the years 1841-1842, more than fifty percent of the workers employed in English manufactories could be deprived of work (“In England: industrial revolution and material life of the popular classes,” *Annales ESC*, November-December 1962, p. 1049). In France, during the crisis of 1828, the foundry of Chaillot, which normally employed 300 to 400 workers, has only a hundred. At the soap factory, too, about half of the work force is unemployed (see E. Labrousse, *le Mouvement ouvrier et les théories sociales de 1815 à 1848*, Paris, CDU, p. 92).

12. Se G. Procacci, *Gouverner la misère*, op. cit., chapter VI.
13. E. Buret, *Misère des classes laborieuses...*, op. cit.
14. E. Laurent, *le Paupérisme et les institutions de prévoyance*, Paris, 1865, t. I, p. 13.
15. See R. Castel, *l'Ordre Psychiatrique*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1976, p. 280 sq.
16. L. Say, J. Chailley, *Dictionnaire d'économie politique*, Paris, 1892, article “pauperism,” p. 450. One could find many more recent expressions of this attitude. Thus the *Encyclopedia Americana*, edition of 1951, at the article “pauperism,” expresses itself in these terms: “The history of pauperism is essentially the history of errors committed in the assistance of the poor, of a too zealous humanitarianism, and of an unreasonable charity. [...] The essential causes of pauperism, apart from thoughtless alms, are the vices that ravage the individual. [...] Sensuality weakens the body, destroys self-respect and leads to chronic dependence.”
17. L. Chevalier, *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle*, 2nd edition, Paris, Hachette, 1984, p. 602.
18. E. Buret, *Misère des classes laborieuses...*, op. cit.
19. L. Chevalier, *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses*, op. cit., p. 255. The data interpreted by Chevalier concern Paris, which is not a new industrial metropolis and where artisanal or semi-artisanal forms of organization are still predominant. But he shows also that this new representation of workers as potential criminals is elicited by the unprecedented transformation of the composition of the Parisian working class at the beginning of the nineteenth century: massive immigration of de-socialized rural people, etc. What characterizes “pauperism,” is – in Paris as well as in the new industrial conglomerations – the association of new forms of labor organization and a degradation of living conditions for the “inferior classes,” due to a great extent to the arrival of new de-socialized (disaffiliated) groups.
20. Let us remember that while the first edition of *Les Misérables* dates from 1862, the Parisian episodes take place at the end of the Restoration and under the July Monarchy, that is, at the moment when the social question is crystallizing.
21. L. Chevalier, *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses*, op. cit., p. 176. Thus, for Hugo, the epithet “miserable” is not a condemnation; on the contrary, it represented an attempt at rehabilitation based on the discovery of the etiology of misery. We find, by the way, the same connotation of the word “misery,” and the same continuum between innocence and crime, with social thinkers like Proudhon or Louis Blanc: “Misery incessantly advises sacrifice of personal dignity; it almost always commands it. Misery creates a dependence of condition for those who are of independent character, so that it hides a new torture in virtue, and changes into bile whatever generosity one has in the blood. Apart from suffering, misery also engenders crime. It leads to the hospital and to prison as well. It makes slaves; it makes most thieves, assassins, prostitutes” (L. Blanc, *Organisation du travail*, Paris, edition of 1850, p. 4, first edition, 1839). Eugène Buret also has this beautiful formula: “Misery is poverty felt morally” (*Misère des classes laborieuses*, op. cit.).
22. Saint-Marc Girardin, *le Journal des débats*, 8th of December 1831, cited by E. J. Hobsbawm, *l'Ere des révolutions*, op. cit.

23. Daniel Stern, cited by Louis Chevalier, *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses*, op. cit., p. 599.
24. C. Pouthas, *la Population française pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle*, Paris, 1956.
25. R. Noiriel, *les Ouvriers dans la société française*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1986, p. 18.
26. For a synthesis on industrialization's slowness, see C. Charle, *Histoire sociale de la France au XIXe siècle*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1991, chapter I.
27. See W. Sewell, *Gens de métiers...* op. cit.
28. S.R. Trempe, *les Mineurs de Carmaux*, 1848-1914, 2 vol., Paris, Editions ouvrières, 1971.
29. See R. B. Noiriel, *les Ouvriers dans la société française*, op. cit., p. 18.
30. J.-P. Rioux, *la Révolution industrielle*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1971, p. 170, counts about 670,000 of them in 1848 in the establishments that have more than ten workers, half of whom are women and children (154,000 and 130,000).
31. T. Fix, "Observations sur l'état des classes ouvrières," *Journal des économistes*, November-December, 1845. See also C. Dunoyer, *De la liberté du travail, ou simple exposé des conditions dans lesquelles les forces humaines s'exercent avec le plus de puissance*, Paris, 1845, which praises "the progress of material well-being, not only among the well-to-do classes, but also for the masses, which is proved by official and irrecusable documents."
32. Compare, for instance, the description of the quartier Saint-Sauveur in Lille by Villermé, *Tableau de l'état physique et moral des ouvriers employés dans les manufactures de laine, de soie et de coton* (1838, reedition Paris, UGE, 1971), that of East London by Eugène Buret, *la Misère des classes laborieuses en France et en Angleterre*, op. cit., and the hallucinatory description of Manchester by Friedrich Engels, *la Misère des classes laborieuses en Angleterre*, 1845, trad. fr. Paris, 1933. One should also keep in mind that the most "engaged" work by Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, published in 1854 (trad. fr. *Temps difficiles*, Paris, Gallimard), also takes place in Manchester. Dickens depicts with ferocious humor, through Mr. Bounderby, the attitude of the "decent bourgeois" towards the workers who are unhappy with their lot, whose ambition they claim is to "want to eat from golden spoons." It must be stressed – even though it is not a perfect proof of "scientificness" — that the social sciences have made their first advancements in these areas. Many of these portraits of poverty correspond to research with objective intentions and practical goals, responding to perfectly codified "calls of offer." Thus was the assignment given out by the Académie des sciences morales et politiques, in 1838, which got Buret the first prize: "To research, based on positive observations, which are the elements composing, in Paris or in any other large city, that part of the population which forms a dangerous class because of its vices, its ignorance, and its misery; to indicate the means that the administration, rich or well to do persons, intelligent and laborious workers, could employ to improve this dangerous and depraved class."
33. J.-B. Say, "De l'Angleterre et des Anglais," *Oeuvres*, t. IV, p. 213.
34. A. Dewerpe, *l'Industrie aux champs. Essai sur la proto-industrialisation en Italie du Nord, 1800-1880*, Ecole française de Rome, 1985, p. 479.
35. Cited by M. Garden, "L'industrie avant l'industrialisation," in P. Léon (dir.), *Histoire économique et sociale du monde*, op. cit., t. III.
36. E. Buret, *Misère des classes laborieuses en France et en Angleterre*, op. cit., t. II, p. 20.
37. E. P. Thompson makes a more balanced judgement: "The crime of the factory system was to inherit the worst from the servant system, in a context that did not

- keep any of the servant compensations” (*la Formation de la classe ouvrière en Angleterre*, op. cit., p. 370). David Lewine shows that it is not an absolute opposition, and that the development of the proto-industry was a decisive factor in the pauperization of the countryside itself and has deeply affected the social and demographic structure of the rural family (see *Family, Formation in Age of Nascent Capitalism*, op. cit.). But these effects on proto-industrialization are not immediately obvious to contemporaries, who continue to romanticize rurality.
38. *Annali universali di statistica*, 19. 1829, quoted in Alain Dewerpe, *l'Industrie aux champs*, op. cit., p. 470.
 39. Proto-industry will turn out to be counter-productive, especially with regard to the requirement of making costly equipment lucrative, and recruiting fixed and attached personnel for continuous and precise work. But this last requirement was not given at the onset of industrialization, so that it was possible for a long time to balance between the advantages and disadvantages of one or the other type of personnel organization.
 40. R. Owen, cited in K. Polanyi, *la Grande Transformation*, op. cit., p. 176.
 41. A. de Lamartine, *la France parlementaire, Oeuvres oratoires et écrits politiques*, t. IV, p. 109, cited in L.-F. Dreyfus, *l'Assistance sous la Troisième République*, Paris, 1907.
 42. See P. Strauss, *Assistance sociale. Pauvres et mendiants*. Paris, 1901.
 43. A. de Villeneuve-Bargemont, *Traité d'économie politique chrétienne*, op. cit., p. 255 sq.
 44. E. Buret, *Misère des classes laborieuses en France et en Angleterre*, op. cit.
 45. L. Chevalier, *Classes laborieuses, classes dangereuses*, op. cit., p. 585.
 46. For a complete exposition of the regime of the hospitals and hospices, see J. Imbert, *le Droit hospitalier de la Révolution et de l'Empire*, Paris, 1954.
 47. A summary of this investigation due to Watreville in P. Leroy-Beaulieu, *l'Etat moderne et ses fonctions*, Paris, 1890, p. 304-305.
 48. Emile Chevalier, article “Assistance,” in L. Say, J. Chailley, *Nouveau Dictionnaire d'économie politique*, op. cit., t. I, p. 76. One can find in Baron de Gérando's four volumes entitled *Traité de la bienfaisance publique*, Paris, 1839, a detailed analysis of all the institutions which can claim to do “benefaction” work. Prisons and beggar's depots – relaunched at the initiative of Napoleon - have to be added here as well. Napoleon, in a note to his minister of the interior dating from November 15 1807, commands: “It is necessary that at the start of the beautiful season, France give the impression of a country without beggars” (cited in L. Rivière, “un siècle de lutte contre le vagabondage,” *Revue parlementaire*, May 1899, p. 5). Consequently, a decree from July 5 1808 on the “extirpation of begging,” imposes the creation of one beggar's depot per district. Obviously, this policy regarding vagabondage, like all those which preceded it, failed.
 49. J.-B. Delecroy, *Rapport sur l'organisation des secours publics*. Convention nationale, session of 12 vendemiaire an V.
 50. *Ibid.*, p. 2
 51. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
 52. A. Thiers, *Rapport au nom de la Commission de l'assistance et de la prévoyance publique*, session of January 26th 1859, p. 11.
 53. J.-B. Delecroy, op. cit., p. 3.
 54. F. Ewald, *l'Etat providence*, Paris, Frasset, 1985, first book, “Responsabilité.”
 55. E. M. Portalis, *Discours de rapports inédits sur le Code civil*, Paris, 1844, p. 83, cited in F. Ewald, *l'Etat providence*, op. cit., p. 60.
 56. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

57. M. T. Duchâtel, *De la charité dans ses rapports avec l'état moral et le bien-être des classes inférieures*, Paris, 1829, p. 29.
58. Baron de Gérando, *le Visiteur du pauvre*, Paris, 1820, p. 9.
59. P. Rossi, *Discours sur la liberté de l'enseignement secondaire*, Paris, 1844, cited in E. Labrousse, *le Mouvement ouvrier et les théories sociales en France de 1815 à 1848*, op. cit., p. 129.
60. Baron de Gérando, *le Visiteur du pauvre*, Paris, 1820, p. 9.
61. *Ibid.*, t. III, p. 288-290.
62. See P. Rosanvallon, *le Moment Guizot*, Paris, Gallimard, 1986. See also *le Sacre du citoyen, Histoire du suffrage en France*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993, 2nd part, chapter 1, "L'ordre capacitaire." For an analysis of the contemporaries' way of living this situation, see H. Gouhier, *la Jeunesse d'Auguste Comte et la formation du positivisme*, 2 volumes, Paris, 1933.
63. Cited by P. Léon, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, t. III, p. 113.
64. At the end of the Empire, there are 32,000 legionaries, among whom there are only 1,500 civilians (P. Léon, *ibid.*, p. 125).
65. P.-P. Royer-Collard, in Barande, *la Vie politique de M. Royer-Collard, ses discours, ses écrits*, Paris, 1851, t. II, p. 131, cited in P. Rosanvallon, *le Moment Guizot*, op. cit., p. 62.
66. With regard to the sociological reality at the beginning of the nineteenth century, these analyses certainly have a one-sided character. Thus, they do not take into account family structure, whose hierarchical functioning has not been abolished: the family continues to exercise a very strong tutelary power over its members. Analogously, social relationships, especially in the countryside, remain marked by traditional dependency patterns. Independently of political restoration, the "castle life," with all its subjections, witnesses a renaissance in the countryside at the beginning of the nineteenth century. But these observations do not refute the fact that problems of the post-revolutionary epoch were mostly represented through the schema of social dissociation.
67. F. Guizot, *Des moyens de gouvernement et d'opposition dans l'état actuel de la France*, Paris, 1821, p. 164, cited in P. Rosanvallon, *le Moment Guizot*, op. cit., p. 109.
68. I have shown elsewhere that the therapeutic relation in the framework of insanity is based on tutelage of this type (see *l'Ordre psychiatrique*, op. cit., chapter I). Moral treatment presupposes a relationship of inequality between the doctor representing rationality and the patient deprived of usage of his mental capacities. But this tutelage is scholarly, in principle based on psychiatric knowledge and controlled by a medical deontology whose goal it is to heal the alienated. This relation is opposed to the previous kinds of tutelage, based on violence and arbitrariness. At best, this tutelage is also temporary, since healing would reestablish the relationship of equality between the persons. One can see here the most elaborate and the most sublimated form of this tutelage, which will predominate in relationships between superiors and inferiors during all of the nineteenth century.
69. F. Guizot, *les Origines du gouvernement représentatif*, t. I, p. 98, cited in P. Rosanvallon, *le Moment Guizot*, op. cit., p. 93.
70. Barère de Vieuzac, "Rapport sur les moyens d'extirper la mendicité et sur les secours que doit apporter la République aux citoyens indigents," 24th floreal, year II, loc. cit., p. 55.
71. One can also understand this paradox, which bears many consequences, in the following way: the establishment of liberal society coincides with the reactivation of the structures of the total institution, the beggar's depot, prison, mental asylum, or

the workhouses in England. The return to seclusion in more modernized forms, and with ideological justification through reparation or healing is the “solution” that suits the most problematic or de-socialized persons, be they allergic to work, criminal (see M. Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, Paris, 1975), or the insane (see *l'Ordre psychiatrique*, op. cit., chapter I). But new strategies must be found, and they are more difficult to implement for categories that have to be moralized in vivo. It is also a matter of an entirely different dimension, since it is about the “inferior classes,” which are not taken into account in traditional regulations, and they constitute an important part of the new industrial populations.

72. Article “Elections,” *Encyclopédie progressive*, 1826, p. 406, cited in P. Rosanvallon, *le Moment Guizot*, op. cit., p. 93.
73. We know that it's the etymology of the word “aristocracy,” but one can add that aristocracy was, or had become representative of the old tutelage, and that for the liberals its historical rule was thus obsolete. The first time, or one of the first times when the notion of “government of the Better” was mentioned in pre-Revolutionary context, was by Boissy d'Anglas in 1795: “We must be governed by the best: the best are the most educated and they are most interested in maintaining the law; so, with very few exceptions, you will find such persons only among those who have a property, who are attached to the land that holds it” (“Discours préliminaire au projet de Constitution pour la République française,” *le Moniteur universel*, t. XXV, June 29th, 1795, p. 92). But the need to find a competent elite after the privileges had been abolished which had been based on tradition, is in fact at the heart of the debates inaugurated by Sieyès in 1789, with the distinction between “active citizens” and “passive citizens.” See O. Lecour-Grandmaison, *les Citoyennetés en révolution, 1789-1794*, op. cit.
74. The society includes as well the Duke of Broglie, the Barons de Gérando and Dupin, Benjamin Constant, the Duke of Orleans, Lamartine, Tocqueville, Dufaure. On its activities, see L.-F. Dreyfus, *Un philanthrope d'autrefois, le duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt*, op. cit.
75. Frédéric Ozanam founds in 1833 the Société Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, whose exclusively charitable objective it is to assemble young Catholics to accustom them to Good through the practice of good deeds. But he increasingly conceives the role of a Christian as that of a “mediator” between “overwhelming, furious and desperate poverty,” and a “financial aristocracy whose loins are hardened” (letter from July 12, 1840). At the onset of 1848 he became a democrat and wrote, in early February, his famous article “Passons aux barbares,” where he advises the Christians to unite with the working class (see J.-B. Duroselle, *les Débuts du catholicisme social en France, 1822-1870*, Paris, PUF, 1951, p. 165-172). But this “Christian-democratic” orientation disappeared from the public scene after the June 1848 uprising was crushed and Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte's coup d'état took place.
76. On the social orientations of legitimism, see D. Renard, “Assistance in France in the nineteenth century: the logic of public intervention,” *Revue internationale d'action communautaire*, NR. 16-56, Montreal, Fall 1986; on the diversity of legitimist positions, see P. Rosanvallon, *le Sacre du citoyen*, op. cit., second part, chapter I. On the complexity of positions taken by “social Catholicism,” see J.-M. Mayeur, “Catholicisme intransigent, catholicisme social, démocratie chrétienne,” *Annales ESC*, March-April 1972.
77. Armand de Melun, at first adept of good deeds like Ozanam, “frequented on the same day, mansards and salons,” as he says himself (letter of July 1844), traces thus his own evolution: “The new orientation of my research made me remain faithful to my program, which makes me go from the poor to the working class and from

assistance to associations” (letter from July 1850). In fact, he will be the leading force behind the commission charged with the reformation of public assistance in the II. Republic, then the indefatigable defendant of mutual assistance societies, but with the condition that adhesion remain optional and these societies be carefully “frameworked” by notaries, in among the first of whom Armand de Melun places the clergymen (see J.-B. Duroselle, *op. cit.*, p. 439-474).

78. Le Play speaks thus of the drama presented to his eyes by ferocious industrialization: “Then started to occur unprecedented things. We saw cluster around new engines of production innumerable populations separated from their families, unknown to their employers, deprived of decent habitations, of churches, of schools, deprived, in sum, of the means of well-being and moralization which, until now, have been considered as required for a civilized people. [...] This regime was weighing down on people who were abruptly torn away from an ancient patronage and traditional habits of sobriety. Thus it is hardly surprising that they provoked social disorders unprecedented in the history of humanity” (*la Reforme sociale en France*, Paris, 1867, t. II, p. 413).
79. *Ibid.*, p. 425.
80. This view evokes what the regime of Vichy attempted to realize, in which the last Leplaysians will feel at ease, Note also that the last of the “forgotten inventors,” who enjoyed a certain notoriety, Paul Descamps, owes it to the fact that he was called to Portugal by Salazar to help him elaborate his social policies (see B. Kalaora, A. Savoye, *les Inventeurs oubliés, Le Play et ses continuateurs aux origines des sciences sociales*, Seyssel, Editions du Camp-Valon, 1989).
81. On Leplaysian orientations, see B. Kalaora, A. Savoye, *les Inventeurs oubliés*, *op. cit.* On the complex relations between all of these currents, which at the end of the century meet in the Musée social, see S. Elivit, *The Third Republic Defended, Bourgeois Reform in France*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1986. The skepticism with which this rich work should be considered is, I think, due to the fact that it underestimates the specificity of solidarism as far as this doctrine advocates State intervention, which the other “bourgeois” currents refuse (see next chapter).
82. F. M. L. Naville, *De la charité légale, de ses effets et de ses causes*, Paris, 1838, 2 volumes.
83. Bastiat, *Harmonies économiques*, Paris, 1850.
84. C. Dunoyer, *De la liberté du travail, au simple exposé des conditions dans lesquelles les forces humaines s'exercent avec les plus de puissance*, Paris, 1845.
85. Charles Dunoyer: “You think this is a hideous ill [misery]? You should add that it is a necessary ill. [...] Luckily there exist in society these inferior places where families who behave badly, are forced to fall. [...] Poverty is this terrible hell. [...] It is perhaps only poverty and the salutary horrors it brings with it, that can lead us to intelligence and to practice the virtues more necessary to the advancement of our species and to our regular development. It offers a salutary spectacle to those among the not so lucky classes who have remained sane, it exhorts them to difficult virtues which they require to reach a better condition.”
86. Obviously there are also socialist positions and purely working-class organizations and forms of reclamation, which advocate radical social change. But they are beyond the pale because they subscribe to a completely different conception of society and the social. The Republican’s attitude is more ambiguous; at times it leans toward the working-class movement, but after June 1848 many Republicans side with the party of order, while the others are too much in the minority to have a significant influence on the elaboration of policies. The republican posture will have had its impact only during the III. Republic, see next chapter.

87. C. Gide, who attempts to renew the social economy at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, divides it into four currents: a Christian-social, a liberal, a solidarist and a socialist orientation (*Quatre écoles d'économie sociale*, Conférences de l'Université de Genève, 1890). But I will show (see next chapter) that solidarism and socialism have a different sense of the social. Speaking of "stateless policies," it is only the two first forms, originated from liberalism and social Catholicism, that formed the vague tutelary complex I have evoked here. While it is futile to search for a rigorous theoretic coherence in these attempts, it is doubtlessly Leonard Simonde de Sismondi who at the beginning of the century traced most clearly its principles. (*Nouveaux Principes d'économie politique ou de la richesse dans ses rapports avec la population*, Paris, 1819). Sismondi wants to correct the political economy, which is preoccupied solely with the production of riches ("chremastics") by a "social economy" which still worries about enhancing the well being of as many as possible. Marx saw here, not without contempt, a "vulgar political economy" which, contrarily to Ricardo's construction, refused to find the humanely destructive consequences in capitalism's internal logic. On these points, see G. Procacci, *Gouverner la misère*, op. cit. At the end of the century, René Worms gives this rather exact definition to social economy: "Social economy is a mellowed political economy" ("L'économie sociale," *Revue internationale de sociologie*, 1898).
88. This image of gangrene is due to the Abbé Meyssonier: "The working class has to be moralized, it is the gangrened part of society" (cited by L. Reybaud, *Etudes sur le régime des manufactures*, Paris, 1955, p. 276). This clergyman is the almsgiver of the "silk convents" factories created by Lyon employers, in which poor girls are surrounded by nuns and submitted to monasterial discipline.
89. Cited in J.-B. Duroselle, *les Débuts du catholicisme social en France*, op. cit. Here the complexity of legitimism is confirmed, which, by virtue of its role of political opponent after 1830 and its refusal of liberal modernity, is lead to support certain popular claims and to assume the role of a protector of the victims of industrialization.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
93. Armand de Melun, *De l'intervention de la société pour prévenir et soulager les misères*, Paris, 1849, p. 9.
94. Thus the first edition of the *Organisation du travail* by Louis Blanc dates from 1839, and the journal *l'Atelier*, which is published between 1840 and 1851, develops a true program of working-class autonomy.
95. Baron de Gérando, *le Visiteur du pauvre*, op. cit., p. 39.
96. Baron de Gérando, *Traité de bienfaisance publique*, op. cit., t. IV, p. 611.
97. See G. Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion*, New York, A. Knopf, 1991.
98. Social case work is born in the 1920s in the U.S., motivated by the desire to redefine social intervention within disadvantaged circles between the intervenant and the beneficiary, whence, as says the President of the National Congress of Labor in 1930, that is, during the crisis, "the futility of all official programs, particularly those that depend on the State" (see F. Castel, R. Castel, A. Lovell, *la Société psychiatrique avancée: le modèle américain*, Paris, Grasset, 1979, p. 59 sq.)
99. A. de Tocqueville, *Memoire sur le paupérisme*, op. cit., p. 39. Remember also that Tocqueville is the author of particularly virulent attack of socialism during the parliamentary debate on the right to work in 1849: "We have to relieve the country of this weight of socialism on its chest...[socialism is] an energetic, continuous, immoderate appeal to mankind's material passions [...]. If I had to find a general formula to express what socialism seems to me to be, on the whole, I would say it

- is a new form of servitude (Cited in E. Labrousse, *le Mouvement ouvrier et les théories sociales en France*, op. cit., p. 214).
100. See next chapter, the dramatization of this debate in 1848, around the question of the right to work.
 101. L. de Guisart, *Rapports sur les travaux de la Société de morale chrétienne pendant l'année 1823-1824*, Paris, 1824, p. 22-23.
 102. See L. -F. Dreyfus, *Un philanthrope d'autrefois*, op. cit.
 103. M. T. Duchatel, *De la charité dans ses rapports avec l'état moral et le bien-être des classes inférieures*, op. cit., p. 306.
 104. C. Bloch, A. Tuetey, *Procès-verbaux et rapports au Comité pour l'extinction de la mendicité*, op. cit., "Quatrième Rapport."
 105. L. R. Villermé, *Tableau sur l'état physique et moral des ouvriers employés dans les manufactures*, op. cit.
 106. It is true that certain workers, especially if they remained close to their rural origins, can show unsuspected qualities. Louis Reybaud marvels: "One's mind gets lost. On one hand there are unavoidable deficits, on the other hand, reserves that cancelled out the deficits. How to conciliate that? This is all because our calculation does not take into account the very developed abilities that can be found with workers of rural origin: the ability to abstain, the power of voluntary privation. We can evaluate their expenses as low it goes, and yet they will find ways to remain below it. Even their vices, their drunkenness, for example, don't interfere with these calculations. Thus, by tears mixed with water, accumulate popular savings" (*le Fer et la houille*, Paris, 1874, p. 111).
 107. The friendly societies count already 925,000 members in 1815, a number which was only reached in 1870, a date at which the English societies count 4 million adherents. This English "advance" is due to the fact these societies were able to develop in a more autonomous manner with regard to State supervision and the employment of notables, and also to the higher English salaries. Meanwhile, in Great-Britain as in France, the insurance societies recruit mainly among the more stable and better paid, See B. Gilbert, *The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain*, London, 1966.
 108. On the "corporatist" origins of the assistance societies, see E. Laurent, *le Paupérisme et les sociétés des prévoyance*, t. I, Paris, 1865, and W. Sewell, *Gens de métiers et révolutions*, op. cit. At about 1820, one can estimate at 132 the number of mutual societies, grouping about 10,000 associates (A. Gueslin, *l'Invention de l'économie sociale*, op. cit., p. 124). The shift from assistance societies to resistance societies is seen very soon. Thus the Société de devoir mutuel takes an active part in the insurrections of the Canuts in 1831 and 1834 (see M. Perrot "Mutualité et mouvement ouvrier au XIXe siècle," *Prevenir*, n. 4, October 1981). For a history of mutuality, see B. Gibaud, *De la mutualité à la Sécurité sociale*, Paris, Editions ouvrières, 1986.
 109. G. Dupeux, *la Société française*, Paris, A. Colin, 1964, p. 148 sq.
 110. See L.-F. Dreyfus, *l'Assistance sous la Seconde République*, Paris, 1907.
 111. Cited in J. Le Goff, *Du silence à la parole droit du travail, société, Etat*, 1830-1889, Quimper, Calligramme, 1983, p. 84.
 112. See J.-B Duroselle, *les Débuts du catholicisme social en France*, op. cit., p. 501-502.
 113. F. Le Play, *la Réforme sociale en France*, op. cit., t. I, p. 413.
 114. M. T. Duchâtel, *De la charité dans ses rapports avec l'état moral et le moral et le bien-être des classes inférieures de la société*, Paris, 1829, p. 133.
 115. H. Valleroux, article "Patronage" in L. Say, J. Chailley, *Nouveau traité d'économie politique*, op. cit., t. II, p. 440.

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116. E. Cheysson: "The role of the engineer," *la Réforme sociale*, Paris, October 1897.
117. The old paradigm of the vagabond, of the completely disaffiliated rodent always haunts industrial society: "Everywhere, it's the nomad workers, foreigners, vagabonds, bachelors, all those who are not attached to the family hearth [...], those who generally have bad morals and save less [...]. Those who do not travel but always remain in the same place, close to relatives or childhood friends, fear their censure and escape more from contact with bad subjects" (H. A. Freguier, *Des classes dangereuses de la population dans les grandes villes et les moyens de les rendre meilleures*, Paris, 1840, p. 81).
118. H. Valleroux, article "Patronage," loc. cit., p. 439.
119. See J. -B. Martin, *la Fin des mauvais pauvres, de l'assistance à l'assurance*, Seysset, Editions du Camp Valon, 1983.
120. L. Reybaud, *le Fer de la houille*, Paris, 1874, p. 34.
121. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
122. See D. Landes, *The Rise of Capitalism*, op. cit.
123. See D. Poulot, *le Sublime*, and the presentation by Alain Cottereau in the edition of 1980, Paris, Maspero. It is rather characteristic that the term "sublime," to qualify this worker irregularity, pejorative when said by Dennis Poulot, applies nevertheless to the best of workers, to those who work fastest and best and can work only three or four days a week, choose their employer, do not risk unemployment. It translates the most qualified workers' desire for autonomy and their profound allergy to forms of brigading of collective labor and the moral order one attempts to impose of them.
124. Georges Duveau opposes the mentality and behavior of workers living in the cities "representing the tentacular factory and the omnipresent patron," to life in the big cities that bring liberty and can "nourish the dreams of the workers" (*la Vie ouvrière en France sous le Second Empire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1946, p. 227). For the "people of good," on the other hand, the popular theater is the place of all the corruption and all the dangers. Leroy-Beaulieu, for example, says: "One becomes envious, cupid, revolutionary and skeptical, communist at the same time" (*la Question ouvrière au XIXe siècle*, Paris, 1871, p. 335).
125. M. Sauzet, *le Livret obligatoire des ouvriers*, Paris, 1890, p. 14.
126. See J. -P. de Gaudemar, *la Mobilisation générale*, Paris, Editions du Champ urbain, 197, p. 115.
127. Cited by A. Cottereau, "Introduction," in A. Biroleau, *Catalogue des règlements d'ateliers, 1798-1936*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Marx already spoke of the "spirit of a factory Lycurgus which makes them profit more from violating the laws than observing them" (*le Capital*, op. cit., t. II, p. 106).
128. F. Le Play, *la Réforme sociale en France*, op. cit., t. IV, p.425.
129. K. Marx, F. Engels, *l'Idéologie allemande, trad. fr.* Editions sociales, 1968.
130. F. Le Play, *la Réforme sociale en France*, op. cit., t. II, p. 458.
131. Cited in E. Dolléans, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier*, op. cit., t. I., p. 344.
132. E. Cheysson, "Le patron, son rôle économique et social" (conference pronounced on April 11th 1906), in *Oeuvres choisies*, Paris, 1911, t. II, p. 117.
133. The slowness and the relatively continuous character if rural immigration to France (contrarily to Germany) has the effect of considerably slowing down the conscience-taking process of a specifically working class condition: several population strata coexist in the same place, the last ones still impregnated with rural traditions, while the first ones are emancipated from them. On this point, see F. Sellier, *la Confrontation sociale en France, 1936-1981*, Paris, PUF, 1981.
134. See F. L'Huillier, *Les Luttes ouvrières à la fin du second Empire*, Paris, A. Colin, "Cahier des Annales," 1957.

135. These remarks concern the evolution of the proletariat of the large industrial concentrations, upon which patronal tutelage was mainly exercised. The evolution of the working-class elite that came out of the urban proletariat precedes this, and is less dependent on the patronal influence. See, for example, G. Duveau, *la Vie ouvrière en France sous le second Empire*, op. cit., and the astonishing portrait of Parisian workers' mentality in D. Poulot, *le Sublime*, op. cit.
136. L. Reybaud, *le Coton*, Paris, 1863, p. 268.
137. Cited by A. Melucci, "Action patronale, pouvoir, organisation," *le Mouvement social*, NR. 97, October-December 1976, p. 157.
138. For an almost contemporary version of patronage, see for example A. Lemenorel, "Paternalisme version XXe siècle: l'exemple de la Société métallurgique de Normandie, 1910-1988," in *le Social aux prises avec l'histoire*. "Cahiers de recherches sur le social," volume III, 1991 (la Société métallurgique de Normandie is a branch of the Creusot Schneider factories). One can try to distinguish between patronage, conceived as a mode of labor management which bases itself on traditional regulations, and paternalism, a hardening of patronage after the worker's strikes at the end of the nineteenth century (see G., Noiriel, "Du patronage au paternalisme: la restauration des formes de domination de la main-d'oeuvre ouvrière dans l'industrie métallurgique française," *le Mouvement social*, NR. 144, July-September 1988). But the two attitudes frequently overlap.
139. L. Bergeron, *les Capitalistes en France, 1780-1914*, Paris, Julliard-Gallimard, 1978, p. 152.
140. B. Constant, *De la liberté chez les modernes*, in *Oeuvres*, La Pléiade, Gallimard, 1957, p. 316.
141. J. Proudhon, *De la capacité des classes ouvrières*, Paris, 1865.
142. A critical account of A. Egon's work, *le Livre de l'ouvrier*, in the February 1844 issue of *l'Atelier*, cited in A. Faure, J. Rancière, *la Parole ouvrière 1830-1851*, Paris, UGE, 1976, p. 232.
143. *Ibid.* p. 352.
144. See A. Gueslin, *l'Invention de l'économie sociale*, op. cit., p. 139 sq.
145. A. Thiers, discourse from July 26th, 1848, cited in L.-F. Dreyfus, *l'Assistance sous la Seconde République*, op. cit., p. 62.
146. L.-R. Villermé, *Des associations ouvrières*, Paris, 1849, p. 34.
147. P. Leroy-Beaulieu, *la Question ouvrière au XIXe siècle*, Paris, 1871, p. 287.
148. For a different reading, "sympathizing" with the same type of data, see M. Leroy, *la Coutume ouvrière*, Paris, 1913.
149. G. Procacci, *Gouverner la misère*, op. cit., p. 179.
150. The procedure is similar to that of the Chicago School in the 1920s, founded on American sociology based on a questioning of the fragility of the social bond and on the risk, carried by the existence of "deviant" immigrant groups, of its breach – groups which do not subscribe to the common regulations of American society.
151. Baron Dupin, *Bien-être et concorde des classes du peuple français*, Paris, 1840, p. 40.
152. He is thus the first person to demand, in 1848, the closure of Parisian workshops, but this is a banal reaction for a philanthropist. Two of his interventions are more significant for the illustration of the shift in liberal positions that occurred in the nineteenth century. It is he who pronounces the funeral speech of the Duke de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, sign of eminence in philanthropic circles. He sums up in four lines the role played by the duke during the Revolution, "who only wanted to chair a simple committee on begging" (*Eloge du duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt prononcé le 30 mars 1827*, publication of the Institut, 1827, p. 12). The duke had also been, among other things, member of the Société des amis des Noirs [Society

of the Friends of black people], which starting from 1789 fought for the abolishment of slave trade. In 1845, at the Chambre des pairs, Charles Dupin opposes in the following terms any reform of the black Code, which perpetuated slavery until 1848: "Let us tighten the bond between masters and free or non-free workers. Let us continue to respect, to favor, good order, economy, and wisdom of life with the black workers as well as we are doing it in France with the white workers. Let us not embitter them or make them rebel with inflammatory declarations" (*le Moniteur universel*, April 5th 1845). Philanthropy thus leads the same fight, for the good of the slaves and for those of the "white workers." But above all, such talk illustrates the complete shift of liberal ideology between the end of the eighteenth and the middle of the nineteenth century: from a mouthpiece of aspirations for liberty, it evolved into a cautious desire to keep social order intact.

153. J. Proudhon, *Système des contradictions économiques ou économie de la misère*, first edition 1846. Paris, edition Marcel Riviere, 1923, t. II, p. 258.

6

Social Property

The rise of the welfare state may be seen as introducing a middle alternative between those who recommended the moralization of the people and those who advocated class struggle. The former and latter occupy symmetrical positions: the forbearance of persons of means toward the suffering, on the one side, and the struggle of the exploited against the exploiters, on the other. These are symmetrical because there is nothing in common between them, nothing at all negotiable between these polar extremes. By way of contrast, the welfare or “social state,” if we may call it that, began its trajectory when the notables ceased to dominate without sharing their wealth, and when the people failed to resolve the social question on their own terms. A realm of compromise was opened that gave a new meaning to the “social.” This was neither simply to mediate the various conflicts of interest by social management, nor to overthrow society itself by revolutionary violence, but rather to negotiate compromises between the two different positions. That is, both to transcend the moralism of the philanthropists and temper the socialism of the “levelers.”

Nonetheless the question of origins compels us to understand precisely *how* the activities of public power might be imposed by law, whereas direct interventions on private property and the economy are seemingly precluded. In France, the development of a preliminary solution was especially difficult. It required the sequence of events running all the way from the Revolution of 1848 to the consolidation of the Third Republic. This, in turn, demanded at the same time a rethinking of what makes up that collective production for which society is created; by what right it can legitimately regulate other things than just personal contracts; and the nature of the property through which it guarantees public protection without con-

tradicting private interests. How could these three elements be articulated at the same time as a single group that forms the first matrix of the social state, by which we mean the imposition of systems of legal guarantees according to which safety no longer depends exclusively on property? How does the state come to occupy a relatively sovereign position with respect to this struggle between the dominant and the dominated?

We must review these difficult and tentative developments, as they formed the foundation upon which what we shall call the “providential state” was established. They also allow us to understand at what point this expression of the “providential” state becomes inadequate in signifying the ends of the “social state.” In fact, nothing in these strategies is suggestive of a generous hand dispensing benefits to its gratified subjects. This state is fundamentally parsimonious, calculating, and ultimately suspicious when it comes to the use that is made of its payments. As such it seeks minimum adjustments rather than the disinterested redistribution of a mass of wealth, and its innovations are driven by fear more than by generosity. The tardiness of its expansion, marked by timid advances and much foot-dragging, proves well that conflict is at the heart of this dynamic. But even if it is not imperial in its aspirations, the social state is nonetheless profoundly innovative. The advent of *social property* represents one of the most decisive achievements of the modernity to which it is indebted, and which reformulates in new terms the secular conflict between patrimony and labor.

A New Hand

What will become clear, at least initially, is that the emergence of such a third alternative (that does not signify the presence of an impartial arbiter) must presuppose that two sets of preliminary conditions first be met. At first glance, what is relaxed is the iron grip of patronage, or put differently, what becomes manifestly evident is the inadequacy of these networks of moral regulations as a means of controlling the lives and aspirations of the “inferior classes.” There is a slow maturation, all throughout the nineteenth century, of the antipodes of resistance to the conception of social order as defined by the nobility. But it was also the case, however, that we must move beyond, or at least suspend, the strictly revolutionary alternative of radically reversing the positions of dominator and dominated: social change could not be advanced simply by replacing the hege-

mony of one with the other. The social state, at the same time presupposes the antagonism of classes, even while diverting them. We would like to suggest that it sublimates these antagonisms, that is to say, as with all forms of sublimation, that it represented a fiction of sorts.

The interpretation of the events of 1848 suggested by Jacques Donzelot in *The Invention of the Social* helps us to understand better the meaning of this development.¹ 1848 represents a terrible blow with respect to previous strategies of social pacification: the people (or at least the Parisian workers) took possession of the public sphere and for the first time imposed their demands on the government. That the workers had been able to carry off such a menace reveals a fundamental defect in the plan of the governability of society, one which demands a redefinition of the role of the state. Their maneuver blocked, and *the right to work* rejected, the problem remains of finding a form of government that accords a certain place to the *right to work*.

The vicissitudes are well known: in February, under pressure from the streets, the provisional government proclaimed at the same time the Republic, universal suffrage, and the right to work. "The provisional government of the Republic is engaged to guarantee the existence of the worker by labor. It is engaged in guaranteeing labor to all its citizens. It acknowledges that workers must associate themselves together in order to enjoy the product of their labor."² But it immediately substituted for the popular demand of a Minister of Labor, or of Progress, who would be charged with putting these demands into place, "The Luxembourg Commission," an organ of record-keeping and deliberation. It opened the National Ateliers, which resembled more the charity workshops of the ancien régime than a genuine public system for the management of labor. The closing of these Ateliers, in June, launched the worker's insurrection and its bloody repression.

The consequences of this defeat of the right to work, correlated with the awareness of the fragility of the tutelary controls exercised by the elites, opened a whole range of uncertainties that would require the development of a new conception of the social and of social policy. This was a founding moment, which also created an "initial trauma," for the consciousness that was produced at this moment is truly confounding: we find a divorce between the "republican" ideal, subsequently achieved by universal suffrage, and

“social democracy,” whose hopes were carried by the Parisian workers.³ On this point Pierre Rosanvallon cites a declaration, shocking in retrospect, from the *Bulletin de la République* of 19 March 1848, probably drafted by Lamartine: “The election belongs to all the citizens. Beginning with this law [decreeing universal suffrage], there is no longer a proletariat in France.”⁴ But the astonishment is retrospective—for us today, who know the end of the story. For the essential republican tradition, forged in opposition to the regimes that had succeeded one another since the Consulate, the advent of full political sovereignty is the fundamental demand. Putting an end to the political minority of the people entails its social enfranchisement. The Republic in large measure is the regime that provides all its citizens, without exception, the plenitude of their rights.⁵

The events of 1848 represent a vivid characterization of the illusory character of this belief. When this profession of faith from the *Bulletin de la République* first appeared, there must be still visible on the walls of Paris the posters of the *Declaration du Peuple Souverain* affixed on the 24th of February: “All citizens must remain in arms and defend their barricades until they have obtained the enjoyment of their rights as citizens and as workers.”⁶ Surely the workers, inspired by the republican propaganda, have gradually achieved their political demands for universal suffrage.⁷ But above all they have themselves articulated the following specific—and in their eyes essential—claims: an end to the subordination of the working relationship by association and the right to labor.⁸ And if this particular articulation of the claim of the right to work is perhaps the creation of a working elite, or of certain theoretical socialists like Louis Blanc, it nonetheless represented for workers as a whole a kind of vital necessity that alone might deliver them from misery and dependency (all the more so given that the Revolution of 1848 happened amidst a grave economic crisis with high rates of unemployment).⁹ This demand is clearly expressed in the new version of the rights of man published by the *Manifeste des sociétés secrètes*:

A dual mission has been imposed upon us: the establishment of the republican form of government and the founding of a new social order. Thus, on the 24th of February, we have conquered the Republic: the political question is resolved. That which we now desire, is the resolution of the social question, that is to say, a prompt remedy to the suffering of the workers, this is now the application of the principles contained in our Declaration of the Rights of Man... The first right of man, is the right to live.¹⁰

There is no better expression than this one of how the workers redefine the social question in terms of their own needs. The only social form that the right to live can exist within is the *right to work*.¹¹ It is analogous to the right of property for the possessors. Such a claim is apparently exorbitant for the National Assembly, even legitimately chosen by universal suffrage. For it implies nothing less than a fundamental transformation of the relationship between state and society so as to abolish the cleavage between capital and labor and to promote the socialization of industrial property. These consequences are perfectly described by Karl Marx in his *Class Struggle in France*: "Behind the right to work, there is the power of capital, behind the power of capital, the appropriation of the means of production, their subordination to the associated working class, that is to say, the suppression of wage-labor, capital, and their reciprocal relationships."¹²

This is not just a "Marxist" analysis. In their zeal to resist the right to work, the representatives of the majority of the National Assembly such as Thiers and Tocqueville, who were the most eloquent vanguard and represented the majority interests of the other social categories, said no less than this. Saying nothing else and no longer the political man who had been its main promoter and who had inscribed this principle in the decree of 25th February, Louis Blanc: "In drafting this decree, I was not ignorant of the degree to which it would engage the government: I knew full well that it would only be applicable by means of a social reform having association for its principle and for the effect of abolishing the proletariat. But in my view, it was only that which was the real value of the decree."¹³

Thus we can say that the assertion of the right to work brought with it its own defeat in the middle of nineteenth-century France. But so long as we add that this defeat is only that of the revolutionary alternative or alternatives to the social question, and moreover, in some degree, the revolutionary option would never recover from this defeat. Not that the revolution would perish on the barricades of June 1848, or in the parliamentary debates that followed, dominated by the party of order.¹⁴ But it was to produce a decisive and irreversible setback, even if the Paris Commune replayed virtually the same scenario, just as unsuccessfully, twenty years later.¹⁵ The radical solution to the social question was largely condemned to obscurity. It could only be achieved by a total subversion of the republican order, which the revolutionary parties attempted to pro-

mote by means of insurrection. What hereafter became obsolete is the hope of grafting directly a social democracy guaranteeing a right to work onto the form of democratic policy promoted by universal suffrage.¹⁶

But the same case held for the winners. After 1848 things would never be quite the same again. The Constitution of the Republic ratified the 4th of November, 1848 “in the name of the French people” contained in its Article 8 the “moderate” response to the demand for the right to work. We must contrast it side by side the decree of February 25th:

The Republic must protect the citizen in his person, his family, his religion, his property, his work, and to make available the invaluable instruction to each and every man; it must, by fraternal assistance, guarantee the existence of needy citizens, either by procuring them work within the limits of its resources, or by giving them, in place of the family, some relief to all those who are beyond the condition of working.¹⁷

These are, almost literally, the measures foreseen by the Committee for the Abolition of Poverty and inscribed in the Constitution of 1793. The famous and multi-secular dichotomy between those “capable” and “incapable” of working is once again enlisted to bifurcate the social horizon. For those who can take advantage of the old “handicapology,” a right to relief is again affirmed: (“The republic must...”), even if this is subject to the most restrictive formulation possible (“...in place of the family...”). As for that other category of the able-bodied poor, encompassing in part that of workers without jobs, the same ambiguity exists, played upon both by the Committee and the Convention itself: “...by procuring them work within the limits of its resources...” Who will be the judge of these “limits,” if not those who have just rejected the maximal version of this “fraternal assistance,” that is, the right to work? This is as much as to say that any change to the underlying organization of work being forbidden, the intervention of the public power in this domain seems destined to remain only a dead letter.

So history was only repeating itself, or, worse yet, faltering? Not exactly. On the one hand, by reaffirming the right to relief after an eclipse of more than a half-century, the Second Republic acknowledged the inadequacy of all the dominant orientations which, since the Directory, had been marshaled together in order to condemn “legal charity.” Thus, the Constituent Assembly prepares a great law for coordinating assistance, but is dissolved before approving it (by

contrast, it succeeded in reforming public assistance in Paris). The legislative Assembly that succeeded it, beginning in May 1849, even more conservative, more influenced by religious interests, appoints a Commission of Assistance of which Armand de Melun is the president and Thiers the secretary: little danger, then, that it might develop an audacious public system of relief.¹⁸ Similarly, the push in favor of giving an official status to the mutuals and of creating a national retirement fund suffered from the double hostility of the liberals and traditionalists, who clung to the principle of voluntary association of wealth rather than a social economy.¹⁹

The coup d'état of December 2, 1851 put an end to these feeble efforts. The massive rallying of conservatives and of the "republicans of tomorrow" behind Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte may undoubtedly be explained by the fact that a dictator seemed to them more suitable than the Republic to maintaining order and establishing social tranquility on a solid footing.²⁰ It is only excluded for the time being, this time to allay the deep fears of property owners following the events of June, the Second Republic had put into place the moderate social program inscribed in the preamble of the Constitution of November 1848. But it is not a matter of rewriting history. What appears certain is that the Second Empire interrupted public debate over the treatment of the social question in a democratic regime.²¹ Such debate would only be taken up again as the reinstated Republic came to be consolidated, in the 1880's. These initiatives still confronted powerful enemies on the right, but it was also threatened by the growth and radicalization of the worker's movement. Social conditions hereafter posed an explicitly political problem, and the state could no longer afford to ignore it.

The heart of this debate turned on the matter of how the state should be involved in the social question. If the Second Republic remained so timid in the matter, this is perhaps only out of conservatism. For it is no longer simply a mistake of not having understood that the social question poses a political question: June 1848 furnished a demonstration of this, vivid and tragic as it was. But the key issue now rested in how the intervention of the state could be *instrumentalized* on these questions. A third voice must be invented between the two available options, even if this third alternative might appear insufficient for one and unacceptable to the other. This required an alternative beyond, on the one hand, the alliance of liberalism and enlightened conservatism, which confounded social in-

tervention with moral activism; and on the other hand, the option of “the social,” which, despite the twin defeats of June 1848 and of the Commune, continued to captivate the working class, but was left behind by a complete transformation of the political regime and thus was unable to gain the assent of a majority.

Indeed the problem is twofold. It is posed alongside the state, and it is not at all apparent how we can find some formula midway between the quasi-prohibition against public intervention, which remains the credo of the elites, and the threat of a capture of the state in order to promote the enfranchisement of the working classes.²² But, besides that which I have called “the question of the collective,” what is similarly lacking is some Archimedean point for orchestrating a social policy. On the one hand, the collective bond tends to be reduced to the moral bond through the strategies of patronage; on the other, there is the risk of “collectivism,” of the vanishing of individuality and the confiscation of private property represented by revolutionary socialism.

The formula for resolving the social question that we are indebted to in the Third Republic owes to the fact that it is naïve to articulate *these two aspects* of the problem by associating a new conception of state intervention with a new version of the reality of the collective, or vice versa. Léon Bourgeois: “In demolishing the abstract and a priori notion of the isolated man, the knowledge of the laws of natural solidarity destroyed with the same blow the equally abstract and a priori notion of the state, isolated from man and opposed to him as a subject of distinct rights or as a superior power [to which] he would be subordinated.”²³

“The knowledge of the laws of natural solidarity,” that is, essentially, the awareness of the interdependence of parts in their relationship to the whole, which is the natural law for the living and the social law for humanity: “Mankind are among them placed and held in bonds of reciprocal dependency, as are all beings and all bodies, in all places and in all times.”²⁴ Léon Bourgeois, a key member of those “republicans of progress” who crafted the Third Republic, mobilized the accomplishments of the nascent discipline of sociology, and in particular, that of Durkheim, in order to refute the basic postulate of liberal anthropology, which I have called in a previous chapter its “methodological individualism.” This impulse most notably included the capacity to discern in social phenomena certain activities irreducible to individual initiative alone. With Durkheim

we arrive at what might instead be called, by way of contrast, “a sociological conception of society.” That this is not simply a tautology may be seen by way of contrast to the example of liberalism developing an individualist theory of society. This development of a reality *sui generis* of the collective runs throughout the work of Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte and is systemized by Durkheim: there exist certain broader objective regulations, global processes bear on the initiatives of individuals, and social phenomena exist as “facts.” Thus, social man has no existence outside of his embeddedness in the collectivity, which, for Durkheim in the last analysis, stem from the place they occupy within the division of social labor.²⁵

Here we see the decisive importance of Durkheim with respect to the reformulation of the social question: he understands that industrial society introduces a singularly novel mode of relations between social subjects, which can no longer be based on the attenuated protections of primary sociability—or what he terms “mechanical solidarity.” Henceforth we must tackle with new vigor the question of the bonds of modern society threatened by disaffiliation on a massive scale. Instead, what he calls “organic” solidarity accompanies this new form of existence that will come to dominate industrial society.²⁶ The division of labor presupposes a complementarity of ever more specialized tasks, and thus there is an objective foundation to this idea that modern society forms a *collection of unequal and interdependent social conditions*.

This proposition runs directly contrary to liberalism: a contractual exchange is not in fact the foundation of the social bond, “all is not contractual in the contract.” The contract rests on certain presuppositions that derive from the positions occupied by the contracting parties within the social division of labor. But the argument also runs contrary to collectivism. The collectivity should not be seen as in contradiction to the individual. There exist *numerous* collectivities, which occupy differential and complementary positions in the social structure. It is this differentiation that produces wealth in a society, its “organic” character, in contrast to the simple “mechanical” juxtapositions of similarities of which the mass is composed. This complex interplay of differences and interdependencies must be carefully preserved insofar as the progress of the division of labor increases the dangers of social disintegration. Solidarity, the cement of society, is constructed and conserved, and this all

the more so as a society becomes more complex. Thus we must correspondingly find in reason some practice, or public policy, whose goal is to maintain and reinforce this “unity in difference,” the fragile miracle that modern society may promote, but also lose.

This understanding of society accords the state a regulative function with respect to the interests of the various collectivities: “The State is the organ of social thought.”²⁷ Undoubtedly, in the work of Durkheim himself, the analysis of this role remains undeveloped, insofar as he mainly confines himself to sketching out the impartiality of the representatives of the state apparatus, placed in an arbitrary position with respect to various particular interests.²⁸ It is Léon Bourgeois who, through his position of political responsibility, translates this ideal theory into practice. A society is a collection of services that its members render for one another reciprocally. From this it follows that each has debts with respect to all the others, insofar as an individual, when arriving in the world, finds there an extant fund of social wealth from which he borrows. Our obligations toward the collectivity are nothing more than reflections of this status of social indebtedness, which is the reality for everyone in society. Thus mandatory deductions, the redistribution of goods and services, are more than simply attacks on the liberty of the individual. They represent repayments that may legitimately be demanded of him by law, and this is nothing other than justice itself. By whom may they be requested or even coerced? By the state: “The State,” says Dupont-White, “is the manager of collective interests.”²⁹ But Dupont-White did not know how to instrumentalize this role, for, still afflicted with the very liberalism that he critiqued, he remained trapped in the opposition between individual and state, and thus for him the collectivity remains something external to the social subject. For Léon Bourgeois, the state, directing the collective interests, is at the same time the enforcer of those “quasi-contracts” that individuals have made by virtue of the simple fact that they belong to a society.³⁰ Hence it is no more than the executor of debts contracted by the social subjects themselves. Thus, the state can “give to those who are creditors and make those who are debtors pay” without interfering in the interests, properly understood, of the individual.³¹

More concretely, this intermediary positioning of the state forms the basis for a policy, which is in essence the policy of social justice: “It is not goodwill that is, that can be, the end of society. It is no

longer the inequality of social conditions.... It is justice whose semblance we must give to all."³² In effect, goodwill is a notion at the same time so vague and general that a "policy of goodwill" must intervene in all public and private spheres of existence and degenerate into totalitarianism. The equality of conditions, when explicitly pursued, annihilates the very nature of the social bond itself in a complex society founded on differentiation and interdependency, otherwise known as inequality in complementariness. By way of contrast, "this justice in the exchange of social services, I can clearly envision the two necessary conditions for it: society must grant all its members access to the social goods that are at its disposal; and it must guarantee against those risks that are avoidable by the efforts of all."³³

Thus, a democratic society might very well be an unequal society, so long as the means of largesse are not dispensed to some dependents caught up in relationships of tutelage, but rather, in the words of Léon Bourgeois, to "similar," firmly organized in a common project.³⁴ Better yet: a democratic society cannot aspire to achieve an absolute equality of conditions, for this would be to destroy the very "organic" differentiation upon which it is founded, and to regress back to an understanding of the collectivity as composed by the simple mechanical juxtaposition of like elements. However, the state can and must intervene so that, notwithstanding these inequalities, justice will be given to each, in his place.

These new principles that are affirmed by the Third Republic will allow for the transcendence of the idea of the sovereignty of the individual put forward by liberalism, and that of the sovereignty of the state conceived as an external force capable of reconstructing society itself on a new basis. But before demonstrating the effective workings of this State, what should we call it? This is an obvious preliminary question, and not simply a matter of semantics. Ordinarily what we see here is the essence of the modern "providential state." This expression seems to me to be inadequate for at least three reasons.

First and foremost because the term itself seems to postulate a face to face relationship between the welfare state and its recipients, who are passive recipients of its gifts. From whence arises the anthem of all those scornful of the intervention of the state, who mimic one another in denouncing the subjugation, the dependency and finally the fecklessness of the beneficiaries of its largesse. This in-

terpretation of the role of the social State does not take into account its *intermediary* position between the various groups of opposing interests. Yet it is precisely this intermediary position of the state that explains its specific actions. It manages antagonism and conflict as much as it pacifies and renders others dependent.

Secondly, the “providential state” is, at base, a polemical phrase invented by critics of public intervention in order to denounce its alleged tyranny. This criticism emerges primarily from two sides of the political spectrum. Unless I am mistaken, the first, or at least one of the very first mentions of the “providential” role of the state in pejorative terms appeared in the *Atelier*, where, in December 1849, the principal force behind this workers journal, Corbon, complains that “more than one exploited awaits Providence, in the form of government, to arrive and extract him from the filth with no effort on his own part.”³⁵ And in its last issue of 31 July 1850, in a sort of political obituary before disappearing, the *Atelier* exhorted the workers “to have more confidence in their own power, to rely primarily on themselves and less on this misleading Providence that one calls the State.”³⁶ The point of the critique is primarily directed not only against the achievement of the “bourgeois” state—and rightly so, as it scarcely existed then in this domain—but against those versions of socialism that wished to call upon the state to transform the condition of the workers, and very likely, even if he was not mentioned by name, against Louis Blanc. This critique of the “providential state” is here set in opposition to work on behalf of worker autonomy.

A similar critique appeared in the same era amidst the search for a moderate reformist position that remained within the realm of voluntary initiatives. Free associations, or “societies of relief,” if you will, but only so long as they were developed wholly outside of the realm of state action. Emile Laurent, whose entire doctrine rested on a timid effort to replace patronage with voluntary oversight,³⁷ denounced this as a “national trait” unique to France, as the tendency to “increase without limits the duties of the State, establishing from this a kind of Providence.”³⁸ In the same vein, Emile Ollivier, in a plea delivered to the Chamber on the 27th of April, 1864 in favor of worker’s associations, attributed the origins of the “providential state” to the French Revolution, which, in abolishing all intermediary bodies between individual and state, left only atomized individuals confronting an all-powerful state: “From this fact there arose the excesses of centralization, the unregulated extension of

social rights, the excesses of socialists reformers; and from these, the report of Babeuf, the concept of the providential state, the revolutionary despotism in all its forms. There we may find the origins of our prejudice against individual initiative.”³⁹

“The unregulated extension of social rights”: this has got to be a dream. Indeed startling references to the all-powerfulness of the providential state such as these will eventually emerge—and this is the third reason to avoid this term—in an epoch where it simply does not exist. The providential state is an ideological construction raised by adversaries of state intervention who apply to such an allegedly social role of the state grievances perhaps rightly directed at its administrative and political aspirations. Discourse criticizing the extravagant role played by the state in these domains since the *ancien régime* is a constant of the political theory of the era, and critics as widely different as Tocqueville and Marx have given equally eloquent expression to these complaints.⁴⁰ Thus, even if one accepts the validity of this criticism of the political and administrative role of the state, its social role still remains insignificant.⁴¹ Under the Second Empire, the portion of national revenues devoted to social dispensations was only .3%.⁴² Indeed it is the striking absence of even a feeble “providential” role of the state that should astonish us. This is especially the case for France. Even before the twentieth century the social protections undertaken by the state remained vastly inferior not only to those offered in Great Britain and Germany, but also in the Scandinavian countries, Austria, the Netherlands, and even in Romania.⁴³

For all these reasons, the expression “providential state” brings with it more obfuscations than clarifications. It is prejudiced against certain kinds of state action in the social domain, which remain to be analyzed, and of the nature of its effects that, so conceived, cannot help but be perverse. Thus we will consistently use instead the phrase “social state,” neutral in its origins and whose substance we will have to trace through the entire range of interventions that it brings to bear. In fact, if the term did not already carry with it other connotations, the expression “national-social state” would probably best convey our meaning.⁴⁴ For the means by which the social state comes into being and the body through which its powers are exercised are both in effect, and importantly, the Nation-State. From this we witness not only a certain disparity of national social policies as a function of different cultural and political traditions among states.⁴⁵

More importantly, we can see the social state's policies as mobilizations of part of a nation's resources in order to guarantee its internal cohesion, as distinct from but complementary to its foreign policy required by the need to defend its place in the "community of nations."⁴⁶ We must return to this, but we have already seen that this embeddedness of the social state in the reality of the nation-state underlines some difficult questions. For example, what can we mean today when we speak of the "social Europe" if social policies have always been historically the emanations of nation-states?⁴⁷ And doesn't the seriousness of current conditions in matters of social protection stem in large measure from the submergence of nation-states in the face of the global economy and the international labor market? But whatever the case with these contemporary difficulties, it should be obvious by now that the domestic policies of the nation-state have little or nothing to do with any "providential" function.

The Question of Obligation

What then did the system of social protection consist of? What formed the seed of a rudimentary form of social state that was brought to bear in France at the end of the nineteenth century and on through the 1930s? Henri Hatzfeld has perfectly captured what was at stake in the parliamentary debates through which the Republican state developed the right to relief and an initial series of measures for social assistance.⁴⁸ In the first place, there is the power, the tenacity, with which the "liberal objection" persisted. Eighteen years passed between the deposition of the first plan (1880) and the ratification of the law on workplace accidents (1898); it took twenty years to develop the first law on worker's and peasant's retirement that merits, as well it should, little more than a smirk.⁴⁹ At this date (1910), our great rivals of the time, the Germans, had already enjoyed for more than a quarter of a century a system of social assistance that covered the majority of workers against risks of sickness, accidents and old age. The English were in possession of unemployment insurance, which was not instituted in France until 1958. There is hardly any reason, then, for glorifying the "French model." On the other hand, taking note of the slow growth of these provisions is highly instructive because it gives us a good sense of the obstacles that the social state must overcome: far from an expression of political sovereignty, the social state developed as a reaction to hostile forces, or as a tool for negotiating compromises between them.

An initial series of measures recognized a right to care for the indigent sick (the law on free medical assistance of 1893), and a right to relief for the elderly and the disabled (1905). We might also add the law of 1913 that favored large, needy families, even if its motivations were slightly different.⁵⁰ This legislation represents a minimal application of the solidarity of “debts,” insofar as it is a matter of affording the conditions of survival, equally minimal, to the poor who, as a general rule, cannot or no longer do work. Thus, once again, the old cleavage between those “able” or “unable” to work constitutes the primary line of division between those who benefit from assistance and all the rest who are left out. Even this “debt,” that the Committee on Poverty already called “inviolable and sacred” and that had been reactivated by the preamble of the Constitution of 1848, is imposed only with great difficulty. The “liberal objection” is once again marshaled, especially against the law of 1905, by stirring up the specter of “legal charity”:⁵¹

In a truly free country, the role of the State must be bounded, almost always and in most things, to the functions for which it was created, that is to say, to guarantee domestic and foreign peace. The rest falls outside of its domain, and I imagine in particular that all the problems concerning public assistance will be resolved in a much more satisfying manner, and at the same time less onerously, if their resolution is left to small collectivities, that is to say, to the communes and the departments and above all to the initiatives of associations and other private interests.⁵²

Note, however, the caveat “almost always.” Liberalism can accept some exceptions to its prohibition against state intervention in certain very specific circumstances like cases of extreme deprivation where there is no other alternative to its stepping in. Thus Edmond Villey, a committed liberal who was tenaciously opposed to all forms of mandatory social assistance, declared that: “The intervention of the State is legitimate, in principle, in all cases where it is a matter of protecting the helpless.”⁵³ The “helpless”: this category corresponds to what we have previously called a “handicapology.” Because it pertains to populations excluded in reality from all participation in productive exchanges, their relief by the state does not threaten to have any untoward consequences in the economic field.⁵⁴

Thus we must refine the opinion of Jean Jaurès since his discussion of the law on mandatory assistance for the elderly poor: “What is in fact the idea of this law? It is to substitute the certainty of law for the arbitrariness of charity.”⁵⁵ Probably, but only so long as we add three qualifications: first, before this law, and for several centu-

ries, the relief of those, like the elderly poor, who benefited from “helplessness” or “handicapology” were most often in practice guaranteed by the forms of harmonizing protections that were a consequence of one’s residency (cf. chapter 1). Thus it is more a matter of moving from a quasi-law to an effective law. This is not a negligible difference, but it certainly doesn’t represent a staggering innovation.

In the same way, secondly, this right is subject to the very strict condition of available resources, and its dispensations depend on certain administrative controls: the indigent must show proof that he is “deprived of resources,” that is to say, exhibit the signs of his misfortune. This is less as the bearer of a right, in the strict sense of the term, but rather as a potential beneficiary, submitted to official scrutiny by an administrative official.⁵⁶ Giving a legal status to assistance was not enough to efface totally the stigma attached to indigence. Nor did it succeed completely in de-localizing poverty, or if one prefers, in universalizing such a right: the grant of a right to relief depends on expertise administered at a local level.⁵⁷

Finally, we must underscore the extraordinarily restrictive character of the criteria that must be satisfied by the beneficiaries of this law. Henri Monod, director of public assistance, whose interests we might very well expect to lie in extending the jurisdiction of his institution, declared thus in 1889: “Public assistance is due, in the absence of other support, to the indigent who find himself, temporarily or definitively, physically unable to provide for his own support.”⁵⁸ Not only do we find the traditional principle of “handicapology”—“physically unable to provide for his own support”—being strongly reaffirmed; but public relief is a right only “in the absence of other support,” familial or private. Besides the family, it is the persistence of the “alimentary obligation” (reiterated even in 1953, when assistance was re-baptized as “social aid”), that leaves room for the arbitrarily restrictive application of this law. The possibility of having recourse to private relief similarly indicates that, despite a principled anticlericalism, assistance under the Third Republic was in fact very eager to avail itself of the coexistence of private works. The congress of assistance was to manage this collaboration between public and private, which at least had the advantage of economizing public expenditures.⁵⁹ This seems to go

well beyond the principles elaborated by the Committee on Poverty and put into action by the Convention: the recognition of this “inviolable and sacred debt” of the nation meant that it is incumbent on the public power to exclude private works, such that the work of relieving the poor “can be disparaged neither by the name nor by the character of almsgiving.”⁶⁰

Thus the great principles of republican solidarity did not, in this case, do much to innovate. Rather they gave greater coherence and more intelligibility to practices that sooner or later came to be imposed in a more empirical fashion. But it is also that this problem of assistance, if it has been symbolically overestimated, had little in it that was strategically at stake. The populations to which it pertained are relatively circumscribed. Above all, they include different categories of those out of work, who are in reality semi-excluded from active participation in social life. Supporting them by means of a policy of relief can make them into integrated poor. As such they do not greatly alter the collective equilibrium of society. The social question is not posed in any acute way at this level.

By way of contrast, the social question does arise at the level of the mass vulnerability represented by the workers’ insecurity. For this is a problem that goes directly to the heart of the status of the majority of wage-earners, formulated primarily with respect to pauperism and perpetuated through the instability of employment, the arbitrariness of bosses, low wages, the dangerousness of work, and the misery of elderly workers. The problem, here, changes scale:

What is the class to which the greatest number of people belong who are forced to have recourse to assistance and to public largesse? Apparently, the greatest number of sufferers in the army of misery is supplied by the class of workers and laborers. What are the main causes why workers and laborers are more often to be found than others in conditions of misery? The majority of these causes are given by the economic conditions unique to this class.⁶¹

At the beginning of the century, a lively debate arose on this point: assistance or assurance? Beginning from the moment when it was recognized that poverty was somehow connected to the problematics of labor, there was the question of whether assistance might be an adequate response to this working poverty. All this came to pass as if reflection on this problem, understood as such by republicans, and even certain socialists, had merely vacillated between two options: on the one hand, of *enlarging assistance* in order to provide support for all the miserable deprived of resources, or on

the other hand, of *imposing mandatory insurance* for all those whose resources are such that they risk, in cases of accident, sickness, or during old age, being unable to satisfy their own basic needs.

At least initially, the republican “opportunists” would toy with assistance. By giving the phrase “deprived of resources” a more extensive meaning than just the physical incapacity to work, they tried to include the lowest order of the working classes.⁶² A generalized system of assistance similarly appealed to “independent” socialists. Particularly significant on this issue is the debate, undertaken in the Chamber of Deputies in 1905, which pitted Alexandre Mirman against Jean Jaurès. Mirman defended a plan for national solidarity financed by taxes and able to assist the entire population, wage-earners and non-workers alike, who are in need—in effect a guaranteed minimum income before the letter. Jaurès foresaw the trap of a merely assistential legislation that limited relief to the most impoverished populations and that prevented the development of social legislation that benefited wage-earners. On this occasion, he stated the goal that was taken up by the founders of Social Security after World War II: “We have dreamed of this unity of legislation; we are certain that one day such a general and coherent system of insurance against all risks will take the place of assistance.”⁶³ In waiting, however, it is necessary not to lose one’s sense of priorities. Generalizing assistance would simply increase the dependency of the people. On the other hand, promoting a system of insurance to which the worker contributes by paying taxes, this would be to make things, as Jaurès claimed in his 1895 defense of the retirement of miners, such “that it [relief] is no longer there as a system of charity, but as the acknowledgment of a right sanctioned by equal sacrifice.”⁶⁴

Nonetheless, the whole world was not as perceptive as Jaurès. Not everyone shared his concern for promoting the emancipation of the worker. But even if we bracket the question of “class” interest, the hesitation that was expressed at the turn of the century is perfectly understandable. With assistance, at least one knows what one is dealing with: the techniques of assistance had been honed over several centuries, and it was enough merely to extend their jurisdiction (and also to finance their expansion, at the very least). Insurance, by way of contrast, marshaled an entirely new technology of intervention, susceptible to new and almost infinite applications. If the imposition of *mandatory insurance* would meet some

resistance, this was perhaps because the kind of protection that it afforded was largely unknown, and it potentially took into account new groups of people other than those who had traditionally received assistance. The stakes are nothing less than a new function for the state, a new kind of right, and a new conception of property. This is a struggle that, in the strict sense of the word, one is perfectly justified in calling uniquely revolutionary: mandatory insurance would bring with it a silent revolution in the condition of wage-earners.

Here, however, we have not gone far enough. For the character of the preceding revelations are likely to obscure more than clarify the stakes of the debate. In the form of relief societies, such associations established with the intention of covering risks have already held great hopes (cf. chapter 5). The philanthropic movement saw in them a preferred means of moralizing the "lower classes." One segment of industrial management made them into a favored instrument for a policy of increasing the loyalty of the manual laborer. But these uses of insurance remained, or seemed to remain, compatible with the two basic strategies of patronage: surveillance and/or imprisonment by the police and other elites; and the territorialization of manual labor that this primitive forms of social advantages helped to maintain.

Not without ambiguity, however. Obsessed with the fear of seeing these associations serve as the basis for militant unionism and politics, elites probably underestimated an even deeper danger: even when they were peaceful, they developed *a system of organization that was incompatible with the mode of domination through the tutelary complex*.⁶⁵ In point of fact these associations brought into being *horizontal* relationships between their members, in contrast to the *vertical* structure of the "government of the best." The cooperative implies a collective form of existence that is not held together by hierarchical dependencies. By its very structure, it thus carried with it the seeds of democratic organization. Its social bonds consist of a network of relationships that are independent of moral subjection, and different also from economic exchanges necessitated by the laws of the market. Already such is the principle of solidarity that unites the members of a cooperative. Thus it seems that by encouraging these structures based on a kind of mutual reciprocity, the defenders of a tutelary order nursed a serpent in their bosom.

A second ambiguity follows from the ideas that the “men of substance” had of the role of cooperatives. Even if we concede that these would be schools for the elevation of the people, as the elites predicted, what clientele were they expected to win over?⁶⁶ Only the good workers—those who are already moral, or at least sufficiently captivated by the allure of wealth, that they desire to partake of the means of acquiring wealth; also those who are able to accumulate, that is to say, those whose wages situate them above the necessity of living “day by day,” thereby allowing them to look ahead to the future. Neither the most miserable, nor those evil souls who refuse to think that their welfare lies in reconciliation with the masters, that is to say precisely those who are most in need of being moralized. Rather than becoming a generalized means of relieving the people, the development of voluntary foresight threatens to create a gulf between the “good” workers and the “bad poor.”

The progress of the recruitment of mutual relief societies seems to confirm this pessimistic assessment. Do not be misled by growing number of members (modest, in any case, and much less successful than the reception of English “friendly societies”). Whereas they were originally popular associations conceived in the tradition of the trades and guilds, cooperatives were progressively rendered “bourgeois” by drawing only on workers determined someday to keep company with the elites. The development of syndicalism after 1884 further deepened the cleavage between an organized worker’s movement, dominated by revolutionary aspirations, and a mutualism that was politically moderate and whose stated goal was cooperation between the various social classes.⁶⁷ Whatever the case, the most miserable and politically advanced fringes of the proletariat (and these two categories are not necessarily one and the same) fell outside the shelter of the voluntary cooperatives.⁶⁸

We can see then that making these associations obligatory marked a veritable *paradigm shift*, both with respect to the problematic of assistance and with respect to voluntary foresight. How did this come to pass?

First and foremost we must carefully consider the link that was forged throughout the nineteenth century between insurance and patronage. Toward the end of the century, however, a certain number of new variables threatened this affinity. This is primarily growing worker resistance to the hegemony of the employers over the funds that they have created for their own ends and over which

employers kept a jealous control. We have already mentioned that, since the end of the Second Empire, strikes were launched on this matter of who should control these funds. Workers are angered by the arbitrariness, and also the dishonesty of certain employers in managing these funds. In the synoptic work that he devotes to this question, Joseph Lefort, however well disposed to the claims of the employers, concedes frequent abusive practices like the use of these relief funds for financing businesses, or even the arbitrary firing of workers, on the verge of being indemnified after thirty years of good and loyal service, just before the age of retirement, in order to avoid having to grant them a pension.⁶⁹

More seriously, or more dramatically, the failure of businesses brought with them the loss of funds, and workers were deprived of their savings. This is the case at the end of the 1880's, with the Mining Company of Terrenoire and the Discount Bank of Paris. The publicity generated by this affair led to the exercise of public power. A law ratified in 1895 made it obligatory to deposit the workers' contributions in the bank of revenues and contributions or other accounts approved by the administration.⁷⁰

Finally, the employer himself often transgressed against the principle of voluntarism, which was hailed as the very guarantor of the moralizing value of this kind of savings. Often, mandatory deductions from wages guaranteed, with the participation of employers, the financing of savings accounts. Even better: before the end of the century, two major industries, mining and railroads, lived in practice under the reign of mandatory retirement insurance.⁷¹ Such developments might best be explained by the uniqueness of these two industries: they are state enterprises, the danger and the difficulty of the work for the miners, the special demands of regularity and punctuality for the trainmen, led to the multiplication of "social advantages," which were exacted from these industries, in order to retain their labor force. But if what it really amounted to was a kind of quasi-obligation, then why was it not guaranteed by the state, rather than depending on the arbitrariness of employers? It was this, in particular, that the miners demanded. They were granted it in 1894. The law ratified June 29 made a retirement pension into a *right*. It is financed equally by worker deductions and employer contributions and had the character of a legal obligation to which employers and employees alike must both submit. Thus the structure of "social insurance" is in place

before the end of the nineteenth century. Why then were these measures not extended to all wage-earners?

This is the spirit of the law on worker and peasant pensions, whose initial version was presented in 1890. It would be twenty years, however, marked by fiery debates within and outside of Parliament, before it was ratified, in an adulterated form, in 1910. This is mainly because it represented a qualitatively new scale: it was a matter of going from a few hundred thousand beneficiaries of pensions to 7 million wage-earners.⁷² But this extension nonetheless posed a problem of principle. Joseph Lefort, whose work was honored in 1906 by the Academy of Sciences and Politics, expressed almost exactly the position of the opponents:

If the question of pensions is imposed in an imperious manner for workers in private industry, it must be reconciled with liberty, individual initiative, association under various and fertile forms, by the whole range of voluntary goods. The experience of this as it is practiced in other countries can not but confirm this conviction that a regime based upon the mandates and intervention of the state will be at odds with the economic well-being of France, with the traditions of its race, no less than with the tendencies that must predominate in a democratic society.⁷³

Note well that it is not the principle of a pension that is being disputed. Rather it is that it will be imposed “in an imperious manner,” as a justification for the miserable condition of elderly workers, of which the majority are condemned to work until they die, or to depend on assistance from their families or charity. But they nonetheless benefit from the *voluntary* character of these provisions. The argument remains that of the nineteenth-century philanthropists: “Before all else it is moral education that it comes to transmit.” The modesty of worker’s salaries was no barrier to this initiative. Voluntary savings were always possible “because of the marvelous elasticity of needs, which are at once infinitely extensible and infinitely compressible.”⁷⁴

According to this insipid and obsessively repeated catechism there arises one essential distinction, which separates workers according to a *moral* criterion. Falling to assistance are those whose “thoughtlessness,” “unsteadiness,” “lack of sobriety,” etc. had discouraged the initiative to save. Rising to autonomy are those who have been able voluntarily to plan ahead. Emile Cheysson formulates this distinction with a certain brutality by underscoring:

The moral and social advantage of separating assistance from foresight and clearly distinguishing the upright men from those fallen men that it gains us nothing to con-

found under the same system. Once having been reassured of these latter, the legislator knows with more ease how to institute the treatment that he brings to the sober clientele, capable of saving and of private initiative, rather than debasing legal solutions to the level of the improvident or the fallen who call tutelage relief. It thus accords due respect to free association and to personal effort.⁷⁵

Thus we can grant assistance to “fallen men,” to the “helpless.” But in no case should a right to insurance be instituted. This would mean, according to Cheysson, “debasing legal solutions.” This is a somewhat peculiar phrase, but it must be understood accordingly: law must continue to regulate relationships between responsible men. When pressed, it is possible to accord this second-order right to relief to rigidly circumscribed populations of the helpless. This may even be tactically useful, insofar as, “reassured of these latter,” the legislator will be more comfortable in opposing the right to insurance. This was the explicit intention of numerous liberals who were rallied to the law of 1905 for the relief of impoverished elderly: “We shall make a law of assistance so that, I am absolutely confident, we will be permitted to avoid the obligation of worker’s pensions.”⁷⁶ The right to relief is thus conceived, in opposition to mandatory insurance, as a safeguard against the extension of the latter. Clearly, this means that a social right—if indeed we are justified in speaking of a “right” in the case of a right to relief—is only legitimate if it pertains to those who are already partially outside of the social, in that zone of assistance shut off from the networks of exchange between autonomous individuals. Laws or rights must not reach into this zone of vulnerability, that of the precariousness of work, or address the inadequacies of the wage-earning condition. He who wishes to avoid “falling” into misery and dependency must defend himself through his own means. There is no collective responsibility for the misfortunes inherent in the condition of the people. Or to say this yet another way: intervention by public power is only justified when it cares for those limited cases, atypical with respect to the condition of wage-earning, that deserve to benefit from assistance.

Thus, despite its moderation, the “solidarist” position clearly belongs to another order of thought altogether. It consists of mobilizing the law for redistributing social goods and reducing inequalities. It brings with it the notion of bearing a “right” in the strong sense of the word. Jaurès also appreciates this well: “with a pension, or with insurance, the rights-bearer, even if he has thousands, upon the hour when the law states that his pension falls due, he will

have it without discussion with anyone, with an absolute certitude.” Thus Jaurès and the majority of socialist deputies moved in the direction of the “republicans of progress,” making possible the ratification of the law on worker and peasant pensions.⁷⁷ For Jaurès and his friends, the obligation of insurance remains embedded in the structures of capitalism. But at least this preserves the dignity of the worker. It gives a certain measure of security to the entire working class by respecting its autonomy, as opposed to an arbitrary patronage that strips it of its dignity.

Such a result, so laboriously acquired, might appear almost derisory. These retirement pensions were hardly greater than allocations for elderly indigents approved in 1905. In addition, scarcely a fifth of the 7 million potential beneficiaries were actually covered by the pension, and the principle of obligation itself was similarly distorted.⁷⁸ Nonetheless, if we add to this the law of 1898 on workplace accidents and the various laws that accorded a right of relief to certain categories of indigents who were unable to work, this was the essence of the social protective legislation of the forty years of republican regimes preceding the First World War. Added up, they seem meager indeed next to the practical results. Numa Murard was correct to say: “One might imagine that the 19th century, until 1914, produced only debates.”⁷⁹ So long as we add that these “debates” would pave the way for a restructuring of the juridical order, and above all the relationship between patrimony and work, that represents the great accomplishment of the twentieth century in matters of social policy.

Property or Work

Recent works have demonstrated the fundamental role played by the technology of assistance in reconfiguring the scope of the law.⁸⁰ By separating legal obligation from individual responsibility, the social law can take into account the socialization of interests, consequences of the solidarity uniting the different parts of the social body. Thus there is a direct connection between the idea of society as a collection of interdependent parts and practical modes of intervention in that society, or what we might think of as the technology of assistance. Insurance entails a form of solidarity, even if the actors themselves are unaware of it. A worker does not buy insurance in order to be in solidarity with other subscribers, but he nonethe-

less partakes of this solidarity. His interest is connected with that of the other members of the collectivity formed amongst the insured, and vice-versa. An individual risk is “covered” by the fact that he is insured in the context of his participation in a group.

What is fundamentally novel about this recourse to insurance is that it furnishes an operational framework that can readily be applied to any number of situations. In other words, the principle of coverage against risk is seemingly inexhaustible. One might be “covered” against accidents, fire, hail, or floods, but also—and above all—even illness, unemployment, old age, or death can be incorporated as risks. These are more or less probable hazards, from which it follows that it is more or less probable that they will occur at such and such a moment, and that these occurrences are calculable. Social life is thus, at least in principle, reducible to a certain number of (social) risks. To be covered against all risks, this would be to live in total safety.

What can the state do in the face of such an eventuality?⁸¹ Certainly not to cover all risks, which would require of it a power that it does not have. But with respect to its role as “manager of collective interests,” recalling the phrase of Dupont-White, this is a function of particular importance, indeed of special significance, because these dangers have implications for collective interests and even threaten social cohesion at the margins. For example, a workplace accident is not only an unhappy event that befalls a particular worker. It is also a social fact, and the representatives of the collective interest may be asked if it is acceptable, at what cost, and under what form: or if this is feasible, what is the most rational way of dealing with it in the name of the common interest? Certain individuals are particularly vulnerable to risks, insofar as their work is representative of the interests of the whole. Solidarity, or the interdependence between the parts of the social whole, justifies directing some compensation toward them. The personal impact of the accident is only the consequence of a practice of collective utility. Compensating the victims or their families is nothing more than justice, in the sense that we understand social justice as a basic requirement for maintaining the solidarity of society.⁸² Similarly, old age must be insured because it is only proper that a worker who has spent his energy working toward the collective interest should be guaranteed his basic necessities, etc.

These implications have been already sketched out with sufficient force that it is useless for us to insist on them yet again. However, there is another implication of the development of insurance, at least as important as the evolution of the legal order. However, this has been left unexplored since Henri Hatzfeld's original insights of more than twenty years ago. This pertains to *a change in the nature of property itself*, the establishment of a kind of *social property* that has no historical antecedents, even as it had a historic genesis.

Thus a paradox must hold our attention, one which shows the inadequacy of merely thinking about insurance in terms of its legal implications. Insurance is a universalist technology. It paves the way for a "society of assurance," in the words of François Ewald, where, at least ideally, the whole range of social risks will be covered. It is also a "democratic" technology in the sense that all the insured occupy analogous and interchangeable positions within a collectivity. However—and here is the paradox that we must take seriously—the first applications of mandatory insurance were *limited to categories of the population threatened by social dislocation*. The risk being covered under different forms—from workplace accidents, sickness old age or disability—is actually the risk of falling from a vulnerable position to a position of outright misery: the risk that accident or sickness might disrupt the delicate equilibrium of a worker's budget, or that old age will leave a wage-earner without livelihood or resources. Exchanges mentioned earlier in the discussion—that is, carrying obligations of relief for the poor and those concerning industry and agriculture's obligation for providing for the retirement of wage-earners—demonstrate the following: some do admit their obligation to relieve the poor in order to avoid the obligation of paying a pension to wage-earners. Others must resign themselves to a formula of worker and peasant pensions scarcely more satisfactory than a right to relief for the indigents.⁸³

All comes to pass, then, in a new era, *as if insurance was analogous to assistance*. Plainly, this signifies that there is an obligation to insure those who are in danger of coming to need assistance. Above some ceiling of incomes, however, insurance remains optional. Social groups whose resources, whether through high salaries or inheritance, appear to shelter them from danger escape the obligation to pay for mandatory insurance. Thus the first laws of insurance affirm a dividing line between the lower orders of society, which must be collectively insured, and superior positions, whose

security depends on their own resources, or as we might say, on their *private* property.

At its origins, then, mandatory insurance falls short of promoting a generalized security. It did not compel a complete break with respect to previous conditions, nor represent an improvement through a new system of rationality.⁸⁴ It offers a new paradigm for managing social conflicts, whose implementation depends on complex socio-historical circumstances. This variable underlines two difficult problems. Why in the early days of insurance, a universalistic technology, is it applied only to those situations still characterized by their *social indignity*? Secondly, what conditions have allowed it to pass from a nominal universality to a universalism whose incarnation becomes the matrix for a society of assurance? (With, in the background, a third question at the very heart of the contemporary moment: what has happened to destabilize the universality of insurance coverage, leaving us today again confronted by the general risk of social insecurity?).

In order to deal with these questions, we must take into account the new relationships that were forged at the turn of the twentieth century between labor (wage-earners), security, and property. The earliest beneficiaries of insurance had only their own labor to survive. They are proletarians left outside the order of property. They embodied the opposition between property and labor, which was still symbolized by the antinomy of security and insecurity. To insure these non-proprietors was not only to change the relationship of labor and security, but also the *relationships between property and labor*. We will follow the path suggested by Henri Hatzfeld when he attempts to grapple with “the difficult transformation of property-security into legal-security.”⁸⁵ But we will also show that this movement marks the first step of an ascent that will lead to the modern “salariat society”: a society in which social identity is based on wage labor rather than on property.

Charles Gide declared in 1902, “In all that concerns the class in possession, property constitutes a social institution that makes all others more or less superfluous.”⁸⁶ Conversely, this is to situate the entire domain of the social in the space of a deficiency, namely, *the deprivation of property*. And, in fact, until this date (1902), most of the “social” manifestations mentioned in the previous chapters have some of this ersatz character of trying to compensate, albeit poorly, and more often poorly than well, for the absence of an autonomy

that property alone can offer. The residue of the nub of the social question: the majority of workers are most vulnerable, and often miserable, so long as they are deprived of the protections associated with property. But posed in these incommensurable terms—that is to say, in the context of an absolute opposition between the laboring and propertied—this question remains unsolvable. The reformulation of the social question will consist not only in abolishing this distinction between propertied and non-propertied, but in redefining it. This is to be done by juxtaposing private property to another kind of property, *social property*, such as would allow one to remain outside the order of private property without losing the safety of it.⁸⁷

This entails a qualitative change. Social security arises from a kind of *transfer of property* through the mediation of labor and under the aegis of the state. Security and labor will become substantively linked. For in a society that is reorganized on the basis of wage-labor, it is the status given by labor that yields the modern equivalent of protections formerly guaranteed by property. This is the result of a long odyssey whose stages we must take care to trace out, because even today we remain the heirs of this historical development.

Since the Revolutionary era, the problem of establishing new relationships between work and property has been posed, and already in complex forms. First, in the form of the political aporia posed by the mass of those who are outside of property and who represent the essentials of the world of labor. How to reintroduce this “fourth order” into the social compact made among those who have nothing, and who, consequently, are nothing?⁸⁸ During debates preceding the ratification of the Constitution of 1793, the representative Harmand expresses himself as follows:

Men who wish to be true will avow with me that, after having obtained the political equality of law, the most immediate and active desire is the hope for substantive equality. I say further, I say that without the desire or the hope for this equality in fact, the equality of law would be no more than a cruel illusion which, in place of the enjoyments it promises, would only offer proof of the torment of Tantalus to the most useful and numerous portion of the citizenry.

And Harmand raises this fundamental question: how “can social institutions produce for man this equality in fact that nature has denied him, without infringing upon territorial and industrial properties? How can this be accomplished without agrarian laws and without the redistribution of fortunes?”⁸⁹

For Marcel Gauchet, this is the nub of the modern social question and the fundamental aporia that the republican regime will run up against, “the failure to construct an organization of powers adequately embodying the liberty and the equality of citizens,” the impossibility of completing the Declaration of the Rights of Man through the deployment of social rights.⁹⁰ And with good cause: in this era how can one promote such an “equality” “without infringing upon territorial and industrial proprieties... without agrarian laws and without the redistribution of fortunes?” This is impossible without a change of reference that will be, rightly, mandatory insurance. But in the absence of such a “solution,” which is neither practical nor probably even fully imaginable at the end of the 19th century, the revolutionaries attempted three others. They did not really chose among these, and they were unable to follow them through to their conclusion.⁹¹ They are rather variations on this opposition between property and labor, which they are forced to try to reconcile.

Recall their first response: linking the right to relief with free access to labor guarantees minimal security to the “non-proprietary classes,” either for those who are unable to work (as a right to relief), or for the able-bodied man who hereafter will be certain of finding work. But we have already seen (chapter 4) that the right to relief did not come about at Thermidor, and that the liberation of the labor market, rather than abolishing the dependency and suffering of workers, opened the door instead to pauperism.

The second pathway, running parallel to the first, consists of attempts to make property ownership available to almost everyone. This is already present in the works of the Committee on Poverty. Those who are “convinced that poverty is extinguished by property and is relieved by labor, will consider whether it should not be proposed to the Assembly to take advantage of current circumstances so as to increase the number of property holders by stipulating that the portion of the baronial and ecclesiastical wealth whose alienation the nation intends might be sold in very small lots, large enough, however, to allow a family to earn a livelihood, and thereby opening the door to the maximum number of those acquiring them.”⁹² La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt was however similarly secretary of the “Committee of Alienation” charged with the sale of nationalized goods. There he defended this position, apparently without success, for as we know the sale of these fortunes is undertaken primarily in the interest of those who are already property owners. So too with

kindred proposals to distribute the baronial lands to the very indigents who have “fertilized [them] with their labor.”⁹³ This was also a proposal of the Barère Report establishing in 1794 the Book of National Beneficence.⁹⁴

Taken to its extreme, this proposal abolished the opposition between propertied and non-propertied by universalizing access to property. It is profoundly indebted to the social imagination of the Revolutionary period. “The lack of property for a large class of persons will be always, in whichever constitution we shall have, a permanent and necessary principle of poverty.”⁹⁵ This is the ideal of a republic of small property owners devoted to the nation because they are attached to their goods, and out of a consideration of their land. “We must give some land to all men,” declared Saint-Just.⁹⁶ But this is also a popular aspiration. Albert Soboul observed that one of the most radical social claims of the era is brought to the Convention on September 2, 1793 by the part of the *Sans-Cullotes* from the Garden of Plants. They demand “that the same individual shall possess no more than a maximum, that nothing can justify more land than required by a set quantity of plow horses; that the same citizen can have only one workshop, only one store.” Consequently, added these petitioners, these measures will “gradually abolish excessive inequality of fortunes and increase the number of property owners.”⁹⁷

One such ideal will survive the Revolution, both in the hearts of the people and among social reformers. The first of these, chronologically speaking, Simonde de Sismondi, remains extremely vague about what remedies might be required to combat the ills of the savage development of the economy. He is specific on one point only: it is necessary to proceed with a limited but necessary agrarian reform in order to “establish in the fields the greatest possible number of workers.”⁹⁸ This resettlement will be a recurrent reference in the majority of proposals for achieving the “abolition of pauperism,” as envisioned by Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, who proposed redistributing public goods among indigents without jobs.⁹⁹ These aspirations for a “return to the land” will be taken up again later in the nineteenth century and beyond, not only by Le Play, for example, but even in the heart of the personnel policy of the Third Republic.¹⁰⁰ Need we mention here as well the rural nostalgia of the Vichy regime?

Yet at least in the form of a direct redistribution of property, this option was rarely put into practice. This nostalgic ideal failed to take into account the force of industrialization and urbanization. In effect, it presupposes the attrition of wage-labor, whereas the subsequent development of industrial society cultivates and expands on it.

However, there is a third option, which comes to pass as a tempering of private property to the credit of its social function, that is not wholly unknown in the Revolutionary era. Its origins may be seen in the Rousseauian tradition: "My idea...is not to destroy completely individual private property, because this is impossible, but to confine it to the smallest possible bounds. I desire, in a word, that the property of the state might be as great, or as strong, and that of the citizen as small, or as feeble, as is possible."¹⁰¹ The Abbey de Mably, disciple of Rousseau, similarly disputes that the order of society must be founded on the consecration of private property.¹⁰²

Is this only a marginal opinion? The Constituents had even inscribed the right to private property among the rights of man, and the Convention itself passed unanimously a law punishing by death "whoever will propose or attempt to establish agrarian laws or all other laws or measures subversive of territorial, commercial or industrial property."¹⁰³ But these provisions may be read in two widely different ways: as an unconditional defense of private property, or as an acknowledgment of its eminently social character. One would probably be mistaken to push the first interpretation too far. "Must it be said again? No man is truly a citizen if he is not a property owner. What is the fatherland? The soil where he is born. And how can we love it if we have no such place? Those who have only to shake the dust from their feet in order to leave a country, how can they cherish it?"¹⁰⁴ In the background we can see the specter of the vagabond, of the "dusty feet" with neither faith nor law because he is without hearth and place. Property is that which establishes social existence because it bounds and territorializes. This is the remedy, and perhaps for this era the sole remedy, against the supreme social evil, that of disaffiliation.

Hence property may not be reduced simply to its economic value. It is no longer reducible to the private enjoyments that it allows. It represents the very pedestal upon which social belonging stands. Thus, how can we comprehend as anything other than demagoguery, or as a slide into political extremism, the decree of the second year of the Revolution seizing the goods of the enemies of the Revo-

lution in order to indemnify impoverished citizens? Saint-Just declares on this subject: "The Revolution drives us to recognize the principle that one who has shown himself to be the enemy of his country cannot be a property owner...The property of patriots is sacred, but the goods of conspirators are there for the misfortunate."¹⁰⁵ One possible interpretation: it is property that makes the citizen, but citizenship is not simply the private enjoyment of personal wealth; it also encompasses an array of social duties. Just as one cannot truly be a citizen without being a property owner, one also does not have the right to be a property owner without being at the same time a citizen, that is to say, in the words of Saint-Just, a "patriot." Property, yes, but limited in its extent, regulated in its employment, and subject to its social utility. For Robespierre as well, "equality of wealth is a chimera," but "the extreme dispersion of fortunes is the source of good from the evil and of good from crimes."¹⁰⁶

This "moderate" interpretation of the position of the most radical wing of the Mountain seems justified by the fact that the social nature of some properties was explicitly acknowledged by most political impulses behind the Revolution. Thus, the nation's confiscation of the ecclesiastical fortunes and those of charitable foundations was suggested by as temperate a spirit as the Duke of Rochefoucauld-Liancourt and received widespread assent. Why? Because these fortunes were already dedicated to the service of the poor. It is therefore just that these should feed the public coffers in order to promote the better organization of this social service. But is it only this kind of wealth whose social utility is recognized, because it will become largely the property of the poor? On August 10, 1789, during the discussion in the National Assembly of the suppression of ecclesiastical tithes, Mirabeau offers an astonishing speech:

I know but three ways of existing in society: as beggar, thief or wage-earner. The property owner is himself only the first of the wage-earners. That which we vulgarly call his property is only the price that society pays him for the distributions that he is charged with making to other individuals by his consumption and by his expenses: property owners are the agents, the economies of the social body.¹⁰⁷

Astonishing indeed, especially given the social indignity attached at the time to wage-labor, for us to see the term wage-earner treated as a virtual synonym of property owner. But Mirabeau suggested here a conception of property as public service: the property owner

is equivalent to an economic unit who animates the activity of the social body by his demands and his expenditures, and thus irrigates it with his riches. As an economic entity, then, he may be held responsible for this kind of social mandate that he exercises. Thus, amidst the effervescence of the Revolutionary period, we witness an emerging redefinition of private property in terms of the social functions that it performs.

Duly considered, this position is not as radical as it might seem. It is only the hegemony of a purely privatistic conception of property that makes it appear so. Indeed, in the “old society,” property was always readily understood as social property. Corporatist privileges are the collective property of the guild, and not that of individual workers; the communes represent an essential form of collective property in the pre-industrial economy; even feudal property is not an inheritance reducible to its saleable value, but a collection of social and juridical prerogatives tied to the land. Nonetheless, liberalism sought to abolish these “archaisms” and to make property—and labor—into commodities. But just as the contractualization of the relationships of labor will be a factor of social dissociation, so too does the complete privatization of property threaten to atomize the social body into a powder of individual property owners. Can the simple association of sovereign property owners really form a society? When the order of the day becomes that of “terminating the Revolution” by putting an end to political disorders and social instability, numerous are those who doubt that a stable order can rest on the unconditional enjoyment of a private patrimony. We need only turn to the testimony of August Comte:

In all normal conditions of humanity, each citizen himself constitutes in reality a public functionary whose more or less defined contributions determine both the obligations and pretensions. This universal principle must be extended as well to property, where positivism sees above all an indispensable social function, destined to form and to administer the capital by which each generation prepares the work of the following.¹⁰⁸

Thus the idea of the inviolability of inheritance and the sacredness of the individual who is free to dispose of it does not stand on its own. Rather it is written in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and in the Napoleonic Code, and it demands the exchanges of the market. But it may be too simplistic just to invoke the immense mishmash of ideas that accompanied and followed the Revolution advocating “bourgeois” property as the sole foundation of the so-

cial order. It is not only the partisans of its abolition, the “collectivists,” who contest its absolute character. This attention to its social functions bears directly on the question of labor. This is what animates society’s activity (Mirabeau), or what guarantees by its “labors” the continuity between one generation and the next (Comte). In sum, private property is equally “social” if one takes into account *its usages*, and not just *its mode of appropriation*. Its absolute break with labor appears rather more debatable than that which is in the last analysis the source of wealth. But, in its liberal version, we find a divorce between property’s uses and its mode of appropriation. It is justified by its social utility (it is in these terms that bosses will constantly justify their preeminence: it is the economic firm that allows workers to live), but its private possessor remains the sovereign judge of how it should be utilized. Can we overcome this tension that runs throughout the purely liberal conception of property and, at least for some of its uses, acknowledges as such and even underscores its *collective utility*? In order to do this we will have to define a kind of “social property” that transcends the arbitrariness of private usage and may be put in the service of the public interest.

The Propriety of Transfers

Beginning in the 1880s this theme of social property becomes a matter of fundamental debate. Through the notion of social property the so-called “republicans of progress” explore the possibility of founding a republic by occupying an equidistant position between individualism and socialism. This is the motivating idea behind such important works as those of Alfred Fouillé,¹⁰⁹ Emile Laveleye¹¹⁰ or Léon Duguit.¹¹¹ Laveleye mobilizes against Thiers the resources of a nascent ethnology in order to prove that “complete property in land is a very recent institution” and to establish property instead on its general utility.¹¹² Duguit declares on this point: “The conception of the subjective property right will vanish so as to leave room for the conception of the social function of property.”¹¹³ Social property is at the heart of the development of *public services*. These represent collective goods that allow for the reduction of inequalities by putting at the disposal of all certain common opportunities, mainly that of education.¹¹⁴ Thus we are able to give a concrete content to the functions of the Republican state, those such as Barni characterized in the *Manuel Republican*, which served as a

kind of secular Bible for the regime: “The State is the entirety of the public powers charged with regulating and administering the entire country.”¹¹⁵

The uncertainty underlined by the Hammond Conventions—“How can social institutions procure for man this substantive equality that nature has denied him without weakening landed and industrial property”—has it been overcome? In one sense yes, if one does not confuse equality and egalitarianism: social institutions facilitate the participation of all in the “public thing.” Society begins, in the words of Léon Bourgeois, “to open to all social members the sociable goods that are communicable to all.”¹¹⁶ The development of social property and social services thus represents the achievement of the solidarist program, over and against the individualism and egoism of classical liberalism.

The importance of this collective property, which should not be confounded with collectivism, is confirmed by the fact that the moderate orientations of the worker’s party, its “possibilities,” similarly make them the basis for social transformations to be introduced to combat the hegemony of the bourgeoisie.¹¹⁷ They saw in these public services, the skeleton of the state, the manifestation of human labor otherwise improperly confiscated by the capitalist class. The dawning of socialism in its optimistic version may be understood as the re-appropriation, in the form of public services, of the social utility of human labor:

Governments change with the various classes that achieve the conquest of power, but the State remains and continues its normal development by transforming little by little each category of human labor and by appropriating it under the name and in the form of public services. The State is the entirety of public services already in place.¹¹⁸

However, this form of social property as incarnated in public services remains a collective property also in the sense that it is impersonalized. It is not appropriable by any particular individual. From that moment onward, it will be an insufficient relief for him beyond these accidents of personal life that make of him a socially vulnerable subject should he be deprived of all private property: sickness, unemployment, old-age. Under these circumstances—which may become permanent conditions, as for the remainder of life after he ceases to work—the worker cannot content himself with being a collective user of public services. He also has personal needs that he must satisfy by personal means, for example continuing to be

fed and lodged after his retirement. But he does not have a private inheritance. Can there exist a *patrimony personally applicable that nonetheless is not private*—which might very well be social—but is susceptible to private enjoyment? This veritable philosophical puzzle, which gives a response to the confusions expressed by Hammond, has been discovered. It is found in the provision of mandatory insurance: an inheritance whose origins and rules of operation are social, but which *assume the function* of a private patrimony.¹¹⁹

That this is a dangerous rift in the hegemony of private property is nowhere better illustrated than by the opposition of Adolphe Thiers, vigilant guardian of the order of property ownership. In 1848 and 1850, heated years that they were, he published two texts in which this break is evident. *Of Property* is a violent defense and illustration of property that marshals every possible philosophical and historical argument to justify what we might very well call his “bourgeois” conception of property.¹²⁰ Thiers freely reinterprets all history and philosophy in order to prove that private property is the only possible foundation of the social order. The other text is the report of the Commission of Assistance of the Legislative Assembly.¹²¹

This report not only contains a refutation of the right to work and a defense of the “virtuous” character that must preserve private good will to avoid degenerating into legal charity (cf. chapter 5). It also formulates a peculiar criticism of the Assembly’s plan for establishing pension funds. This criticism is ignored because, as we have emphasized, the majority of experts on “relieving the lower classes” are in agreement about the various forms of mutualist savings plans, so long as they remain voluntary. But Thiers reveals himself to be very hesitant about a tax, even voluntary, for guaranteeing a retirement pension. He opposes savings funds and pension funds. Making a deposit into a savings fund “always demands will, in order to serve the worker for unemployment, for sickness, in order to make himself master in his abode, in order to establish his family, in order to suffice into his last years.”¹²² It is “rich in material and moral results,” because it has all the character of private property.¹²³ The saver is a small property owner. Undoubtedly he will never become a landlord. But his small patrimony already is enough to place him in the class of those who merit consideration. He is reintegrated into the order of property ownership by the weight of private savings.

By way of contrast, contributing to a pension fund produces only “limited and hardly moral” results, and those who proceed in this

way “are definitely no more than egoists with a short-sighted view.”¹²⁴ This is because the capital saved in this way is established for the benefit of the depositor alone. But above all, “it can no longer be looked after nor borrowed against for any other need until the day when the pension comes to the worker.”¹²⁵ Thus it does not represent a private patrimony in the plain sense of the word, a good that the possessor may freely dispose of and that he can transmit to his heirs through a process of capitalist accumulation. This is why, even if we cannot absolutely forbid this kind of arrangement, it is still less desirable than those of savings banks. Its development dates however “from the moment when false doctrines, invented in order to seduce and mislead the masses, began to be raised like the river bed of a torrent that enlarges before subsiding.”¹²⁶ In sum, this form of indemnification is contaminated by its suspicious affinities with collectivism. It is merely the harbinger of what is to come.

Judgments like this one by Thiers probably betray the inability of champions of pure liberalism to conceive of the value of property other than in the form of a personal fortune controlled by its possessor and directly transmittable to his descendants. Still, throughout his writings, Thiers does manage to surmise the dawning of a novel kind of property that does not circulate like money and is not exchanged like a commodity. This will be less a good that one possesses in private than a prerogative springing from our membership in a collectivity and one whose enjoyment arises through a system of juridical rules.

Thiers’s resistance to capitation has nothing anecdotal about it. It represents the very essence of a recurrent objection to obligatory social insurance. Thiers gives the extreme or even extremist version of this objection, probably because, more lucidly or even more viscerally attached to a purely private conception of property than many other liberals, he better understood the prerequisites of the technology of social insurance, even in the form of voluntary participation. He brilliantly perceives that one’s recourse to insurance places *de facto* the subject in a network of solidarity widely at odds with the liberal definitions of property and responsibility. This implication becomes evident in the case of mandatory insurance. Thus it is this same argument that is taken up and amply developed a half-century later in the debate over worker and peasant pensions. Denys Cochin, in the Chamber of Deputies on June 25, 1901 notes the following:

When you have given the worker a legal mandate obliging him to deposit his savings in your pension fund, you have taken from this wealth whatever other employments he might have preferred. In the country, he buys a piece of land, a house, some cattle; in the city, some tools or a small business fund. He knew how to rise to become a boss. But you, you hold him in the position of wage-earner by demanding an exclusive control over his small capital, by imposing on him only a single way of placing it. Do you see, Sirs, the mistake of your project is to divide the citizens into two classes, to separate them into two clans, those of patrons and those of wage-earners. In reality, the two clans are intermingled; the two classes are confounded. You shall seek in vain to find the frugal worker on your lists of pensioners; he has become a boss, he has become bourgeois, without you anticipating it and without requiring any of your assistance.¹²⁷

At first glance, the argument seems paradoxical, or even one of bad faith: how can the partisans of the law on mandatory insurance, that is to say, in large part the parliamentary Left, be those who are accused of trying to keep wage-earners in their subordinate positions? However, this argument contains within itself a profound insight. As Henri Hatzfeld has observed, in practice, the idea of mandatory social insurance implies the acceptance of the singularity of industrial society and the irreversible nature of the social stratification that it brings with it. In industrial society, the division of labor becomes more and more extreme, but also social differentiation takes on more and more complex forms, without the possibility of reversing itself. It is no longer just a matter of property-owners and those propertyless who might become propertied through the force of their talents. Wage-labor has assumed a *structural* position in society: there will always be wage-earners, and more and more permanent wage-earners. Henceforth, will the paradigm of the property owner remain the only common ideal for all members of society and the only guarantee of security? This would be to resign ourselves to the fact that the growing masses of people—even those who are indispensable to the development of industrial society—will be definitively condemned to positions of jeopardy. Isn't the new question rather one of stabilizing wage-labor and, if I may say so, of "*dignifying*" it? Such that it becomes a full-fledged status, rather than continuing to see it as a provisional state that can be abolished, or from which one tries to escape by means of acquiring property?

The dawning of insurance thus sanctions the recognition of the irreversible character of social stratification in modern societies and the fact that this will be founded on the division of labor and not just on property. Conversely, adversaries of mandatory insurance still defend the hegemony of the model of independent property owner, of property as the exclusive foundation of social dignity and secu-

erty. This ideal may be exemplified by the great landed property owner or by the landlord, but just as well by the artisan, the shopkeeper, the small landholder: to buy some acres in the country, or some tools in order to establish oneself, this is also a popular aspiration.¹²⁸

So resolving the social question by reference to access to property alone, rather than by social insurance, this is not just fanciful nostalgia on the part of the possessors and their ideologues, whom we might accuse of simply defending their class privileges. To the contrary. We cannot understand the meaning of the extraordinarily tenacious opposition to insurance—in France above all—if we do not appreciate that all of France either was or aspired to be a property owner: the France of the “small” just as much as that of the “great” property-owner; the France of shopkeepers, that of artisanal traditions and of small rural properties, the anti-industrial France. This must first be vanquished, or at least weakened, before the new conception of security, social security, can be imposed. It is necessary to wait until only gradually, timidly, three steps forward and two steps back, French society comes to be re-centered around wage labor. Conversely, we understand that the full-fledged acceptance of wage labor represents a decisive step in the promotion of modernity: a model of society in which social positions are essentially defined by the positions one occupies within the division of labor.

Finally, then, it is a mutation of property that allows the realization of the machinery of social insurance: the encouragement of a “transfer of property” in the literal sense of the word.¹²⁹ The sums put away are automatic and mandatory deductions; access to enjoyment is subject to conditions or specific dates, such as illness, retirement age, etc. The payment of premiums is an unavoidable obligation, but it gives way to an inalienable right. The property of the insured is not a saleable good, it is held in a system of juridical constraints, and the benefits are delivered by public agencies. It is a “tutelary property,” *a property for security*.¹³⁰ The state, which is in actuality the director of this, plays a protective role. It is not consequently a “provider”; it does not distribute benefits, but it is in practice the guardian of a new system of distributing goods.

Here we have the point of departure for what the theory of regulation will announce under the form of the socialization of incomes, and which will come to represent a more and more important part of socially available revenues (cf. chapter 7). The wage is not just re-

muneration for labor—judiciously calculated to insure the perpetuation of the worker and his family. It includes a component—the “indirect wage”—that represents a rent paid *from labor* toward certain situations *beyond labor*. These situations are defined negatively: sickness, accident, unproductive old age, meager compensations for labor for which we must even then labor. But they can be and indeed will be defined positively in terms of the ability to consume, or be instructed, or enjoy leisure, etc. Paradoxically, this property linked to labor will form the essential basis for delivering us from the hegemony of labor.

However, at least at first, the transfer of property is mainly seen as lacking with respect to the full and complete prerogatives of “bourgeois” patrimony, especially in terms of the ability to transmit it to descendents. But, even at the time, it did manage to fulfill an essential function in industrial society: the preservation of the working classes from social destitution. This ambivalent character is nicely explored by an author who sketches out, at the very end of the century, the effects on the working family of such measures still being planned:

Whereas the transmission of the legacy of the bourgeois family is made by will or *ab intestat*, for the working class family it is no longer a question of passing this along by testament. With respect to the succession *ab intestat*, it is no longer regulated in a uniform fashion, but depends on the laws and regulations adopted by the various institutions whose end is the creation of this wealth for the worker. As we have just said, the question of making one’s will is not posed here, because the various institutions of oversight are not dedicated to making an estate that the worker is free to dispose of by a will as he likes, but of protecting his family, who, without the relief of these self-same institutions, will be a fallen family, in the care of public assistance.¹³¹

Capitalism here achieves a strange kind of alchemy. The powers of property are upheld. The right is tied to the payment of deductions, it is that which gives it its unconditional character, in contrast to the right to relief: because he has paid, the payee is the bearer of a right in the absolute sense and thus it comes to him—even if he is not “in need” of this provisions in order to survive, if he is, for example, a rich property owner as well as a retiree.¹³² Thus, this transfer of property is not incompatible with the classical understanding of property. It respects the prerogatives of private property, and even extends them: only the individual’s payments grant access to these collective rights. But, at the same time, this operation gives way to a new form of security. Before insurance, to be

secure was to be in possession of enough wealth to confront the vagaries of existence. With insurance, these risks are “covered.” How? By a system of legal guarantees, that is to say sanctioned in the last resort by the legal state. The social state finds in this a function entirely its own. It is, if we may say so, the *guarantor of the transfer of property*. The state thereby accommodates itself to a new and completely original role. By doing so it transcends the absolute antagonism between the fiery defense of “bourgeois” property and the socialist programs envisioning its appropriation. It can play this role without attenuating private property. But, through the management of the transfer of property, it superimposes upon it a system of public provisions that ensure social security.¹³³

By politically implementing this machinery of insurance the state is able to overcome the moralism of the “policies without a State,” led by moralistic elites, even while minimizing the “state socialism” of the collectivists. But, this time, it is no longer a matter of projects, or of programs: new institutions are already in place, and new flows of money can begin to circulate.

Such a development gives birth to the solution of the social question that is unique to industrial society. We will recall that this was posed as a response to the contradiction present at the dawn of industrialization and featured conspicuously throughout the various descriptions of pauperism: that is, the existence of populations who found themselves both at the heart of the productive apparatus, since they were the vanguard of industrialization, and yet at the same time semi-excluded from society, disaffiliated with respect to collective norms and the dominant ways of life. How can we foster a strong sense of social belonging amongst these populations pushed to the margins by the savage forces of industrialization? Insurance provides the best means of repatriating this fringe, who are “camped in the midst of Western society without being provided for,” in the words of August Comte, that is to say the wage-earners, or at least the lowest echelons of wage-labor.¹³⁴

In essence, then, from two things come one. Either we continue to maintain wage labor in its fragmentary condition and with its precarious status. And insofar as wage-earning positions are multiplied, becoming more and more irreversible, this will also be to bring instability to the very heart of industrial society and to confess to the fact that progress has been beached on the sands of social vulnerability. Or, on the other hand, we can stabilize these wage-

earning conditions. This is not just to offer a certain degree of material security. It also and more importantly situates the beneficiary in a legal order. This belonging is of a qualitatively different kind than that afforded by the proximate protections of kinship and the tutelage of strategies of patronage. For these, security only came from one's belonging to territorial networks or to relationships of clientelism: for example, membership in solidarities of kinship, loyalty to a corporation or a boss, give the best chances of overcoming the vagaries of the workers existence. In contrast, insurance "de-localizes" protections even as they are depersonalized. It allows for a break between secular protection and personalized dependency. On the other hand, it solidifies *a newfound association between security and mobility*. The nomadic character that made the vagabond such a negative exemplar of liberty is overcome at the same time as insecurity. So long as he maintains the conditions that made him the bearer of a right, the worker can be just as well insured in Mauberge as in Cholet. De-territorialization is no longer the same as disaffiliation. This possibility of combining mobility and security paves the way for a rationalization of the labor market that takes into account both the exigencies of flexibility for industrial development and the needs of the worker. In theory at least, a worker can circulate throughout public spaces as he pleases, because he is a member of a juridical order, that is to say, a universal order. What is promoted by this juridical order associated with the right of work is also the framework for mobility controlled by the labor force itself.

Theoretically, at least, for the earliest application of this new system were extremely modest, and they remained so for some time. But as early as 1904, Léon Bourgeois declares:

Organizing solidarity insurance for all citizens against all the risks of everyday life—sickness, injuries, involuntary unemployment, old-age—appears at the beginning of the 20th century as the necessary condition for the peaceful development of all society, as the necessary object of social duty.¹³⁵

This is the entire program of Social Security realized in 1945 and even later. And whereas coverage for unemployment was foreseen even then, this would not be achieved in France, and even then only then imperfectly, until 1958, with the creation of Assedic. However, when Léon Bourgeois writes this text in the context of a plea for pensions to the Congress of the Mutual of Nantes, only workplace accidents are "covered," since the law of 1898. The law on

workers pensions will be, we have seen, a defeat. We will have to wait until the 1930s for a new step to be taken. But the restrictive nature of the application of insurance only to the lowest categories of workers is upheld. The first goal of the law, introduced in 1921—at first the delays that resulted finally in the law of 1930 were long, and the arguments exchanged often redundant with respect to those that preceded the law of 1910¹³⁶—formulated the philosophy of business as follows: “In the act of insurance, when the interested can without difficulty make the required effort, why should the state be substituted, even partially, for their own actions?...It is for the benefit of the feeble, the modest, it is to the advantage of the small wage-earners that its contribution is required.”¹³⁷

In addition, a platform of income above which it is useless to be insured will be established, and even periodically readjusted until the eve of World War II, in order to take into account inflation.¹³⁸ So at least initially, it is less an issue of a full and complete recognition of the status of wage labor than an effort to dispel the misery of the most wretched wage-earners:

The wage-earner will be found however in a labor contract more stable, more equitable, which is for him indispensable for maintaining his existence even when he finds himself physically unable to provide for his needs. Insured, he will banish from his mind those social risks that might brutally plunge him and his own into the most profound and undeserved distress. As an elderly pensioner, he will no longer be a burden on his children; at the family table, by his pension, he represents a valuable asset.¹³⁹

Insurance took a long time before truly distinguishing itself from the old framework of assistance. It was not until 1945, in a profoundly different context, that mandatory insurance would assume the task of becoming the basis for a generalized coverage against social risks.

We should not speak too hastily, however, about the “delay” of this policy. What sort of delay are we talking about? In terms of its structure, insurance appears already semi-providential in that it allows us to mobilize toward the resolution of the social question a mechanism that promotes security without weakening private property and without affecting the underlying relations of production. But this opportunity that capitalism would discover for stabilizing itself without upsetting its structures would be singularly miraculous if the technology of assistance was solely a matter of its own power. But social insurance was not a magic potion whose virtues

alone dissolved social antagonism. It is a complex regulatory system whose achievements arise from the equilibrium, constantly in flux, among divergent interests. Some of these play the role of “engines,” and others of “brakes.”¹⁴⁰ Four main partners are at least partly implicated in this subtle game: the wage-earners themselves, their employers, defenders of private wealth and representatives of the state bureaucracy.¹⁴¹ But each of these poles of interest cannot simply be identified with single and readily distinguishable group pursuing a coherent strategy. At the risk of grossly simplifying things, we can say that the working class is split between a moderate orientation, intent on reform, and a revolutionary impulse that violently opposes it; that amongst employers, heads of major corporations more easily resign themselves to these policies, whereas small businessmen are jealous defenders of their independence; that it is mainly the whole range of defenders of private capital and entrepreneurial liberty—itself an extremely heterogeneous group, composed of small manufactures, small merchants, representatives of the independent and “liberal” professions first and foremost the medical corps—who are the most determined in their opposition; and that the state still tries to occupy a mediating position and attempts to enforce those options that minimize social tensions.¹⁴²

But such an overview is not only too schematic. It must also somehow capture the dynamic aspect of such a game of four coins, wherein the relationships of force between these partners are transformed, with the push of reforms followed by retreats (for example, at the moment of the First World War, followed by a relative normalization). This dynamic must also be situated in the context of socio-economic transformations that weaken or strengthen the positions of each of these groups (for example, an economic crisis, or, more gradually, the slow attrition of the class of small property owners, small independent producers, or small landlords). Finally, it must give some account of how the slow and conflictual growth of a *reformist position* gradually takes hold.

By “reformist,” I understand the dawning of social relationships of change that are sanctioned by the state. Thus the achievements of philanthropy or of patronage, in order to be significant, are not true social reforms so long as they have no underlying legal mandate. Obligatory insurance, by way of contrast, represents a considerable reform. By means of the law it gives birth to a transformation in the relations between the social partners, between employers and

employees, between property owners and non-property owners. This hypothesis will allow us to grasp the unique role played by the state in this complex game. It does not represent an independent agent with respect to other social forces, but it is the agent that must carry out and ratify any changes in order for them to become genuine reforms. From this it follows that, in order for a social reform to be possible, the partisans of reform must be represented in the apparatus of the state and that they have decision-making power. In France, the manifestation of such a “reformist” orientation in the governmental apparatus was only belated, and for many years its influence remained minimal.¹⁴³

But such an explanation goes well beyond the limits of the present analysis. We must be content with continuing our pursuit of the thread set forth at the outset: namely, tracing out the transformation of wage labor. Indeed it is around the status of wage labor that the essence of the problem of social protection revolves. We have just seen how social protections essentially grew upon the mantle of wage labor; as a way of beginning to dispel some of its indignity; likewise, through the expansion of wage labor it will be developed and expanded in wage earning society; and thus it is the contemporary crisis of wage labor, then, that will render social protections so vulnerable. We may very well conclude on the basis of this that wage labor will be both the foundation and the Achilles heel of social protections. The consolidation of the status of wage labor allows for the expansion of a full-fledged system of social protections, just as its subsequent instability gives way once again to a new kind of social insecurity.

Notes

1. J. Donzelot, *l'Invention du Social*, op. cit., chapter I, see also G. Procacci, *Gouverner la misère*, op. cit.; P. Rosanvallon, *le Sacre du citoyen*, op. cit.
2. Decree from February 25, 1848, cited in M. Agulhon, *les Quarante-Huitards*, Paris, Gallimard-Juillard, 1992 (first edition 1973), p. 130.
3. J. Donzelot, *l'Invention du social*, op. cit., p. 20.
4. Cited in P. Rosanvallon, *le Sacre du citoyen*, op. cit.
5. It is probably useless to ask oneself whether this belief was “sincere” or whether the republican “bourgeois” used popular aspirations to realize their own political goals before abandoning their allies. There is an ambiguity here, already encountered at the time of the Revolution (see chapter 4), which does not necessarily imply bad faith. The republican form is, for those who subscribe to it, a plan of “governmentality” which is applicable to the society as a *whole*, that is, capable of subsuming both the social and the political dimensions. The criticism at this representation’s “formalism” (for instance, by the Marxists), and at the fact that it serves to cover up class interests, comes as a lesson that the workers must learn from these events *after*

- experience has decanted the ambiguity of these beginnings (see K. Marx, *la Lutte des classes en France*, trad. fr. Paris, Editions sociales, 1984).
6. Cited in W. Sewell, *Gens de métiers et révolutions*, op. cit., p. 327.
 7. See G. Weil, *Histoire du parti républicain*, Paris.
 8. This is a theme emphasized by *l'Atelier* journal, published between 1840 and 1850, see A. Cu villier, *Un journal d'ouvriers*, "l'Atelier," 1840-1850, Paris, 1914.
 9. L. Blanc, *l'Organisation du travail*, op. cit.
 10. Cited in M. Agulhon, *les Quarante-Huitards*, op. cit., p. 128.
 11. Félix Pyat, in his plea for the right to work on November 2, 1848, insists: "The right to work is the right to live as a working person" (*ibid.*, p. 184).
 12. K. Marx, *la Lutte des classes en France*, op. cit.
 13. L. Blanc, *Histoire de la révolution de 1848*, Paris, 1849, t. I, p. 129.
 14. An amendment proposed by Félix Pyat to include the right to work in the Constitution's preamble was rejected on November 22, 1848, by 638 votes against 86; the path taken since its acceptance in March by the temporary government is immense. On the very lively parliamentary debate of fall 1848, whose most passionate opponents were A. Thiers and Tocqueville, see J. Garnier, *le Droit au travail à l'Assemblée nationale. Recueil complet de tous les discours prononcés dans cette mémorable discussion*, Paris, 1848.
 15. One could say that the drama of the Paris Commune reactivates the "initial trauma" of 1848 evoked by Jacques Donzelot. As the crushing of the June 1848 insurrection, that of the Commune does not completely reassure proprietors and shows the urgency of the social question. At the onset of Christmas 1871, the charitable economy Society, still chaired by Armand de Melun, puts on Paris's walls an "Appeal to men of good will": "The social question is at this moment not an object of discussion. It stands before us as a threat, as a permanent peril [...]. Will we let these children (the people is a sublime and selfish child), will we let these workers, flattered in their pride and passion, consummate the ruin of the motherland and the world? (cited by R. H. Guérard, *les Origines du logement social en France*, Paris, Editions ouvrières, 1967, p. 217).
 16. Obviously, the insurrection was a practice of the Republicans before 1848, as a proof of the existence of secret societies, or a career, as for Blanqui, eternal "up-riser." But it was a subversion to bring to triumph the Republican ideal stifled by conservative regimes. Except for some episodes from the revolutionary period, as the conspiracy of the Egaux de Babeuf, it was only after 1848, as Jacques Donzelot notes, that the Republic starts acquiring leftist enemies, and a double criticism, theoretical and practical, of a Republican regime assimilated to bourgeois exploitation. Even for those who remained Republican by conviction, a painful realization was made as to the limits of universal suffrage, which, instead of ensuring the triumph of democracy, gave popular legitimacy to the conservative Chamber. "The Republic is above universal suffrage," says Eugène Spuller, summarizing the debates that took place in 1848, "at the heart of the entire Republican party" (*Histoire parlementaire de la Seconde République*, Paris, 1891). In the same context, the social-democratic Committee of Paris writes in its program from February 1849: "The Republic is above the right of majorities" (cited in P. Rosanvallon, *le Sacre du citoyen*, op. cit., p. 301).
 17. Cited in M. Agulhon, *les Quarante-Huitards*, op. cit., p. 229.
 18. See L. -F. Dreyfus, *l'Assistance sous la Seconde République*, op. cit. The legislative Assembly has voted a certain number of partial laws on found infants, patronage of detained persons, the status of hospitals and hospices, apprenticeship, etc., but the discussion of the bulk of the assistance program will never take place due to Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte's coup.

19. See above, chapter 5.
20. The expression, as opposed to “yesterday’s Republicans” rooted in the Republican tradition, denotes those who allied themselves to the Republic during the February Revolution, and whose Republican convictions are often uncertain.
21. Which does not mean that the situation did not change during the Second Empire. See in particular the considerable development of assistance societies, the structuring and radicalization of the worker’s movement with the creation of the first International. The law of 1864 that authorizes working “coalitions,” which legalizes strikes, is decisive for the solidification of the worker’s collective with regard to personalized relations with employers. Theoretically, there is reflection contesting the role liberalism makes the State play, particularly with the precursor work by M.C. Dupont-White, *l’Individu et l’Etat*, Paris, 1857. Dupont-White describes the contradiction in which the contemporary worker is trapped, “annexed to an industrial machine, sovereign by universal suffrage... the judge of these antagonisms, is the State” (p. 57). “It is clear that the train of progress, as well as progress itself, attributes to the State an intervention role it did not have before” (p. 62).
22. Thus Louis Blanc’s conception of the state: “We want a strong government because, in the regime of inequality in which we are still languishing, there are the weak who are in need of a social force to protect them. We want a government that intervenes in industry, because where the poor will not get loans, we need a social banker who will lend to the poor” (*l’Organisation du travail*, op. cit., p. 20).
23. L. Bourgeois, *Solidarité*, Paris, 1896, p. 87.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
25. E. Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, first edition, Paris, 1895.
26. It is possible that the vocabulary at this time made it hard for Durkheim, and makes it difficult for us to grasp today, the profundity of his intuition. He considers “organic” this new conception of social interdependence, a word with naturalist connotations, while, as Gérard Noiriel emphasizes, Durkheim proposes a radical criticism of the themes of rootedness, of inscription in local, territorial, ethnic and genealogical sociabilities (*le Creuset français*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1988, p. 33). “Organic” solidarity, to the contrary, is a constructed sociability, or one to be constructed, on the ruins of primary sociability. Also, Durkheim’s interest in “corporations” is not the expression of passé-ist nostalgia, but an awareness of disaffiliation’s risks carried by modern industrial organization.
27. E. Durkheim, *Leçons de sociologie*, Paris, PUF, 1950, p. 95.
28. See P. Birnbaum, “La conception durkheimienne de l’Etat: l’apolitisme des fonctionnaires,” *Revue française de sociologie*, vol. XVIII, NR. 2, April-June 1976. More generally, on the place of politics in Durkheim’s work, see B. Lacroix, *Durkheim et la politique*, Presses universitaires, Montreal, 1981.
29. C. Dupont-White, *L’Individu et l’Etat*, op. cit., p. 345.
30. As opposed to the liberal man, whose individualism is due to unawareness or selfishness, the citizen recognizes his debt towards all and thus the “quasi-contract” concluded by everyone as member of the society “is nothing but a contract retroactively consented to” (*Solidarité*, op. cit., p. 133).
31. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
32. L. Bourgeois, *Deux Discours de M. Léon Bourgeois*, Paris, Fédération nationale de la mutualité française, 1903, p. 23 (discourse held at Saint-Etienne on September 28, 1902, for the creation of a mutual funds Society of France).
33. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
34. “Society is formed among similar persons, that is, between beings who, beneath the real inequalities that distinguish them, share a common first, indestructible identity” (*Solidarité*, op. cit., p. 51).

35. Cited in A. Cuivillier, *Un journal ouvrier*, "l'Atelier," op. cit., p. 222.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
37. Timid is the appropriate word here, since, after declaring that "aversion to patronage is one of our epoch's most invincible currents." Emile Laurent concludes thus his vibrant praise of the mutual assistance associations' moralizing virtues: "It's not the complete abolition of what has been called patronage, but its radical transformation" (*le Paupérisme et les associations de prévoyance*, op. cit., t. I, p. 92).
38. *Ibid.*, t. I, p. 64.
39. E. Ollivier, *le Moniteur universel*, May 15, 1864, p. 688, cited in A. Cottureau "Providence ou prévoyance? Les prises en charge du malheur et la santé des ouvriers au XIXe siècle britannique et français," *Prévenir*, NR. XIX, second semester 1989, p. 25.
40. The denunciation of the precocity of the leveling effects of state centralization in France is, as we know, one of the main themes of Tocqueville's *l'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*. But Marx echoes him by raising the State power back to the "feudal dignitaries who saw themselves transformed into appointed functionaries." "All political revolutions have only transformed this machine without breaking it" (*le 18 Brumaire de Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte*, trad. fr. Paris, Editions sociales, 1984).
41. It should at least be nuanced, however. Thus, the most recent historical analyses of "absolute monarchy" come back to the long-held hegemonic role of the royal Cabinet and the intendants, over seventeenth-century society. Also one should reconsider the omnipotence ascribed to the state under the Second Empire. It is true that the state's political tutelage was felt heavily (see the supervisory role played by the prefects, official persons, etc.), and the state apparatus became more spectacular. However there was no quantitative increase for the role of the state: the percentage of state expenses in terms of the nation's "physical product" (value of agricultural and industrial products put together) remains practically the same, about 13 percent, between 1815 and 1874 (see Alain Plessis, *De la fête impériale au mur des fédérés*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1973, p. 89 et seq.).
42. See P. Rosanvallon, *l'Etat en France*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1990, p. 165.
43. See H. Hatzfeld, *Du paupérisme à la Sécurité sociale*, Paris, A. Colin, 1971, p. 34.
44. Etienne Balibar uses it, see "Inégalités, fractionnement social, exclusion" in J. Affichard, J.-B. Foucault, *Justice sociale et inégalité*, Paris, Editions Esprit, 1992, p. 154.
45. For a maximalist version of disparities among State-Nations, see the works of the so-called "neo-institutionalist" school, and particularly P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, Theda Skocpol, *Bringing the State Back In*, op. cit.
46. See F. Fourquet, N. Murard, *Valeurs des services collectifs sociaux*, Bayonne, Terka, 1992.
47. See A. de Swaan, "Les chances d'un système social transnational," *Revue française des affaires sociales*, 1990, 3.
48. H. Hatzfeld, *Du paupérisme à la Sécurité sociale*, op. cit., chapter II, "L'objection libérale et le problème de l'obligation."
49. The law on workers' and peasant's retirements concerned potentially 7 million employees. In 1912, there were about 2.5 million subscribers, and only 1,728,000 in 1922; see A. Prost, "Jalons pour une histoire des retraites et des retraités," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, t. XI, 1964.
50. This law from July 14, 1913, which allots a monthly allocation per child whose age is below thirteen to families with more than three children who have insufficient resources to raise them, is the first of a series of natalist-inspired measures, which resulted in the 1932 Law on family allocations.

51. Caring for sick indigents (Law of 1893) is of social utility because they will be able to work again, which is not the case for the disabled and the elderly. Thus the 1893 Law met with much approval, whereas that of 1905 was vehemently opposed.
52. Discourse by the Count de Languinais to the Chamber of Deputies, session of June 15th, 1903, cited in H. Hatzfeld, *Du paupérisme à la Sécurité sociale*, op. cit., p. 72.
53. E. Villey, *Du rôle de l'Etat dans l'ordre économique*, Paris, 1882, cited in J. Le Goff, *Du silence à la parole*, op. cit., p. 50.
54. We understand in this logic that a first law of obligatory existence was voted for well in advance of the "invention" of solidarity and the Republican state. It is the assistance to the alienated law dating from June 30th, 1838, long discussed but voted with a large majority by a Chamber where conservatives and liberals prevailed. This priority setting has two reasons: the alienated indigents are the poorest of the poor, and visibly exonerated from the obligation to work. But dangerous as well, they pose problems to the public order and cannot be left to their own devices. Obligatory medical care ensures that these sick persons receive the care required by their state and resolves by internment the question of public order: "A fortunate coincidence, says the reporter of the law to the Chambre des pairs, which, applied with rigorous measures, unites the benefit of the sick with the general well-being" (see R. Castel, *l'Ordre psychiatrique*, op. cit., p. 204 et seq.). The other law for obligatory labor protection, dating from 1841 and limiting child labor, poses a grave problem, because it represents an indirect interference with labor organization and a significant risk of *slippage*. "It is the first time we are taking a path that is not exempt from perils; it is the first act of industry regulation, and industry needs liberty in order to move," stresses one of the intervening agents at the Chambre, the count of Beaumont. But this grave objection could be circumvented because child labor put labor reproduction, and thus superior industrial interests, at peril – in addition to those of the workers; thus the application of this law was left at the employer's discretion.
55. J. Jaurès, Chamber of Deputies, session of June 9th, 1903, cited in H. Hatzfeld, *Du paupérisme à la Sécurité sociale*, op. cit., p. 75.
56. Even though it was animated by systematic hostility towards "legal charity," Tocqueville's judgment, made a half century previously, on the intrinsic inferiority of the right to assistance, is worth considering: "Ordinary rights are conferred upon men in relation to some advantage they acquired over their equals. That [right to assistance] is accorded because of recognized inferiority. The former stress their advantages and note them. The latter sheds light upon this inferiority and legalizes it" (*Mémoire sur le paupérisme*, op. cit., p. 35.).
57. Alexandre Mirman, socialist, independent, and determined partisan of a broadened right to assistance, was aware of the problem. He makes the Chamber of Deputies change the category of "indigent" to that of "entitled"; "claimed assistance" to "claimed their right." He also asked that the attribution commissions state their motives in writing, and that the recipients could appeal to the decisions. But these propositions were rejected by the Senate (see H. Hatzfeld, *Du paupérisme à la Sécurité sociale*, op. cit., p. 74 et seq.). But a vocabulary shift would have been sufficient to endow the right to assistance with secular contamination: the image of the "bad poor" attached to the indigents, and the judgment of those who dispense the aid, which risks becoming more of a judgment on the moral value of the solicitors than the application of a right. This aggravating problem is still unresolved, as we can see on today's discussions of RMI.
58. H. Monod, "Discours d'ouverture," *Ier Congrès international d'assistance publique*, Paris, 1889. Monod will say twenty years later, much more explicitly, coming back

to the meaning of his work: "All my effort was aimed at reducing State intervention, at determining the categories of those unfortunate people to whom public assistance should go" (*la Réforme sociale*, April 1906, p. 658).

59. An illustration of the complementarity of these viewpoints in *Ier Congrès international d'assistance publique*, Paris, 1889, op. cit. A labor division tends to crystallize between public assistance, almost automatic for completely dispossessed persons, and the private sector, with more punctual and flexible interventions. One or the other must be attentive to the fact that the condition of those who receive aid is always less enviable than that of people who can pay for their own needs. It is the principle of less eligibility, inspired by English poor laws. Private assistance privileges moral and psychological remedies over material assistance. They proceed to detailed and multidimensional examination of "cases" in the philanthropist tradition of the *Visiteur du pauvre* (see the exposé of C. S. Loch, secretary of the Charity Organization Society of London: "De l'organisation de l'assistance," *Congrès international de l'assistance publique*, op. cit., t. I, p. 51 et seq.). In spite of tensions between the intervening agents on the terrain, for those responsible, these two forms are complementary.
60. C. Bloch, A. Tuetey, *Procès-verbaux et rapports du Comité pour l'extinction de la mendicité*, op. cit., "Plan de travail," p. 310. These restrictions exclude neither a homage based on the founders of the first Republic, nor an intense "ideological struggle" as to the meaning of giving in the history of assistance at revolutionary assemblies. This struggle opposes republican historians like Camille Bloch and Louis-Ferdinand Dreyfus to "clerics" like Lallemand or Christian Paultre. Thus the interpretation that the Third Republic gave birth to assistance corresponded to political implications as well as practical necessities. On these points, see C. Bec, *Assistance et République*, Paris, Editions ouvrières, 1994.
61. C. Biancoli, intervention at the *Ive Congrès international de l'assistance publique et de la bienfaisance privée*, Milan, 1906, p. 134.
62. C. Bec, *Assistance et République*, op. cit. See also in J.-M. Tournerie, *le Ministère du Travail, origines et premiers développements*, Paris, Editions Cujas, 1971, the progressive substitution of interest for insurance at interest, for assistance in the discussions and projects which preceded the creation of the ministry of Labor in 1906.
63. Cited in H. Hartzfeld, *Du paupérisme à la Sécurité sociale*, op. cit., p. 78. Mirman's position recalls that upheld at the same time in Great-Britain by Beatrice and Sidney Webb, *The Prevention of Destitution; La Lutte préventive contre la misère*, London, 1911, trad. fr. Paris, 1913. The Webbs are hostile to insurance and to any special social legislation at the same time. They advocate a transfer of central public interventions to different unspecialized municipal services, which could prevent people from falling into dependent situations, without making indigency a particular target.
64. H. Hartzfeld, *ibid.*, p. 118.
65. Some of these notables seem at least to have suspected it. Thus the report of an imperial procurer, dating from 1867, which, concerned with maintaining public order, seems to foresee in this form of association the danger of calling into question "all superiority, of all government": "One would never be surprised of one thing; that is that the government created with its own hands the instrument needed to topple it. I know that mutual assistance societies are a cherished creation, but favorite children are those that ruin the family... It is tempting to think that one can bring the proletariat to take care of itself in times of sickness and of old age; it is very satisfying to think we will escape secret organized societies; it would be good to hope that that an immense association devoted to the government will be founded. Unfortunately, all these derived results are far from the thought of those who accept

their encouragement. They take the arm that was given them; but they use it as they see fit. In the working class, the only prevailing and the only really powerful passion, is the hatred of any superiority, of any government. . . . It only lacks organization; and the presumptuous societies come and give them that” (cited in B. Gibaud, *De la mutualité à la Sécurité sociale*, op. cit., p. 38).

66. A witness’s report, among others, that of Emile Laurent, one of the first persons to show contempt for the provider state, offers, as a counterpoint, a passionate praise of mutual assistance societies: “With its honorary members, its fraternal reunions of employer and worker, in the factory itself or outside of it, reunions which would be good if only because they involve common deliberation, where one likes each other because one knows each other, because one has read in each other’s hearts, where bad faith disappears, where misunderstandings are straightened out, where the highest-ranking, knowing they are in charge of others, feel the need to give the most humble their instructions, their example; the mutual assistance society with its schools, its adoptions, its thousand tutelary aspects” (*le Paupérisme et les associations de prévoyance*, op. cit., y. I, p. 107).
67. See B. Gibaud, *De la mutualité à la Sécurité sociale*, op. cit. This opposition persisted during the twentieth century, see for example B. Gibaud, op. cit., p. 100 et seq., the least ambiguous role played by mutuality during the Vichy regime.
68. Those responsible for the mutualist movement are, moreover, conscious of the gap which exists between them and the majority of the workers. Léopold Mabilleanu, who became President of the National Federation of the French mutuality, declared in 1900 that the latter “does not provide for the welfare of the least interesting of the working class, those who already represent an economic elite in the country” (*Premier Congrès international de la mutualité*, Paris, 1900, p. 12).
69. J. Lefort, *les Caisses de retraites ouvrières*, Paris, 1906, t. I, p. 114 et seq.
70. See E. Levasseur, *Questions ouvrières et industrielles en France sous la Troisième République*, Paris, 1907, p. 500 et seq.
71. In 1898, 98 percent of miners and approximately two thirds of the rail workers were affiliated with patronal funds (see J. Lefort, *les Caisses de retraites ouvrières*, op. cit., t. II, p. 89 and p. 177). The third category of retirement beneficiaries is that of the State agents, thanks to a 1853 law. But the State intervenes here as an employer within the framework of a personnel policy which compensates the modicity of salaries with security of employment and retirement.
72. Seven million approximately, and not the 12 million salaried counted at this time, since, as will be shown, insurance will only concern first the lower tier of the working class.
73. J. Lefort, *les caisses de retraites ouvrières*, op. cit., t. I, p. III. One of the arguments against the “German system” addressed here is that it does not only deliver loans. It also helps put up hospitals, retirement houses, consultation services, etc; in short, a nucleus of sanitary and social institutions whose public character is unacceptable for opponents of state intervention.
74. *Ibid*, t. I, p. 9.
75. E. Cheysson, “Discussion,” in *la Solidarité sociale*, Académie des sciences morales et politiques, Paris, 1903, p. 137. Cheysson says explicitly that he is against solidarism, for the precise reason that the notion of social debt creates a right. As a disciple of Le Play, he remains faithful to the “social duty” which does not lead to legal obligation, but to moral debt. As to the state, it can only encourage the initiatives by helping those who help themselves, according to the principle of “subsidized liberty,” as is said in Belgium at that time.
76. Intervention of M. Seblina at the Senate, session of June 9th, 1905, cited by H. Hatzfeld, *Du paupérisme à la Sécurité sociale*, op. cit., p. 71.

77. J. Jaurès, Chamber of Deputies, session of July 12th, 1905, cited in Hatzfeld, *ibid.*, p. 71.
78. The jurisprudence of the cessation court establishes that if a worker did not subscribe, the patron is exempted from the obligation of enrolling him. The “obligation” becomes optional. One can add that 65 years, at that time, was an age reached by few workers: “retirement for the dead,” as the CGT counter-propaganda would say, which violently opposed enrollment of workers assimilated to salary reduction. The failure of the 1910 law was officially recognized by the promoters of the law of social insurance in 1932. “After all the ministers of Labor, after all the budget reporters, we cannot but note the system’s failure” (report of Edouard Gringa, *Documents parlementaires*, Chambre des députés, annexe nr. 5505, session of January 31st, 1923, p. 36).
79. N. Murard, *la Protection sociale*, Paris, La Découverte, 1989.
80. In particular J. Donzelot, *l’Invention du social*, op. cit., and F. Ewald, *l’Etat providence*, op. cit.
81. Obviously, insurance can be a “private” practice, and indeed it has its origins in private initiatives. Thus maritime insurance since the Middle Ages: the enormous risks of maritime navigations made it necessary for them to be shared by several executives of commercial expeditions. The Royal Insurance Company, first French life insurance company, was founded in 1797, but in spite of its name, it is a private company. Also, the various mutual assistance society are associations functioning as insurance agencies, but without a guaranty from the state.
82. This is what is at stake in the 1898 law on work accidents, whose paradigmatic role was amply stressed by François Ewald, *l’Etat providence*, op. cit., and I do not need to get back to it here.
83. See F. Netter, “Les retraites en France au cours de la période 1895-1945,” *Droit social*, nrs. 9-10, September-October 1965.
84. It is the reserve that can be brought to François Ewald’s impressive construction in *l’Etat providence*, op. cit. Understanding the conditions of insurance applications requires analyzing salary transformations.
85. H. Hatzfeld, “La difficile mutation de la sécurité-propriété à la sécurité-droit,” nr. 5 March, 1982.
86. C. Gide, *Economie sociale*, Paris, 1902, p. 6.
87. Except for “collectivist” options, which campaign for the abolishment of private property, but they did not prevail, at least in Western Europe. One could probably say that a Revolution such as the one that triumphed in Russia in 1917 imposed the other option, the “collectivist” one, of the social question.
88. See Dufourmy de Villiers, *Traité du quatrième ordre*, op. cit. Since the end of 1789 as well, Lambert, inspector of apprentices placed at the General Hospital, and who eventually became a member of the Committee on begging, interrupts the Constituent Assembly, calling for it to create a committee charged with “the application in a special manner to the protection and preservation of the non-proprietary class, the great principles of justice decreed by the Declaration of human rights and the Constitution.” The Committee for the extinction of begging was established in response to this initiative (see L. –F. Dreyfus, *Un philosophe d’autrefois*, op. cit., p. 147).
89. Discourse from April 15th, 1793, *Archives parlementaires*, t. LXII, p. 271, cited in M. Gauchet, *la Révolution des droits de l’Homme*, op. cit., p. 214.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 201.
91. Even though reflection on its provision was an important component of revolutionary thought. See the “Quatrième Rapport” of the Committee for the extinction of begging, edited by La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, op. cit., and above all J. A. N. Condorcet, *Esquisse d’un tableau historique des progrès de l’esprit humain*, Paris,

an III, which, in the 10th period, “of future progress for the human spirit,” wishes to apply “social math” to the reduction of inequalities. But this provision remains optional, and, in contrast to the right of assistance, was never really pushed to be executed.

92. *Procès verbaux et Rapports du Comité*, op. cit., “Plan de travail,” p. 318-319.
93. “The National Assembly [...] can attack poverty with might by increasing the number of proprietors; the present circumstances give it a unique chance that should not be missed, because it will not come again. Fifteen to twenty million acres, dependent of domianial estates, languish without being used, in the aridity of moor land, as swamps, or in the tyranny of utilization. These lands given to cultivate to indigent persons, who would be paid by a part of their labor by being granted a portion of the land they worked on, would safeguard them forever from misery, would guarantee and expand well-being for unfortunate families, and would bind them to their homeland by their own interest and by your good deeds” (ibid., “Quatrième Rapport,” p. 388).
94. Barère, “Rapport sur les moyens d’extirper la mendicité et sur les secours que la République doit accorder aux citoyens indigents,” op. cit.
95. *Procès-verbaux et rapports du Comité*, op. cit., “Plan de travail,” p. 315.
96. Saint-Just, *Fragment sur les institutions républicaines*, ed. C. Nodier, Paris, 1831, cited in M. Bouvier-Ajam, *Histoire du travail en France*, op. cit., t. II, p. 30.
97. Cited in A. Soboul, *Paysans, sans-culottes et jacobins*, Paris, 1966, p. 133.
98. Simonde de Sismondi, “De la richesse territoriale,” *Revue mensuelle d’économie politique*, February 1834, p. 15.
99. L.-N. Bonaparte, *l’Extinction du paupérisme*, op. cit.
100. See Jules Méline, the ardent defender of a protectionist policy favoring the peasantry, *le Retour à la terre et la surproduction industrielle*, Paris, 1906. In 1923, the reporter of this law’s project expresses himself thus at the Chambre des députés: “We know all the misdeeds of the rural migration; our salvation is in the return to the land” (*Documents parlementaires*, Chamber of Deputies, annex nr. 5505, session of January 31st, 1923, p. 53).
101. J.-J. Rousseau, *Projet de Constitution pour la Corse*; in C. E. Vaughan, *The Political Writing of J. J. Rousseau*, Cambridge, 1915, t. II.
102. Abbé de Mably, *Doutes sur l’ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés*, Paris, 1767.
103. Law of March 18th, 1793, cited in M. Bouvier-Ajam, *Histoire du travail en France*, op. cit., t. II, p. 30.
104. A. Duquesnoy, *Journal de l’Assemblée constituante*, Paris, édition de 1894, t. I, p. 498.
105. Cited in M. Leroy, *Histoire des idées sociales en France*, t. II, p. 272.
106. M. Robespierre, *Projet de Déclaration des droits à la Convention*, April 23, 1793. Thus one can understand that for Robespierre, property must be “the right of each citizen to enjoy and dispose of the portion of goods the law guarantees him.”
107. Cited by Maxime Leroy, *Histoire des idées sociales en France*, op. cit., H. G. Mirabeau makes his thought explicit on April 2, 1791: “We can regard the right of property as we exercise it as a social creation. Laws do not protect; do not only maintain property, they give it birth, so to speak” (p. 270).
108. A. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, Paris, Edition of 1892, t. I, p. 156.
109. A. Fouillé, *la Propriété sociale et la démocratie*, Paris, 1884.
110. E. de Laveleye, *De la propriété et de ses formes primitives*, Paris, 1891.
111. L. Duguit, *le Droit social, le droit individuel et la transformation de l’Etat*, Paris, 1908.
112. E. de Laveleye, op. cit., p. 542.
113. L. Duguit, op. cit., p. 148.

114. See C. Nicolet, *l'Idée républicaine en France, 1789-1924*, Paris, Gallimard, 1982, in particular chapter 10.
115. J. Barni, *Manuel républicain*, Paris, 1872, p. 420.
116. See below, *Deux Discours de M. Léon Bourgeois*, op. cit., p. 22.
117. One calls “possibilists” or “broussists” the socialists who want to profit from the possibility of partial reforms in the capitalist regimes. They oppose the partisans of a radical and immediate transformation of society, whether it be of Marxist tendencies led by Jules Guesde or of direct action syndicalism (See G. Weill, *Histoire du mouvement social en France, 1852-1902*, Paris, 1904, p. 224 et seq.).
118. P. Brousse, *la Propriété collective et les services publics*, Paris, 1883, Editions du Prolétariere, organ of the worker party, cited here in the 1910 Re-edition, p. 27. One can see here the outline of a nationalization doctrine, which will announce itself between the two wars in socialist reformism. Henri de Man, who was its first theoretician, characterizes it in the following way: “The essence of nationalization is less the transfer of property than the transfer of authority; or, more specifically, the problem of administration blends with the problem of possession and changes in the system of authority required by a directed economy” (cited in P. Dodge [ed.], *A Documentary Study of Henrik de Man*, Princeton, 1979, p. 303).
119. Insurance benefits are, nonetheless, not the only form of social property appropriable by individuals. Social housing represents the other modality of collective disposable property, under certain regulating conditions, for private use. This analogy — between social insurance and social housing as two great forms of making available to the “people” social property to overcome their vulnerability — should be looked into deeper. The first “cheap hesitations,” whose emergence is more or less contemporary with the first forms of social insurance, with the HLM’s large programs, whose expansion is more or less parallel to that of Social Security. But to develop these points we would need to delve into other terrains. This reflection invites, however, to not identifying the initiatives to fight against social vulnerability with what François Ewald calls “insurance society.” If it is essential, insurance technology is far from covering social property, which seems to me to be the umbrella concept subsuming all of the social sector development starting with the Third Republic.
120. A. Thiers, *De la propriété*, Paris. 1848.
121. A. Thiers, *Rapport général au nom de la Commission de l'assistance et de la prévoyance publique*, op. cit.
122. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
123. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
124. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
125. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
126. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
127. Cited by H. Hatzfeld, *Du paupérisme à la Sécurité sociale*, op. cit., p. 88.
128. The argument that the obligation to insurance prohibits the worker from disposing freely of his savings to improve or change his condition, was obviously applied to rural workers as well: “The agricultural worker’s provision must make him a petty proprietor, and not a renter. For him, retirement would be a peril rather than a benefit, if his perspective and his contributions turn him away from the land, deprived of the dignities and enjoyment of his property” (A. Souchon, *la Crise de la main-d’œuvre agricole en France*, Paris, 1914, p. 159, cited in H. Hatzfeld, p. 284). The “belatedness” of the peasantry in entering the Social security system after the end of the Second World War illustrates the privileged bonds existing between that system, industrialization and the industrial employees. On the other hand, one could say that the peasantry remained for a long time captive in the model of property-security and of the most archaic nucleus of this model: landed property.

129. A. de Swaan, *In Care of the State*, op. cit., p. 153 et seq. It is possible that the evolution of the commercial law and in particular the constitution of anonymous societies (Law of July 24th 1867) could have led to this type of collective property. Alfred Fouillé shows explicitly the bond between the association of capital and the associations of insurance premiums: "In face of the capital associations, workers must associate their provisions and their savings, whose strength is hundredfold by the regime of insurance" (*la Propriété sociale et la démocratie*, op. cit., p. 146). The considerable difference is that the members of an anonymous society can dispose as they wish of their capital, while this is not possible for the members of an insurance association.
130. A. de Swaan, *ibid*.
131. P. Aivarez, *De l'influence de la politique, de l'économie et du social sur la famille*, Paris, 1899, cited in J. Donzelot, *la Police des familles*, Paris, 1977, p. 47.
132. Let us remember Jaurès's remark that: "In retirement, in insurance, the person who has the right, even if he possesses millions at the age when the law says he should retire, will have it without discussions, with absolute certainty."
133. The state does not administer directly insurance benefits. This is done, as we know, by the "funds," whose status and agents have undergone profound transformations: mutual societies at first, representing workers and employers later. See, for example, A. Catrice-Lorey, *Dynamique interne de la Sécurité sociale*, Paris, CREST, 1980. But beyond these complicated technical modalities, the most important fact here is that the State was the guarantor of the deposits and that the eventual modification of the system was the legislator's domain.
134. A. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, Paris, édition de 1929, p. 411.
135. L. Bourgeois, *la Politique de prévoyance sociale*, op. cit., p. 321.
136. Two innovations, however, with respect to the beginning of the century. An attempt proposed by the senator Chauveau in 1925, to cover unemployment as well, was finally rejected after an interesting debate, at the end of which the majority decides that "unemployment is a danger which does not at the moment threaten the French economy" (*Documents parlementaires*, Sénat, Annex nr. 182, session of March 30th, 1926, p. 881). Another innovation, the precedent imposed by the re-conquered Alsace-Lorraine, which benefited from the regime of protection inaugurated by Bismarck. It seems unthinkable to deprive the Alsations of the social advantages because they have become French again, and it is difficult as well to keep two systems of social protection, in Alsace-Lorraine as well as in the remainder of France.
137. *Documents parlementaires*, Chamber of Deputies.
138. In 1930 this limit is fixed at 15,000 francs of annual salary for the entire territory, and 18,000 francs in the cities of more than 200,000 inhabitants. It reaches 30,000 in 1938 (see F. Netter, "Les retraites en France au cours de la période 1895-1945," loc. cit.)
139. First report Gringa, *Documents parlementaires*, Chamber of Deputies, annex, session of January 31st, 1923.
140. Expressions of H. Hatzfeld, *Du paupérisme à la Sécurité sociale*, op. cit.
141. See A. de Swaan, *In Care of the State*, op. cit. De Swaan uses this scheme to account for the disparities in the chronology and the modes of realization of social protections in Western European countries. This entry seems fruitful to me to help orientation in the debate that opposes the defenders of each national configuration's specific character, and those who propose a structural unity of a social state beyond limits. We can perceive how the particularities of each country are put in the framework of these "structural" relations between the different types of agents which can be found in each national situation, but in a different pattern.

142. For a synthetic presentation of the role of the state, see below, chapter 7.
143. “Independent socialists,” in rupture with the revolutionary orientations of the socialist party because they want to participate in republican “bourgeois” governments, were the first explicit spokesman of such reformism to have access to the State apparatus. Alexandre Millerand: “The Republic is the political formula of socialism, as socialism is the economic and social expression of the Republic” (excerpt from *Socialisme Réformiste Français*, Paris, 1903). Millerand is the first socialist to occupy a ministerial office. During his transition to the Ministry of Commerce, from 1901 to 1903, he elaborates several “social” projects, but fails to pass the law on workers’ and peasants’ retirement. Viviani, an independent socialist as well, is the first titular of the Ministry of Labor, in 1906, but his maneuver margin is slim and his realizations rather modest (see J. –M. Fournerie, *le Ministère du Travail, origines et premiers développements*, op. cit.). Aristide Briand announces in 1909 an ambitious program of social reforms that remained on paper only (see M. –G. Dezes, “Participation et démocratie sociale: l’expérience Briand en 1909,” *le Mouvement social*, nr. 87, April-June, 1974). Albert Thomas, minister of Armament during the war, wishes to pursue after the victory a policy of class collaboration sketched out during the “sacred Union,” and promote an “industrial democracy,” to which patronage opposed an end of the have-not’s (see P. Fridenson, M. Rebérioux, “Albert Thomas, pivot du réformiste français,” *le Mouvement social*, *ibid.*). The implantation of a reformist policy of width comparable to that which imposed itself in Germany and Great-Britain between the two wars, faces at the same time the weakness of the state itself (see R. F. Kuisel, *le Capitalisme et l’Etat en France*, trad. fr. Paris, Gallimard, 1984, chapter III and IV), the relative weakness of the working class, and its divisiveness exactly in this point: reform or revolution. France would have to wait until the Front Populaire for a governmental majority committed to social reform. On the key moment of 1936, see below, chapter 7.

Wage-Earning Society

The proletarian condition, the working condition, the wage-earning condition: these are the three dominant forms of the labor relationship in industrial society, and also three modalities of relationships that link the universe of labor with society at large. Although, roughly speaking, we could say that they succeed one another, their pathway is not linear. With respect to the question posed here of the status of wage-labor as a source of social identity and communal integration, they rather present themselves as three distinctive subjects.

The proletarian condition is an example of quasi-exclusion from the social body. The proletarian is an essential link in the dawning process of industrialization, but he is condemned to work in order to reproduce himself, and in the previously cited words of Auguste Comte, he “camps within society without having a settled place there.” It would probably not occur to the “bourgeois” at the beginnings of industrialization—nor even, conversely, to the proletarian—to compare his circumstances to those of workers in the earliest large-scale industries, at least in terms of their lifestyle, housing, education, or leisure. Rather than a matter of hierarchy, one instead has to deal with a world split by the double opposition between capital and labor, of security/property, on the one hand, and mass vulnerability, on the other. Divided but also threatened. The “social question” is thus precisely the acknowledgement that this central fracture, brought vividly to light through the descriptions of pauperism, might very well lead to the dissociation of the whole society.¹

The relationship between the working condition itself and society envisioned as a whole is more complicated. A new relationship of wage labor is being formed, through which the wage ceases any longer to be a punctual remuneration for a task. Now it guarantees rights, gives access to benefits outside of work (sickness, accidents,

retirement) and allows a wider participation in social life: through consumption, housing, education, and even, beginning in 1936, leisure. This time it is an image of integration within a wider subordination. For until the 1930's, a time when this configuration comes into being in France, wage-labor is essentially the worker's wage. It rewards tasks that have been executed, and most often those at the bottom of a social pyramid. But at the same time it entails a more complex stratification, the opposition between the dominant and dominated, which includes intersecting zones through which the working class experiences this participation in its subordination: consumption (at a mass level), education (if only primary), leisure (but only popular), housing (working class housing), etc. That is why this system of integration is highly unstable. How can laborers as a whole feel satisfied when they are stuck performing repetitive tasks, isolated from power and honor, whereas industrial society develops a demiurgic conception of labor? Who creates social wealth, and who appropriates it undeservedly? The moment when the working class is structured is also the moment we witness the affirmation of class-consciousness: on the matter of "us" versus "them" there is much more to be said.

The advent of wage-earning society will not, however, be the triumph of the working condition.² Manual workers were less vanquished in a Promethean struggle between the classes than simply overwhelmed by the generalization of wage-labor. "Bourgeois" wage-labor, employees, managers, intermediary jobs, tertiary sectors: the "salarization" of society bypasses the wage-earning worker and subordinates him yet again, this time with little hope that he might ever impose his leadership. Once the entire world, or almost all of it, becomes salaried (more than 82 percent of the active population in 1975), one's position within the salaried classes comes to define one's social identity. Each compares himself to everyone else, but also tries to distinguish himself; the social scale has an increasing number of rungs to which the salaried attach their identities, emphasizing the distinction between the lower echelons and aspiring to a superior stratum. The working condition always occupies the bottom of the scale, or nearly the bottom (there are also immigrants, half-workers, half-barbarians, and the lost of "the fourth world"). But all this presupposes the economic growth upon which the State continues to fund its services and protections, and in addition, whoever is deserving will be able to "rise": improvement for

all, social progress, and better living. Wage-earning society seems to be carried along by an irresistible tide of growth: the accumulation of goods and wealth, the creation of new jobs and unheard of opportunities, increasing rights and guarantees, the multiplication of safeguards and protections.

This chapter seeks less to retrace this story than to discern from this history the conditions that have made it possible, and made of wage-earning society a wholly novel kind of system, at the same time sophisticated as well as fragile. Our awareness of this fragility is recent. It dates back only to the beginning of the 1970's. Yet it remains our problem even today, for we are still living in such a wage-earning society. And may we justifiably add—with Michel Aglietta and Anton Bender—this “wage-earning society is our future”?³ This will be the question to be debated in the following chapter. But even if this is to be the case, it shall prove a matter of a very uncertain future indeed. In the meantime we may better understand the nature of this uncertainty if we reconsider the logic of the development of wage labor in both its power and fragility.

The New Salarial Relationship

“It is industrialization that gave birth to wage-labor, and it is the domain of large-scale industry that is the site *par excellence* of modern salarial relations.”⁴ This judgment has both been confirmed and given additional nuance by our previous analyses. Wage-labor originally existed only in a scattered way throughout pre-industrial society, without ever managing to assert itself enough to achieve a unity of conditions (cf. chapter 3). With the Industrial Revolution a new system of manufacturing workers and factories comes to be developed that anticipates modern wage-earning relationships without yet systematically achieving such a coherent form (cf. chapter 5).⁵

One can in this way characterize the main features of this relationship of wage-labor from the beginnings of industrialization, corresponding to what we have just termed the proletarian condition: a remuneration scarcely above a minimum wage allowing for the reproduction of the worker and his family, and allowing no room for investment in consumption; an absence of legal guarantees for labor governed by the contract of hiring (article 1710 of the Civil Code); the “labile” character⁶ of the relationship between the worker and the business: he frequently moves from place to place, letting

himself out to whoever pays the most (especially if he possesses some recognized professional skill) and “relaxing” certain days of the week or during more or less extended periods if he can survive without submitting himself to the discipline of industrial labor. To summarize this relationship formally, we can say that the salaried relationship includes three features: first, a means of compensating the labor force, the wage—which largely determines the mode of consumption and the lifestyle of the workers and their families; second, a kind of disciplining of work which regulates the rhythm of production; and finally, the legal framework that structures the relationship of labor, namely, the labor contract and the provisions associated with it.

It will be apparent that I have just extrapolated these characteristics from the criteria used to define “Fordist” forms of wage-labor by the “regulationist” school.⁷ In doing so I presuppose that within the heart of the same social system—in this case, capitalism—the salaried relationship may take on different configurations.⁸ The question, or at least the one raised here, is to tease out the transformations governing the passage from one form to another. Whether we speak of the advent of the relationship of wage-labor that prevailed at the beginning of the industrial revolution, or the “Fordist” system of wage-labor that followed it, five preconditions must apply.

The first condition: a rigid distinction between those who work effectively and regularly, and the inactive or semi-active, who must be excluded from the labor market or integrated in carefully controlled ways. Modern wage-labor requires the precise delineation of what statisticians call the “active population”: we must identify and count those who are occupied and those who are not, part-time and full-time activities, remunerated jobs and unpaid jobs. Obviously, this is a difficult, long-term project. Landed gentry and landlords, are they “active”? And the wives and children of the manual laborer, artisan or farmer? What is the status of those innumerable temporary workers, seasonal workers, who populate the villages, towns, and countrysides? How can we speak of employment—and correlatively, of non-employment, or unemployment—if we cannot define what it really means to be employed?

After many attempts it is only at the turn of the century—1896 in France, 1901 in England—that the notion of an “active population” is unambiguously defined, permitting the establishment and development of reliable statistics. “The active will be those and only those

who are present on a market affording them a monetary gain, the labor market, or the market for goods or services.”⁹ Thus, the condition of wage earners, distinct from that of purveyors of merchandise or services, becomes clearly identifiable. So too is the condition of involuntary unemployment, distinct from all of those who maintain an erratic relationship to work.

But it is one thing to be able to recognize and to count these workers; it would be even better yet if we could regulate this “labor market” by controlling its fluctuations. The English strove to do so very seriously as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1910 William Beveridge rightly perceived that the main obstacle to the realization of a labor market was the existence of those intermittent workers who refused to submit themselves to a rigorous discipline. Thus it is necessary to master them:

For those who wish to work only once a week and stay in bed the rest of the time, the office of placement will make this desire unrealizable. For those who wish to find a precarious job from time to time, the office of placement will gradually make this kind of life impossible. It will take this day of work that he wished to have and give it to someone else who already works four days a week and will hence allow this latter to earn a decent livelihood.¹⁰

The employment bureau is to achieve a rational distribution of work, which consists of drawing a line of demarcation between real full-time employees and those who will be completely excluded from the world of labor and will become the charge of coercive forms of assistance specially set up for the able-bodied poor. Similarly, the Webbs insist that “an institution where individuals must be criminally regulated and maintained under constraint...[is] absolutely essential to any effective program of treating unemployment.”¹¹

Although it is impossible to implement fully any such “ideal,” institutions put in place in Great Britain in the first decades of the twentieth century nonetheless approach it. Municipal employment offices and powerful trades-unions practicing “closed shops”—which monopolized employment for union members—managed not only to quash unemployment, an endemic problem in Great Britain, but even better, to dominate hiring for open jobs.

The main reason for the delay in the growth of industrial wage-labor compared to Great Britain is that this kind of rudimentary “employment policy” never assumed such a systematic form in France.¹² Hiring has always been left to the initiative of workers, who are in principle “free” to let themselves out at will; to the whims of “bro-

kers” or of “entrepreneurs”; to the venality of private placement offices; along with a few rare municipal offices; and to union attempts to control, or even to monopolize, hiring.¹³ Fernand Pelloutier aims to set up a kind of clearing house for jobs, which must, among other things, gather all demands for employment and organize the hiring under union control.¹⁴ But the economic firm, even undercut by union divisions, will persist. At the political level, the reformist wing, including the “republicans of progress” and independent socialists, take an interest in the question. Léon Bourgeois in particular appreciates the connection between the regulation of the labor market and the question of unemployment, which becomes a matter of concern in the beginning of the century with an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 unemployed persons.¹⁵ But the remedies that he conceives of for combating it are very timid indeed: “The placement system is obviously first on the list.”¹⁶ He complains of the shortcomings of municipal and union offices, evokes the necessity of a guarantee against unemployment, but ultimately leaves responsibility for hiring to professional groups.

Accordingly, public authorities would for a long time have only a modest role in coordinating the labor market and the struggle against unemployment. The Office of Labor, created in 1891, had the task of gathering important documentation and of developing reliable statistics. This work is continued later by the Ministry of Labor, created in 1906, but nothing could take the place of a true employment policy.¹⁷

What remained in place for a long time were a collection of employer-led policies put in place earlier (cf. chapter 5), a mix of persuasion and constraint intended to lock workers in place by conferring “social advantages,” and annihilating their resistance by means of rigid regimentation. More generally, there was the kind of moral blackmail inflicted upon workers by philanthropists, social reformers, and spokesmen for liberalism: conform yourself to the model of a good worker, regular in his labor and disciplined in his morals, or you will become one of those miserable few excluded by industrial society.¹⁸ Here again we must mention the prodigious and repetitive literature on the need for moralizing the people. The vitality of this attitude at the end of the nineteenth century and even well into the beginning of the twentieth may be seen in the extraordinary burst of repression against vagabondage which surfaces at the time:

50,000 arrests each year for vagabondage in the 1890s, with 20,000 annually coming before the courts, under the threat of imprisonment in cases of recidivism.¹⁹ Simultaneously, these measures can be explained by the grave economic crisis that was taking place, and the poverty of the countryside. But this is also a way of reminding ourselves, at a time when a new order of labor is being sketched out with the second industrial revolution, what the costs are of trying to escape from it. For a decade or two the vagabond again becomes the abhorred nemesis that he represented in pre-industrial society (cf. chapter 2): a symbol of a-sociability who must be eradicated because he appears as an affront to a society that seeks to tighten the regulation of labor.²⁰

But shortly another form of regulation will be imposed in a more effective way. These small doses of repression or philanthropic solicitude are limited in their effects because they remain outside of the system of labor, strictly speaking. So long as it is a matter of converting the worker to a more regular behavior by trying to persuade him that his true interest requires greater discipline, he may revolt, or simply flee from these obligations whose main idea remains moral. But the widespread use of machinery imposes another kind of objective constraint. This can hardly be debated. One either follows or does not follow the rhythm imposed by the technical system of work. The relationship of work ceases to be “volatile” if this technical system is in itself powerful enough to impose its order.

*Second condition: tying a worker to his workplace and the rationalization of the process of work in the context of a “time management that is precise, systematic, and regulated.”*²¹ Efforts to regulate the worker’s behavior by means of the technical constraints of the work itself, which reach their epitome in Taylorism, are not original to the twentieth century. As early as 1847 the Baron Charles Dupin already dreams of realizing perpetual labor thanks to the tireless compulsion of the “mechanical motor”:

There is then a great advantage to making indefatigably operating mechanisms by reducing the intervals of rest to the shortest possible time. This lucrative perfection would be to work constantly... This would be to introduce in the same workshop the two sexes, and the three ages, exploded in rivalry face to face, if we can speak of it in these terms, dragged indiscriminately by the mechanical motor toward extended labor, toward labor by day and by night so as to approximate ever more closely perpetual motion.²²

But this fantastic utopia rests on the “competitive exploitation” of different kinds of personnel, that is to say, on the mobilization of the human element.

With the “scientific management” of labor, by way of contrast, the worker is fixed to his task not by external constraints but by the ongoing progress of technical operations whose duration was rigorously set by the chronometer. “Malingering” workers are to be eliminated, and with them, whatever margins of initiative and liberty that the worker managed to preserve. Better yet, divided tasks become ever simpler and more repetitive, so that sophisticated and polyvalent training is unnecessary. The worker is dispossessed of any negotiating power that his “profession” formerly gave him.²³

But the effects of this “scientific management of labor” may be interpreted in two ways. As the loss of the autonomy of labor, or as the realignment of professional skills to the lowest level of repetitive tasks. Most analyses of Taylorism, however, by emphasizing the aspect of dispossession, are overly simplistic. On the one hand, they tend to idealize the liberty of the pre-Taylorian worker, capable of selling his skills to the highest bidder. It is perhaps true that those who inherited rare artisanal skills are in high demand. However, because Taylorism mainly resides in large-scale enterprises, it has to deal most of the time with working populations who have recently come from the countryside, under-qualified and with little autonomy.

On the other hand, it is perhaps the “scientific” rationalization of production that contributed most powerfully to the homogenization of the working class. It threatened the insularity of the “trades” with which their members closely identified themselves: one thought of himself as a blacksmith or a carpenter before conceiving of himself as a “worker” (the rivalries of fellowship, surviving a long time after the Ancien Regime, offer a caricature of this fixation on the uniqueness of the trade).²⁴ This is notwithstanding the fact that even within the same professional specialization there often existed very serious disparities of wages and status between accomplished fellows, journeymen, and apprentices. Thus one wonders whether the “scientific” homogenization of laboring conditions might have forged an even sharper working class consciousness through the very tediousness of the organization of labor. Indeed the earliest factory seizures by workers took place in 1936 in the most modern and automated factories. It will be in these “workers citadels” that

the CGT and the Communist Party will recruit its most resolved militants.²⁵

Thirdly, the tendency toward the homogenization of working conditions cannot be taken to its extreme; or rather, in doing so, it produces the very opposite effect of further differentiation. Indeed mass production itself requires distinctions between purely task-oriented employees (such as the specialized worker) and employees who operate and maintain (technical workers). This technological evolution of work also entails the solidification and diversification of some personnel who will plan and oversee—those who will become the “supervisors.”

Homogenization and differentiation: this dual process is already at work at the beginning of the second industrial revolution. This cautions against speaking of “Taylorization” as a homogenous process intent on conquering the workplace. Its implementation is gradual and confined to certain very specific kinds of industrial sites: before World War I, barely 1 percent of the French industrial population had been affected by this American innovation.²⁶ Moreover, Taylorism is only the most extreme expression²⁷—and it becomes even less so when it comes to France—of a more general tendency toward the conscious and systematic reorganization of industrial labor, what was called in the 1920’s “rationalization.”²⁸

Finally, these methods will overflow the industrial plants signified by Taylorism only to be established in offices, large department stores, and the “tertiary” sector. Also, rather than simply evoking “Taylorism,” it might be more helpful to speak of the progressive implementation of a new dimension of the wage labor relationship characterized by the maximum rationalization of the work process, the synchronization of tasks on an assembly line, and a strict separation between work time and non-work time, all of which allow for the development of mass production. In this sense, then, we are justified in saying that a method of organizing work, driven by the search for maximum productivity through the rigorous control of operations, has in fact been an essential ingredient in the making of the modern salarial relationship.

*Third condition: the access, by means of a wage, to “new norms of working class consumption,” by which the worker himself becomes the beneficiary of mass production.*²⁹ Taylor himself already foresaw a substantial increase in wages necessary to encourage workers to submit themselves to the new disciplinary constraints of

the factory.³⁰ But it is Henry Ford who systematized the relationship between mass production (the application of the semi-automated assembly line) and mass consumption. The “five dollar day” not only represents a sizeable increase in wages. It anticipates the modern worker’s ability to rise to the status of one who consumes the products of industrial society.³¹

This is a considerable innovation if one puts it in the context of the prolonged history of wage labor. Until this fundamental turning point, the worker has been essentially conceived of, at least in the paternalistic ideology, as a maximum producer and a minimum consumer: he must produce as much as possible, but the profit margins that arise from his labor are even more significant than the fact that his wage is low. It is revealing that the paternalistic condemnations of the “iron law of wages” did not consist of supplemental wages, but of non-monetary social benefits in cases of sickness, accident, old age, etc. These benefits might very well prevent the total ruination of working families, but they would do little to maximize their consumption. It is also significant that the culmination of these workers finding themselves more comfortable was never envisioned by these same patrons and social reformers in terms of the potential to consume more, but rather it was conceived of as a duty of saving or of contributing wages for increased security. The only legitimate consumption for the worker is reduced to what is necessary for him to decently reproduce his labor power and maintain his family at the same mediocre level. The possibility of consuming more must be forbidden, because it leads to vice, drunkenness, and absenteeism.

Similarly, on the part of workers, it is also with the beginnings of mass production that we first see an explicit concern for well-being through increased consumption. In 1913 Alphonse Merrheim, then Secretary General of the CGT, declares—as something of a corrective against the usual representation of syndicalism as a direct action mobilized to prepare solely for the “Great Evening”:

There is no limit to the desire for well-being, and syndicalism does not deny this. To the contrary: our action, our claims, for the reduction of working hours, the increase of wages, do they not have as their minimum goal that of increasing in the present the desires, the ease of well-being of the working class, and consequently his ability to consume?³²

This preoccupation with consumption on the part of workers that appears at the turn of the century responds to a transformation of

the popular lifestyle caused by decreasing domestic savings and primarily affects workers in large industrial conglomerates.³³ If the world of labor, already in pre-industrial society and later at the dawn of industrialization, survived on miserable wages, this is in large measure because an important part, however difficult to decipher, of its consumption did not pertain to the market. Rather it centered around bonds preserved with the original rural environment, ownership of a plot of land, seasonal participation of workers in the fields even for professions as “industrial” as that of miners.³⁴

All this changes with the growth of industrial centralization. The homogenization of working conditions is accompanied by a homogenization of environment and lifestyles. These were complex processes, which took place over several decades. They pertained to housing, transportation, and more generally, the relationship of man to his environment just as much as to the “housewife’s shopping basket.” But a growing segment of the working population objectively find themselves living in conditions approximating those that fueled the portrayals of pauperism in the first half of the nineteenth century. That is, workers were cut off from their family and their environment of origin, concentrated in homogenous spaces and nearly reduced to resources afforded to them by their labor. To be sure, the same causes do not produce the identical effects; or put differently, to witness mass poverty it is necessary that the remuneration for this labor does not remain a survival wage.

What is known as “Fordism” was the articulation of this relationship between mass production and mass consumption that Henry Ford was perhaps the first to put into practice. Henry Ford declares: “Setting the wages for an eight hour day at \$5.00 was one of the most beautiful economies that I have ever made, but by carrying it to \$6.00 I made an even better one.”³⁵ What he expresses here is a new connection between increasing wages, increasing production, and increasing consumption. It is not only that higher wages will increase the motivation to work, and thereby productivity. It elaborates a policy that links wages to increased productivity through which the worker himself attains a new level of social existence: that of consumption, and not just consumption for the sake of mere production. In so doing he leaves the zone of vulnerability that condemned him to living virtually “day to day,” satisfying piece-meal his most urgent needs. He gives in to the desire—and here I borrow the words of Merrheim—whose social condition of realization is

the point of departure from the immediacy of needs. This form of liberty proceeds through the mastery of time and is relieved only by the consumption of durable but not strictly necessary objects. This “desire for well-being,” which centers on the automobile, housing, kitchen appliances, etc., grants the working world access to a new level of existence—and all this without displeasing the moralists.

It may be too much of an honor to credit Ford alone with this quasi-anthropological transformation of the relationship of wage labor. This is only one step in a more general process whose causes go well beyond the invention of the “semi-automated assembly line” and the wage policy of an American industrialist. Still, it is the case that Ford begins to espouse a conception of wage labor according to which “the mode of consumption is integrated into the conditions of production.”³⁶ This is sufficient to allow many echelons of workers—but not all workers—to leave behind the zone of extreme poverty and permanent insecurity that has been their fate for centuries.

Fourth condition: access to social property and services: the worker is also a social subject capable of participating in the stock of common, noncommercial goods available to society. What I refer to here is the “transfer of property” described in the previous chapter, which is embedded in the same configuration of wage labor. If pauperism was the poison of industrial society at its origins, mandatory insurance constituted its best antidote. A minimum thread of safety tied to work may be applied to situations outside of work and protect the worker from absolute destitution. Under the most rudimentary forms of social insurance, to be sure, these social benefits are probably too modest to have truly redistributive functions or to weigh significantly on the “norm of consumption.” However, they are responding to the very same historical circumstances of wage labor when it can be classified and recorded (put differently: one can only attach rights, even modest ones, to a clearly identifiable condition, which presupposes the elaboration of the concept of an active population and setting aside several forms of temporary work); or fixed and stabilized (one ceases any longer to count on the resources of household savings and “protections of kin” to guarantee security). Evidently, this model was applied only as a special privilege for workers in large-scale industries, even if it was later applied well beyond this population. It acknowledges the singularity of a working condition of wage-labor, and at the same time it

consolidates it by attempting to guarantee some resources for self-sufficiency in case of accident, sickness or after retirement.³⁷

We should also recall that the development of this transfer of property is rooted in the growth of the idea of “social property,” and especially public services. These bolster the contribution of different social groups to the “public thing,” even though this contribution remains unequal. The working class, we will see, will in fact have better access to these collective goods such as health, hygiene, housing and education.

Fifth and last condition: embeddedness in a right to work that recognizes the workers as a member of a collectivity bearing a social status above and beyond the purely individual dimension of the labor contract. One also witnesses a profound transformation of the contractual aspects of wage labor itself. Article 1710 of the Civil Code defined wage labor as a “contract by which one of the parties is engaged to do something for the other in exchange for a payment.” This is a transaction between two individuals who are both, in principle “free,” but whose profound inequality has been emphasized several times. Léon Duguit sees there the expression of a “subjective right,” that is to say, “a power belonging to a person to impose on another his own personality.”³⁸ This would be replaced by a social right “unifying by the community of needs and by the division of labor the members of humanity and especially members of the same social group.”³⁹

Acknowledgement of this collective dimension of labor transforms the contractual relationship of work into a status of “wage earner.” “There is in the idea of status, characteristic of public law, the idea of an objective definition of a situation that transcends the play of individuals wills.”⁴⁰ The juridical acknowledgment of a group of workers as collective interlocutors already appears in the law abolishing the prohibition against strikes (1864) and that authorizing workers coalitions (1884). But such acquisitions have no direct effects on the structure of the labor contract itself. Similarly, for many years, negotiations that were at the very heart of business between employers and the collective of workers—in general, on the occasion of a strike or upon threat of a strike—have no legal value. It is the law of March 25, 1919, after the reconciliation made by the “sacred union” and worker participation in war efforts, which gives a legal status to the notion of *a collective convention*. Provisions stipulated by the “convention” replace the terms of the indi-

vidual labor contract. Léon Duguit immediately discerns the philosophy of this:

The collective contract is a brand new legal category totally alien to the traditional categories of the civil law. It is a law-convention regulating the relations between two social classes. It is a law establishing permanent relations between two social groups, the legal framework according to which individual contracts between members of these groups must be concluded.⁴¹

Indeed the collective convention supercedes the face-to-face relationships between employer and employee implicit in the liberal definition of contract. A worker hired for an individual post in a business benefits from the provisions set in place by the collective convention.

The results of this law were extremely disappointing due to the reluctance, manifested at the same time by the working class and the employers, to enter into a process of negotiation. This “reluctance” (the word is a euphemism) of the “social partners” to negotiate explains the role played by the state in putting in place procedures for meeting to discuss terms.⁴² Since the efforts of Millerand in 1900 to create workers councils, it is really the state that appears to have a dominant role in the creation of worker’s rights.⁴³ At least this is the case until a part of the laboring class finally rallied to the reforms (as special goals or as a stage in a revolutionary process) and entered onto the stage to impose its point of view. The year 1936 represents a historical first of this kind: we find the conjunction of political will (the government of the Popular Front with a socialist-communist majority, which, despite its divergences, wishes to enact its social policy favorable to workers) and a popular social movement (almost 2 million workers occupying factories in June). The Matignon agreements reintroduced the notion of collective conventions and instituted delegates from each business elected by the entire personnel of the firm.⁴⁴

But, beyond this one “social triumph” and a few others, the period of the Popular Front represents a particularly important step, decisive and tenuous, in the odyssey of wage labor.

The Working Condition

There is always something arbitrary in trying to date transformations that are only intelligible in light of long-term processes. But I would like to propose the year 1936 as one such objective moment.

This may be seen as a moment of crystallization and a balancing point for these modern salaried relations I have just described. This is an important step in the advancement of the working classes: mainly this is due to an affirmation of the working condition that sanctions the reforms of 1936. But could it be that this is a Pyrrhic victory? What is the overall status of the working classes in society? On the one hand, 1936 marks a decisive step forward in its recognition as a major social force, an extension of its rights, and a consciousness of its power that might allow it to dream of one day becoming the future of the world. On the other hand, 1936 sanctions the *uniqueness of labor*, its assignment to a subordinate position in the division of social labor and in society at large.

With respect to the sanctification of the working classes, this is a beautiful summer that has no fear of autumn. In light of the electoral victory of the Left, workers anticipate the decisions of the Blum government (or force them), occupy factories, and immediately gain an unprecedented advance in social rights. Employers panic and imagine the coming reign of the workers.⁴⁵ “All is possible,” as early as May 23, 1936 Marceau Pivert, leader of the left wing of the Socialist Party, wrote in the free paper *Populaire*.⁴⁶ All is certainly not possible, but some things, substantially, have changed.⁴⁷ As proof, one measure that might seem secondary but which bears an exceptionally symbolic meaning if one locates it in the history of “the indignity of wage labor”: namely, paid vacations. Several days a year the worker can cease giving his life in order to sustain it. Doing nothing that is required—this is the freedom of existing only for one’s self. Enacting this possibility into law is an acknowledgement of the worker’s right to simply exist—that is to say, also, like others, the landlords, the “bourgeois,” the aristocrats, the owners, all those who, at least in the worker’s imagination, enjoy life for its own sake and for themselves, all the time.

Demands for a reduction in working hours have been the oldest and the most impassioned of the worker’s claims. It appears that the very first illicit “cabal” of fellows was started more to control work hours than to obtain higher wages.⁴⁸ The February Revolution of 1848 abolished the ten-hour day, an accomplishment that was immediately undone. The syndicalism of the beginning of the century makes a weekly break (obtained in 1906) and the eight-hour day one of its main demands, perhaps the only one, for the syndicalists of direct action, which would not prove to be “reformist.” It is the

most popular buzzword of the May 1st struggle, and it covers propaganda posters from the CGT.⁴⁹ But symbolically more important even than the reduction of work hours, (the forty hour week is obtained in June, 1936), more deeply liberating than greater access to consumption by higher wages, the financing of *time off* is prized as an official recognition of the humanity of the worker and of the human dignity of work.⁵⁰ The worker is also a man, and not a perpetual beast of burden; and his labor grants him this access to the quality of man as such, of man himself, in ceasing to be driven by the inexorable law of every day life. This is a cultural revolution well beyond its character of “social acquisition,” because it would change his life and reasons for living, if only for a few days every year. It seems that contemporaries lived for time-off in this way, those at least who share their enthusiasm for these moments. For there is no lack of good souls who complain that the shameful time has come when we have begun to finance laziness, and that “low trash wearing berets” invade the beaches reserved for the upper classes.⁵¹

But isn't this attaching an exaggerated importance to such a modest advance as obtaining a few paid days off every year? From this fact, this episode (the sole “social conquest” of 1936 that was not ultimately undermined) may exemplify what we might call the *suspended* and still unstable position occupied by the working classes at the end of the 1930's. On the one hand, after a long social quarantine, its condition begins to approximate an ordinary regimen of life. Paid days off can symbolize the reconciliation of two conditions and two ways of life otherwise separated. On this narrow beach of time, the working life recovers an essential characteristic of “bourgeois” existence, a freedom to choose what to do or whether to do nothing, because the daily constraint of surviving has been loosened. At least for a few days of the year, the working condition and the bourgeois condition *intersect* one another.

But at the same time there remains a distinctive working class existence lived in subordination and giving birth to a kind of class antagonism. The “bourgeois” hostility to paid holidays—shared by the lowest workers, merchants, or indeed by the entire non-wage-earning France—actually manifests the fundamental character of this cleavage. This reactive attitude can scarcely conceal the secular scorn of the proprietary classes toward the worker-who-does-not-work. He can be unoccupied only because he suffers from a moral

defect, having no other possible employment during a liberty stolen from work than to satisfy his vices, laziness, drunkenness, and luxury. There is no other possible modality of existence for the worker than working: this is not a tautology but a moral and social judgment, shared by all the right-thinking, and one that condemns the worker to a position of perpetual motion, never resting in the face of his material tasks.

From the point of view of the workers, too, attitudes toward paid time off betray an indelible feeling of social inferiority and dependency. This is leisure, true enough, but a “popular” understanding of recreation. There is a pride in being like others, but a consciousness that, far from self-generating, this liberty has a miraculous character to it and one must henceforth deserve it by learning the proper use of it, that is, how to enjoy one’s self. “The working class knew how to seize its leisure time, it must now conquer the use of that leisure,” said Léon Lagrange.⁵² The organization of popular leisure—an important and original part of the achievements of the Popular Front—mirrors this concern to escape from free idleness. This is a strong expression both of a consciousness of class differences and a kind of pragmatic moralism: leisure must be deserved, and it must be fully made use of. One must distinguish one’s self from the idle rich, who are social parasites. Culture, sports, health, encountering nature, healthy relationships (but not sexual) between the youth, etc. must fill every moment of free time away from work. There can be no dead time, for liberty is neither anarchy nor pure enjoyment. One must do better than the bourgeois, and work hard at one’s leisure!

More importantly, the short amount of time allotted for this fragile liberty rubs his face in the permanence of an alienated labor that is the basis on which the social status of the working class is founded. Workers in large-scale industry played a driving role in obtaining the social conquest of 1936.⁵³ But the overall conditions of labor in these factories occupied in June, 1936 are governed by “the scientific organization of work” or its equivalents: the pace, the timing, constant surveillance, the obsession with productivity, the arbitrariness of employers, and the contempt of middle managers. One must only read the works of Simone Weil: these already include all the themes of “crumb work” that will distinguish the beginnings of the sociology of work.⁵⁴ But this system of work is not only demanded by the technical exigencies of production, the division of tasks, rapid

pace, etc. It is a *social* relationship of subordination and dispossession that is created by the mediation of the technical system of work. Simone Weil insists on this “vise of subordination” that characterized the condition of the worker with respect to his labor.⁵⁵ He is reduced to the level of the tasks he is performing. All that is thoughtful, reflective, or imaginative escapes him. Yet because this is a *social* condition, and not just a technical relationship of work, this condition of dependency is not left behind in the locker rooms upon leaving the factories. To the contrary, as Yves Montand will cry in *Luna Park*, it will pursue him like a shadow outside the factory. One can perhaps say, with Alain Touraine, that “working class consciousness is always determined by a dual requirement: to create works and to see them recognized socially as such.”⁵⁶ However this is most often an unhappy consciousness, the awareness of a deficiency, on the floors of the factory as much as outside of its walls. There is a glaring contradiction between the importance of the worker’s role *qua* producer, the creative force behind social wealth, and the recognition, or rather the lack of recognition, which is granted to him by the collectivity. This link between his dependency in the workplace and his socially inglorious position in everyday life is the common fate of all workers: “no intimacy links workers to the places and the objects among which their life is exhausted, and the factory makes them, in their own country, into strangers, exiles, the uprooted.”⁵⁷

Although this contradiction is especially apparent from the condition of workers in large-scale industry who are submitted to modern methods of rationalizing work, they are the minorities in the working class.⁵⁸ But this only pushes to the limit a broader characteristic of the condition of the working classes: their consciousness of the socially inferior status befalling manual labor. This image of the labor of the worker, reduced only to the tasks he performs, indispensable but without social dignity, is self-explanatory and holds for all kinds of manual labor. This is the main thesis of the very first analysis of the working condition with scientific pretensions:

The status of the worker contrasts with that of the employee, of the functionary, like him not businessmen, but whose remuneration one pays at the same time as the service, or for the length of service, intellectual or moral qualities... For the manual worker, one only rewards mechanical and quasi-mechanical operations because the worker should abstain from all initiative and focus only on becoming a reliable tool, well adapted to a simple or complex, but always monotonous task.⁵⁹

So the worker does not think; this is well known, and the dawning science of sociology even goes so far as to argue that he cannot think. Still, we will see, this is the main idea of the monumental treatment that François Simiand devoted to wage labor in 1932.⁶⁰ The manual worker continues to be regarded as an inferior stratum of labor, technically the crudest and socially the least respected.

Workers do not necessarily share this vision of labor as represented in the learned treatises of sociology and economics that are the reflections of the dominant classes. Since its very origins the workers movement had already begun (and this is already the leitmotif of the *Atelier*, edited and published by the workers themselves between 1840 and 1850) to affirm the dignity of manual labor and its social preeminence as the true creator of wealth. Later one will even witness the lionization of certain exemplary workers like miners or metal workers, who are the bearers of a Promethean conception of the world.⁶¹ But this glorification of labor does not overcome the workers' feelings of dependency. This tension between the assertion of dignity and the actual experience of dispossession is the very essence of working-class consciousness. This is forged through conflict, beginning from the collective sense of being deprived of the fruits of one's labor. Its assertive attitude carries within itself a consciousness of this subordination. To feel one's self to be dependent fires the struggle to re-appropriate the social dignity of labor "alienated" by the capitalist system of production.

We may therefore characterize the working classes' place in the society of the 1930's as a *relative integration* in this subordination. Aspects of belonging were emphasized: social insurance, right to work, increased wages, access to mass consumption, relative participation in social property, and even leisure. The common variable in all these acquisitions is that they contributed to *stabilizing* the working condition by distancing the working classes from the immediacy of need. In this sense, the working condition may be distinguished from the proletarian condition of the beginning of the industrial revolution, which was stamped by vulnerability at every turn. And in this sense we may also speak of a kind of integration: the working class has been rescued from the position of quasi-exclusion that it once occupied at the extreme margins of society.

However, this repatriation takes place within a context that still bears traces of this dualism. Note the following: society is still dualistic, but not dual. A dual society is a society of exclusion in which

some groups have nothing and are nothing, or virtually so. In the model that I have invoked here, certain crosscutting cleavages and interdependencies exist, which carry with them relationships of domination that do not immediately correspond to situations where subordinates are confronted by arbitrary power. But this coexistence of *independence within dependency* upholds the feeling of a complete opposition of interests between dominant and subordinate. Such a social structure is reflected in the antinomy between “us” and “them” so well described by Richard Hoggart.⁶² “We” are not zombies; we have our dignity, our rights, our own forms of solidarity and organization. Thus we should be respected: the worker is not a domestic servant, he is not completely under the sway of needs, nor is he at the beck and call of a master. This is the pride of the workers, who will always prefer managing themselves in order to “make ends meet” rather than begging for help: “we,” we earn our living. But “them,” this is another matter altogether. “They” have wealth, power, access to high culture and to a multitude of goods whose brilliance we will never see. “They” are pretentious snobs, and we must be wary of them, even when they pretend to wish us well, for they are crafty and capable of pulling strings that we will never have access to.

Awareness of this cleavage is upheld though the life experiences of the working class all throughout the main spheres of social existence: consumption, housing, education, and work. Consumption, we have said, is no longer reduced to the satisfaction of the basic needs of survival, and the working class has access to “mass consumption.” But the portion of the worker’s budget devoted to food is still 60 percent in the 1930’s (it was more than 70 percent in 1856, and 65 percent in 1890).⁶³ Maurice Halbwachs, like Thorstein Veblen, shows the anthropological significance of the reduction of a major part of the budget spent on food consumption: it is participation in social life that finds itself amputated by the feebleness of expenses whose ends are not mere biological reproduction.⁶⁴ These analyses date from 1912, but the situation has not substantially changed twenty-five years later: from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1930’s, the share of non-food related expenses in the worker’s budget increases by only 5 percent.

Popular housing is not exactly the “hellish lodging” evoked by Michel Verret during the nineteenth century, but unhealthiness and overcrowding are still routine for the majority of working-class hous-

ing. For Paris, a study of 1926 shows that one inhabitant in four has less than a half-room, and that the dreaded "furnished room" still lodges more than 320,000 people. The situation hardly improves with time: scarcely 70,000 housing units are built in France per year at the end of the 1930's, compared to 250,000 in Germany.⁶⁵ The urbanism of "city gardens" remains confined to some socialist or radical municipalities, and experiences of the sort of White City envisioned in the style of Le Corbusier are rare. These are more germane to employees of the nascent middle classes than to workers.⁶⁶

In terms of education, the free secondary school is established only in 1931. As a consequence education remains constant between 1880 and 1930, an average of 110,000 students.⁶⁷ That is to say that children of the poorer classes are stuck at the "primary" level. The theme of the dangers of an education pushed too hard, which "uproots" the people, is a constant throughout the literature of the time.⁶⁸ Jean Zay, minister of the Popular Front, extends mandatory schooling to the age of fourteen and attempts to impose a preparatory class and common curriculum for all students. But the (relative) "democratization" of education will have to wait until the 1950's. As for the relationship of employment, we have already stressed how socially dependent workers are on their places of work. But, on top of this, the labor market is still dominated in the 1930's by mobility created from uncertainty. One labors under the constant threat of setbacks against which labor legislation offers no protection. Employment by task, either by the hour or the day, is most frequent. Usually there is neither written contract nor any advance stipulation of the terms of employment. The worker "takes his leave," or the employer "lays him off," one or the other with great ease.⁶⁹ And the economic crisis of the 1930's serves to awaken the threat of unemployment. Immigrants confront this most directly: 600,000 of the almost two million foreigners who came to settle in France following the demographic vacuum of the Great War are sent back. But neither are native-born workers secure. In 1936 almost a million people are unemployed.⁷⁰ The era of the Popular Front is also a period of economic and social instability, which will soon give way to drama and defeat.

We have continually insisted that mandatory insurance is a provision that will prove decisive for dispelling the vulnerability of workers. But, in the 1930's, it has scarcely begun to show its effects. Worker's pensions are trivial, and depending on the term of

capitalization and worker mortality, there are fewer than a million beneficiaries.⁷¹ In the 1930's, elderly workers who have to appeal to assistance for survival are just as numerous as those who are beneficiaries of mandatory social benefits.⁷²

The convergence of all these facts explains the persistence of a strong working class particularism. Standard of living, educational level, life-style, relationship to work, degree of participation in social life, shared values—all these go into the making of an identifiable set of social patterns that mark the working condition as a social class. It is no longer the “floating caste...that spreads throughout the nation,” which is alluded to by Lamartine during the first phase of the industrial revolution (cf. chapter 5). But “the social and cultural isolation of workers remains significant enough that class relationships are established between social entities which still constitute real groups.”⁷³ We should probably be suspicious of portrayals, which today assume a nostalgic tone, of the working class with its solidarity and its morality, its simple pleasures and its intense forms of sociability. As much by its subordinate position in the social hierarchy as by its internal cohesion, the world of the worker appears as both a part of the nation and organized around its own interests and aspirations.

All this demonstrates just how unstable the model of integration was that characterized the 1930's and that remains dominant even up to the 1950's. Hasn't the working class become too conscious of its rights—or too ambitious, its critics might say—too aggressive to be kept in a position of dependency? Such a critical juncture might very well culminate in one of two very different kinds of transformations: either in the pursuit of “social acquisitions,” gradually eroding the distance between “them” and “us,” or through the seizure of power by the organized working class. To put this plainly: will we end up with reforms or revolution? This may be the reformulation of the social question by the end of the 1930's.

This is less a matter of two antagonistic agendas than of two options arising from the same practical base, from the same underlying material conditions. The working class is no longer in the position of “having nothing to lose but its chains.” Because of this a worker's movement might very well be consolidated in pursuit “of a positive platform of goals to be attained.”⁷⁴ We have already seen the effects of such a pragmatic reformism, whereby important concessions were obtained. But this does not necessarily imply the end

of social messianism on the part of the workers. In the militant imagination, 1936 takes its place alongside 1848 and the Paris Commune as foundational moments when the potential for an alternative system of society is sketched out. The “generation” that rose up in 1936 will live through the Occupation, the Resistance and give birth to very powerful social struggles after the Liberation by forming the core, especially in the CGT, of a militant class attitude.⁷⁵

Especially because there is no lack of enemies on the other side. The other alternative is represented by the fascist threat and a conservative France that—as in 1848 or in 1871—exact its revenge. We need only consult the newspapers of the time to realize how much this was a period of acute political and social antagonism. As early as May 5, 1936 Henri Béraud, in *Gringoire*, tried to mobilize the fears of the average Frenchman against the threat of the “Reds”: “You used to like your small garden, my brave one, your coffee, your friends and your small automobile, your ballot box, your newspaper full of satires, and various happenings. Oh well, friend, you are going to say farewell to all of that.”⁷⁶ And on the other side, when in 1938, the defeat of the Popular Front is almost complete on the political level, Paul Faure writes in *Le Populaire*, official organ of the socialist party: “To deny class struggle would be to deny the light of day.”⁷⁷

Destitution

Nonetheless, the working class was not vanquished by means of a frontal assault, as were the Parisian workers in June 1848, for example. Reflecting on the vagaries of the period we may very well point to the Occupation, and especially to the participation of one part of the working class in the Resistance, to the context of the Liberation, and the quasi-insurrectional strikes of 1947 and various struggles against “American imperialism,” as well as to the striving of the CGT and the Communist Party to maintain, at least rhetorically, a revolutionary posture. These are just so many episodes of social antagonism that crystallized in the 1930’s and that will remain very much alive well into the 1960’s. But this posture of radical opposition is gradually undermined because, notwithstanding some political avatars, it is swept away by a transformation of a sociological nature. The working class has been deprived of its former position as the lance-bearer for the advancement of wage earners. By charting the transformation that has been underway for

more than forty years (from the 1930's to the 1970's), we will conclude that "working class distinctiveness" was not abolished, but that it ceased to play its earlier role of chief "motivator," as it did during the formative years of industrial society.⁷⁸ The wage labor of workers was literally gutted of its historical potentialities that once gave birth to the worker's movement. The working condition did not give way to another form of society; it only accommodated itself to a subordinate position in a wage-earning society. What are the processes implicit in this transformation?

Until the 1930's, the wage earner is virtually synonymous with factory worker. François Simiand, in his work of 1932 that aspires to be definitive on the subject of wage labor, says this plainly:

The term "wage" seems to us in the current usage to be improperly applied, in a way that is both general and specific, to the category of workers, distinguished from domestics in agricultural, employees in commerce, industry and also agriculture, managers of services, enterprises, engineers, or managers of any kind.⁷⁹

The working class is unique in offering a "service of pure labor," which forms a "distinct economic framework."⁸⁰ But what is a "service of pure labor"? Purely manual labor, perhaps, but there is also work on machinery, and thus Simiand is forced to add one nuance: the worker hires himself out for "a manual labor, or at least one whose manual part is essential."⁸¹ This is also purely routine labor, but aren't most employees just executing a routine? Simiand adds another qualification that betrays his embarrassment: the employee "rents a non-manual labor or at least one whose non-material effect is not essential."⁸² And what of the service managers, engineers, managers, who are not owners of their businesses? They also provide, exclusively, a "service in labor." Why should we refuse to accord them the same status as wage earners in the factory? For Simiand, however, there is no hint of this.

Indeed, Simiand occupies a defensive position that is already in the process of being outmoded, one that recalls a model of society dating back to the beginnings of the industrial revolution, characterized by the preeminence of tasks directly transforming raw materials. But wage labor is already in the process of emerging as a distinctive and pervasive phenomenon in the 1930's. It gradually tempers the weight of manual labor, and, very shortly, that of the working condition in the system of labor. We must sketch out the significance of this transformation up until 1975, a date which might be seen as marking the apotheosis of a society of wage labor.⁸³

First and foremost we find massive increases in the proportion of wage earners in the economically active population: this number had grown from less than half (49 percent) in 1931, to almost 83 percent in 1975. In absolute numbers, if we include agricultural workers, the number of manual workers decreased, from 9,700,000 to 8,600,000; by way of contrast, the total number of non-agricultural workers slightly increased from 7,600,000 to 8,200,000. But the main shift in the make-up of the active population is the increase in *wage earners who are not industrial workers*. They were only 2.7 million in 1931, and there are 7.9 million of them in 1975. By then their numbers have almost surpassed that of manual workers (and have largely outstripped them since then). But there are also considerable *internal* changes even within this group. Although the extant statistics do not allow us to compare these with absolute precision (thus, if one counts almost 125,000 “experts and technicians,” the categories of “middle managers and upper-level managers” do not exist in the 1930’s), we can say with confidence that the great majority of non-factory working wage earners were small public or private sector employees whose status, even if it was considered superior to that of factory workers, nevertheless remained generally mediocre. In 1975, however, the “average employee” represents less than half of non-factory working wage earners, compared to 2,700,000 “middle-managers” and 1,380,000 “upper-level managers”: these groups represent a wage-earning class with high living standards that has experienced the most considerable increase.⁸⁴

Thus the changes reported by the statistics appear to reflect a qualitative transformation of the structure of wage labor. If the number of factory workers has largely maintained itself, its position in the system of wage labor has been fundamentally *degraded*. First, because the working class lost, one might say, the stratum of wage labor that was inferior to it in terms of social status, wages and living conditions. At the beginning of the 1930’s agricultural workers still represented fully one fourth of manual workers (they were more than half in 1876). In 1975, they had practically disappeared (only 375,000). Now it is the working class that occupies the bottom rung of the salarial pyramid—indeed, the base of the social pyramid.⁸⁵ On the other hand, above it there have developed not only salaried employees—who are often only, in the hallowed phrase, a “white-collar proletariat”—but also and more importantly a “bourgeois” class of wage earners.⁸⁶ Accordingly the factory worker risks being

at the same time drowned in a more and more extensive conception of wage labor and crushed by the proliferation of wage-earning situations that are always superior to his. In any case, he is deprived of the role of the vanguard he might have played in the development of the system of wage-labor.

Analyzing the development of wage labor from the 1930's to the 1970's confirms this gradual destitution of the working class. Luc Boltanski has demonstrated the difficulty with which a "bourgeois wage earner" began to differentiate himself through a process that accentuates his differences with respect to the characteristics of manual workers. Here was yet another episode in the opposition between salaried labor and patrimony, such as marked the nineteenth century during the debates over mandatory insurance. The weight of tradition makes it virtually impossible to conceive of respectable positions that do not rely on inherited property or the social capital attached to "offices" or to liberal professions. Hence we witness some curious efforts to establish the respectability of new wage-earning positions on a "patrimony of values which are in fact middle-class values, the spirit of initiative, savings, family heritage, a modest ease, the sober life, respect."⁸⁷ The situation is even further blurred insofar as many of these high-quality, wage-earning positions are held by the sons of families possessing an inheritance. Do they derive their respectability from their position or their inheritance? These two factors are difficult to distinguish from one another. One example of the power of traditional obstacles to conceiving of an entirely "bourgeois" wage earner: in 1937, the Appeals Court refused to recognize the status of work-related injury to a doctor, as a man of the arts "can not maintain a subordinate relationship" with a director of a hospital. Thus a doctor injured at work is not a wage-earning employee of the establishment that employs him.⁸⁸

It is revealing that the first group of "respectable" professionals to assert themselves as wage earners are the engineers, and also that the initiative is undertaken in 1936: The syndicate of wage-earning engineers is created in June 13, 1936.⁸⁹ Affirming their "average" position between bosses and workers, and also concerned about benefiting from social advantages acquired by the working class, while at the same time differentiating themselves from ordinary workers. In any case, this attitude would become fully transparent after World War II. At that time the general confederation of managers will devote a significant part of its activity to demanding both an

enlargement of the hierarchy of salaries and a unique retirement system that avoids any risk of being confused with the working “masses.”

Although engineers were perhaps in the vanguard of promoting “bourgeois” wage-earning, they hardly represent all managers of industry. Since its formation at the end of 1944, the general confederation of managers has recruited widely. It defines a manager as any agent of a public or private enterprise invested with a modicum of responsibility, which includes lower management. Labor unions, however, are forced to put in place a special provision for receiving “engineers and managers,” the CFTC as early as 1944 (French Federation of Syndicates for Engineers and Managers), the CGT in 1948 (General Union of Engineers and Managers).⁹⁰

Paralleling this transformation within economic firms, the growth of “tertiary” activities also contributes to the proliferation of non-factory wage earners: the multiplication of commercial services, banks, local government administrations and the state (alone the National Department of Education accounts for nearly 1 million agents in 1975), the opening of new sectors of activity, communications, advertising, etc.⁹¹ Most of these activities are salaried. In addition, almost all of them exceed manual labor in terms of income and prestige. As early as 1951, Michel Collinet portrays “a salaried middle class” already extremely complex, that includes some employees, middle functionaries, office managers, managers, lower management, technicians and engineers, etc.⁹²

Not only has the working condition been buffeted and overcome by a whole gamut of more and more diversified salaried activities, but its internal coherence suffers. In 1975, there are roughly 40 percent qualified workers, 40 percent specialized workers, and 20 percent manual laborers. The percentage of women has increased to 22.9 percent of the working population, mainly in low-skill jobs (46.6 percent of manual workers are women). Almost one out of five workers is an immigrant. The development of the public sector (a quarter of the whole wage-earning class) reinforces another kind of cleavage: employees of the state, of local municipalities and nationalized businesses benefit in general from a more stable status than those of the private sector. The theme of the *segmentation of the labor market*, that is to say, the distinction between protected sectors and vulnerable workers, makes its appearance at the beginning of the 1970’s.⁹³ Probably the unity of the working class has

never been achieved: around 1936, the disparities between different categories of workers according to their qualifications, their public or private status, their nationality, their integration into heavy industry or small businesses, etc. must have been just as important. Yet back then, a process of unification appeared to be the work at hand, by cultivating awareness of common interests and a common opposition to “class enemies.” However, for reasons that we will explain, since the 1970’s, this dynamic seems to have been broken, leaving the working condition with its “objective” disparities.⁹⁴

One other change, less often noted, was probably even more important in accounting for the transformation of the working condition when seen over the long term. A 1978 study—although the movement started even before this—focusing, among other things, on “the kind of work actually performed” by workers observes that those who devote themselves to manufacturing tasks barely represent a third of the working population.⁹⁵ In other words, most workers are devoted either to tasks that one could call “infraproductive,” such as maintenance, delivery, packaging, security, etc., or to activities closer to conceptual tasks than to actually performing them, such as overseeing machines, quality control, testing, maintenance, research, or the organization of labor.

This is a considerable change, if not with respect to the actual reality of factory work then at least with respect to the dominant portrayal that it has been given in industrial society. In this popular vision, workers appear as *homo faber*, man as maker *par excellence*, one who directly transforms nature by means of his labor. His productive labor becomes incarnated in the manufactured object. For the tradition of English political economy, as for Marxism, labor is the essential source of material, useful, consumable goods.⁹⁶ This activity of manufacturing goes also with two other contrasting readings. To Halbwachs, for example, it explains the burdensome character of the working condition, which “finds itself in harmony neither with nature nor with men, remains isolated in front of the material, struck only by inanimate forces.” This is why the working class resembles “a mechanical and inert mass.”⁹⁷ Marx, on the other hand, makes man himself the center of these activities of transforming nature, the source of all value, and thus establishes the demiurgical role that he attributes to the proletariat. But it is probably the case that both the former and the latter—as we have already seen in Simiand—are applicable to the conception of a manual

laborer that prevailed at the beginning of the industrial revolution and that begins to become obsolete with the progress of the division of labor. The manual worker ceases to be the paradigm of production by “labor.”⁹⁸

These transformations, just as profound for the manual worker himself as for the place he occupies in the system of wage labor, cannot help but shatter our understanding of the role attributed to the working class in industrial society. Can the working class maintain the central role attributed to it, both by those who exalt its revolutionary potential and those who see it as a threat to social order? This debate is underway as early as the 1950’s, and Michel Crozier is among the first to proclaim that “the era of the proletariat is over”: “a phase of our social history must be definitely closed, the religious phase of the proletariat.”⁹⁹

This has not been completely played out, however, for the transformation of the working condition can give rise to two apparently contradictory interpretations. A “new working class” might be formed through the new permutations taken on by the division of labor. But these new agents who assume a more and more decisive role in production—workers in “cutting edge” industries, planners rather than executors, technicians, architects, managers, engineers, etc.—continue to be stripped of decision-making power and of the essential benefits of their labor by the capitalist system of production. So with respect to the issue of class conflict, their position is analogous to the former proletariat. Henceforth they are the privileged legatees of the task of the revolutionary transformation of society that the traditional working class, seduced by the siren’s song of consumerism and circumscribed by union bureaucracy and reformist policies, had abandoned.¹⁰⁰

On the other hand, the hypothesis of the “bourgeoisification” of the working classes rests on an overall improvement of lifestyle that softens social antagonisms. The “desire to be integrated into a society where a premium is placed on the search for comfort and well-being” gradually leads the working class to establish itself in the matrix of the middle class.¹⁰¹

In fact, these two apparently contradictory positions are complementary in the sense that the drift of their arguments is more political than sociological. Serge Mallet overestimates the weight of these new strata of industrial wage labor.¹⁰² Mainly, he overestimates the working class’ capacity to play the role of “energizing” these new

strata that assert themselves through changes in production (in particular, the development of automation, a favorite theme in the sociology of work in the 1960's). However, as early as 1936, the CGT knew the bitter experience of the "disaffection of technicians toward the worker's movement."¹⁰³ With a few rare exceptions around 1968, studies of social conflict, even "new" ones, reveal that technicians, managers and engineers generally behave in ways that defend their particular interests. They abide by social differentiation and the respect of hierarchy, rather than identifying or aligning themselves with the position of the working class. And perhaps justifiably so: for the conviction that underlies this exaltation of the historical role of the "new working class" in the 1960's is essentially political. No longer is it a matter of carrying the flame of the revolution, or of Billancourt, but of the CFDT and the PSU.¹⁰⁴

But the opposite discourse, proclaiming that the working condition has dissolved into the nebulous middle classes, seems motivated by the desire, more political than scientific, to exorcise social conflicts once and for all. This is the ideology of those who proclaim the "end of ideology." They stare with hungry eyes at the working classes' appetite for consumption and note with satisfaction the weakening of political and unionist commitments.¹⁰⁵ But they fail to notice that despite the unarguable improvement of its living conditions, the working class is not absorbed into the middle classes. Studies begun in the 1950's and 1960's confirm the persistence of a distinctive working class ethos and an awareness of subordination akin to that previously discussed at the end of the 1930's.¹⁰⁶ This is because the working condition has scarcely changed at all with respect to the relationships of subordination, inextricably technical and social, that they imply.¹⁰⁷ These inevitably translate into feelings workers have of being stuck in a "socially inferior" position.¹⁰⁸ There is also something distinctive about their lifestyle and forms of sociability: "Whether a matter of habits of consumption, lifestyle, or the use of urban space, numerous and various measurements which are evidence of a distinctiveness of behavior in the environment of the worker."¹⁰⁹ The entire world consumes, but not the same products; there are more diplomas, but they do not have the same value; many go on vacation, but not to the same destinations, etc. It is pointless to cite here all the analyses that mitigate this discourse of social ecumenicism. One may express a single idea at a glance, and strongly affirms its homogene-

ity. Another relies on innumerable statistical measures and correlation charts of growth. But these miss the signification that this transformation has for the social actors themselves. A single example of this kind of sophisticated construction whose abstraction never touches the social reality that it pretends to represent. Jean Fourastié, master of this subject, has wisely calculated that “a specialized worker (OS), beginning in 1970 and remaining such a worker for his entire life, will before his sixtieth birthday have garnered a greater buying power than that of a State Counsel taking his retirement today.”¹¹⁰ It would be interesting to locate this fortunate worker in 1995 and ask him what he thinks of such a comparison of his position with that of the state counselor.¹¹¹

Thus the decisive transformation that has occurred throughout the 1950’s and 1960’s is neither the complete homogenization of society nor the passing on of the revolutionary torch to the “new working class.” Rather what we find is the dissolution of this revolutionary alternative and the redistribution of social conflict according to a very different model than a society of classes: the new model is that of the salaried society.

Dissolution of the revolutionary alternative: the historical reality of the working classes is not reducible to an ensemble of lifestyles that we can describe, salary charts that we can compare, or a nostalgic populist folklore. It was also an adventure which lasted slightly more than a century, with its up’s and down’s, marked by high points—1848, the Paris Commune, 1936, 1968 perhaps—that appeared momentarily to anticipate an alternative way of organizing society. It is difficult, however, to date with any degree of certainty the collapse of this conviction that social history might conclude in what Crozier calls as early as 1959 “the religious phase of the proletariat.” Even in glorious moments such as these, this conviction was carried only by a minority of workers.¹¹² And it may still resurface periodically in the form of many sudden explosions reminiscent of the “youth of the strike,”¹¹³ thereby awakening sleeping utopias.¹¹⁴ However, it has become less and less imaginable that such reveries of future days as these might ever be institutionalized. That oscillation between revolution and reform, which has always run through the workers movements, has gradually come to be fixed more and more insistently on the latter pole, and the cleavage between “them” and “us” ceases any longer to foster illusory dreams of radical change. We might think of this as the disenchantment of

the social world, reduced to a one-dimensional existence without hope of transcendence: social transformation no longer seems to be a matter of black or white, and ceases any longer to be driven by a sense of historical inevitability. Ironically, it is probably May 1968 that crystallized this awareness: this time it was the case that the working classes joined a movement already in progress, rather than acting as its epicenter, and they were content merely to extract “reformist” advances from these events. In any case, it is revealing that in the immediate aftermath of 1968, immigrant workers were called upon to seize the torch of a revolutionary messianism abandoned by an indigenous working class who had been “integrated into the system.”¹¹⁵

Besides the political aspects of these vagaries, the dominant anthropological meaning of wage labor itself collapses during these decades. The revolutionary potential of the working class was due to the fact that it embodied this “indignity of wage labor,” such that it had nothing to lose but its chains and that its emancipation would change the face of the world. On this point, Marx did no more than radicalize a widely accepted anthropological feature of wage labor, universally acknowledged, about the kind of dependency that results when one man puts his laboring power at the disposition of another. This is the literal meaning of the phrase “alienated labor”: that is, to labor for another and not for one’s self, at the discretion of another who will consume or commodify the product of one’s labor. With liberalism, this kind of constraint is euphemized when stated in an explicitly contractual form. And although it loses this aspect of personalized dependency when one labors, for example, for an anonymous corporation managed by collective conventions, this does not change the fundamental asymmetry of the relationship. What precedes the wage earner is a kind of abandoning of the fruit of his work to another person, or to a business, or to an institution, or “to capital.”

Under this logic, the activities of an autonomous social subject, even if they include providing a service, cannot be subsumed into a relationship of wage labor. Put differently, an independent producer cannot be a wage earner. This is not simply a tautology, but the consequence of the fact that some activities are inalienable, and thus, non wage-able, even if they correspond to a work done for another. For example, shoemakers or weavers can be either independent workers or wage earners. However, a doctor cannot be a

wage earner, as the previously cited decree of the Appeals Court demonstrates even in 1937.

This secular conception of wage-earning labor is erased during the decades of the 1950's and 1960's following the eclipse of any historical role for the working classes. The gradual growth of the "bourgeois" wage earner paved the way for this development. This culminates in a model of society that is no longer riven by an essential conflict between wage earner and non-wage earner, that is to say, between proletariat and bourgeois, or between labor and capital. Instead, the "new society," if we may recall a slogan from the beginning of the 1970's, which aspired to be the political manifestation of this change, is organized around the competition between different poles of wage-earning activities.¹¹⁶ Such a society is neither homogenous nor pacified. But rather than class struggle, its antagonism takes the form of a struggle for status and classification. This is a society in which the main social significance of wage labor is as the preeminent means of social identification.

The Wage-Earning Condition

In the middle of the 1950's there arose a new discourse on "men of the coming age." These are presumably pure wage earners who have somehow acquired a bourgeois pedigree.¹¹⁷ This profile may be seen in the context of the modernization of French society, which pits the agents of growth and progress against representatives of the traditional middle classes, small businessmen, Malthusian merchants, and prominent conservatives. On the one hand, we see a protectionist or "poujadist" France, consecrated to defending the past; on the other hand, there is a dynamic France that has finally come to terms with its age, and whose new wage earners represent its cutting edge.¹¹⁸

In this context, a new salaried universe comes into being. Its exemplars see themselves as having been given the function of acting as the vanguard, devoted to the task of "bearing" social dynamism. For example, we speak of this or that industrial or commercial sector "fueling" the economic growth of an entire society. What we see is the quasi-mythologization of a certain kind of man (or woman) who fits the following profile: efficient and dynamic, liberated from archaism, both relaxed and successful, hard-working and a heavy consumer of status goods, luxurious vacations, and trips abroad.¹¹⁹ No longer does he wish to partake of puritanical and thesaurical

ethics, of the cult of patrimony or respect for sacred hierarchies that characterized the traditional bourgeoisie. Newspapers like *l'Express*—“*l'Express*, newspaper of the managers”—or *l'Expansion* provide evidence of the audience for this vision of the social world, and, in turn, do much to propagate it.¹²⁰ Mainly this pertains to different categories of wage earners: middle and upper-level managers, teachers, advertisers, communication experts and, on its lower fringes, representatives of a few kinds of intermediary professions such as cultural officials, paramedical personnel, educators, etc.¹²¹ As they come into being, they will form what Henri Mendras calls the “central constellation,” which he makes the heart of the diffusion of a “second French revolution.”¹²² The phrase “second French revolution” is undoubtedly an exaggeration. But there is in fact a group (or rather an interconnection of subgroups) of service providers who constitute the most mobile and dynamic sectors of society, the main diffusers of the values of modernity, progress, fashion and success. In addition, with respect to society as a whole, this is the group whose growth was the most continuous and rapid since the “take-off” period following the end of World War II.

Wage-labor’s advances in these sectors threaten the secular opposition between labor and patrimony. Comfortable incomes, positions of power and prestige, leadership in matters of life-style and culture, security against the vagaries of existence—all these enviable social goods are no longer necessarily linked to one’s possession of a large inheritance.¹²³ At the extreme, socially dominant positions might even be assumed by “pure” wage earners, that is to say, by persons whose income and position in the social structure depend entirely on their jobs.

This is only in extreme cases. Increases in the status of wage earners are linked to the development of professional sectors that, particularly in the tertiary, require titles and diplomas.¹²⁴ But we know that educational capital is often linked to familial or cultural inheritance, itself strongly dependent on economic capital. On the other hand, wage labor may be at the origins of the making of a family fortune, particularly by means of credit and access to capital. Accordingly, the relationship between patrimony and labor becomes much more complex than at the dawn of industrialization. Back then, roughly speaking, the possession of an inheritance shielded you from having to devote yourself to wage earning; and indeed the acquisition of a patrimony, even modest, by workers drove them

to escape from the wage-earning classes by establishing their own businesses. Now, wage earning and inheritance interact with one another in two ways: money facilitates access to upper-level salaried positions through the intermediation of diplomas, whereas being established in comfortable salaried positions may command ready access to money.¹²⁵

Thus, we might wonder whether this “central constellation” really represents a system of “pure” wage labor? Nor does it seem to occupy the hegemonic position of a “bourgeoisie without capital” attributed to it by its most enthusiastic flatterers.¹²⁶ It remains a *core of dominant positions*, which accumulate and intermingle with economic, social and cultural capital, the management of public and private enterprises and powers exercised in the heart of the state. Of this “state nobility,” Pierre Bourdieu comments,

Few groups of leaders have ever gathered so many different principles of legitimation, and which, even if they appear contradictory, as do an aristocracy of birth and a meritocracy of scholarly success or scientific competency, or as the ideology of “public service” and the cult of profit disguised in the exaltation of productivity, are combined to inspire new leaders with the most absolute certainty of their legitimacy.¹²⁷

In fact, many professions within this “central constellation” are more dependent on economic capital than has been acknowledged: managers whose fate is linked to that of the economic firm, or cultural officials, communications professionals whose legitimacy is based on their ability to obtain financial support. Similarly, the classic contrast between old-fashioned bosses and salaried executives of corporations (“owners” and “managers”) deserves to be loosened. The CEO’s of large corporations, for example, who are deliberately chosen for their professionalism and technical competency from the upper echelons of the wage earners, are frequently also major stockholders of the firm, stemming from a long career in the business world.¹²⁸ If the whole myth of the power of the “two hundred families” was a concoction created by the Left, it remains true nonetheless that economic power is essentially kept within the domain of the carefully chosen (cf. the composition of the “power elites” of the large corporations).

And justifiably so: although there may be no osmosis between the different blocks that compose wage-earning society, neither is there any sense of absolute “otherness.” The high-status salaried classes play a facilitative role, including within them traditionally

dominant groups, whose most dynamic segments have succeeded in adapting themselves by acquiring, without renouncing their old prerogatives, the new attributes of success and honor. These now include frequenting the best schools and possessing the most prestigious diplomas. In doing so, one part of the traditional dominant classes also succeeds in placing itself on the highest rung of the market for wage labor.

Accordingly, even within the dominant groups, there is less homogenization than competition, or the struggle for placement. This social domain is filled with conflicts and the preoccupation with differentiation. The principle of *distinction* both opposes and reunites social groups. It opposes and reunites because distinction functions by means of a subtle dialectic between the same and the other, proximity and distance, fascination and repudiation. It presupposes a *transversal* dimension of different groupings which unify even those who are in opposition, allowing them to compare and rank one another. "Classholders are classified by their classifications": they are recognized through their distance with respect to other positions, which thereby form a kind of continuum.¹²⁹ Thus this logic of differentiation is distinguished both from models founded on consensus and models founded on class conflict. To best characterize this constellation, it might be likened to what Georg Simmel said of the "middle class" through a tripartite analysis of society: "What is truly original about it is that it makes continual exchanges with the two other classes and that these perpetual fluctuations erase borders and replace them with perfectly continuous transitions."¹³⁰ "Perfectly continuous transitions": we will have to discuss this. But the idea of a continuum of positions unique to a wage-earning society truly exists.

In this way the salaried society might be imagined as beginning from the coexistence of a certain number of blocks at once separated and unified by this logic of distinction that is at play within the heart of each group just as much as between the different groups.¹³¹ In this system, one would have to find his place in a block of *professions independent from an unregenerate patrimony*, the block of those who were vanquished by modernization and who were described so picturesquely by Michel Winock. It is because these groups were marginalized that the society of wage labor came to be deployed in the first place: for example, the vanishing of the landlord as paradigm for the bourgeois; the inexorable decrease of small

merchants and artisanry (900,000 artisans, 780,000 merchants and the like at the beginning of the 1980's),¹³² a revolution within the agricultural world leading to the extinction of the traditional peasantry.¹³³ Either these segments of the patrimonial classes figured out how to adapt themselves to the new demands of the society of wage labor (cf. for example, the relative dynamism of small and mid-level enterprises, or the development of agricultural cooperatives), or they had to resign themselves to passing away. Even in the "greater France," which for a century and a half slowed the realization of progress, opposed itself to urbanization and industrialization, the wage system and the values associated with education and urban culture have also played a dominant role. Some evidence of this may be seen in the fact that after having looked down upon the wage-earning classes, and doing everything possible to distinguish themselves from it, these "independent" categories finally came to regard them with an envy colored by resentment: peasants, artisans, small merchants inevitably compare themselves to wage earners, not just in terms of their income, but also by their working hours and access to leisure or social benefits. A major resurgence of "Poujadisme"—which goes well above and beyond the phenomenon of Poujade himself—is actually this envy or resentment of categories whose independence is threatened toward the salaried sectors who ostensibly work less and on top of this benefit from all the social advantages. Thus the allure of the salaried condition, which it exercises by virtue of its limits, on the categories who do not have access to it, such as the upper bourgeoisie.

This allure manifests itself in the *popular block* composed of workers and employees who occupy a subordinate position in the system of wage labor. Perhaps it is only a crude approximation that places in the same "block" both manual workers and employees. However, in the 1960's we witness "the transformation of a working class widened and renewed by incorporating more and more employees."¹³⁴ Similarly, due to the mechanization of office work, the employee is rarely in direct collaboration with the boss. "White collar" employees of large department stores or business offices suffer from similar constraints to those faced by manual workers. The evolution of wages marks the same tendency toward homogenization.¹³⁵ The widespread application of a monthly pay period begun in 1970 sanctioned this evolution: the professional status of monthly-paid workers is practically the same as that of employees.¹³⁶

However, we must stress one last time that the unarguable improvements that popular groups have benefited from, or have acquired, do not completely efface their particularity or distinctiveness. As Alfred Sauvy has noted, “any social organism which must adapt itself, change proportions, does this more easily by addition than by subtraction.”¹³⁷ In particular, the “addition” of new salaried layers above the working class wage earners did not “suppress” all those features that contributed to the model of the alienated wage earner. Here we must mention some details from the beginning of the 1970’s: for example, recall our summary circa 1936 of various indices showing the differential integration of popular classes in matters of consumption, housing, lifestyle, participation in education and culture, social rights, etc. But it would take at least a chapter just to show that in all these relationships, the popular classes are still very far from catching up from their backwardness.¹³⁸ However, what is significant here may be the fact that despite this subordination, these groups are embedded in a continuum of positions which makes up the wage-earning society, and, from this fact, they may be able, if not to interchange themselves, then at least to compare themselves by differentiating themselves.

The omnipresence of the theme of consumption during these years—the “society of consumption”—expresses perfectly what we might call the *principle of generalized differentiation*.¹³⁹ Consumption demands a system of relations between social groups according to which objects owned are *markers* of social position, “the indicators of ranking.”¹⁴⁰ One imagines then that his value is to be overdetermined: social subjects do not discover their appearance here, but rather their identity. They manifest their place in the social collectivity by what they consume. This is the analogue of the sacred in a society that no longer possesses transcendence; the consumption of objects signifies, emphatically, the intrinsic value of an individual as a function of the place he occupies in the division of labor. Consumption is the basis of a “commerce,” in the eighteenth century meaning of the word, that is to say, a highly scrutinized exchange through which social subjects communicate with one another.

Without pretending to offer an exhaustive overview of wage-earning society, we must at least indicate the place of the last block, which we will call *peripheral or residual*. The relative integration of the majority of workers which is symbolized, among other things,

by monthly pay creates a gap in terms of a labor force that is marginalized on this account, including unstable, seasonal, or intermittent occupations.¹⁴¹ These “peripheral workers” are thrown into ferocious competition. They suffer most from the side effects of changes in the demand for manpower.¹⁴² Composed mainly of immigrants, women and youth, without qualifications, elderly workers incapable of following the “re-conversion” which awaits them, they occupy the most demanding and precarious positions in the company, have the lowest wages, and are the least protected by social rights. They live more on the borders of the salaried society than being full participants in it. Thus, at the same time that the working condition is being consolidated, there remains, lagging in the midst of workers, and mainly manual workers, a line of demarcation between vulnerable groups whose condition resembles the proletariat of an earlier age and the majority who seem in the process of enjoying greater participation in the benefits of social and economic progress. However, before the end of the 1970’s, the singularity and importance of this phenomenon were poorly understood. For the beneficiaries of progress, this nagging problem is overshadowed by the dominant dynamic that carries society as a whole toward opulence. On the other hand, those who take an interest in it, usually for purely political reasons, find proof there of the perpetuation of the exploitation of the working class such as it is.¹⁴³ The importance of this cleavage at the very heart of wage-earning society will only appear later, when we witness the theme of precariousness.

These “peripheral” situations of those populations that have never entered into the dynamic of industrial society may ultimately be reconciled—even if we cannot simply collapse them together. This is what is known as “the fourth world,” an expression of slightly dubious exoticism, as if there existed in the midst of developed society certain archaic islands populated by all those could not or did not want to pay the price of social integration and who are left outside the orders of regular labor, decent housing, sacred familial unions, and other legitimate institutions of socialization. “There are those who, being unable to enter into modern structures, remain outside the mainstream of the life of the nation.”¹⁴⁴ They wander or live on the outskirts of towns, breed amongst themselves for generation after generation, live through expediency or off of relief, and seem to rebuff all the well-intentioned efforts of those who wish

to moralize and normalize them. They are an embarrassment to us during periods of economic growth and conversion to the values of modernity. But in the end there is nothing scandalous in the fact that there exists, as in all societies, a limited fringe of marginals or a-sociables who play no part in common life. In any case, these residual pockets of poverty do not appear to call into question either the general rules of social exchange or the dynamic of ongoing societal progress. Speaking of them as the “fourth world” is one way of saying that “these people” are just not cut out to be wage earners.

Despite the existence of these “peripheral” or “residual” populations within salaried society—and probably also, at its apogee, those eminent artists, media darlings, upper-level managers, heirs of great fortunes, whose condition seems incommensurable to common life, but whose exoticism is obviously different than that of the “fourth world” so as to maintain the mythology of *Paris Match*—the salaried society affords a structure that is relatively homogenous in its differentiation. Not only because the essence of social activities is re-centered around wage labor (nearly 83 percent are wage earners in 1975). But above all because most of the members of this society find in wage labor a singular principle which at the same time reunites and separates them, thereby allowing them to discover their *social identity*. “In a salaried society, everything circulates, everyone measures themselves against one another and compares themselves to one another.”¹⁴⁵ This formula may be exaggerated in that such a society has extreme margins, positions of excellence above the wage earner and positions of indignity below him. However, it is probably an eminently fair formulation so long as one does not confuse “compare themselves to” with to be *equivalent*, and if we understand “measure themselves against one another” as a *competition* through which social subjects find their social identity in difference. Wage earning is not just a way of being paid for one’s labor, but the system by which individuals are distributed in social space. As Margaret Maruani and Emmanuelle Reynaud have observed, “Behind every employment situation there is a social judgment.”¹⁴⁶ It is necessary to take this expression in its strongest sense: the wage earner is judged and situated by his employment, and wage earners find their common denominator and socially exist in terms of this position.

The Growth-State

Nonetheless, wage-earning society is not reducible to a nexus of wage-earning positions. Delivered over solely to the logic of competition and distinction, it would risk being carried away by centrifugal forces. It is also a system of *political management*, which linked together private property and social property, economic development and the acquisition of social rights, the market and the State. This I call by the name of the “growth-state,” the articulation of two fundamental parameters which have accompanied the wage-earning society in its development and woven its essential boundaries: economic growth and the development of the social state. This is such that any halt to this growth will be understood as an effect of economic crisis perhaps, as the underlying cause of this sophisticated montage of economic factors and of social regulation that gave modern wage labor its fragile constitution.

First we must deal with economic growth. What is apparent in retrospect is that the period up to the 1970’s was an unparalleled period in the history of humanity, or at least, in that of industrialized countries. In France, between 1953 and 1975, more or less, we saw annual growth rates of 5 percent or 6 percent, practically tripling the productivity, consumption and income of wage earners.¹⁴⁷

This fantastic enrichment brought with it some *stakes* for wage-earning society. Recalling a famous phrase of Louis Bergeron, general secretary of the CGT-Workers Force, there were now some “grounds.” This was not just a relative abundance of goods to redistribute. But growth itself—so long as it lasted—allowed us to make claims on the future. Thus it is not a simple matter of grabbing today this or that advantage, but rather of offering a program for improvement at the end of this condition. In this way economic development integrates by offering social progress as a common goal to the different groups in competition. As a result, disparities such as those experienced in the here and now can at the same time be perceived as temporary differences. “Sectoral claims can thus be legitimated”—and even, we might say, sublimated: for they mark steps down a pathway that must culminate in the reduction of inequalities.¹⁴⁸ If a particular group does not succeed in obtaining all that it demands—and thinks, to the contrary, that it never has enough—on the one hand, it already benefits from some things, and moreover, it can always imagine that in the future it will obtain

more. Projecting these aspirations onto the horizon of the future is one effective way of calming struggles in the here and now, and gives credence for tomorrow to the social-democratic ideal of the progressive removal of inequalities. This gamble on the future is not just an expression of faith in the virtues of progress in general. Through his modes of consumption, his investment in durable goods, and his use of credit, the wage earner anticipates day by day the perpetuity of growth and concretely links his own destiny to an indefinite progress. In salaried society, the anticipation of a better future is written into the very structure of the present. Even more so, by projecting them onto the following generation, the wage earner may hope to realize his deferred aspirations: what I was not able to accomplish, my children will obtain.

Thus the rise of salaried society was a tributary to the condition of economic growth. But what we must now determine is whether there is some essential link between them, or if this was only an accident of circumstances: namely, of economic growth. But it also contributed intimately to a second set of social conditions: the development of a social state. If it is really true that competition and the search for distinction are the driving principles of the salaried condition, balancing these requires that they be submitted to arbitration and that negotiated compromises be established. Either a class-based society was threatened globally by a third party, or a salaried society risks being torn apart in categorical struggles in the absence of a central regulative power. Wage-earning society is also a society in whose heart the social state has been established.

State intervention was deployed in three main directions. We have already outlined these, but they will grow even more extensive in the context of this new social system: first, by guaranteeing widespread social security; second, by maintaining the general equilibrium and guidance of the economy; and finally, by searching for compromises between different partners involved in the process of growth.

1. The establishment of Social Security in 1945 constitutes first and foremost a decisive step *in the protection of wage earners* in the long history of the transfer of property (cf. the preceding chapter). But the evolution of the system during the following decade effected the transition from a society of classes to a salaried society. The ordinance of October 4, 1945 seems to achieve the original goal of so-

cial insurance: to put an end, definitively this time, to the vulnerability of the popular classes. The population concerned—"the workers"—is still a working class. The kinds of labor who are primarily targeted are working wage earners, who have only imperfectly emerged from secular precariousness. Social protections arise to protect the labor force against "risks of any nature": "Thus is instituted a system of Social Security destined to guarantee workers and their families against risks of any nature likely to reduce or eliminate their ability to earn money, to cover costs of maternity and the costs of family that they support."¹⁴⁹

To consolidate "the ability to earn" of the workers: such a program may be understood in part as an extension of the kind that the Popular Front imagined might achieve social justice through the improvement of the condition of the working classes.¹⁵⁰ The working condition is both the main support for, and the most mistreated segment of, industrial society, and the progress of society as whole must therefore begin with its improvement. Was it possible to combine this positive discrimination on behalf of workers with the ambition, simultaneously affirmed, of covering the entire population against insecurity? "All French residing on the territory of Metropolitan France benefit [...] from Social Security legislation."¹⁵¹ Yes, if a strong political will were to impose a general system (for all) whose mechanisms of financing and redistribution would nonetheless advantage some (the most vulnerable wage earners). In the context of the Liberation, this was what was desired.¹⁵² Such a general system must have a strongly redistributive function, with levies on the most advantaged groups contributing to shore up the resources of workers or disadvantaged families.¹⁵³ But if one grants some credence for sociological reality, each social category defends its own interest.

The sociological burdens are those of the transformation of wage labor we have previously analyzed. In the era when the general system of Social Security is put in place, the working class has already been partially outstripped and disadvantaged by other salaried configurations which are better prepared. It is simultaneously surrounded by non wage-earning groups, independent professions, which resist being put on the same level as that of workers. Just as soon as the political opportunity will arrive when they can speak their minds, they will impose another system altogether.¹⁵⁴

As the special systems multiply, rather than being a matter of simply adapting itself to take into account certain marginal exceptions, what we end up with is an entirely new system. This new system expresses the diversity of the society of wage labor. At the heart of this even the non-wage earners occupy the old territory for the wage earners by striving to maximize the advantages and minimize the costs of the system.¹⁵⁵ What we find at work is the logic of differentiation and distinction, rather than solidarity and consensus. The blueprint of social security, then, gives quite an accurate image of the structure of the wage-earning society, that is to say, a hierarchical society in which each professional group, jealous of its prerogatives, dedicates itself to making them recognized and marking its distance with respect to all the others.

Even if we lament its retreat from the original democratic ideals that were the basis of the system, or even some of its lacunae, we must confess that it conforms perfectly to the logic of the development of the society of wage labor.¹⁵⁶ The hierarchical subordination of the working class mirrors its destitution as the life-blood of the system of wage labor. The achievements of Social Security, then, may be interpreted as the apotheosis of a system of wage labor, in the heart of which non-manual laborers have assumed a more and more preponderant position. They operate under the kind of cover unique to a society that esteems differentiation more than equality. On the one hand, the secular vulnerability of the popular classes seems to have been abolished once and for all: we now have a security net for everyone. But the socialization of incomes also reaches to touch other income groups and, one after another, the majority of the nation.¹⁵⁷ The “transfer of property” whose logic was first imposed at the bottom of the social scale with pensions for workers and peasants and social insurance (cf. chapter 6) is now universalized. From now on the “indirect salary” represents nearly a quarter of income, and its goal is no longer exclusively the preservation of the most vulnerable against the risk of social destitution.¹⁵⁸

Thus, this evolution is at the same time one of promoting wage labor and promoting social property, of which the state is both the initiator and the guarantor. Not only because the administration played a vital role in putting the whole system in place (cf. for example, the role played in France by Pierre Laroque, or in England by Lord Beveridge acting on a governmental mandate). More

deeply, this is because there is a juridical aspect rooted in the very structure of the wage. By the intermediary of the indirect wage, "what matters is less and less what each owns and more and more the rights acquired by the group to which he belongs. Possessing is less important than his collective status as defined by a set of rules."¹⁵⁹

Applying social insurance to everyone thereby submits virtually all members of society to a system for transferring property. This is the last episode in a long struggle between patrimony and labor. One part of the wage (of the value of the labor force) from now on transcends the fluctuations of the economy and becomes *a kind of property for security*, emanating from labor but available for circumstances outside of labor such as sickness, accidents, and old-age. The welfare or "social" State is placed, in this way, at the heart of the system of wage labor. It acts as a third party that plays the role of mediator between the interests of employees and employers: "Direct relations between employers and wage earners are gradually replaced by triangular relationships between employers, wage earners and social institutions."¹⁶⁰

2. The notion of the state that underlies social protection is complementary to the behavior of public power as an *economic actor* after World War II. But what Social Security accomplished was a generalization of social property underway since the end of the nineteenth century, whereas the intervention of the state as economic regulator marks a new innovation.¹⁶¹

In the context of reconstruction, first and foremost, and of modernization, secondarily, the state takes charge of developing society. It institutes an active public policy for regulating the overall economic equilibrium and for encouraging certain areas of investment, as well as supporting consumption by policies intended to fuel a new economic take-off. At the beginning of the 1950's, State investment in basic industries is greater than the private sector.¹⁶² This interventionist-led economy accords a prominent role to nationalized industries and to the public sector. This is further extended by controls on credit markets, prices and wages:

The State enjoys impressive regulatory powers, among other domains, investment, credit, prices, and wages all fall more or less under its control. It can, for example, have an impact upon wages, by fixing on the one hand a general minimum, or on the other hand the scale of treatments in the public function. New public services of statistics or planning will prove extremely useful, all symbolizing the attitudes of a State now inclined to foresee the future in order to better organize it.¹⁶³

All this is to lay the groundwork for a socialization of the conditions of production. In applying these Keynesian principles, the economy is no longer conceived of as a separate sphere. Rather, it is susceptible to the force of interventions—whether they concern prices, wages, investments, aid to certain sectors, etc. The State is the pilot of the economy. It oversees a balance between economic objectives, political objectives and social objectives. Hence we find the circularity of a regulation that weighs on the economy in order to promote the social, and that makes the social the means of priming the economy when it becomes enfeebled.¹⁶⁴ As Clauss Offe has observed, the authority of the State is “infused” into the economy by the direction of global demand, whereas the constraints of the market are “introduced” into the State.¹⁶⁵ The alleged “laws” of the economy are no longer experienced as inevitable. By its policy initiatives, the role that it plays in guaranteeing wages, the select industries that it encourages, the State intervenes not only as producer of goods, but also, one might say, as the producer of consumers, that is to say, of disposable wages.

But with respect to the present thesis, we must mainly concern ourselves with the development of social property. This is primarily a matter of the nationalizations, which as Henri de Man has already observed, culminated in a transfer of authority over property (cf. chapter 6). But it also pertains to the development of public services and collective machinery that, beginning with the Fourth Plan of 1962 (the first to call itself a “Plan for Economic *and Social* Development”), we might say represent incarnations of the social. Whether this is a matter of special provisions favoring certain disadvantaged groups of the population or of public services devoted to collective uses.¹⁶⁶ Pierre Massé at the time made much of the criticism (carried on by others like Jacques Delors) of the “American” model of economic development centered on individual consumption. As the bearers of “a less partial idea of man,” however, this collective machinery put an indivisible property at the disposition of all.¹⁶⁷ To cite a phrase of Victor Hugo, “each has his part of this, but all have it as a whole.”¹⁶⁸

Public services thus increased social property. They represent a kind of social good that is not individually appropriable, nor marketable, but rather serves the common good. As distinct from the logic of patrimony, on the one hand, and the reign of private commodities, on the other, these social goods belong to the same order

as the transfer of property that Social Security was enlarging at that very moment. We see the parallel between the affirmation of a property in social protection, then, and the development of a property in public usage.

We might hesitate to attach a name to this form of governance. Richard Kuisel, sensitive to the retrenchment of these positions with respect to the socializing options that were sketched out in the era of the Liberation, speaks of “neoliberalism.”¹⁶⁹ But if so, this is certainly a form of liberalism that exists at some tension with earlier liberal policies. Jacques Fournier and Nicole Questiaux, for their part, speak of a “social capitalism,” emphasizing both the incontestably capitalistic character of this economy and the efforts to hedge it in by strong social regulations.¹⁷⁰ One might also invoke a French-style Keynesianism, with planning and centralization, as Pierre Rosanvallon has suggested.¹⁷¹ But beyond the specifics of the French case, this form of the State is just as well characterized by Claus Offe: “A multifunctional and heterogeneous collection of political institutions and administrations whose end is to manage the structures of socialization of the capitalist economy.”¹⁷² Beyond the correctives pertaining to the savage workings of the economy, the emphasis here is placed on the processes of socialization that transform the parameters interacting with it in encouraging growth. Here again, the state is at the heart of the dynamic of the development of wage-earning society.

3. The regulative role of the state enjoys a third function, that of governing the relations between the “social partners.” This task is contemporaneous with the emergence of the earliest concerns with the intervention of the social state, but its achievements were for some time extremely limited. Even as late as the beginning of the 1970’s, it had only weakly asserted itself in this arena.¹⁷³ What this involved was treating in a contractual way, at the initiative of or with the intermediation of the state, the divergent interests of employers and wage earners. If the history of labor is often read as the history of resistance to seeing negotiation as a way of managing conflicts, we should mention here two measures whose impact was considerable on the consolidation of the wage-earning condition.¹⁷⁴

The SMIG (Guaranteed Interprofessional Minimum Salary) was established in 1950 and becomes in 1970 the SMIC (Augmented Interprofessional Minimum Salary), indexed both to increases in prices and the progress of economic growth. With respect to the

history of labor, these measures are essential, because they define and give a legal status to the minimal conditions for access to the wage-earning condition. A wage earner is not only a worker, or someone who merits a certain remuneration for a job. With the SMIG, the worker “enters in the wage-earning condition,” one might say, that is to say, he is placed on this continuum of comparable positions, such that we can finally see clearly what is at the base of this condition. The worker enters into a logic of differential integration which, at least in the case of the SMIC, is even tied to the overall growth in production. At least this is a vital minimum that assures one’s participation in economic and social development. This affords the first degree of belonging to a *status* of wage earner, such that the wage is no longer only a means of economic remuneration.

The nationalization of the monthly paycheck represents another major step forward in the consolidation of the wage-earning condition for those who find themselves placed at the bottom of the scale of jobs. This provision, we have already mentioned, made the status of the majority of hourly workers identical with that of salaried employees, and the wage ceased to be payment for a specific and regular task and became instead a global allocation assigned to an individual. But, as an additional contribution to the integration of the worker, the monthly salary, due to the manner in which it was imposed, exemplifies the role played by the state in the development of contractual policies. It was first proposed by the government and coldly received at the time both by management, who feared having to pay the costs of it, and by the workers unions, scornful of a measure that had often served as part of patronal strategies for introducing cleavages within the heart of the workers.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, agreements for monthly salaries, negotiated branch by branch beginning in May, 1970, were rapidly imposed. Notwithstanding eventual second thoughts on the part of the electorate—the candidate Pompidou had included the monthly salary program in his presidential platform—this was an incontestable success for the state in its desire to promote social compromises between antagonistic groups.¹⁷⁶

In addition to these provisions affecting the structure of the professions and the right to labor, we must add efforts intended to share the fruits of economic expansion. The directive addressed by the prime minister for the preparation of the Fifth Plan demanded in January 1965 “to clarify what might be [...] in reality the growth of

great masses of revenues, wages, profits, social provisions and other individual revenues in order to encourage a large accession of all to the fruits of expansion, even while reducing inequalities.”¹⁷⁷ Attempts to develop a “revenue policy” took place in this context and were launched after the major mining strike of 1963. Pierre Massé proposed in January 1964 that on the occasion of the preparation of each plan the Commissariat will be entrusted with:

Paralleling the usual large-scale planning, to present a suggestive program of value. This latter would emphasize the orientations for large masses of revenues, notably wages, social benefits, agricultural revenues and profits, and also the conditions of the balance between savings and investment, on the one hand, and receipts and public expenditures, on the other...From these annual orientations the government could recommend a progressive rate for each revenue category.¹⁷⁸

The revenue policy will never see the light of day, at least in this form. The distribution of wages between 1950 and 1975 shows that disparities remain almost constant, even with a tendency to widen (a difference of 3.3 percent between upper management and workers in 1950, and 3.7 percent in 1975).¹⁷⁹ Can one then speak of a redistribution of the fruits of growth? Yes, perhaps, but only if one does not understand by this the reduction of inequalities. Overall, the evolution of wages follows that of productivity, and all categories have benefited from it, but without the case of hierarchies being tightened as a result of it. However, if this progression was made possible by the results of growth, it was not automatically the effect of it. Economic development took place within juridical structures of legislation. In addition, when the economic dynamic begins to slow down, the consistency of this system blunts the initial effects of the crisis. The interprofessional agreement signed October 14, 1974 guaranteed unemployment insurance for a total of 90 percent of the gross salary for the first year, whereas partial unemployment is paid by the business with the support of public funds.¹⁸⁰ Provisions for a parity of guarantees, calling for the responsibility of the state, still allowed one to imagine that a quasi-right to work existed, even at the very moment when economic conditions began to worsen.

Thus we can see a powerful synergy between economic growth and its corollary, virtually full employment, and the development of the right to work and social protections. Wage-earning society seemed destined to follow an ascendant trajectory that, at the same time, would guarantee collective wealth and promote a better redistribution of opportunities and security. To avoid belaboring this discus-

sion and to keep to the main line of the argument, I will confine myself to protections directly linked to labor. However, the same link between economic development and statist regulation played itself out in the domains of education, public health, urban planning, family policy, etc. In general, the whole energy of salaried society seemed focused on absorbing the *deficit of integration* that distinguished the beginnings of industrial society. This was to be accomplished by increasing consumption, access to property or decent housing, increased participation in culture and recreation, advances toward achieving a greater equality of opportunity, consolidation of the right to work, the extension of social services, the amelioration of pockets of poverty, etc. For a brief and happy moment the social question seemed to have been resolved by the faith in unlimited progress.

It is this trajectory of unlimited economic growth that was so rudely shattered. Who today could imagine that we are all moving toward an open and more welcoming society, or working to reduce inequalities and maximize social protections? The very idea of progress itself has seemingly been abandoned.

Notes

1. “Central” is to be understood here with respect to industrial society. One should not forget that France is still at the onset of the nineteenth century, and for a long time afterward still a predominantly rural society. An indirect, but essential response to the social question created by industrialization consists in restraining it. Richard Kuisel describes as “equilibrated liberalism” these strategies that consists in distrust towards the workers of industry, urban growth, an instruction too general and too abstract which runs the risk of “uprooting” the people, and on the other hand, which grants support to categories that play a stabilizing role in social equilibrium: independent workers, small entrepreneurs, small peasants above all. “A gradual and balanced growth, where all the sectors of economy progress at the same pace without the big ones being able to eclipse the small ones, or the cities being able to empty the countryside – this was the ideal image of national prosperity.” (Richard Kuisel, *le Capitalisme et l’Etat en France*, op. cit., p. 72). *Small is beautiful*. This socio-economic context contrasts with the process I am trying to delineate here. It accounts for the slowness with which industrialization imposed itself on French society. In fact, France was only converted to “industrialism” after the end of the Second World War, some decades before its collapse.
2. I am using here the concept of salaried society as defined by Michel Aglietta and Anton Bender, *les Métamorphoses de la société salariale*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1984, and I propose to show in this chapter its sociological implication.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
4. R. Salais, *la Formation du chômage comme catégorie: le moment des années 30*, op. cit., p. 342.
5. Obviously, this profile does not correspond to all, or even the majority of the workers at the onset of industrialization in the first half of the twentieth century (at

this time, artisans, “proto-industry,” and partial salaried workers who get their income from another economic activity, etc, play a predominant role). But it represents the nucleus of what became the dominant wage-earning workforce in industrial society, represented by the workers of large-scale industry.

6. The expression is employed to characterize the mobility of the workers of first industrial conglomerates by S. Pollard, *The Genesis of Human Management*, London, 1965, p. 161.
7. See for example R. Boyer, *la Théorie de la régulation: une analyse critique*, Paris, La Découverte, 1987.
8. When salaried relations are reduced to modern salaried relations, which are “Fordist,” one confuses the methodological conditions necessary to come to a rigorous definition of salaried relations and the socio-anthropological characteristics of actual salaried situations, which are diverse (see in *Genèse*, nr. 9, 1991, a variety of viewpoints on this question). I maintain that we are entitled to speak of salaried situations not only at the beginnings of industrialization, before the “Fordist” relation becomes established, but in the “pre-industrial” stage as well (see chapter 3), under the condition that it not be confused with “Fordist” salaried relations. But the purist position is impossible to maintain vigorously, even in modern times, because the strictly “Fordist” relations, were always in the minority, even at the pinnacle of industrialist society (See M. Verret, *le Travail ouvrier*, Paris, A. Colin, 1982, p. 34, which evaluates for the end of the 1970s at about 8 percent the rate of workers who truly work on the assembly line, and at 32 percent the rate of those who work at automated machines).
9. C. Topalov, “Une révolution dans les représentations du travail. L’Emergence de la catégorie statistique de “population active” en France, en Grande-Bretagne et aux Etats-Unis,” 1993, p. 24, and *Naissance du chômeur, 1880-1910*, op. cit.
10. W. Beveridge, *Royal Commission on Poor Law and Relief Distress*, Appendix V8, House of Commons, 1910, cited in C. Topalov, “Invention du chômage et politiques sociales au début du siècle,” *les Temps modernes*, nr. 496-497, Nov.-Dec 1987. It’s Beveridge’s work published at that time, *Unemployment, A Problem of Industry*, London, 1909, which begins to make known the future blueprint of English Social Security.
11. S. and B. Webb, *The Prevention of Destitution*, op. cit. There is unanimity on this point among the English social reformers. See P. Allen, *The Unemployed, a National Question*, London, 1906, and a synthetic presentation of the “policies of decasualization” – which could be translated as all the measures taken to end temporary employment in order to create a true labor market – in M. Mansfield, “Labor Exchange and the Labor Reserve in Turn of the Century Social Reform,” *Journal of Social Policy*, 21, 4, Cambridge University Press, 1992.
12. In 1911 are counted 47 percent of salaried workers in the active population of France, with a ration of 3 employers for 7 salaried workers, whereas the proportion of salaried workers in Britain is approximately 90 percent (See B. Gibaud, *De la mutualité à la Sécurité sociale*, op. cit., p. 54).
13. See B. Motez, *Systèmes de salaire et politiques patronales*, Paris, Editions du CNRS, 1967. The *tacheron* or the cashier is paid by the patron for the execution of a task, and compensates the workers whom he employed himself. This practice, very unpopular with the workers, is abolished in 1848, but reinstalled soon afterwards and defended by liberals, such as Leroy-Beaulieu, who see there a double advantage: to ensure a close supervision of the workers by the *tacheron*, and to allow a promotion of a sort of elite of small entrepreneurs based on the salaried workers (see P. Leroy-Beaulieu, *Traité théorique et pratique d’économie politique*, t. II, p. 494-495).

14. See F. Pelloutier, *Histoire des bourses du travail*, Paris, 1902, and Jacques Julliard, *Fernand Pelloutier et les origines du syndicalisme d'action directe*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1971.
15. L. Bourgeois, "Discours à la Conférence internationale sur le chômage," Paris, September 10th, 1910, in *Politique de la prévoyance sociale*, op. cit., p. 279.
16. L. Bourgeois, "Le ministère du Travail," speech held at the mutualist Congress of Normandy at Caen, on July 17th, 1912, in *Politique de la prévoyance sociale*, op. cit., t. II, p. 206 sq. Bourgeois favors also a control of apprenticeship to improve qualification and "the action of the state as a moderator in the execution of large-scale public works" (p. 207).
17. See J. -A. Tournerie, *le Ministère du Travail, origines et premiers développements*, op. cit.
18. See J. Donzelot, P. Estèbe, *l'Etat animateur*, Paris, Editions Esprit, 1994, introduction.
19. See M. Perrot, "La fin des vagabonds," *l'Histoire*, Nr. 3 July-August, 1978.
20. For a sample of this literature, which preaches a sheer crusade against vagabondage, see doctor A. Pagnier, *Un déchet social: le vagabond*, Paris, 1910.
21. R. Salais, "La formation du chômage comme catégorie," loc. cit., p. 325.
22. C. Dupin, report to the Chambre des pairs, June 27th, 1847, cited in L. Murard, P. Zylberman, "Le petit travailleur infatigable," *Recherche* nr. 23, November, 1976, p. 7. One could find precedent to a quasi "perfect" organization of factory discipline before the introduction of sophisticated machinery and before the assembly line. Thus, the production of pottery founded in England in 1770 by Josiah Wedgwood was transmitted to posterity as a model of strict labor organization. It is not mechanized, however, but associated with manual labor at the heart of the enterprise and a policy of workers' moralization leaning on the Methodist Church and a Society for the suppression of vices, animated by the patron. See N. McKendrick, "Josiah Wedgwood and Factory Discipline," in D. S. Landes, *The Rise of Capitalism*, op. cit. One could also reveal forms of task division which anticipate work at the assembly line, without necessarily using machinery. Thus the "tablee": an object circulates from hand to hand around a table and each worker adds to it a piece, until assembly is complete (see B. Dorey, *le Taylorisme, une folie rationnelle*, Paris, Dunod, 1981, p. 342 et seq.).
23. See B. Coriat, *l'Atelier et le chronomètre*, Paris, Christian Bourgeois, 1979. There are several early French translations of F. W. Taylor, thus *Etudes sur l'organisation du travail dans les usines* (412 p.) Anger, 1907. For an actualization of questions asked by Taylorism today, see the collective works under direction of Maurice de Montmollin and Olivier Pastré, *le Taylorisme*, Paris, La Découverte, 1984.
24. See A. Perdiguier, *Mémoires d'un compagnon*, Paris, reedition Maspero, 1977.
25. See G. Noiriel, *les Ouvriers dans la société française*, op. cit.
26. See M. Perrot, "La classe ouvrière au temps de Jaurès," in *Jaurès et la classe ouvrière*. Paris, Editions ouvrières, 1981. On the role played by the Great War in this respect, see Patrick Fridenson (ed.), *l'Autre Front*, Paris, *Cahiers du mouvement social*, 2, 1982.
27. On the modalities of the implementation of Taylorism at the Renault factories and the problems it led to, see P. Fridenson, *Histoire des usines Renault*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1982.
28. See A. Moutet, "Patrons de progrès ou patrons de combat? La politique de rationalisation de l'industrie française au lendemain de la Première Guerre mondiale," in *Le soldat du travail*, special issue 32-33, *Recherche*, September 1978.
29. The expression is due to Michel Aglietta in *Régulation et crises du capitalisme, l'expérience des Etats-Unis*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1976, p. 160.
30. He even considers the possibility of "diminishing the cost price in such proportions that our interior and exterior markets be considerably enlarged. It will thus be

possible to pay higher wages and decrease the hours of work, at the same time improving work conditions and comfort" (*la Direction scientifique des entreprises*, op. cit., p. 23).

31. See M. Aglietta, *Régulation et crises du capitalisme*, Paris, ed. Marabout, p. 23, French translation of Henry Ford's work: *My Life, My Work; Ma vie et mon oeuvre*, Paris. On the concrete organization of work at the factory and the workers' reactions, see the testimony of a veteran worker with Ford, H. Beynon, *Working for Ford*, Penguin Books, 1973.
32. A. Merrheim, "La methode Taylor," *la Vie ouvrière*, March 1913, p. 305, cited in J. Julliard, *Autonomie ouvrière. Etudes sur le syndicalisme d'action directe*, op. cit., p. 61. In this article, Merrheim attacks not only Taylor's method but also its "falsification" by the French patronate. Another significant declaration of the other great syndicalist of that epoch, Victor Griffuelhes: "We demand that the French patronate be similar to American patronate and thus, our industrial and commercial activity increasing, the result for us is security, a certainty which, elevating us materially, trains us for struggle, facilitated by the need of a workforce" ("L'inferiorité des capitalistes français," *le Mouvement social*, dec. 1910, cited *ibid.*, p. 55).
33. B. Coriat, *l'Atelier et le chronomètre*, op. cit., chapter IV.
34. See R. Trempe, *les Mineurs de Carnaux*, op. cit., which shows the stubborn resistance of miners to ensure a work schedule compatible with agricultural activities.
35. H. Ford, *Ma vie et mon oeuvre*, op. cit., p. 168.
36. M. Aglietta, *Regulation et crises du capitalisme*, op. cit., p. 130.
37. The fact that the first French law of compulsory retirement-insurance was the law dating from 1910 on workers' and peasant's retirement, seems to contradict this privileged clinging to social protection at the conditions of industrial workers. But as Henri Hatzfeld notes (*Du pauperisme a la Sécurité sociale*, op. cit.), this equal treatment of workers and peasants corresponded to a political demand in "radical" France, which cherished its peasants and wanted above all to avoid destabilization of the countryside and an ensuing rural exodus. These good intentions were ill compensated. The Law of 1910 on retirement proved to be inapplicable in the countryside, because of the difficulty of identifying there "pure" salaried workers, and strong resistance from the side of the employers to comply with an injunction perceived as an inadmissible state intrusion into "paternal" forms of work relations. The peasant salaried force represents a condition too different from that of industrial salaried workforce to be treated on equal footing with it.
38. L. Duguit, *le Droit social, le droit individuel et la transformation de l'Etat*, op. cit., p.4.
39. *Ibid.*, p, 8.
40. J. Le Goff, *Du silence à la parole*, op. cit., p. 112. See also F. Sellier, *la Confrontation sociale en France, 1936-1987*, op. cit.
41. L. Duguit, *les Transformations generales du droit privé*, Paris, 1920, p. 135, cited in J. Le Goff, *Du silence à la parole*, op. cit., p. 106.
42. For an analysis of the socio-historical context which accounts for this patronal and syndical bad will, and on the differences between France and Germany and Great Britain, see F. Sellier, *la Confrontation sociale en France*, op. cit. p. 1 and 2. On the measures taken during the First World War and their being put into question again once peace was regained, see M. Fine, "Guerre et reformisme en France, 1914-1918," in *le Soldat du travail*, op. cit.
43. Decree from September 13th, 1900. "There is a first-order interest in establishing between the patronate and the workers good relations which permit a timely exchange of necessary explanations and settling of certain difficulties.... Such practices can only help acclimatize the news mores one would wish in honor. By estab-

- lishing them, the government of the Republic remains faithful to its role of pacification and arbitration” (cited in J. Le Goff, *Du silence à la parole*, op. cit., p. 102). But the decree was never applied.
44. In 1936, 1123 collective conventions are signed, and 3064 in 1937. See A. Touraine, *la Civilisation industrielle*, t. IV, L. H. Parias, *Histoire générale du travail*, Paris, Nouvelle Librairie de France, 1961, p. 172-173.
 45. See in S. Weil, *la Condition ouvrière*, Paris, Gallimard, 1951 (letter to Auguste Deboeuf, p. 188-190), testimonials and reactions from the patronate. The Matignon accords were seen by the majority of the patronate as a diktat to which they were to return incessantly.
 46. Cited in H. Noguères, *la Vie quotidienne en France au moment du Front populaire*, Paris, Hachette, 1977, p. 131.
 47. It is Maurice Thorez’s response in a discourse of June 11th, 1936, which gives the key to the much-cited phrase “One must know how to end a strike.” One must know how to end a strike as soon as satisfaction has been obtained. One must even consent to compromise when not all one’s claims have been satisfied, provided the essentials have been settled. Not everything is possible” (cited *ibid.*, p. 131); on the positions of the Communist Party as to the will of the CGT and certain tendencies of the Socialist Party to promote structural reforms such as nationalizations and planned economy, see R. F. Kuisel, *le Capitalisme et l’Etat en France*, op. cit., chapter IV.
 48. See H. Hauser, *Ouvrier du temps jadis*, op. cit.
 49. The syndicate’s insistence on their demand to reduce work hours is driven by two motives: to help the workers retrieve their dignity by ceasing continuous, debilitating work; and to struggle against unemployment by sharing work between a larger number of employees.
 50. The Matignon accords granted an immediate increase of salaries from 7 to 15 percent. Between 1926 and 1939, the real salary (price increase at consumption and inflation deducted) of a qualified Parisian worker progressed by approximately 60 percent. See F. Sellier, *les Salariés en France*, Paris, PUF, 1979, p. 67.
 51. See H. Noguères, *la Vie quotidienne en France au temps du Front populaire*, op. cit., who speaks of “cultural revolution” and describes at the same time the enthusiasm of the first departures for holidays and the reactions of the well-thinking press before the “pleasure trains” organized by Leo Lagrange to get the workers and their families to the seaside. Subtle contempt on the part of *Figaro*’s editor: “Later, there was partying on the stones of the Historical Promenade [the English Promenade at Nice], and there was frolicking in water... The multiplication of red trains on the Cote d’Azur is progressing. And the demultiplication of blue trains as well” (p. 156).
 52. Cited in H. Noguères, *la Vie populaire en France au temps du Front populaire*, op. cit., p. 188. For an expose of Leo Lagrange’s collective works, — he was “sub-secretary of State in Sports and Leisure” — see J. -L. Chappat, *les Chemins de l’espoir: combats de Leo Lagrange*, Paris, Editions des federations Leo-Lagrange.
 53. The first factory occupations occur at the metallurgical and aeronautical factories, that is, in the most “modern” industrial sites.” On the changes that occurred in the workers’ movement since the beginning of the 1930s, which put at the forefront these workers of the large-scale industries at the expense of the sectors attached to artisanal traditions and State agents, see G. Noiriol, *les Ouvriers dans la société française*, op. cit., chapter 5. On the transformations that occurred within the CGT itself (unified in 1935), see A. Prost, *la CGT a l’époque du Front populaire, 1934-1939*, Paris, A. Colin, 1964.
 54. See G. Friedmann, *le Travail en miettes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1963.
 55. S. Weil, *la Condition ouvrière*, op. cit., p. 242.

56. A. Touraine, *la Conscience ouvrière, Le Seuil*, 1966, p. 242.
57. S. Weil, *la Condition ouvrière*, op. cit., p. 34.
58. In 1936, the 350 largest enterprises employ 900,000 workers (H. Noguères, *la Vie quotidienne au temps du Front populaire*, op. cit., p. 97). The establishments with more than 500 salaried workers employ about a third of the 5.5 millions of salaried workers in industry (see F. Sellier, *les Salariaés en France*, Paris, PUF, 1975).
59. M. Halbwachs, *la Classe ouvrière et les niveaux de vie*, Paris, 1912, p. 121 and p. 118.
60. F. Simiand, *le Salaire, l'Evolution sociale et la monnaie*, 3 volumes Paris, 1932.
61. For a prototype of this literature, see A. Stil, *le Mot mineur, camarade*, Paris, 1949.
62. R. Hoggart, *la Culture su pauvre, trad. fr.* Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1970.
63. R. Boyer, "Les salaires en longue période," *Economie et statistiques*, nr. 103, September 1978, p. 45. It is only at the end of the 1950s that the part of food in worker's budgets is below 50 percent.
64. M. Halbwachs, *la Classe ouvrière et les niveaux de vie*, op. cit., see T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, London, 1924.
65. See J. -P. Flamand, *Loger le peuple. Essai sur l'histoire du logement social*, Paris, La Decouverte, 1989.
66. L. Haudeville, *Pour une civilisation de l'habitat*, Paris, Editions ouvrières, 1969.
67. See A. Prost, *Histoire de l'enseignement en France, 1800-1967*, Paris, A. Colin, 1968.
68. Since M. Barrès, *les Déracinés*, Paris, 1897.
69. See R. Salais "La formation du chômage comme categorie," loc. cit. For an autobiographical testimonial on the worker's existence, see R. Michaud, *J'avais vingt ans*, Paris, Editions syndicalistes, 1967, which shows the permanence of professional mobility and of the "unstable" character of employer-employee relations.
70. See J. -J. Carré, P. Dubois, E. Malinvaud, *la Croissance française*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1972. The unemployed represent about 8.5 percent of the salaried workers, and 4.5 percent of active population (F. Sellier, *les Salariaés en France*, Paris, PUF, 1979, p. 78).
71. See A. Prost "Jalons pour une histoire des retraites et des retraites," loc. cit.
72. A.-M. Guillemard, *le Declin du social*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1986.
73. A. Touraine, *la Conscience ouvrière*, op. cit., p. 215.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 353.
75. See G. Noiriel, *les Ouvrières dans la société française*, op. cit., chapter VI.
76. Cited in P. Reynaud, *Mémoires*, t. II, Paris, Flammarion, 1963, p. 51.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
78. I am borrowing this term from Luc Boltanski, *les Cadres, la formation d'un groupe social*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1982, p. 152, which qualifies thus the dominant role played by a social group in the reorganization of a professional field. One could say that the salaried workers first played this role for the structuring of the salaried employees, before being replaced by middle class salaried employees.
79. F. Simiand, *le Salaire, l'evolution sociale et la monnaie*, op. cit., t. I, p. 151. This is why the compensation of other forms of labor must be designated by different names: "appointments," "treatment," "emoluments," "indemnizations," etc, but not "salaries."
80. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
83. One generally sets the date at 1973 for the "crisis" which began the degradation of the salaried worker's condition. But, apart the fact that the first effects are not being felt right away (thus, unemployment does not increase significantly before 1976), 1975 represents a convenient date because many statistical investigations mark it as

- a key year. One could also note that in 1975 the working population in France reaches its peak. It will decrease after that in regular intervals.
84. Main sources used here, as well as (except where a mention to the contrary is made) in the following pages: L. Thevonot, "Les catégories sociales en 1975. L'extension du salariat," *Economie et statistiques*, Nr. 91, July-August 1977; C. Baudelot, A. Lebaupin, "Les salaires de 1950 à 1975," *Economie et statistiques*, Nr. 113, July-August 1979; F. Sellier, *les Salariés en France*, Paris, PUF, 1979; M. Verret, *le Travail ouvrier*, Paris, A. Colin, 1988, F. Sellier, "Les salariés, croissance et diversité," and M. Verret, "Classe ouvrière, conscience ouvrière," in J. -D. Reynaud, Y. Graffmeyer, *Français, qui êtes-vous?*, Paris, La Documentation française, 1981. For lack of homogeneous sources, the date of reference for the 1930s can vary from 1931 to 1936, but the effects of the disparity are minimal for the general argumentation.
 85. The growth of industrial wage labor is based on two main sources: the reduction of independent professions and rural migration. On the last point, see F. Sellier, *les Salariés en France*, op. cit., p. 10 sq., who insists on a strong resistance of peasantry to the attraction of the city and industry (in 1946, the active agricultural population is practically as numerous as in 1866). Thus it is the agricultural workers rather than exploiters, who first leave the countryside, children rather than adults, but the children of salaried workers rather than those of exploiters. For these agricultural workers and their children, the accession to the working class represented a relative social promotion. But when this recruitment is exhausted the condition of the worker becomes the last of all: that is where people remain who cannot "get up," or where one falls by descending mobility.
 86. The employed world is touched by a rationalization of labor, especially after the First World War: office work is being mechanized (the typewriter appears at the start of the century), specialized, collectivized and also feminized, which always marks a great loss in social status. Like many workers, the employee at large retail stores or factory offices loses the polyvalence which was part of the classical employee like the clerk or notary, a kind of underling to his employer.
 87. Abbé J. Lecordier, *les Classes moyennes en marche*, Paris, 1950, p. 382, cited by L. Boltanski, *les Cadres*, op. cit., p. 101, which notes the "retarded" character of this text from 1950, presenting the same tonality as the literature of the 1930s that aimed to justify the existence of a "middle class." (Thus A. Desquerat, *Classes moyennes françaises, crise, programme, organisation*, Paris, 1939.)
 88. Cited by L. Boltanski, *les Cadres*, op. cit., p. 107.
 89. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
 90. *Ibid.*, p. 239 et seq.
 91. The distinction between primary (agricultural), secondary (industrial), and tertiary (services) activities was introduced by C. Clark, *The Conditions of Economic Progress*, London, Macmillan, 1940, and popularized in France by Jean Fourastié's work. The economic and social development is expressed in the development of tertiary activities. But apart from the commercial tertiary and the administrative tertiary, one can identify an "industrial tertiary" which is gaining importance. These are employment categories of the industrial sector which are not directly productive, like the typists, accountants, etc.
 92. M. Collinet, *l'Ouvrier français, essai sur la condition ouvrière*, Paris, Editions ouvrière, 1951, seconde part, chapter IV.
 93. In fact, the theme emerges in the United States in the 1960s and finds its audience in France in the 1970s, see M. J. Piore, "On the Job Training in the Dual Labor Market," in A. R. Weber, *Public and Private Manpower Policies*, Madison, 1969, and M. J. Piore, "Dualism in the Labor Market," *Revue économique*, Nr. 1, 1978.

94. I am adopting E. P. Thompson's central thesis according to which a social class is not only a "data" or a collection of empirical data. It is "fabricated" through a collective dynamic which is forged in the conflict (See E. P. Thomson, *la Formation de la classe ouvrière anglaise*, op. cit.)
95. A. -F. Molin , Volkoff, "Les conditions de travail des ouvri re et des ouvri res," *Economie et statistiques*, Nr. 118, January 1980. This change is connected to the decline of the most traditional of worker's labor. Thus, the miners, who numbered 500,000 in 1930, were less than 100,000 in 1975; textile workers passed from 1.5 million to 200,000 in the same period (see F. Sellier, "Les salari s: croissance et diversit ," loc. cit., p. 48).
96. See P. Lantz, "Travail: concept ou notion multidimensionnelle," *Futur anterieur*, Nr. 10, 1991/92.
97. M. Halbwachs, *la Classe ouvri re et les niveaux de vie*, op. cit., p. 118, and p. XVII.
98. H. Arendt, in *La Condition de l'homme moderne*, op. cit., chapter III, criticizes the confusion of labor and work, which would have characterized the reflection on work in the modern era, not only according to Marx, but already with Locke and Adam Smith. But one could add that Hannah Arendt can produce this criticism in the middle of the twentieth century, after two centuries of transformation of the conception of industrial work as it emerged at the onset of industrialization.
99. *Arguments*, "Qu'est-ce que la classe ouvri re fran aise," special issue, January-February-March 1959, p. 33. The debate restarts with the emergence of the theme of the "new working class," see the special issue of the *Revue fran aise des sciences politiques*, Volume XXII, Nr. 3, June 1972, in particular J.-D. Reynaud's article "La nouvelle classe ouvri re, la technologie et l'histoire."
100. See Serge Mallet, *la Nouvelle Classe ouvri re*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1966.
101. G. Dupeux, *la Soci t  fran aise*, Paris, A. Colin, 1964. The literature on this theme of the march towards abundance and the apotheosis of middle classes is plethoric. One could take Jean Fourasti 's work, and in particular the *Trente Glorieuses*, Paris, Fayard, 1979, for its better orchestration.
102. A Study of the 1970s evaluates at 5 percent the proportion of workers of the industry that correspond to this profile (see P. d'Hugues, G. Petit, F. Rerat, "Les emplois industriels. Nature. Formation. Recrutement," *Cahiers du Centre d' tudes de l'emploi*, Nr. 4, 1973).
103. S. Weil, in the report she addressed to the CGT after the 1936 strikes, entitles "Remarques sur les enseignements   tirer des conflits du Nord," in *la Condition ouvri re*, op. cit.
104. This interpretation does not show Serge Mallet's thought, who presented himself in his initial method not like that of a "man of science objectively posing of awareness, but that of a militant of the worker's movement, more precisely of the syndical movement" (*la Nouvelle Classe ouvri re*, op. cit., p. 15). One can only add that Mallet's bet on the revolutionary tropism of these new engaged agents in the process of production gained widespread acclaim.
105. Thus, Dupeux already speaks of "depolitization," of "decline of the revolutionary myth," and of "decline of political participation" of the workers (*la Soci t  fran aise*, op. cit., p. 252).
106. A. Ligneux, J. Lignon, *l'Ouvrier d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, Gonthier, 1960, J.-M. Rainville, *Condition ouvri re et integration sociale*, Paris, Editions ouvri res, 1967; G. Adam, F. Bon, J. Capdevielle, R. Moureau, *l'Ouvri r fran ais en 1970*, Paris, A. Colin, 1970. The synthesis of J. H. Goldhorpe, D. Lockwood, F. Bechhofer, J. Platt, *The Affluent Work Series*, 3 volumes, Cambridge University Press, 1968-1969, did not have its equivalent in France. Here, however, is one of the work's major conclusions, inasmuch as the "worker of abundance" can be misinterpreted:

“The integration into the middle classes is not a process under way at the moment, neither is it a desired objective for the bulk of the working class. . . . We have only seen that an increase in salaries, the improvement of working conditions, the application of more forthcoming and more liberal employment policies, do not fundamentally modify the class situation of the industrial worker within contemporary society” (abridged French edition, *l’Ouvrier de l’abondance*, Le Seuil, 1972, p. 210).

107. One of the most important changes is doubtlessly the proportion of immigrants and women in the toughest and least valued jobs. But the development of new forms of industrial organization did not abolish the constraints or the hardship of many tasks, in particular at the assembly lines. One could compare two testimonials, forty years between them, whose authors present the same characteristic of having worked at a factory without being laborers. S. Weil, *la Condition ouvrière*, op. cit., and R. Linhart, *l’Etabli*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1977.
108. A. Ligneux, J. Lignon, *l’Ouvrier d’aujourd’hui*, op. cit., p. 26. Its an excerpt of an interview of a worker among others of the same status, in which the workers retake their perception which is reflected on them by their social status: the worker “is a pear,” “a poor devil,” “a red lantern,” etc.
109. J.-M. Rainville, *Condition ouvrière et integration sociale*, op. cit., p. 15.
110. J. Fourastié, *les Trente Glorieuses*, op. cit., p. 247.
111. To see where the fascination for growth curves can lead, we will read today, with amusement or irritation, *la Civilization de 1905*, by Jean Fourastié, Paris, PUF, 1970.
112. A minority of strikers in 1936 in spite of the extent of the movement: less than 2 millions for 7 million salaried workers; an essentially Parisian phenomenon- June 1848 and the Commune. Moreover: the indifferent ones and the “yellow” were workers as much as the syndicalists and the militants, and in June 1848 the most combative units of the Guard who triumphed over the Faubourg Saint-Antoine were composed of young workers. At the same time, however, June 1848, the Commune of Paris, 1936, lived in the memory of an entire class.
113. M. Perrot, *Jeunesse de la grève*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1984.
114. The question of how to know when a utopia dies makes no sense, since utopia is outside history (thus, for the Indians of Mexico, Zapata is not dead). The difficult question is that of knowing when a utopia does not leave its mark on history. Thus the reference to the Revolution put an aura of absolute on the most basic reformist enterprises. Since when is this no longer the case?
115. See for instance J.-P. Gaudemar: *Mobilité du travail et accumulation de capital*, Paris, Maspero, 1976, which expresses the consensus of “leftist” currents at the beginning of the 1970s. It is a displacement analogous to that which had occurred ten years earlier on the “new working class,” and it can be interpreted as a new step in the process of depriving the “classical” working class of its revolutionary role, included in the eyes of the ideologues, who take themselves to be the heirs of nineteenth century revolutionary prophetism. In fact, immigrant workers were the agents of the hardest social struggles of the 1970s. From the side of the “native” working class, the Lip conflict is doubtlessly the last one to mobilize the alternative potential of the workers’ movement (see P. Lantz, “Lip et l’utopie,” *Politique d’aujourd’hui*, Nr. 11-12, November-December 1980). But the conflict of Lip can also be interpreted as one of the last struggles of the growth period that followed the Second World War. As the General Assembly declares solemnly on October 12, 1973: “We will accept no dismissals, no regrouping, no dismantling” (loc. cit., p. 101). Today such declarations would be unthinkable.
116. We know that this is the name given by Jacques Chaban-Delmas to his political program corresponding to a period of strong economical expansion and will to “de-block” from the part of post-1968 society.

117. "To eliminate from the middle classes salaried employees and a large number of functionaries, would mean to reduce these to a caricature of bourgeoisie" (P. Bleton, *les Hommes des temps qui viennent*, Paris, Editions ouvrières, 1956, p. 230).
118. See J. Donzelot, "D'une modernisation à l'autre," *Esprit*, 1986, August-September 1986, and M. Winock, *La République se meurt*, Paris, Florio, 1985. One must cite the description given by this author of the defenders of a pre-capitalist societal organization: "In the other camp was blooming the fortune of village life, petty merchants, the bistrotts making Mr. Paul Ricard's fortune, nineteenth-century France, radical, protectionist, pavillonnary, with its mass of notaries, functionaries, ushers, traditionalist clergy, boulists wearing Basque berets, bad dogs, walls covered with remains of bottles, active members of the Association Guillaume-Budé, cooks of raw materials, colonial administrators, ancient brothel owners, to which were added Marshal Pétain's faithful crowd." I add here that in this "camp," there were few or no salaried workers.
119. Inasmuch as women remain a minority in the high salary echelons, for instance, 3.8 percent of engineers in 1962 and 4 percent in 1975, 12 percent of superior administrative employees in 1962 and 17.3 percent in 1975 (L. Boltanski, *les Cadres*, op. cit.).
120. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
121. Certain liberal professions can belong to the same movement, but they are very marginal within this salary configuration. There are 172,000 members of liberal professions in 1975, against, 1,270,000 superior employees and 2,764,000 middle-wage employees (see L. Thevenot, "Les catégories sociales en 1975," loc. cit.)
122. H. Mendras, *la Seconde Révolution française*, Paris, Gallimard, 1988.
123. A 1977 investigation on "the mean income of the patrimony according to socio-professional category of the household" (in J.-D. Reynaud, Y. Graffmeyer, *Français, qui êtes-vous?* op. cit., graphique 5 p. 136) shows that the categories of "superior employees" and "middle-waged employees," which include most of these new salaried layers, dispose of an income four times less than that of the "industrials and merchants" and the "liberal professions," significantly lower than that of "agriculturers," and even twice as low as that of the "artisans and small merchants." Another investigation (*ibid.*, graphique 3 p. 133) shows that there are enormous disparities in the distribution of wealth: 10 percent of the most fortunate households possess 54 percent of it, and the 10 percent of the least fortunate have 0.03 percent. On the other hand, the curves compared to the distribution of income and patrimony show that there can be very high income associated with rather low patrimony.
124. Between 1954 and 1975, the proportion of jobs in the tertiary sector increases from 38 percent to 51 percent, see M. Maruani, E. Reynaud, *Sociologie de l'emploi*, Paris, La Découverte, 1993, p. 49.
125. In 1977, principal lodgings and secondary residences represent 37.8 percent of national French assets (see J.-D. Reynaud, Y. Graffmeyer, *Français, qui êtes-vous?* op. cit., graphique 3, p. 133). We know that loaning facilities for access to property depend largely on the professional profile of the borrowers and on their capacity to budget for the future by betting in advance on the stability and progress of salaried revenues, whence the possibility for the workers themselves to accede to property: in 1973, 38 percent among them owned their lodgings (see M. Verret, J. Creusen, *l'Espace ouvrier*, Paris, A. Colin, 1979, p. 114).
126. "Thus, traditional bourgeoisie, connected to the possession of things, evolves in a neo-bourgeoisie without capital, which is fattened by its basis of the tertiary sector. Briefly, inherited property tends to cede to merited property (inasmuch as a diploma sanctions merit). But what is more personal than such a property? (A. Piettre, "La

- propriété héritée ou méritée,” *le Monde*, January 1978, cited by P. Bourdieu, *la Noblesse d’Etat*, op. cit., p. 479).
127. P. Bourdieu, *la Noblesse d’Etat*, op. cit., p. 480.
128. Ibid., p. 278. See also J. Marchal, J. Lecaillon, *la Répartition du revenu national*, Paris, Editions Genin, first part, t. I, which show that the advantages in nature, premiums and emoluments which benefit superior employees of high level, represent a type of non-salarial remuneration which is in effect a participation in the company’s profits.
129. See Pierre Bourdieu’s analyses in *la Distinction, critique du jugement social*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1979.
130. G. Simmel, *Sociologie et épistémologie*, trad. fr. Paris, PUF, 1981, p. 200.
131. I prefer the term “block” to that of class, not for consensus-ideological reasons (there is no class so there is no conflict, etc.), but because a class, in the full sense of the word, only exist when it participates in a social dynamic which makes it the carrier of its own historical project, as the working class was. In this sense there is no working class anymore.
132. See *Données sociales 1993*, Paris, INSEE, 1993, p. 459. But it should be noted that the number of independent or assimilated jobs increases again as one of the consequences of the crisis of salaried society, see next chapter.
133. See H. Mendras, *la Fin des paysans, suivi d’une réflexion sur la fin des paysans vingt ans après*, Le Paradou, Actes-Sud, 1984. In the beginning of the 1980s, there remain less than a million exploiting farmers, see *Données sociales 1993*, op. cit. It is thus also, according to Colin Park’s classification, the collapse of the “primary” sector.
134. M. Aglietta, A. Bender, *les Métamorphoses de la société salariale*, op. cit., p. 69.
135. Calculated on the basis of an index of 100 in 1950, the average gains of employees attain the index 288.6 in 1960, that of the workers 304.8 (see J. Bunel, *la Mensualisation, une réforme tranquille?*, Paris, Editions ouvrières, 1973, p. 36).
136. The principle of workers’ mensualization leads to a paritary accord signed on April 20th, 1970, by patronal unions and unions of salaried workers. This measure extends to workers the advantage of monthly paid salaried workers in terms of holidays, vacations, paid sick leave, retirement, etc. More deeply, worker’s salary ceases being a direct compensation for work, and becomes the counterpart of a global allocation of time. In 1969, 10.6 percent of workers are mensualized. They will be 53 percent in 1971, and 82.5 percent in 1977 (see F. Sellier, *les Saliariés en France*, op. cit., p. 110).
137. A. Sauvy, “Développement économique et repartition professionnelle de la population,” *Revue d’économie politique*, 1956, p. 372.
138. One will find in J.-D. Reynaud, Y. Graffmeyer, *Français, qui êtes-vous?*, op. cit., a collection of tables that mark the differential performances of social categories in terms of revenue, patrimony, diplomas, access to culture and leisure, social mobility, etc. The working categories, slightly preceded by the employees, regularly occupy the last positions (except if one takes into account certain categories of agricultural workers who are close to extinction, and populations of the “fourth world,” to which we will return).
139. See J. Baudrillard, *la Société de consommation*, Paris, Denoel, 1970.
140. M. Aglietta, A. Bender, *les Métamorphoses de la société salariale*, op. cit., p. 98.
141. See J. Bunel, *la Mensualisation, une réforme tranquille*, op. cit., p. 192-193.
142. Analogously to the works on market segmentation, the theme of “peripheral worker” emerges in the United States in the end of the 1960s, see D. Morse, *The Peripheral Worker*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1969.

143. See the discussions of the time on “relative pauperization” or “absolute pauperization” of the working class. More generally, because of the quasi-full employment rate, at the moment where it emerges, this theme of fragmentation of the working class is remapped in terms of persistence of inequalities rather than in terms of increased precarity.
144. Preface of the Abby Wresinski to J. Labbens, *la Condition prolétarienne*, Paris, Sciences et Service, 1965, p. 9. This work has the subtitle “L’heritage du passé,” significant for the perception of poverty as a sort of foreign body in salaried society. See also J. Labbens, *Sociologie de la pauvreté*, Paris, Gallimard, 1978. The “poor,” for this author, “are in the last echelon, or, better yet, next to the ladder, without being able to put their foot on the first step. They do not recognize themselves in the working class, and the working class does not recognize itself in them” (p. 138). Thinking of the problematic of the “fourth world” as distinct from that of the working class is a central, and controversial, component of the ATD-Fourth World.
145. M. Aglietta, A. Bender, *les Métamorphoses de la société salariale*, op. cit., p. 98.
146. M. Maruani, E. Reynaud, *Sociologie de l’emploi*, op. cit., p.113.
147. See, for example, E. Mosse, *la Crise...et après*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1989, Y. Barou, B. Kaiser, *les Grandes Economies*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1984. For the CERC, purchasing power of salaries in constant francs was multiplied by 2.7 between 1950 and 1973 (CERC, Nr. 58, second trimester 1981).
148. M. Aglietta, A. Bender, *les Métamorphoses de la société salariale*, op. cit, p. 80.
149. Order number 45-2258 from October 4th, 1945, *Journal officiel*, October 6th, 1945, p. 6280.
150. However, if the work of the Front Populaire was considerable in terms of the right to work and collective conventions, it did not make any progress concerning social protection per se, perhaps because it had no time for this.
151. Law of May 22nd, 1946, “generalizing Social Security,” article 1.
152. On this context of the Liberation – the directives of the national Council of Resistance starting 1944, the desire to affirm national solidarity after the miseries and troubles of the war, the predominance of a left wing numerically dominated by the “party of the working class,” the forced discretion of a largely discredited right wing and patronate, etc., see H. Galant, *Histoire politique de la Sécurité Sociale*, Paris, A. Colin, 1955. On the importance of the Beveridge report, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, London, 1942, and its influence in France, see A. Linossier, *Crise des systèmes assurantiels aux Etats-Unis, en Grande-Bretagne et en France*, thesis for a doctorate in sociology, University of Paris VIII, 1994.
153. The intention was “to deduct from the revenue of advantaged individuals the sums necessary to complete the worker’s resources, or those of the disadvantaged families” (A. Parodi, “Exposé des motifs accompagnant la demande d’avis no. 504 sur le projet d’organisation de la Sécurité sociale,” *Bulletin de liaison no. 14 du Comité d’histoire de la Sécurité sociale*).
154. This system will eventually count 120 basic regimes and 12,000 complementary regimes, see N. Murard, *la Protection sociale*, op. cit., p. 90 sq. On the circumstances that led to the blockage of the general regime, see H. Galant, *Histoire politique de la Sécurité sociale*, op. cit. In the background of the parliamentary scene, the representatives of different professional associations and “independents” started actively lobbying. Apart from the role of physicians to counter the medical side effects of the program, the role of the general Confederation of the employees representing the categories hostile to rapprochement with the working class has been prevailing, see L. Boltanski, *les Cadres*, op. cit., p. 147 sq.
155. See G. Perrin, “Pour une théorie sociologique de l’ Sécurité sociale dans les sociétés industrielles,” *Revue française de sociologie*, VII, 1967. The desire for differentia-

- tion was also a factor with the working class: the professional categories such as the miners, chimney maintenance persons, seamen etc., did all they could to preserve their "acquired advantages." On the weight of previous regimes to generalize, see F. Netter, "Les retraites en France avant le Xxe siècle," *Droit social*, Nr. 6, June 1963.
156. In particular, the absence of coverage for unemployment. On the other hand, a complete analysis of protection should accentuate the importance of family allocations; a reflection of the predominance of natalist tendencies in France.
 157. Seventy-five percent of the French population are covered in 1975, 99.2 percent in 1984 (see C. Dufour, *la Protection sociale*, Paris, La Documentation française, 1984, p. 49).
 158. The sums allocated to social protection represent 10 percent of national income in 1938, 25 percent in 1970, 27.3 percent in 1980 (see J. Dumont, *la Sécurité sociale toujours en chantier*, Paris, Editions ouvrières, 1981, p. 42). In percentage of disposable household income, social payments increased from 1.1 percent in 1913 to 5 percent in 1938, 16.6 percent in 1950, 28 percent in 1975, 32.4 percent in 1980 (R. Delorme, C. André, *l'Etat et l'économie*, op. cit., p. 415).
 159. H. Hatzfeld, "La difficile mutation de la sécurité-prosperité à la sécurité-droit, loc. cit., p. 57.
 160. J.-J. Dupeyroux, *Droit de la Sécurité sociale*, Paris, Dalloz, 1980, p. 102. Let us remember that the State plays this role without directly interfering with the system's management, which is done on a paritary mode. This proves that the functioning of the social state is not necessarily associated with the deployment of heavy state bureaucracy, not even the State of France. It might be useful to remember as well that the French system of social security follows much more flexible, decentralized and diversified rules than the English system, for example (see D. E. Ashford, *British Dogmatism and French Pragmatism*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1982).
 161. Not that the "liberal" state never allowed itself to implement policies that went counter to spontaneous economy, such as the deliberate protectionism practiced by Guizot or Thiers, the systematic encouragement of agriculture at the expense of industry, or else, during the First World War, the mobilization of the essential of production for national defense (see P. Rosanvallon, *l'Etat en France de 1789 à nos jours*, op. cit.). But – except for the period of war, most of whose directives were re-implemented once peace had been established again – the state must not interfere with the management of industry and it is up to the industrials to define their goals and manage their companies to the best of their interest. Between the wars, the first conceptions of planned economy and nationalizations appear within the framework of reformist Socialism and also in those circles interested in a strong state. The CGT develops a substantial program of nationalizations, but it will not be implemented. The only initiative of economic *dirigism*, which was promoted by government of Leon Blum's Front Populaire (he himself was against nationalizations) is the creation of an Office of Wheat to assure a minimum income for peasants; another sign of the preponderance given to the interests of agriculture over those of industry (see R. Kuisel, *le Capitalisme et l'Etat en France*, op. cit. and A. Bergourieux, "Le néosocialisme. Marcel Deat: traditional reformism or spirit of the 30s?" *Revue historique*, Nr. 528, Cotober-December 1978; Jacques Amoyal, "Les origines socialistes et syndicalistes de la planification en France," *le Mouvement social*, Nr. 87, April-June 1974; on the quantitative growth of state investments, see R. Delorme, C. André, *l'Etat et l'économie*, op. cit.).
 162. R. Kuisel, *le Capitalisme et l'Etat en France*, op. cit., p. 437.
 163. *Ibid.*, p. 417.
 164. See J. Donzelot, *l'Invention du social*, op. cit., p. 170 sq.

165. C. Offe, *Contradictions of the Welfare State*, London, Hutchinson, 1986, p. 182-183, and also A. Linossier, *Crise des systemes assurantiels aux Etats-Unis, en Grande-Bretagne en France* op. cit.
166. F. Fourquet, N. Murard, *Valeur des services collectifs sociaux*, op. cit., p. 104.
167. Pierre Masse, cited in F. Fourquet, *les Comptes de la puissance*, Paris, Editions Recherches, 1980.
168. Cited in F. Fourquet, N. Murard, *Valeurs des services collectifs sociaux*, op. cit., p. 56. The image in Hugo's poem, is that of the light shining for all the navigators, which serves all the world, but which is not appropriated by anyone.
169. R. Kuisel, *le Capitalisme et l'Etat en France*, op. cit. Apart from Pierre Mendès-France's positions, André Philipp, for instance, advocated an option which accorded much importance to syndicates in the control of political economy. But "concerted economy" leaned in fact on the great industrial concentrations, on the most dynamic sectors of capitalism and on the great nationalized enterprises.
170. J. Fournier, N. Questiaux, *le Pouvoir du social*, op. cit. One will also find in this work a certain number of propositions to extend in the sense of a socialist politics the achievements made after the war.
171. P. Rosanvallon, *l'Etat en France*, op. cit.
172. C. Offe, *Contradictions of the Welfare State*, op. cit., p. 186.
173. Let us remember Alexandre Millerand's proposition from 1900: "There is a first-order interest in establishing between the patrons and the workers, relations that permit a timely exchange of necessary explanations and regulations of certain difficulties. By establishing these relations, the government of the Republic remains faithful to its particular role of peacemaker and arbiter."
174. See especially J. Le Goff, *Du silence à la parole*, op. cit., F. Sellier, *la Confrontation sociale en France*, op. cit., J.-D. Reynaud, *les Syndicats, les patrons de l'Etat, tendances de la negotiation collective en France*, Paris, Editions ouvrières, 1978, and P. Rosanvallon, *la Question syndicale*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1988. There are two main reasons for this situation. The general attitude of the majority of the patronate tends to consider the affairs of the enterprise as its own domain, which leads to a certain diffidence towards syndicates. This attitude evolved very slowly in one century. On the other side, the difficulty, and sometimes the refusal of syndicates to play the game of salaried society. This in fact implies a different way of conflict resolution and the acceptance of relative solutions aimed at finding compromises rather than global changes.
175. J. Bunel, *la Mensuralisation, une reforme tranquille?* op. cit.
176. The golden age of this politics corresponds to Jacques Chaban-Delmas' attempt at promoting his "new society." The inter-professional agreements from July 1970 on permanent formation represent, with the agreements on mensuralization, an exemplary realization of this approach. The product of a contractual agreement becomes a "national obligation": "Permanent Professional training constitutes a national obligation" (article L 900-1 from the Code of Labor).
177. Cited in B. Friot, *Protection sociale et salarisation de la main-d'oeuvre: essai sur le cas français*, these de sciences économiques, University Paris X, Paris, 1993.
178. Cited in F. Sellier, *la Confrontation sociale en France*, op. cit., p. 217. For an expose of the ambition of revenue politics, see G. Caise, *les Politiques des revenus et leurs aspects institutionnels*, Geneve, BIT, 1968.
179. See C. Baudelot, A. Lebeauvin, "Les salaires de 1950 to 1975," *Economie et statistiques*, Nr. 113, July-August 1979. An increase of low salaries occurs in 1968 with a particular increase of the SMIC (35 percent in Paris and 38 percent in the provinces), but it mostly catches up on a previous decrease, and it will again erode later.

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180. J.-D. Reynaud, *les Syndicats, les patrons et l'Etat*, op. cit., p. 14-16. Let us remember that unemployment compensation (belated in France) is implemented by this type of paritary conventions (signature in December 1958 of the agreement that created the Assedic and Unedic, here as well under pressure from public authorities).

8

The New Social Question

The thrust of the previous analyses leads us to reinterpret the social question as it is posed today in light of the degraded status of the wage earning condition. The question of exclusion, which has occupied the center stage for the last few years may be essentially misleading, for it displaces to the margins of society what is really something at its very heart. Either there are, as Gambetta imagined, only distinct “social problems,” a plurality of difficulties to be confronted one at a time; or, there is one larger “social question,” which is essentially the problem of the status of wage labor, insofar as wage labor has come to structure our social system almost entirely.¹ We have seen how wage labor existed for a long time only at the margins of society; then it became instantiated there as a function of its subordinate status; and finally it has been dispersed such that it encompasses and puts its stamp on the entire society. But it is precisely at the moment when the attributes associated with labor (i.e., that it determines the status of an individual and situates that individual in society) came to be definitely imposed at the expense of other supports of identity, such as familial membership or belonging in a concrete community, that the centrality of labor itself is violently called into question! We must wonder whether we have arrived at a fourth stage in the anthropological history of wage labor, when its odyssey turns to tragedy?

Probably such a question does not allow for any definite answer at this particular moment in time. But it is, however, possible to show what’s at stake and to survey the options available to us, while still pursuing the main theme that has driven this entire project. We have sought to understand any given situation as a *bifurcation* with respect to earlier conditions. That is, we have sought to make it intelligible by examining the distance that separates what is now

from what came before. Without mythologizing the equilibrium attained by wage-earning society nearly twenty years ago, we may nonetheless perceive a shift of the main parameters that made such a fragile balance possible. What is new is not just the end of economic growth, nor even the end of virtually full employment, unless, that is, we are capable of finding evidence there for a change in labor's role as the "great integrator."² Labor, as we have seen throughout this book, is more than just the physical work performed. And so conversely, we must understand that non-work is also more than just unemployment, which is no small thing to demonstrate. Indeed perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the current situation is the rebirth of a kind of "worker without work," such as Hannah Arendt described: those who are literally supernumeraries in society, or "the useless of the world."³

Nonetheless, simply noting this fundamental shift is not, in and of itself, enough to appreciate the exact meaning of this change; nor does it tell us how concretely to deal with circumstances that have been unknown for almost half a century, even if they are reminiscent of earlier historical precedents we have examined. First, we cannot simply sit and wait for economic recovery: our patience might better be spent in forging new expedients. This is an uncertain, transitional period in the inevitable restructuring of the productive forces of society: certain habits must be changed before we can find another stable arrangement. Moreover, it marks a complete transformation of our relationship to work, and thus, our relationship to the world: so what's at stake is neither a matter of inventing a wholly new way of inhabiting this world, nor of resigning ourselves to the apocalypse.

To avoid the temptation of trying to be visionary, just as much as the excesses of an undue cynicism, we must begin by appreciating the magnitude of changes that have taken place over the last twenty years. Only then will we be able to get a handle on measures that might be taken in the face of them. In particular, in contrast to the "policies of integration" that prevailed up until the 1970's, are the new policies known in France as "insertion" up to the task of dealing with the massive societal fractures that loom in front of us? Put differently, are we really updating public policies or merely obscuring their failures?

This work conceives of itself as essentially analytical and holds no illusions about proposing any miracle solutions. However, put-

ting this in historical perspective allows us to bring several perspectives to bear and to put back together a new puzzle. We only hope that this long journey will offer some modest lessons: for example, the market economy has never in and of itself established a social order; in a complex society, solidarity is no longer a given but must be constructed; social property is both compatible with private inheritance and necessary to situate it in the context of collective goals; a wage, in order to transcend its secular indignity, can never be reduced simply to payment for a task; the necessity of giving everyone a place in democratic society can only be accomplished by a complete commodification of this society by creating a kind of “employment geyser,” etc.

If the future is by definition unpredictable, history nonetheless shows that the gamut of resources that men have at their disposal for solving their problems is hardly infinite. Thus, if our problem today is as much that of continuing to construct a society of interdependent subjects, we may at least be able to specify certain conditions that must be taken into account in order for us to accomplish this.

A Change of Direction

What was shattered by the current economic “crisis” was probably only the mirage of progress: namely, the belief that tomorrow will be better than today, and that one may have confidence in the prospects of improving his condition in the future; or, in a less naïve form, that there are systems in place to manage the future of a developed society, to transcend its conflicts and to direct it toward better and more stable conditions. This may be only the euphemistic heritage of the revolutionary ideal of man’s complete mastery of his own destiny through the goal of restoring, even by force, the reign of ends in history. With respect to progress, however, it is no longer a question of instituting by force a better world in the here and now, but rather of managing transitions that will allow us to approximate such a world.

This view of history necessarily entails the glorification of the role of the state. There must be one central actor to lead these strategies, to oblige the social partners to accept reasonable goals, to make sure that compromises are respected. The social state is this actor. In its genesis, we have seen, it is composed only gradually and bit by bit. But during its development, and in proportion to its

growth, it rises to the task of being the leader of progress. This is why the goal of attaining the social state, and deploying the plenitude of its aspirations, is *social democratic*. Probably every modern state is more or less obliged to “create the social” as a way of remedying certain glaring dysfunctions, assuring at least a minimum of cohesion between social groups, etc. But it is through the social democratic ideal that the social state is posed as the principle of governing society, the motivating power that must take charge of progressively improving the lives of all.⁴ In order to accomplish this it has at its disposal a reservoir of national wealth made possible by growth, and the state is devoted to redistributing these fruits of progress and negotiating how the benefits will be shared among different social groups.

It may be objected that this social democratic state does not “exist.” Indeed, in this form it is only an ideal type. France has never truly been a social democracy, whereas the Scandinavian countries or Germany, for example, were much more so.⁵ On the other hand, the United States was even less so, or perhaps was not at all. This means that independent of the complete actualization of the ideal type of social democratic state, *some features* of this form of state are found in more or less recognizable form in different social contexts. We may now wonder to what degree France in the 1970’s was on its way toward the realization of this social democratic ideal. This is not just to fit it into a neat typology; nor is it simply to applaud it—or excoriate it—for not having closely enough (or having too closely) approximated the social democratic ideal. Rather, this is simply to try to appreciate the magnitude of the changes that have occurred over the past twenty years, and to take the measure of the radical break that has taken place with respect to the previous trajectory of the era. Have we seen what amounts to an accidental wrong-turn, or a fundamental change of policy? From this it is necessary to proceed to a critical treatment of the position occupied on the ascendant trajectory that seemed destined at the time to lead to a better future.⁶

To that end, we must first dispel the illusion of the “Thirty Glorious Years” that proves such a barrier to our understanding. Not only because it glorifies a period which, from colonial wars to multiple injustices, featured numerous shameful episodes.⁷ But mainly because by idealizing the magnitude of economic growth, it threatens

to obscure at least three key features of wage-earning society: its shortcomings, the ambivalence of some of its effects, and the contradictory character of some of the others.

1. *Its unfinished character*: even if we agree in the first place with the ideology of progress, we must concede that most of the achievements of this era are only intermediary steps in the unfolding of an arrested process. Whether, for example, in the context of the consolidation of the right to work, the two laws which, at the end of the period (1973 and 1975), regulate lay-offs. Until then employers determined lay-offs, and the responsibility fell to the worker who believed himself wronged to show proof in front of a court of the illegitimacy of the measure.⁸ The law of July 13, 1973 requires the employer to offer proof of a “real and serious cause”—in principle objective and verifiable—justifying the lay-off.⁹ For lay-offs with economic motives, the law of January 3, 1975 institutes the administrative authorization of lay-offs (this would be, we know, brought back in 1986). Thus, as Francois Sellier emphasizes, “there is devolution of control of lay-offs to the labor administration”¹⁰: the public administration, by the intermediation of work inspectors, gives itself the role of arbitrator and of recourse with respect to a fundamental prerogative of employers.

There is a real reduction, then, of the arbitrary power of employers in matters of lay-offs. But there is not as much reciprocity between employers and employees toward the fundamental provision of the right to work. During a lay-off for personal motives (law of 1973), the employer only has to take into account the “interest of the business” which necessitates the layoff and offers the justification for it. In cases of contestation, it falls to the unemployed to give proof that he is the victim of injustice. Similarly, for layoffs with an economic motive, subject to previous authorization (law of 1975), it is obviously the employer who takes the initiative, always, of course, in the interests of the business. Labor inspectors are often too overwhelmed to verify if the measure is justified, and jurisprudence on the matter shows that it is very difficult to contest an employer’s decision in matters of economic lay-offs.¹¹ Accordingly, the incontestable advances toward the right to work in matters of layoffs do not mean that democracy has been achieved though the corporation, or that the corporation has become a “citizen.”¹²

These examples point toward a deeper ambiguity in the achievements realized during the era of economic growth. Obviously, during this time layoffs are infrequent, and the labor contract for an undetermined length (CDI) often runs to its conclusion, allowing the worker to spend an entire career in the same company. But with respect to the job security that results from this, as a general rule, how much of this is simply an artifact of favorable economic circumstances, and how much stems from solidly rooted protections? In other words, during what we called the “growth-state” of the previous chapter, what may be attributed to contemporary realities—semi-full employment, for example—and to a condition of rights guaranteed by the law? What is the status of this connection which lasts for nearly thirty years, and which was more tacitly accepted as a fact than clearly stated as a policy? For example, during the presentation of the law of July 13, 1973 that we have just mentioned, the Minister of Labor expresses himself in these terms:

What is the subject of this? To realize an incontestable progress toward a right to work by protecting wage earners against abusive layoffs...It appears today indispensable that economic development does not affect workers who contribute to realizing this. Economic expansion and social protection must go hand in hand.¹³

Indeed, they have effectively both disappeared together! But the nature of the bond is in no way clarified in all of this. Surely it is not a matter of some intrinsic relationship along the lines of “there is no economic growth without protections” (the proposition whose inverse would be: “there is no social protection without economic growth”). Growth *facilitated* things, but it does not replace political will. One often forgets that perhaps the most decisive breakthrough in matters of social rights was realized with social security in 1945 and 1946, in a devastated France whose productivity dropped to levels lower even than in 1929.

Thus, these securities may prove misleading if they rely exclusively on growth. In the 1950's and 1960's, the labor contract for an undetermined length of time became the norm, and then served as a virtual guarantee of employment.¹⁴ But this stemmed only from the fact that in times of full employment, one often hires, and only rarely lays off employees. As this growth vanishes, however, security too disappears, and the “indefinite” aspect of the contract reveals itself to be a simple consequence of empirical realities and not a legal

guarantee. In summary, a contract of indeterminate length is a contract that lasts...only so long as it is not interrupted—unless it exists with a special status such as that of functionary, or with legal guarantees against layoffs, whose efficacy we have seen remains limited.¹⁵ This did not prevent most wage earners, during the years of growth, from experiencing their relationship to employment with the certitude of controlling the future and of making choices that take into account this future, such as investing in durable goods, taking out mortgages for construction, and so on. After economic conditions changed, however, these debts will come to represent a perverse heritage of the years of growth, capable of throwing many wage-earners into hardship. But even before then we might say that they were in jeopardy without even knowing it, *imminently* vulnerable: their fate was concretely linked to the pursuit of progress whose parameters they did not control.¹⁶

2. Beyond the incomplete and still tenuous character of what we have agreed to call “social acquisitions,” the deployment of protections included *certain perverse side effects*. Even without invoking the old chorus of the liberals, for whom any state intervention necessarily takes away personal responsibility and increases dependency, we must confess that political and social conditions near the end of the growth years are marked by a deep malaise of which “the events of May” 1968 were only the most spectacular expression.¹⁷ In periods of full growth, we may often find an apotheosis of consumption, or the refusal of an important part of society—mainly the youth—to surrender their aspirations of personal development for security and comfort. The demand of the day to “change life” expresses this need to keep hold of a new individual sovereignty, distinct from the ideology of progress, productivity, and the cult of the statistical growth curve, with which, as an inscription on the walls of the Sorbonne reads, “it is impossible to fall in love.” Hedonism and the celebration of the moment—“everything, right now”—are also expressions of the refusal to conform to the logic of deferred gratification and the programmatic existence implied by the deal level of security: protections have a cost. They are paid for by the repression of desire and consignment to a torpid life where everything is planned in advance.¹⁸

Today this attitude may appear to us as nothing more than the reaction of spoiled children to a surfeit of consumable goods and a security that was too easily obtained. However, they also indicate

dire reservations about the *form of governmentality* represented by the social state. The complaint is not so much that the state does too much, but rather that it does poorly that which it must do. Indeed, during these years, radical critiques of the foundations of a social order devoted to progress remained marginal, even if they expressed themselves in particularly vivid forms.¹⁹ On the other hand, numerous and varied were the critiques of how the state conducted the obligatory release of former tutelages and injustices inherited from the past. Such was the energetic questioning in the 1960's of the technocratic mode of managing society which was expressed through the proliferation of clubs—Club Jean Moulin, Citoyens Soixante, etc.—and associations for voluntary causes to participate in the decision-making processes of everyday life. Against the alleged de-politicization of society, political and social action must be reestablished through the involvement of citizens. Passivity is the price they pay for having delegated to the state the role of conducting change from above, without controlling civil society.²⁰ The vigor of “social movements” in the 1960's and the early 1970's attests to the demands for new responsibility on the part of citizens anesthetized by bureaucratic and impersonal forms of direction by the social state.

At a more theoretical level, the growth period of wage-earning society was also the moment when a vigorous sociological critique was developed along three main lines: the illumination of persisting inequalities, mainly in the spheres of education and culture; the denunciation of social injustice and of the exploitation of the labor force; and criticisms of the treatment, unbecoming a democratic society, reserved to certain categories of population, prisoners, mentally ill, the poor, and so on. This was a matter of exploring the promise of the republican ideal such as it is expressed in the preamble of the Constitution of 1946:

Each has the right to work and obtain a job...the nation guarantees to all, notably to children, mothers, and all workers, the protection of their health, material security, rest and leisure. Any being who by reason of his age, physical or mental state, economic conditions finds himself unable to work, he has the right to obtain from the collectivity decent means of existence. The nation guarantees equal access of child and adult to education, professional training, and culture.²¹

It is no contradiction to note that at the beginning of the 1970's we were still very far from achieving this, and not to accept at first glance the soothing language of growth and progress. I feel no re-

morse today for having belonged to this movement. But these critiques did not call into question the undercurrent that appeared to bear along wage-earning society and to weigh heavily on the entire social structure. They contested the distribution of these benefits and the apologetic function often played by the ideology of progress as a means of perpetuating inherited conditions.²²

3. But there is perhaps an even deeper contradiction in the actions of the social state during the boom years. Awareness of this third aspect is more recent: perhaps it was necessary for conditions to begin to deteriorate in order for the entirety of these contradictions to make themselves visible. On the one hand, the interventions of the social state have powerful homogenizing effects. This is an inevitable consequence of administering the beneficiaries of public services, which efface individual particularities. Thus, the “rights-bearer” is a member of an abstract collectivity, reattached to a juridical and administrative entity of which he is an interchangeable element. This aspect of the functioning of public services is well known, and has for many years fed various criticisms of the “bureaucratic” or “technocratic” character of social policy. But its paradoxical correlative was less well known: little has been said about how this *process yields at the same time certain fearful individualizing effects*. Beneficiaries of public services are at the same time homogenized, hedged in by juridical and administrative rules, and cut off from their particular belongings to other social collectivities:

The classical welfare state, at the same time that it emanates from the compromises of class, produces the formidable effects of individualism. When one offers individuals this extraordinary parachute that is the guarantee of assistance, one authorizes them, in all aspects of their lives, to cut themselves off from all communities, and all possible belongings, beginning with the most basic solidarities of the neighborhood; if there is Social Security I have no need of my next door neighbor to help me. The welfare state is a powerful factor in the growth of individualism.²³

The social state exists in the midst of a society of individuals, but the relationship that it maintains with individualism is dualistic. We have seen that social protections are intended to exist in the interstices of primary sociability and to remedy the shortcomings of proximate protections. They respond to the dangers of being an individual in a society where industrialization and urbanization have made such solidarities of proximity extremely fragile. Public pow-

ers recreate protections and bonds, but on a completely different order than that of belonging to concrete communities. By stabilizing general regulations and by establishing objective rights, the social state increases the distance between groups of belonging, which at the extreme limit no longer have any reason to offer protections. For example, mandatory insurance puts into place a certain kind of solidarity that comes from belonging to a collectivity. However, because of how it is applied, this way of “making society” requires only a very limited personal investment and a minimum of responsibility (you need only pay your premiums, which are taken automatically, and eventually elect delegates for managing the “savings,” whose activities are opaque to everyone). It is the same for the whole range of social protections. The intervention of the state allows individuals to ward off the perils of anomie which, as Durkheim well understood, is intrinsic to the development of industrial societies. But in doing so these individuals are left alone with their principal interlocutor, and at the extreme limit, with the state and its agencies. Individuals have succeeded in overcoming their vulnerability at one level, but this dependency is merely reconstituted on another level. The state becomes their principal support and main source of protection, but this relationship remains one that simply unifies an individual to an abstract collectivity. Is it even possible, asks Jurgen Habermas, “to produce new forms of life by juridico-bureaucratic means”?²⁴ The recipe, if it even exists, has yet to be found.

The dangers that accompany this dependency on the state will assert themselves whenever public power finds itself having difficulty accomplishing these tasks as effortlessly as it was able to do during periods of economic growth. Like the God of Descartes, who recreated the world at every instant, the state must maintain its protections by continuous activity. Should it withdraw itself, it is the social bond itself that risks being lost. For the individual would then find himself in direct contact with the naked logic of the society of wage labor, thrown back on himself, with only the concrete solidarities or other collective social actors whose antagonism cemented the unity of society. In this context, corporatism threatens to take the place of the general interest: a defense and articulation of one identifiable stratum that is distinct from the lower echelons and which aspires to the prerogatives of the higher strata. At the extreme, if the goal of every individual is to maintain himself and, if possible, to

better his own fate and that of his family, then social life risks being lived at the level of *the struggle for life*.

But there exists, if not an outright contradiction, then at least powerful tensions, between the development of individualism, which characterizes wage-earning society, and the application of the socialization of revenue and the administrative constraints indispensable to the working of the social state. This antagonism has been allayed so long as the cost of compulsory solidarity was not too onerous, and these regulatory constraints were compensated by substantial benefits whose dividends the individual himself receives. Thus, social protections were financed, as we know, by the great majority of the working population, who contributed mainly for themselves: they secure their own future at the same time as that of that of all workers. But under the dual pressures of unemployment and demographic shifts, the system of social services finds itself being squeezed to the limits. There is a major shift in the logic of the system of social services—from one in which the working populations paid mainly for others who are working, to a system of national solidarity, in which those who work must now pay for ever increasing numbers of others who don't work.²⁵

As production, employment and revenue grow apart, the reduced percentage of the actively working population devotes a more and more significant part of its resources to financing the large proportion of those who do not yet work, who are no longer working, or who will never work.²⁶

Under these conditions it will probably be impossible to avoid making painful choices. Certain debates which twenty years ago had a purely academic quality assume a bitter tone today. For example, must social services aspire to help out any citizen in need, or should they be preferentially connected to work? The first option is that of Beveridge, who saw a very extensive meaning in it: "To assure all citizens of the United Kingdom an income sufficient for them to meet their responsibilities."²⁷ However, the same relationship underlines vividly the necessity, for a social security plan to succeed, of promoting conditions of virtually full employment: "This relationship considers as one object of social security the maintaining of full employment and the prevention of unemployment."²⁸ The other option, the "Bismarckian system," ties the fundamentals of assistance to the contributions of workers, and France, we know, follows this same model. However, Pierre Laroque recalls almost literally the words

of Beveridge on the “liberation of need”: Social Security is “the assurance given to every man that under any circumstances he will be able to maintain in satisfactory conditions his subsistence and those of his dependents.”²⁹ Beveridge and Laroque could without too much inconvenience, or at least without contradiction, juxtapose two models with entirely different aspirations. They were not forced to choose between them, however, because the conditions of virtually full employment contributed to a “satisfaction” of need sustained by the labor of the majority of the population. But the protection of all by solidarity and the protection of workers by insurance will come into conflict with one another if and when the population of those who work should become a minority.

Similarly, we should note that the system of social security was hardly concerned with coverage against unemployment. Pierre Laroque justified himself that way: “In France, unemployment has never been as serious a threat as it is in Great Britain.”³⁰ Above and beyond the fact that such a declaration seems today to be seriously outdated, he also revealed a deeper contradiction: can unemployment be “covered” through work? Perhaps, but only up to a certain point. Significantly, unemployment is not a risk just like any other (for example, workplace accidents, disease, or impecunious old age). Not only is it widespread, but it negates the possibility of subsidizing other risks, and even the possibility of “covering” himself.³¹ The case of unemployment reveals the Achilles heel of the social state throughout the years of economic expansion. The form that it then assumed rested on a system of labor that is deeply shaken today.

But the social state may be even more fundamentally destabilized by the weakening of the nation-state, of which it is the direct emanation. We see a dual erosion of the prerogatives of national sovereignty: from below, with the rapid growth of “decentralized” local powers, and from above, with the advent of Europe and even more with the globalization of the economy and the growing influence of international financial capital. Likewise, the Keynesian social state rests upon, and in part contributes to building, a compromise between social partners within its borders. It also presupposes such a compromise outside its borders, at least implicitly, among different states that are situated at comparable levels of social and economic development. In fact, despite inevitable national differences, social policies, including labor policies, of countries like Germany, Great Britain, or France, for example, are (or were) roughly

comparable to one another, that is to say, compatible with the competition that these countries gave to one another at both the economic and commercial level. The social policy of a state is the result of a complex negotiation between the demands of domestic politics (most simply, maintaining social cohesion) and the exigencies of foreign policy: being a competitive “power.”³² But the rules of the game have changed since the beginning of the 1970’s. For example, instead of European states importing immigrant manual laborers whom they oblige to work on their own terms, they find themselves in competition on the global labor market with areas of the world where labor is cheap. This is another very compelling reason for thinking that it is out of the question, even if economic growth returned tomorrow, for states to return to the policies they followed on the eve of the “first oil crisis.”

Following Jurgen Habermas, we may wonder if we are not witnessing the “exhaustion of a model.” Different variants of socialism have made the conquest of the heteronomy of labor into the condition for founding a society of free men. The social democratic species of the social state retained a softer version of this utopia: it was no longer necessary to subvert society by revolution in order to promote the dignity of labor, but the value of this latter remained central in terms of social recognition and a foundation for protecting against insecurity and misfortune. Even if the onerousness or dependency that comes with laboring for a wage was never completely abolished, the worker found himself compensated by becoming a citizen in a system of social rights, a beneficiary of social services redistributed by the bureaucracies of the state, and also a recognized consumer of commodities produced by the market.³³ This way of domesticating capitalism has restructured modern forms of solidarity and exchange around the locus of labor under the auspices of the state. But what shall become of this edifice when work loses its centrality?

The Supernumeraries

Whatever its “causes” might be, the shakeup that affects society at the beginning of the 1970’s is well expressed, in the first instance, through the transformation of the problematic of employment.³⁴ The statistics are not well known, but they are the burning issue of the day: almost 3.5 million people are unemployed, composing more than 12 percent of the active population.³⁵ But unemployment is

only the most visible manifestation of a profound transformation in the larger state of employment. The *jeopardization* of labor is another aspect of this transformation, less spectacular, but probably even more important. The labor contract for an indeterminate length of time is in the process of losing its hegemony. This most stable form of employment, which reached its apogee in 1975 and applied then to about 80 percent of the active population, has dropped today to less than 65 percent. The “particular forms of employment” that have developed in the meantime include a range of different situations: contracts of labor with a specified length (CDD), temporary, part time work and different forms of “assisted employees,” that is to say, supported by public powers in the context of the fight against unemployment.³⁶ In absolute numbers, the CDI remains in the wide majority. But if one calculates the dynamic of new hires, the proportions are reversed. More than two thirds of annual hirings are done according to these new contractual forms, somewhat misleadingly called “atypical.”³⁷ The young are the most affected, and women more than men.³⁸ But the phenomenon also reaches to what one might call the core of the work force, men of thirty to forty nine years old: in 1988 already, more than half of them were hired under a special status.³⁹ And this touches at least as much on large industrial corporations as on the “PME,” or small businesses: in companies with more than fifty employees, three quarters of young persons under the age of twenty-five are hired under contracts of this type.⁴⁰

This process seems irreversible. Not only are the majority of new hires done under this form, but the overall stock of CDI's is gradually reduced (more than 1 million jobs of this kind are lost between 1982 and 1990). The trend also seems to be accelerating. In March 2, 1993 the *Tribune-Desfossés* published a ten-year projection that foresaw a complete inversion of the proportion of CDI to other forms of employment. The number of CDI might then be reduced to around 3 million. We are probably right to have some reservations about the mathematical precision of reports like this one. Nonetheless, they do succeed in capturing a profound upheaval of the salaried condition.⁴¹ Diversity and discontinuity in employment are in the process of replacing the paradigm of homogenous and stable jobs.

But why should we conclude that this phenomenon is as important, or perhaps even more important, than growing unemployment? This should not be interpreted as an effort to trivialize the serious-

ness of unemployment. But putting the accent on the precariousness of labor allows us to understand the processes that *feed* social vulnerability and ultimately produce unemployment and disaffiliation.⁴² It is already misleading to characterize these new forms of employment as “special” or “atypical.” The portrayal of them as somehow “unique” rests on unfounded assumptions about the preponderance of the CDI. Likewise, the portrayal of unemployment as a phenomenon itself atypical, that is to say irrational, and one that we might eradicate at the cost of a little good will and imagination, all other things being equal, is probably an expression of outmoded optimism. Unemployment is not a bubble that is created within the system of labor and that can simply be reabsorbed. It begins to become clear that the precariousness of work, and unemployment, are inscribed in the actual dynamic of modernization itself. They are the necessary consequences of new ways of structuring employment, the shadows cast by industrial restructuring, and of the struggle for competitiveness—which effectively loom like dark clouds over the lives of many people.

It is the very structure of wage labor itself that risks being cast into doubt. The consolidation of the working condition, we have seen, consisted of the fact that paying a person more and more entailed some attachment to his availability and his skills over the long term—in contrast to a more rustic conception of wage labor that consisted of simply and temporarily renting an individual to accomplish a finite task. “The durability of the bond of employment implies indeed that one does not know in advance which particular task, defined in advance, the wage-earner will be led to fulfill.”⁴³ The new “special” forms of employment have more in common with these older forms of hiring, when the status of the worker was erased in the face of the constraints of labor. *Flexibility* is one name given to explain this obligation of modern workers to adjust to their tasks.

We do not mean to endorse this characterization. Flexibility is not reducible to the necessity of adjusting themselves to a repetitive mechanical task. But it does require that the operator is immediately able to adapt himself to fluctuations of demand. Crisis management, production on demand, immediate responses to the pressures of the market—these have become the categorical imperatives of the functioning of competitive enterprises. In order to meet these conditions, businesses may have recourse to subcontractors (external flex-

ibility), or train their own personnel in the suppleness and polyvalence that will allow them to confront a wide gamut of new circumstances (internal flexibility). In the first case, it falls to satellite enterprises to absorb the fluctuations of the market. They can do so at the cost of rendering labor extremely precarious, yielding strong risks of unemployment. In the second case, the corporation takes charge of adapting its personnel to changing technology. But this strategy is at the price of eliminating those who are unable to rise to these new standards of excellence.⁴⁴

These observations call fundamentally into question the integrative function of the economic corporation. During the years of economic prosperity the business enterprise represented an organizational matrix at the very foundation of wage-earning society. It is mainly on the basis of this, as Michel Aglietta and Anton Bender have observed, that the differentiation of wage labor operates: it structures relatively stable human groups and places them in a hierarchical order of interdependent positions.⁴⁵ This form of social cohesion is always problematic because it is split by conflicts of interest, and in the last analysis, by the antagonism between labor and capital. However, as we have seen, economic growth allowed for some degree of compromise between the aspirations of employees and the objectives of management, by guaranteeing increasing revenues, social advantages and facilitating the professional mobility and social advancement of wage-earners. Economic "crisis" reduces or suppresses these profit margins, and "social acquisitions" become obstacles with respect to the overall mobilization demanded in the name of maximum competitiveness.

It seems ironic that a discourse sympathetic to the economic corporation is being imposed precisely at the time when the firm has surrendered a major part of its integrative function.⁴⁶ Perhaps the corporation really is the source of national wealth, the school of success, a model of efficiency and competitiveness. But we must add that the corporation also functions, and apparently more and more often, as the machinery by which vulnerability and even "exclusion" are created. All the more so today.⁴⁷

Within the economic corporation itself, the race for efficiency and competitiveness brings along with it the disqualification of the least skilled. "Participatory management" requires the mobilization of skills that are not only technical, but also social and cultural, which are oftentimes at odds with the traditional professional cul-

ture of most wage earners.⁴⁸ When, in the context of the search for “internal flexibility,” the business seeks to adapt the qualifications of workers to changing technologies, this “permanent training” may function as a perpetual system of selection.⁴⁹ The result is the disposability of “aging workers,” too old or poorly trained to be recycled, but too young to benefit from retirement. In France, the rate of activity amongst the fifty-five to sixty year old age group drops to 56 percent, one of the lowest in Europe (in Sweden it is 76 percent, for example), and most workers no longer go directly from full activity to retirement, according to the classic model of protected labor.⁵⁰

But the economic corporation fails similarly in its integrative function with respect to the young. By raising the level of required qualifications at the entry level, they demobilize a labor force even before it is put into service. Thus young people who would have been integrated into production twenty years ago without any problem find themselves condemned to wander from internship to internship, or from one menial job to the next. Moreover, this demand for qualifications does not always respond to technical imperatives. Numerous businesses tend to prepare themselves against future technological changes by hiring overqualified young people, even in sectors with low statuses. This is why young people who hold the CAP or BEP (junior high school and high school technical degrees) occupy more and more inferior jobs according to their qualifications. Whereas in 1973 two-thirds of them occupied a position for which he had been trained, in 1985 only 40 percent of them do so.⁵¹ The result of this is a loss of motivation and an increase in the precariousness of mobility; these young people are tempted to look elsewhere, if possible, for employment suitable to their qualifications. The ultimate outcome is that young people who are truly unqualified risk having no alternative other than unemployment, because the jobs that they might once have occupied are taken by those more qualified than they. Even more fundamentally, this logic risks undermining policies that have placed such a great emphasis on qualifications as the primrose path for avoiding unemployment, or getting beyond it. It is probably an overly optimistic vision of the “crisis” that leads one to believe that by improving and multiplying one’s skills he might become impervious to “unemployability.” Statistically speaking, it is true that “low qualifications” are the greatest predictor of unemployment. But this correlation does not imply that

there is a necessary and direct correlation between qualifications and employment. The “unqualified” are in continual risk of being left one step behind if the general level of training is rising.⁵² This is also why objectives such as having 80 percent of an age group attain the baccalauréat (high school diploma) are only pseudo-solutions to the problem of unemployment. There are certainly not 80 percent of jobs today, or even in the near future, that will require this level of qualification.⁵³ So rather than reducing unemployment, then, there is the danger of merely raising the level of the qualifications of the unemployed.

To be clear: it is justifiable and even obligatory from the point of view of democracy to address the problem of the “underqualified” (that is to say, in a less technocratic way, putting an end to the cultural underdevelopment of a part of the population). But it is illusory to conclude that non-wage earners can find a job simply by going back to school. The relationship between training and jobs is posed in a context very different than at the beginnings of the twentieth century. Back then, the kind of training and socialization promoted by the school facilitated immigration toward the cities by rural children and the formation of an educated and competent working class: youth educated by the Republic find jobs according to their new skills. Today, not everyone is qualified and competent, and raising the level of training remains an essential objective. But these democratic imperatives must not obscure a new and even more elemental problem: the possible *un-employability* of the qualified.⁵⁴

It would be unfair to give the entire responsibility for this condition to businesses. Their real function is to master technological change and to adapt to the new requirements of the market. The entire story of the labor system demonstrates that we should hardly dare ask employers on top of this to “create the social” (and indeed, when we do this, as in the case of the patronal philanthropy of the nineteenth century, it is in the strict and limited sense, and done in the interest, properly understood, of the corporation). But in the current environment of rapid change, adhering too narrowly to the immediate demands of the bottom line may come to be seen as counterproductive for industry itself (for example, the savage use of flexibility destroys the social cohesion of the corporation, or discourages its employees). Consequently, we might at least hope for the intelligent management of these imperatives by businesses. It is, however, naïve to expect that firms could ever take into account the

threat of social division that results from their activities. After all, the most competitive businesses are also often the most selective, and thus in a certain respect the most exclusive (cf. the automobile industry), and the announcement of “social plans” frequently accompany those of positive earnings reports. This is another way of saying that a policy whose objectives are to control the effects of the degradation of the wage-earning condition and to restrain unemployment are fundamentally at odds with the dynamism of economic firms and their virtues in the competitive market. Numerous measures like those to aid hiring by firms, etc. have given proof that even if they are not useless, they are extremely limited in their effects. In order for these truly to help a public in difficulty, it would have been necessary “to redistribute less often subventions for hiring that would have taken place anyway.”⁵⁵ What are known as the “unexpected bounties” of some social measures are obviously of interest to businesses, and there is no reason why they wouldn’t seize upon them. But these often have perverse effects on the management of unemployment.

In sum, to look for a concern with the welfare of the community on the part of corporations is to search in the wrong place. The economic firm expresses the logic of the marketplace—namely, economy—which is “the institutional domain of businesses alone.”⁵⁶ At this level, the margin for manual labor is narrow because (and the failure of countries where “real socialism” prevailed demonstrates this) a society can no sooner afford to ignore the laws of the market than physics can the laws of gravitation. But if it is indeed suicidal to be “against” the market, the consequence of this is not necessarily that we ought to abandon ourselves to it. The problematic of social cohesion is not a matter of the market; social solidarity is not constructed by means of competition and productivity. But are these two logics incompatible with one another? We shall return to this question. For now, it was necessary that we sketch out their differences in order to reveal the dead-end of trying to make business carry the weight of resolving the current social question. A political will may perhaps—or at least it should—bound and circumscribe the market so that society is not crushed by its workings. It cannot delegate to business the responsibility of exercising its own mandates. Even if “what is good for General Motors is good for the USA,” it need not also be true that this is enough to maintain the cohesion of the entire society.

If the mastery of the social question cannot exclusively be entrusted to the domain of business and economics, this is also because their contemporary dynamic yields disastrous effects from the point of view of social cohesion. The situation may at first glance be interpreted by analyzing the duality of the labor market, but this yields a somewhat radical solution.⁵⁷ In reality there are two “sectors” of employment, a “primary” market formed of skilled elements, who are better paid, protected and more stable, and a “secondary” market composed of precarious employees, less qualified, directly subject to the fluctuations of supply and demand. But the relationship between these two sectors is not fixed once and for all. Roughly speaking, we might say that in times of economic growth and a correspondence between supply and demand for labor, there is a complementary relationship between the two sectors. It works to the advantage of the corporation—and apparently also to the wage earner—to hold on to human capital. This loyalty minimizes the cost of training, guarantees a continuity of skills and a better social environment within the corporation, and minimizes the effects of lowered productivity. The secondary market plays a supporting role in coping with unpredictability, and ultimately, it functions as a kind of sieve by socializing employees, some of whom will later be integrated in a stable way. On the other hand, under conditions of underemployment and overqualification, the two markets are in direct competition. According primacy to the status of employee of the corporation forms an obstacle to the demand of coping with rapidly shifting circumstances. By way of contrast, wage earners in the secondary sector are more “attractive,” because they have fewer rights and are not protected by collective bargaining and thus can be hired or fired as needed.⁵⁸ We may add that the globalization of the labor market further degrades the national labor market. Corporations also subcontract (external flexibility) in countries where the cost of labor is several times cheaper. Initially, this kind of de-localization mainly affects underqualified workers and traditional industries (cf. the ruin of the textile industry in developed countries, in which they were the most labor-intensive industrial sector). But a corporation can also subcontract out the manufacturing of sophisticated machinery or software in Southeast Asia or elsewhere.⁵⁹

This evolution is aggravated by the “tertiarization” of activities, whose importance Bernard Perret and Guy Roustang have emphasized.⁶⁰ Such a transformation not only changes the structure of the

labor system in the sense of the predominance of direct relationships between producers and clients (provision of services, strictly speaking) and of the increasingly informational and relational character of activities. It has a direct effect on the productivity of labor. On average, the gains of productivity made by industrial activities are twice those of the service sector.⁶¹ One result of this is a serious questioning of the magnitude and the consequences for the employee when growth returns. According to the classical economists, as synthesized by Alfred Sauvy, the transformation of the technology of production has always been followed by a “spillover” of manpower away from older sectors and into new spheres of activity (thus the reduction of the manpower tied to agriculture gave way to the development of a more productive industrial sector).⁶² This rationale is suspect, however, if technological progress makes only feeble gains in productivity and suppresses more jobs than it creates. In reality this seems to be the case.⁶³

Not only is the current problem one that issues into a “precarious periphery,” but also that of a “destabilization of the stable.”⁶⁴ The growth of precariousness now reaches into previously stable zones of employment. Herein arises this mass vulnerability, which we have seen being slowly conjured up. There is nothing “marginal” at all about this dynamic. Just as the pauperism of the nineteenth century arose out of the heart of the dynamic of early industrialization, so too does the precariousness of labor arise from a central process, driven by the new technological-economic imperatives at the very heart of modern capitalism. This is more than enough to pose a “new social question” of the same magnitude and centrality as that posed by pauperism in the first half of the 19th century, much to the astonishment of contemporaries.

Seen from the perspective of labor, then, we can distinguish three points where this question is crystallized. First, there is the *destabilization* of the stable. A segment of the integrated working class and the wage earners of the lower middle classes threatens to collapse. Whereas the consolidation of the wage-earning society continuously enlarged the employment base of secure jobs and eased the pathways to social mobility, the inverse movement now prevails. Perhaps it is the fate of these intermediary strata—neither the highest nor the lowest on the social pyramid—who now have little to hope for in the face of blocked social mobility, but rather everything to lose, upon which the balance of a social structure will be played

out. (Parenthetically, populism—of the Right or the Left—is the political manifestation of their fall into insecurity.) This confirms the fact that it is not enough to consider the social question only from its margins and to content ourselves with merely complaining of “exclusion.”

The second detail of current conditions is the *descent into precariousness*. Temporary work represents a nebulous condition whose borders are uncertain, but which tends to be set apart from regular work. Less than a quarter of the 2.5 million unemployed recorded by the ANPE in 1986 had found stable employment two years later (22 percent); 9 percent had apparently resigned themselves to permanent inactivity; and 44 percent were still unemployed, either (for a quarter) having remained so (long term unemployment), or became so again after having held one or several jobs. If we add to this those who occupied at the time of the study a job that was threatened, then it is in the neighborhood of half of the unemployed, or formerly unemployed, who have been thrown into the erratic trajectories of alternating between employment and unemployment.⁶⁵ This thesis is confirmed by other studies. Thus, in 1988, only one intern out of four, and one jeopardized worker out of three found stable employment after a year.⁶⁶ This same year, almost 50 percent of job applicants were previously employed on a contract of fixed duration.⁶⁷

Thus recurring unemployment is a significant feature of the employment market. A whole population, mainly the young, appears relatively employable only for short-term tasks, several months or a few weeks, and even more easily dismissed. The phrase, a “permanent interim,” is not a bad choice of words. This is a mobility of alternating between activity and inactivity, of temporary dealings colored by the uncertainty of tomorrow. This is one of the social consequences arising as a side effect of the demand for flexibility. And it is costly indeed for persons involved. In 1975 already, Michel Pialoux portrayed this “realism of despair” that forces some categories of the young to “choose” these strategies day by day.⁶⁸ At the time this was a way of life reserved largely to a clientele of youth, particularly those who were disadvantaged, children of immigrants, inhabitants of the suburban projects, and so on. Today it affects large segments of young people coming from the “traditional” working classes, holders of technical diplomas such as the CAP, and it also impacts certain segments of the middle classes.⁶⁹ Precarious-

ness is a destiny. When one speaks of the discrediting of labor that afflicts new generations and which some see as the happy symbol of an end to the alienation of the civilization of labor, one must keep in mind the objective reality of the job market. How do we invest these situations with meaning and attach goals to these trends? The dream of the “interim,” this is the desire to become permanently employed, linked however with doubts that seriously undermine the hope of ever reaching it.⁷⁰ It is less the initiative to labor that is lacking, than the omnipresence of discontinuous and literally meaningless employment, which can hardly serve as the basis for imagining a tolerable future. This way of living in the social world requires strategies for survival that are rooted in the present. Out of this develops a culture that is, according to the felicitous expression of Laurence Rouleau-Berger, a “culture of waywardness.”⁷¹ Thus we witness a return to the center of the social stage of the burden previously imposed on those formerly known as “the people”: namely, “to live from day to day.” Does this not justify our speaking of a *neopauperism*?

A third kind of phenomena, and the most disturbing, seems to have emerged in the contemporary period. The jeopardization of jobs, and rising unemployment, are perhaps manifestations of a *deficit of occupiable places* in the social structure, if one understands “place” to mean those positions associated with social utility and public recognition. “Aging” workers (often less than fifty years old) no longer have a place in the productive process, but neither do they have another; young in search of their first job and who wander from internship to internship and from one menial job to another; the long-term unemployed who try with little success to retrain themselves: all this seems to indicate that our society has rediscovered with surprise the presence within itself of a kind of population thought to have long since vanished, the “useless of the world,” who exist in society without really belonging to it. They occupy the position of *supernumeraries*, floating in a kind of social non-man’s land, not integrated and perhaps unintegratable, at least as Durkheim spoke of integration as belonging to a society formed by a collection of interdependent elements.

This social inutility also disqualifies them on the civic and political level. These different subordinated groups of industrial society, exploited by those who are indispensable, have no influence on the course of things. It seems astonishing that a disaster of such cata-

strophic proportions as 3.5 million people unemployed has given birth to no social movement of any significance. What it does produce is an incredible amount of debate and a corresponding number of “accompanying measures.” “One surveys” what will become of the unemployed, who are not social actors, but as we have seen, “social non-entities,” the “ordinary useless.”⁷² With respect to the current social structure they occupy a position analogous to the “fourth world” at the apogee of industrial society: they are not plugged into the circuits of economic exchange, they have missed the train of modernization, and remain on the platform with little or no baggage. Because of this, they may very well become the focus of attention and raise some concern, for they pose a problem. But it is the very fact of their *existence* that poses this problem. Only with difficulty can they be taken into account for what they really are, because their qualification is negative—uselessness, social non-entities—and they are usually aware of this.⁷³ When the very basis on which one’s social identity is founded becomes invalid, it is difficult to speak in one’s own voice, or even to say no. Struggle presumes the existence of a collectivity and a project for the future. The useless of the world have the choice between resignation and sporadic violence, the “rage” (Dubet) which most often proves self-destructive.

One might perhaps summarize this recent transformation by saying that for growing segments of the active population, and *a fortiori* for those who find themselves in situations of forced inactivity, *identity through work* is lost. But this notion of gaining one’s identity through work is not easy to handle within the framework of an argument that wishes to be rigorous.⁷⁴ We may assuredly discern several circles of collective identity founded first on one’s profession (the collectivity of labor),⁷⁵ which can be extended into a community of habitat (the working-class neighborhood),⁷⁶ or into a community of life-style (the bistro, roadhouses on the side of the Marne, red light districts, union or political affiliations). Richard Hoggart has left us with one of the best portrayals of the coherence of this popular culture, constructed around one’s professional service, but developing a value system with a strong motivating force.⁷⁷ In industrial society, especially among the popular classes, work has the function of the “great integrator,” which Yves Barel has distinguished, but this does not preclude socialization by other facts than labor. “There is familial integration. There is educational integration, professional integration, social, political, cultural, etc. integra-

tion.” But work is a catalyst that crosses these fields, it is “a principle, a paradigm, something that in reality is found in the diverse integrations concerned, and that makes possible the integration of integrations without at the same time making differences or conflicts disappear.”⁷⁸

However, without simply listing specific monographs, it is difficult to move beyond this general conceptual framework. It is even more difficult to measure the recent deterioration of these integrative functions played by work.⁷⁹ I have proposed a general hypothesis in order to take into account the overlap between what is happening on the axis of integration by labor—stable employment, precarious employment, expulsion from employment—and the thickness of the relational embeddedness in familial networks of sociability—strong sense of belonging, tenuous relationships, social isolation. These linkages distinguish different zones of density in social relations, the zone of integration, zone of vulnerability, zone of assistance, zone of exclusion, or rather, of disaffiliation. But it is not just a matter of a mechanical correlation, because a strong valence on one axis may compensate for the weakness of another (for example, in chapter 1, the treatment of the “shameful poor” and of the vagabond: they are both outside the zone of work, but the first is completely embedded in the community, whereas the latter is completely cut off from any social attachments).

In the contemporary period, it is even more difficult to govern these relationships, because the social state intervenes as an omnipresent entity. Thus even if it is interesting, as in the case of the CERC, to take note of a statistical correlation between, for example, the rate of divorce and the precariousness of employment, the complex processes that drive this correlation are not for all of this obvious.⁸⁰ In reality there exist two sets of familial vulnerability. The family in general has become more and more vulnerable because it has become a more and more “democratic” structure.⁸¹ We can see the gradual erosion of this island of tutelary power that remained vested in the family even in the heart of the contractual order instituted by the Civil Code. All the reforms of the Family Code up to the most recent on the rights of children go in the direction of establishing a familial partnership founded on a relationship of equality between familial roles.⁸² That is to say, the family tends to become a relational structure whose consistency depends at base on a relationship of equality between its members. The growth of a negoti-

ated contractual familial order threatens the structure of the family in and of itself, by making it dependent on the very self-regulation that it must itself master.

But certain families are exposed to a totally different kind of threat. The low social status and precariousness of some designate them as beneficiaries of social services subject to resources.⁸³ Here state intervention takes on a completely different form. Whereas the Family Law remains a matter of civil law, such that its provisions have a universal goal, specific targeted interventions are the reality of the social state as part of a policy of assistance for those disadvantaged populations and for maintaining social cohesion. If many studies document the fraying of the social fabric of the family—separation, divorce, single parents—bringing with them a decrease in familial resources, we can hardly surmise from this that these systematically throw them into economic jeopardy.⁸⁴ In addition, the inverse relationship between declining socioeconomic conditions—unemployment, debt, bankruptcy, etc.—and familial dissociation is more often asserted than proven. Finally and primarily, one would have to consider the special vulnerability of these kinds of disadvantaged families, and the distinctive vulnerability of the “modern” family, which corresponds to an entirely different logic. It might seem that there is a causal loop between the exposure of the family to different kinds of risks. In addition to the vulnerability of the familial structure that may in part be attributed to the management of its relational capital, we might add the additional and distinctive vulnerability of families exposed to a loss of social status and to economic precariousness as a result of the deterioration of the wage-earning condition. But it remains to be shown how we might give evidence for these claims.⁸⁵

The same may be said of the correlation between declining status tied to work and the growing fragility of those relational supports which, above and beyond the family, guarantee a “protection of proximity” (for example, neighborhood associations, participation in groups, associations, parties, unions, etc.). The hypothesis seems widely confirmed by certain extreme situations that link total expulsion from the order of work and social isolation: the homeless, for example, as a modern analogue of the vagabond of pre-industrial society.⁸⁶ For less extreme examples, however, the relationship between the two axes is more complex. To what degree is the deterioration in the status of labor accompanied by a corresponding degra-

dation of social capital? Unless we are willing to risk considerable distortions, there is really no completely direct answer to this question beyond either particular analyses of individual life stories, or general polemics about the disastrous rupture of social bonds and the loss of traditional communities.⁸⁷

In order to refine this question, we must establish more elaborate distinctions between different forms of sociability. Some kinds of sociability come from belonging to a structured collective, such as the community of labor, membership in an association, a union, etc. "Living on social assistance" (an experience known to several million people) does not equate, however, with complete isolation. Rather it leads to the creation of other kinds of relationships (for example, with the office of social services or other fellow unfortunates), answering other objectives altogether (for example, exchanging information about ways to receive assistance). Similarly, it might be argued that what I have called "disaffiliation" may be shown as not necessarily equivalent to a complete lack of social bonds, but only with the absence of belonging in structures that carry a social meaning. This hypothesis suggests that there are new "floating sociabilities," which are no longer embedded in the stakes of society at large, wandering truants exemplified by the "core" of rootless youth. What they suffer from is not so much a lack of communication with others (these youths often have more diverse relationships than members of the middle classes) as the disappearance of the kind of goals from which such interactions take their meaning. I will return later to this theme of "insertion." For the importance of new policies of insertion may be precisely to create these kinds of sociability, or to consolidate them when they already exist, even if they are too inconsistent to sustain an entire social project of integration.

This is the trail we must follow in order to determine the network of relationships existing between the deterioration of economic conditions, on the one hand, and the destabilization of the lifestyles of groups confronted by turmoil, on the other. Without being able to marshal all of these details, I offer an ideal typical representation of this process of degradation internalized by destiny, a puzzle to uncover. This is the main feature of the drama of the wage-earning condition, whose lot has once again become that of vulnerability. Hereafter life will be "suspended by a thread" after the collapse of a new kind of integration that was proclaimed and even celebrated well before it was ever realized.⁸⁸

In the 1980's—only belatedly with respect to the ascending trajectory of wage-earning society—a household “rises to property,” with a small amount of family savings, help from others, and credit. But the wife, a menial employee in a low-status job, is almost immediately laid off. The husband, without skills or diplomas, takes small jobs that are harder and harder to find. Debts accumulate, for they must keep making payments for the car, television, and soon for phone and electricity. At the moment of the interview, the wife waits to hear back about her application for the RMI (minimum revenue of insertion) and the husband, a probationary employee in a company, hopes without thinking about it too much that he will be hired at the minimum wage. Their two families look at them reproachfully, because as legatees of the certainties of the boom years, they have a hard time imagining that one cannot find a job if one is really looking for one. Certainly, these shameful children have betrayed the promise of social advancement, and this is probably their own fault. Thus, what should be a success story of the rise of the proletariat to the petit-bourgeois lifestyle turns into a nightmare. Almost a century of victories over the vulnerability of the masses, it seems, have been erased. “It’s impossible, living in a time like this, that one still has problems like this. People say that progress advances, but this isn’t true. I personally find that it regresses rather than going forward. It’s impossible, solutions must be found, something must be done.” How will “they” do something? For it is the social state, apparently, that is accountable.

“Economic Insertion,” or the Myth of Sisyphus

The paradox: in a period dominated by the rebirth of economic liberalism and a celebration of business, how is it that state interventions in the sphere of employment have never before been as numerous, diverse and insistent? But even more than just an increased role for the state, it is the transformation of the forms of its intervention that we must explore. Let us first discuss the meaning of these changes before attempting to conjugate the nuances. The new paradigm is distinguished by a shift from *a policy whose goal was integration to one that strives for economic insertion*. By policies of “integration,” I mean those that are motivated by the search for one great equilibrium, the homogenization of society from the center outward. They proceed by offering general policies in a national framework. In that way, they attempt to promote universal access to public

services and to education, the reduction of social inequalities, and a better distribution of opportunities, the development of social protections and the consolidation of the wage-earning condition.⁸⁹

By way of contrast, I will interpret policies of “insertion” in terms of their differences, perhaps even by exaggerating the main features distinguishing them from policies of “integration.” In contrast to older policies, these new policies of “insertion” conform to a logic of *positive discrimination*: they target specific groups and certain zones of social space, and deploy specific strategies in their direction. But if some groups or some sites are consequently objects of extra attention and concern, this is more from the assumption that they are socially deprived and inferior than from a concern that they live under conditions of poverty. Indeed, they suffer from a *deficit of integration*, such as the inhabitants of inner cities, students who have left school, poorly socialized families, underemployed or unemployable youth, habitually unemployed, etc. Policies of economic insertion may be understood as a collection of strategies to compensate for differences in order to make up for these differences with respect to a complete process of integration (a background of decent life, a “normal” education, a stable job, etc.). But today there is some suspicion that considerable efforts brought to bear in the last fifteen years in these directions have not fundamentally changed these constants: despite our best efforts, at the present moment these populations may simply be *unintegrateable*. It is this eventuality that one must confront.

Can we distinguish policies of integration from policies of economic insertion in terms of the contrast between universal, long-term measures and the targeting of particular populations? Not without introducing at least a few qualifications. Indeed, such a distinction is not new, and it antedates even the creation of policies of economic insertion themselves. In the sphere of social protection, this is the main principle of the classic complementarity between social insurance and social assistance. Social security achieves the general socialization of risk by “covering” wage earners, their families, and ultimately all those who are inscribed in the order of work. Social aid (renamed as such in 1953) inherits the former function of assistance by dispensing supplemental resources to all whose existence cannot be guaranteed on the basis of work or property. This is a formidable inheritance, which makes benefits derived from social aid, even when they are by law, contingent on a minimum baseline of

resources, or on a scale of disability. This is why, for modern and progressive currents of social reformers, this dualism must eventually be erased, and a single system of protections put in place to protect all citizens through one uniform set of legal guarantees—this was already, we have seen, the position of Jaurès in 1905, as well as that of Beveridge and Laroque in establishing social security.

This is not the system that prevailed. To the contrary, even well before the “crisis,” social aid differentiates and reinforces itself. Its history since the end of World War II is that of an ever more precise targeting of its beneficiaries, toward which more and more determined institutional, technical, professional, and regulatory systems are deployed. The state concurs in these processes. It legislates, establishes special institutions, guarantees the homogeneity of diplomas and professionals, coordinates the implementation of bureaus, and also the coordination between public and private sectors.⁹⁰ Through this process we find more and more numerous categories of recipients of social aid taking shape. Many of these are the consequence of special needs: children in difficulty, “economically weak” elderly, the handicapped, broken families or those with few resources.⁹¹ At the beginning of the 1970s we even witnessed a gathering of some of these categories into large conglomerates of groups that share a common inability to adapt themselves to the demands of wage-earning society. Lionel Stoleru rediscovers “poverty in wealthy nations” and proposes less to fight it than to stabilize it by guaranteeing a minimum salary to the “most weakened” (the negative income tax).⁹² This is no longer a matter of attempting to reduce inequalities, but of leaving the maximum free play to the market by controlling only the most extreme consequences of economic liberalism. Nearly at the same time René Lenoir draws attention to the “excluded,” a term that already embodied all the indeterminacy it holds to this very day: two to three million mentally or physically handicapped persons, more than a million elderly invalids, three to four million “socially maladapted.”⁹³ The remedies that he envisioned are however more generous, since he proposes to ameliorate their condition when this is possible, and above all, to attempt to anticipate the danger of these populations being excluded.⁹⁴

Thus, at the beginning of the 1970s, the distinction between social security and social aid, whose complementarity was supposed to embrace the whole range of social protections, is confounded.⁹⁵

The multiplication of targeted groups and specific policies casts doubt on the state's ability to administer policies of integration with a universal or homogenizing aspiration. However, all the groups that benefit from special programs are characterized by an *inability* to keep up with the dynamic of wage-earning society, whether because they suffer from a handicap, or because they possess insufficient resources to adapt themselves to the rhythm of progress. The widening of the "socially maladapted" category (3 or 4 million for René Lenoir!) is one effect of this operation that—according to the difference of most handicaps, mental illnesses, etc.—circumscribes a residual population by attempting to *subtract* the new constraints, never defined, of modern society. *Social maladaptation* is also a central feature of the Bloch-Lainé: "Those maladapted to the society of which they are a part include children, teenagers, and adults, who have for different reasons more or less significant difficulties behaving like others."⁹⁶ The substantialist conception of poverty (ATD-Fourth World) have the same function: identifying those left behind by growth because of their social incapacity.

This consciousness of the heterogeneity of a society driven by economic growth amounts to a backing away from universal policies of integration and an increase in the special treatment of certain "problem populations." But this does not prevent the social machinery from moving ahead, or progress from being made. This is why, despite some controversy over how these policies are to be financed, this shift doesn't call into question the fundamental distinction that runs throughout the entire history of social protection: namely, between coverage by means of work for all those who can—and therefore must—work, and access to assistance for those who cannot do so or who are exonerated from this obligation for legitimate reasons.⁹⁷

Only when the specter of a new kind of "problem population" shakes this edifice does the question of insertion emerge. This is a considerable innovation: it is no longer a matter of instituting a new category in the register of deficiency, handicap or abnormality. This new clientele is neither simply delivered over to the imperative to work, nor to the different responses administered by social aid. Policies of insertion intermingle in an ambiguous zone where jobs are not guaranteed even to those who would like to have them, and where the erratic character of certain life-goals go well above and beyond individual factors of maladaptation. For these new popula-

tions of clients, policies of insertion must invent new techniques of intervention. They will situate themselves alongside policies aspiring to a universal integration, but they are also distinct from particular policies in being more reparational, remedial, or assistential than traditional policies of social assistance. They appear at a specific moment, at the end of the 1970s, when there is widespread turmoil within wage-earning society. Are they up to the task of meeting this collapse?

Today we can begin to ask this kind of question because policies of insertion have been applied now for almost fifteen years. Initially, they have a temporary and ad hoc character, and aim only to be provisional solutions. Probably at the time no one would have been able to imagine them persisting. But their gradual consolidation marks *the establishment of "the temporary" as a way of existence*.

Even before the notion of insertion appeared, at least in the sense that it has taken on since the 1980s,⁹⁸ this new theme begins to be drawn with the reappearance of an old preoccupation that the boom years were unable to erase: namely, the *precariousness* of some working conditions.⁹⁹ Thus Agnès Pitrou describes the fragility of certain working families who might draw our attention without being "social cases," nor even deprived of employment, but who are at the mercy of the least shift of fortune.¹⁰⁰ Invited in 1980 by Prime Minister Raymond Barre to offer proposals for rescuing these "islands of poverty" that subsisted in French society, Gabriel Oheix presented sixty ideas to fight not just poverty but also insecurity, and some of them contain measures in favor of employment.¹⁰¹ In the same context of the second half of the seven year presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, when the breakdown of economic growth becomes more and more apparent, we see the first "pacts for employment" made to facilitate the hiring of the young,¹⁰² and the institution of operation "habitat and social life" in order to improve the social life of certain disadvantaged neighborhoods.¹⁰³ Behind these initiatives is the shadow of a dual awareness: that poverty may not only represent islands of archaism in a society devoted to progress, but depends also on processes related to employment; and that the problems posed by some youth must not only be interpreted in terms of personal maladaptation, and that it is also necessary to take into account the status of employment and the conditions of life. Wage-earning society at last begins to feel the pangs of a guilty conscience.

However, the beginning of the 1980s mark the official birth of policies of insertion. Three studies explore the new spheres and methodology of these policies.¹⁰⁴ They concern certain categories of the population, mainly the young, who are not included in the usual forms of representation and the machinery of public services. For example, we might point to the youth of Minguette in the summer of 1981, who burn cars during long nights of revelry with repercussions that are devoured by the media. What exactly are they demanding? Apparently nothing specific, but at the same time, they say, many things. Such youth are neither representative of the working classes, even though they sometimes work; nor emanations of the dangerous classes, even though they occasionally commit acts of delinquency; nor truly “poor,” because they are neither resigned nor assisted nor living from day to day. Nor are these the expressions of a specific ghetto culture, because they share the cultural and consumerist values of their age group, nor completely strangers to the educational system, because they are enrolled in school, even if they do poorly. They are not really any of these things, and yet at the same time they are all of them. They defy all attempts at socialization, and yet none can answer them. They pose a *transversal* question. One might call this *a matter of their integration*, which itself is composed of many different aspects: integration with respect to work, to lifestyle, to the police, to the justice system, to public services, education, etc.¹⁰⁵ It amounts to a problem of finding them a place in society, which is to say, at the same time, and correspondingly, both a social standing and something useful to do.

To meet this challenge, the “interministerial missions” respond both *transversally and globally* by rethinking the methods and techniques of social intervention. They suggest the localization of administration and an emphasis on specific goals; the mobilization of different concerned actors, both professional and non-professional (partnerships); new relationships between the central and the local, which challenge traditional notions of public activities; and between the professional techniques and global goals to be met that cast doubt on traditional social work. These practices have been well enough analyzed that it is pointless to return to them here,¹⁰⁶ and it is also unnecessary in this context to differentiate these complementary approaches: they are examples of a single goal of rejuvenating public policy.¹⁰⁷

Originally, these were conceived of as experimental and temporary. Contemporaneous to the debut of the first Socialist government, they were part of an ambitious policy for jump-starting the economy and employment whose inspirations were Keynesian. Coping with recession means that we must look after the most oppressed by fighting the risk of violent explosions in zones of urban fragility (by the social development of neighborhoods and committees for preventing delinquency) and by improving the condition of schools and the skills of young people, whose lack of qualifications, more than a lack of jobs, render them “unemployable” (Zones of Educational Priority and Project “New Qualifications”). Improving the socialization of youth and enlarging their range of professional qualifications are the best ways of retraining them so that they might find themselves equal to the opportunities that will be open to them. This is the necessary but not the sufficient condition, however. General political and economic measures are required in order to give these initiatives their true meaning. Bertrand Schwartz is perfectly explicit on this point: “We want to point out the limits of these actions because we are not so naïve as to think that small, local teams, even numerous...are in and of themselves enough to resolve the professional, cultural and social problems of the young.”¹⁰⁸

What will happen when these hopes are dashed and when the “crisis,” far from being resolved, becomes even more serious and deeply entrenched? The passage from policies for the “Social Development of Neighborhoods” (DSQ) to “Urban Policy” nicely illustrates what seems to be the real common fate of these policies of insertion. The first DSQ, few in number, have a markedly experimental character, based at the same time on strong political commitments and a desire for technical innovation. They put an emphasis on local potential at the ground level and on rebuilding social identities through the cultivation of self-managed activities.¹⁰⁹ Such an occupational effervescence is not at all to be scorned, and we shall return to it later. But all this transpires as if the most dynamic examples have given in to the temptation—or have been forced to do so—of making the neighborhood into a kind of “total social phenomenon” capable of being totally self-sufficient. This risks returning to a further isolation and raises two alarming questions: to what extent are these experiences transferable and generalizable? And above all: how can they be undertaken on a scale that transcends

the neighborhood, which is not itself a complete reservoir of employment, nor even a complete entity in the organization of urban space?

The creation of the Interministerial Delegation to the Cities (DIV) in 1988, and then of the Ministry of Cities in 1991, strive to go beyond these territorial limitations. The goal is to open up “difficult” neighborhoods, whose problems, if they arise mainly from the fact of being closed in upon themselves, are not however to be treated *in vivo*, but must be reconceived within the context of the city’s space. These are primarily efforts to mobilize different state administrations: the Ministry of Cities has as its mission to bring together every means within the public power for resolving what has become, in the official language of the social question *par excellence*, “the question of exclusion.” These “Contracts with the City” direct the responsibility of the state and of public powers toward this primary goal and call upon the collaboration of local powers and resources.

But here we find the same contradictions we previously encountered at the level of the economic corporation. In the context of competition and of the search for economic efficiency that also prevails between municipalities, it is unclear whether local officials can or even will play the game of economic success and excellence, and at the same time take responsibility for the “disadvantaged.” Accordingly, local social policies dealing with the “excluded” risk becoming trivial efforts at the margins that consist of doing the minimum at the ground level needed to avoid the most noticeable signs of dysfunction, and even this only when one cannot get rid of them by pushing the problem off on the neighboring municipality.

Being a matter of employment, this question is even more important insofar as “real” businesses, with a few notable exceptions, are initially reluctant to involve themselves in this movement. Local policies have been the site for novel and interesting achievements, such as the neighborhood managers who create at the ground level certain jobs for residents. But they remain extremely limited (currently there are only about a hundred such neighborhood management organizations). A report by Martine Aubry and Michel Praderie submitted to the government in 1991 summed up the entirety of achievements in matters of employment.¹¹⁰ It concluded the necessity of making businesses participate in the dynamic of insertion, and for this appealed to the public spirit of corporate CEOs. Obvi-

ously this invitation can't hurt, but one may doubt its efficacy when the very same heads of corporations are also authorized, if not encouraged, to increase productivity by any possible means, including the reduction of jobs.¹¹¹

Surely it may seem unfair just to dismiss these policies uniformly. They have certainly prevented many explosions and tragedies, even if these effects are not easily "verifiable." They have also functioned as laboratories where we might experiment with new public policies. Perhaps they even offer the outlines of an entirely new system of governance, a new economy of relationships between central powers and local authorities, new forms of citizen involvement in which democracy might find a source of rejuvenation.¹¹²

However the consequences of local policies also reminds us that we must be extremely careful in speaking, as is frequently the case today, of a "displacement" of the social question by the urban question. To be sure, in a society that is almost 80 percent urban, most social problems have an urban context. Moreover, some neighborhoods are truly locations where virtually all the problems that are consequences of the deterioration of the wage-earning condition come to be dramatically crystallized—high rates of unemployment, the fall into precariousness, the breaking of class solidarities, and the breakdown of familial, educational and cultural inheritances, a lack of perspective and of plans for the future, and so on.¹¹³

But in addition to a sociological impulse to focus on matters like "exclusion" and the "excluded"—issues that run throughout the entire society—there is also a temptation to make an individual's confinement in a given territory into a spatial projection—or a metaphor—for exclusion, leading one to believe that we can remedy one by treating the other. It would be better to speak instead of the *territorial management of problems*, which is quite different. Michel Autès distinguishes between territorial and territorialized policies.¹¹⁴ In one sense, any policy, especially since decentralization, is "territorialized," because it must be locally applied to a given territory. A "territorial" policy, on the other hand, mobilizes essentially local resources in order to treat a problem *in situ*. Herein lies its originality, but also its ambiguity. It breaks the instrumental relationship between local and central governments, but at the risk of reducing them to local institutions for regulating conflicts. The question posed by a local policy is not just a matter of scale (the locality will prove "too small" for directing a "large-scale" policy). It is primarily a

question of *the very nature of the variables* that an action centered on the local level may have within its control. For example, the possibility of effecting global redistribution or of managing collective bargaining with representative social partners seems to go well beyond the locality.¹¹⁵ A territorial policy gets pushed into a systemic logic: it is limited to manipulating a finite range of variables controllable in the here and now, and the changing outcome of tinkering with these extremely limited variables. Whatever new results we may achieve are merely readjustments of elements internal to the system itself, rather than the transformation of the givens that structure conditions from the outside.

To be sure, local policies of insertion, especially in their incarnation as “city policies,” try to transcend this narrow range. However, in most cases dealing with the question of employment, which is our main concern here, they encounter perfectly comprehensible roadblocks. If the management of employment has to be handled at a local level, this is only because it has not been resolved elsewhere at the level of national policy. What threatens to happen in such cases is that local policies are devoted to *the management of non-employment*, by putting in place activities that are set up in its absence, in order to try to make people forget about a lack of jobs.

Besides a few limited successes, such as the neighborhood management associations, this seems generally to have been the case. A 1988 study remarked that most of the DSQ operations did not include an economic program, did not create jobs, unemployment did not decrease, and even sometimes increased. The study called for a scaling back of these policies: “they cannot pretend to resolve problems of unemployment or of human skills, they can only prevent a part of the population from becoming completely excluded.”¹¹⁶ It is understandable that such policies cannot aspire to have the power of rooting out unemployment. But, if one decodes this kind of message—“prevent a part of the population from being completely excluded”—this should be read as saying that it would nevertheless be nice if one could manage social turmoil at the ground level by creating a minimum number of exchanges and activities in these spaces threatened by complete anomie. No one, except extreme critics of the policy, can dispute the interest of these efforts. But we would have to be singularly optimistic to see the outlines of a “new citizenship” in these policies of maintenance. One cannot found citizenship on social uselessness.¹¹⁷

The assessment that we may begin to offer of the Minimum Revenue of Insertion (RMI) is along the same lines. The RMI generalizes the problem of insertion, since it concerns the entire population of twenty-five year olds and over whose income falls below a certain level. It also represents a considerable innovation over previous social policies in two ways. For the first time in the long-term history of social protection, the distinction between able-bodied and those who are unable to work is removed: “any person who, because of his age, physical or mental condition, economic situation or the lack of jobs, finds himself unable to work, has the right to obtain from the collectivity a decent means of existence.”¹¹⁸ Hence we find placed on the same level as beneficiaries of the same rights all those who benefited from the old “handicapology” as well as those who suffer only from the poor labor market.

Secondly, this right to obtain a “decent means of existence” is not simply a right to assistance. It is a right of insertion: “social and professional insertion of persons in difficulties constitutes a national imperative.”¹¹⁹ The contract of insertion is the accompaniment of the allocation of resources that links the beneficiary to the achievement of a goal. But this also entails the assumption that the national community must help him to realize this goal. This is an attempt to break the secular image of the “bad poor,” who live as parasites instead of working, but also an effort to erase the stigma of the assisted, the passive beneficiary of relief, which stems from his powerlessness to take care of himself.

This decisive transformation of social aid resulted from the recognition of the existence of these new sorts of impoverished persons who can no longer be held responsible for their diminished condition. It will no longer be possible either to hold them culpable for not working, when this was not something they chose, or to try to care for them or rehabilitate them by placing them in one of the classical categories of social aid. It is necessary to help them once again find a “normal” place in society.¹²⁰ The notion of insertion designates this original mode of intervention and suggests, by means of the contract, its own methodology: to construct a project that engages the responsibility of both the beneficiary and the community, and this should conclude in the re-inscription of the beneficiary into the common regime.

The first article of the law of 1988 included, however, a fundamental ambiguity: “The social and professional insertion of persons

in difficulty...” Does this mean social *and* professional insertion, or social *or* professional insertion? This formulation gave birth to lively debates about the application of the law.¹²¹ But after several years of the application of the RMI, the ambiguity has been resolved. These two forms of insertion operate on two completely different registers of social existence. Professional insertion corresponds to what we have so far called “integration”: to regain a full-fledged place in society, to be reinstated in the position of wage earner, with its burdens and assurances. On the other hand, a “purely social” insertion unfolds on a novel register of social existence that poses new and unnoticed problems.

Quantitatively, all the evaluations of the RMI (and they are numerous, for no other social measure has been accompanied by such a flood of studies, reports, and follow-ups of all kinds) attest to an utter disparity between these two kinds of insertion. By studying several sets of variables, we can estimate that about 15 percent of the recipients of the RMI once again find stable or temporary employment.¹²² Moreover, a significant number of recipients travel through the tundra of “subsidized employment” or internships and likewise represent about 15 percent of the whole.¹²³ The remaining 70 percent are distributed between unemployment, generally unsubsidized, and inactivity.¹²⁴

As a result, for the great majority of its recipients, the RMI does not play the role that it was supposed to play, at least in the spirit of its sponsors: namely, to represent a transitional stage, an assistance of limited duration that would allow some people in difficulty to get back on their feet. But if the RMI does not function as a sieve, it becomes a kind of cul-de-sac into which all whose existence is not socially justifiable risk being herded. This is the assessment made, in more or less explicit terms, by the evaluative reports: “the RMI is a breath of fresh air that marginally improves the living conditions of beneficiaries without transforming them...It allows its beneficiaries to live better where they find themselves.”¹²⁵ Or even, with respect to the form most often taken by the contract of insertion: “the notion of counterpart is weakened to the advantage of a notion that it might be simply an accompaniment of the contractant in the present situation.”¹²⁶

To put this differently, what would a social insertion consist of that did not culminate in a professional insertion, that is to say, in integration? A condemnation to perpetual insertion, in the end? What

is someone who is permanently inserted? A person whom one does not completely abandon, whom one “accompanies” in his present situation by weaving around him a network of activities, initiatives, and projects. Here we might mention the development in some social services of a veritable occupational effervescence. These efforts are not to be underestimated. It is the pride (but maybe also the regret) of a democracy not to resign one’s self to completely abandoning a growing number of its members whose only crime is to be “unemployable.” But these efforts have something pathetic about them. They are reminiscent of the labor of Sisyphus, pushing his rock that nevertheless always falls back down the hill just when he approaches the summit, for it is impossible to settle it into a stable position. The success of the RMI would be its self-abolishment by the transformation of its clientele from subjects-to-be-inserted into integrated subjects. But the number of its direct “beneficiaries” has doubled since its first years of existence and reaches today almost 800,000. For many among them, insertion is no longer a *stage*; rather, it has become a *permanent condition*.

Insertion as a way of life represents a peculiar modality of social existence. I am not making up the possibility of this. The study of the National Commission for the evaluation of the RMI alludes to this in its most diplomatic manner: “For a large portion of recipients, these actions lead them toward a ‘stable-transitory’ state; in situations of insertion, these persons have an intermediary status somewhere between exclusion and definitive insertion.”¹²⁷

Either a “stable-transitory state,” or position of permanent transition, on the one hand, or inserted for life, on the other. Recipients of the RMI do not have a monopoly on these two conditions. This is also the fate of youth who wander from internship to internship, sometimes taking menial jobs before finally losing their spirit, abandoning this arduous pursuit, and becoming candidates for insertion. They want, they say, “real work.” One author also speaks of “a stable-transitory state” when describing the situation of some long-term unemployed.¹²⁸ This is also the status of many projects that are set in some neighborhoods. Their promoters exhaust themselves inventing projects, in order to make some belongings possible, to structure employment around activities that they have invented. At the extreme, their work consists of constructing spaces of sociability different from those in which their clientele live, making an otherwise desperate everyday life at least tolerable. Borrowing the

vocabulary of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, we might say that insertion attempts to achieve a “secondary socialization,” that is to say, to reattach the individual to an “institutional underworld or one based on institutions.”¹²⁹ But the “institutional” practices that support insertion are labile and intermittent when compared to other “substructures” that act throughout everyday life, in particular, that of labor. These are rendered even more fragile by the fact that, for individuals who take advantage of policies of insertion, the “primary socialization,” that is to say the internalization of general norms of society through family and school, is often itself in disarray. Rather than speaking of secondary socialization, we should probably call this “asocial-sociability.” I understand by this the system of relationships more or less evanescent that are either not embedded at all, or are inscribed only in an intermittent and problematic way, in recognized “institutions” and that leave individuals in a vacuum.¹³⁰

Policies of insertion thus appear to have failed to help a significant part of their clientele make this transition toward integration, which was their original goal. “Whether in the context of the RMI, the formation of credit, and more broadly, the entire range of policies of insertion for populations threatened by exclusion, these policies of insertion are delivered up to the doorstep of businesses.”¹³¹ This criticism does not immediately damn them, because they have at least momentarily contributed to avoiding the very worst outcomes, at least if one thinks that the degeneration into acts of violence and revolt are the worst evils to be avoided. Moreover, during these extremely straightened economic and social circumstances which have given birth to them, when even people perfectly integrated have fallen down, it is particularly difficult to bring back to ordinary life those who have already given up or who are rendered vulnerable by their environment of origin or their conditions of life. But we must also add that they have another function than the one they ostensibly fulfill. If we may indulge ourselves with a phrase that has a rich sociological pedigree, we might say that these policies also contribute to “calming the naïve.”¹³² In France at the beginning of the 1980s, there arose a general consensus on behalf of the need to accept the “major constraint” represented by the globalization of the market, and the search at all costs for competitiveness and efficiency. With this choice, some categories of the population find themselves left out. Is it by accident that the in-

creased reliance on policies of insertion is contemporaneous to the triumph of corporations and the entrepreneurial ideology? Perhaps it is also no coincidence that it is socialist governments that are particularly attached to pushing such a “social supplement” (in the sense that one speaks of a “supplement of soul”) at the very moment when they concede that economic constraints have dictated their legislation. Under the banner of excellence, there can be no winners without losers. But for a society that did not altogether abandon its democratic ideals, it still appears just and fitting that those who have lost are not consigned to the fate of pariahs. Such may be the real meaning of policies of insertion: *to take care of the able-bodied who have been invalidated by present circumstances*. This is their originality, both with respect to classical policies of social assistance targeted toward a lack on the part of their clientele, and policies of integration that address themselves to all without distinction. Policies of insertion instead operate in particularly vulnerable zones of social life where the “ordinary useless” have given up or are about to do so.

In a social system that promises an unbroken transition between different forms of socialization and social ages (from the school to work, from work to retirement, for example), we can not speak of insertion, for it is given by increase: it will be made pleonastic with the notion of integration.¹³³ Since the stakes appeared in the machinery of wage-earning society, insertion is posed as a problem and offers at the same time a technology for resolving it. It gives a name (“insertion”) both to the distance with respect to integration and the practical provision that is supposed to overcome this distance. But in addition, the response itself is two-fold. At the heart of the clientele who benefit from insertion, some are reintegrated into the common regime. Others, like the permanently ill, are maintained indefinitely under an intermediary social system. This gives rise to a new status that forces us to confront the crumbling of wage-earning society and current ways of trying to come to grips with it.

The Crisis of the Future¹³⁴

Periods of strife are a windfall for the “makers of plans,” as has been said of the 18th century. I do not have any intention, however, of proposing the best course of action. If the future is an adventure whose script can only be written by history, this is largely unknow-

able. Tomorrow belongs to the unknown. But this is also a work beginning with the inheritance of today. The vast horizon we have surveyed up to this point allows us to posit certain strong correlations between economic conditions, the level of protections offered to certain groups, and the social state's modes of activity. Thus, while it may be absurd to pretend to predict the future, it is possible to trace the constraints that will inform it in a different sense, as a function of alternatives that will be chosen (or, to the contrary, not chosen) in matters of economic policy, of the organization of labor, and of the social policies of the state. To simplify, I will examine only four possible outcomes.

The first is to stress the continued deterioration of the condition of wage labor observable since the 1970s. This will be the direct consequence of accepting the unbridled hegemony of the free market. "If 20 percent of the French are just as poorly qualified as the Koreans or Filipinos, there is no reason to pay them more. The SMIC or minimum wage must be abolished."¹³⁵ This assertion does an injustice to the Koreans and Filipinos. There certainly already exists, or will soon exist, an even larger proportion of this foreign labor who are just as qualified as their French counterparts occupying the positions of skilled workers, technicians, and even those of highly qualified computer programmers, and yet who cost much less to employ. There is no *economic* reason not to prefer them to French wage earners.¹³⁶ In this logic, the President of French CEO's declared in 1983: "1983 will be the year of the struggle against the constraints introduced legislatively during the Thirty Glorious years, the year of the struggle for flexibility."¹³⁷ This is the idea that one cannot serve two masters, and that the "rehabilitation of business" is the new categorical imperative to which the entire society must conform.

From this perspective, the majority of social protections are the legacy of an outmoded era, when social compromises were compatible with the demands of the marketplace. Today they have the effect of stasis that blocks the dynamic of recovery. This effect of inertia works effectively. For example, when Ronald Reagan or Margaret Thatcher attempted to apply the extreme neoclassical option, they had to leave intact the major provisions of social protection.¹³⁸ However, for partisans of such a policy, these imperfect results are the consequence of two main obstacles: resistance by social groups who acquired these "privileges," and the political risks

of moving too savagely and rapidly toward deregulation. Thus we may discern a significant difference between the theoretical positions of liberal ideologues and their political expressions. For this ultraliberalism, however, it was the sociological imagination inherited from an outmoded past that must gradually be gotten rid of.

This *hubris* of the market puts the entire society at the whim of its ungovernable laws. “The market is the state of nature of society, but the duty of elites is to make of it a state of culture. Lacking legal norms, in developed societies as in others, it turns into the jungle, reducing itself to the survival of the fittest and creating segregation and violence.”¹³⁹ This is also the lesson Karl Polanyi drew from observing the unfolding of the industrial revolution. Left to its own devices, the “self-regulating” market, the purest way of applying the economic logic, is strictly speaking inapplicable, because it contains within itself none of the necessary elements for establishing a social order.¹⁴⁰ Indeed it might very well destroy the social order that preexists it. If the domination of the economy beginning in the nineteenth century has not completely destroyed society already, this is only because it has been limited by two kinds of *non-mercantile* regulations. Market society was able to take hold in the first place because it was embedded in a social system where traditional patronage and “organic” forms of solidarity remained strong: a predominantly rural society with extensive and durable family bonds, as well as effective networks of proximate protections. These conditions prior to the advent of the market blunted its potentially destabilizing effects, which were only suffered directly by groups that were already left out (disaffiliated): namely, those immigrants from the interior, uprooted and pauperized, who formed the labor force for the first industrial corporations.¹⁴¹ Secondly, the response to this upheaval was the creation of new social regulations—social protections, social property, and social rights. It is the “invention of the social” that has domesticated the market and humanized capitalism.¹⁴²

We are today in a totally different situation. The *Gemeinschaft*-like aspect of society, still strong in the 19th century, has been progressively eroded and extant reservoirs of informal solidarity are practically exhausted. Protections set in place by the social state have been substituted for them, and basically stand in their place today. This is precisely what makes these protections so vital. To eradicate them would not only be a matter of taking back “social

acquisitions,” more or less contestable, but would amount to breaking the modern form of social cohesion. This cohesion depends entirely on such regulations, for the good reason that this solidarity was in large part created by these social acquisitions. To impose in an unconditional way the laws of the marketplace on all of society would be equivalent to a virtual cultural counter-revolution, whose social consequences are unpredictable because this would be to destroy the unique form of social regulation that has been developed over the course of a century. One of the paradoxes of progress is that the most “developed” societies are also the most fragile. Some countries—such as neo-Peronist Argentina—have suffered the effects of savage deregulations at the cost of immense suffering, but apparently without collapsing. It would likely take much less than this to provoke the breakdown of a country such as France, because it cannot fall back on the former kinds of social protections to defend itself. The interactions woven by the social state have become the major component of this kind of sociability, and “the social” hereafter forms the very skeleton of society. It would only be necessary, then, to allow the unchecked reign of the “natural laws” of the marketplace in order to yield a kind of fear whose outlines are impossible to sketch, except to realize that this would not allow even the minimal conditions for forming a society of equals.

A second possible outcome would consist of trying to maintain, in almost the same form, the current situation by increasing efforts to stabilize it. Up until recently, the transformations that have been underway for the past twenty years have not carried with them any major social shockwave. Indeed they have probably shored up as many positions as they have torn down.¹⁴³ Consequently, if we bracket for a moment the personal tragedies, numerous but generally discrete, and some occasional violence largely confined to already stigmatized areas, it is not inconceivable that French society could tolerate the social invalidation of 10 percent, 20 percent or perhaps even more of its population.

This is insofar as it would be possible to improve the management of circumstances that create problems. The state is already intensely involved in their care taking. In 1992, 1,940,000 persons were recipients of various provisions, ranging from aid to jobs.¹⁴⁴ We have previously shown the limits, but also the ingeniousness, of policies of insertion. In order to manage the risk of losing control of the current situation, the state has hardly exhausted its full capacity.

It might very well improve its performance without fundamentally increasing the scale of its interventions. For example, the RMI might be made even more generous, and supplementary efforts could be deployed to better mobilize the different agencies of insertion. So too for urban and employment policies, youth partnerships, the unemployed, etc. We must also remember that the social state helps keep between 11 and 13 million people from falling into relative or absolute poverty.¹⁴⁵ But the role of the state is not limited to distributing social benefits. The capacities of public services are extensive enough to “fight against exclusion,” but they remain widely underutilized. The state possesses numerous, varied and sometimes powerful personnel and services in a given territory: control over construction, transportation and communications, architecture and urbanization, police personnel, national education, social services, etc. One of the major reasons for the difficulties encountered in some neighborhoods stems from the attenuated presence of public services. They might be more sincerely engaged in a policy of positive discrimination for problem areas, outcomes indeed envisioned in the relevant literature.¹⁴⁶ The state might very well shore up its role as guarantor of social cohesion at a cost that would not be exorbitant.¹⁴⁷ Finally, in terms of what is currently offered by urban policy, it would be extremely helpful to coordinate closely all these measures at a local level in order to give them the coherence they are currently missing.

Such a “moderate” option is not unreasonable. There are two versions of this. The optimistic one thinks that this would only be necessary as a holding pattern for a few years or decades, while waiting for economic recovery and/or the consolidation of a new regulatory system that would succeed in bringing with it the stabilization of post-industrial society. The other, more cynical, finds nothing scandalous in thinking that a society could prosper by accepting that a certain proportion of its citizens will be left behind.¹⁴⁸ But the quietism that has prevailed up to now in the political management of economic “crisis” rests on three conditions that cast doubt on the long-term chances for maintaining the quasi-status quo.

First, it is imperative that current conditions improve, are maintained, or at least do not deteriorate too much; that the globalization of the labor market can be controlled; that a reasonable “diversion” of manpower can be effected for obsolete categories of workers into new productive jobs; that the insecurity of working conditions

does not continue to grow to the point that it becomes impossible to extend a minimum of protections to the majority of jobs, and so on. Probably no one today, in the face of these outcomes, can have absolute job security. But in many cases there is a strong, uncontrollable risk of degradation that will deliver us back into the context of the first option, to the “return to the jungle” alluded to by Alain Minc.

Similarly, the success of a minimal management of the crisis presupposes that its victims will continue to resign themselves to submitting to the situation that is given to them. Such a prediction no longer seems absurd. To the contrary, the history of the workers movement allows us to see the astonishing passivity with which ever more degraded working conditions are accepted in the here and now. The formation of a power of contestation and social transformation supposes that at least three conditions will come into being: a system structured around a common condition; the availability of an alternative vision of society; and the feeling of being indispensable to the functioning of the social machinery. If social history has gravitated for more than a century around the question of work, this is because the workers movement achieved the synthesis of these three conditions: it had its militants and its sense of belonging, it was the historical bearer of a project for the future, and it was the main producer of social wealth in industrial society.¹⁴⁹ The supernumeraries of today, however, have no such things. They are atomized; they have no hopes other than of being slightly less poorly situated in contemporary society; and they are socially useless. Thus it seems beyond the realm of probability, despite the best efforts of certain fringe militant groups like the Syndicate of the Unemployed, that this heterogeneous collection of isolated conditions might give birth to an autonomous social movement.¹⁵⁰

But organized assertions of rights are not the only form of social protest. Anomie gives way to violence. This is usually senseless violence, without any systematic goal, often both destructive and self-destructive, and rather more difficult to control because there is nothing to be negotiated. Such a potential for violence already exists. But when it manifests itself in action, these are ordinarily turned against their authors (cf. the problem of drugs in the suburbs), or against some external symbols of wealth that are repugnant to the oppressed (acts of delinquency, pillaging of supermarkets, vivid destruction of automobiles, etc.). But we simply cannot say, espe-

cially if conditions are aggravated, or even just “maintain themselves,” whether such manifestations will not proliferate to the point of becoming unbearable. They may pave the way not for a “Great Night,” but for numerous blue nights when the misery of the world will unveil the shrouded face of its despair. A democratic society will be completely powerless, or completely shamed, in the face of the exigencies of confronting these disorders. In reality, this could only include the possible responses of repressing or enclosing the ghettos.

There is a third reason, and to my mind the most important, that makes maintaining the status quo unjustifiable. It is impossible to draw a distinct hermetic line between those who withdraw from the game and those who fall, and this is for a very basic reason: it is not simply a matter of “in’s” and “out’s” but a continuum of positions that exist in a collectivity and that “contaminate” one another. When in the middle of the nineteenth century he denounced the “gangrene of pauperism,” the Abbé Messonier was not just exhibiting contempt for the people. The only reason that the question of pauperism became the social question of the nineteenth century, and was directly confronted, was because the entire society was threatened by this “gangrene,” and destabilization by a boomerang effect of the periphery upon the center.

So it is even today with “exclusion,” and that is why this term must be handled with extreme caution. Let me repeat one more time: exclusion is not an absence of social relationships, but a set of social relations endemic to society as a whole. No one is really outside of society, but there are a set of positions whose relationship to the center are more and more attenuated: former workers who become long-time unemployed; youth who cannot find jobs; groups who are poorly educated, poorly housed, poorly cared for and poorly esteemed, etc. There is no clear line of division between these situations and those of the vulnerable who are slightly better off, such as those who still work but who might be laid off the next month, or those who are more comfortably housed but who might be evicted if they cannot pay the rent, or those who study hard but know that they risk not graduating, etc. The “excluded” are usually the “vulnerable” who were “on the border” but who have finally collapsed. But there is also a circulation between this zone of vulnerability and that of integration, a destabilization of the stable, of qualified workers who become insecure, well-esteemed managers who may be-

come unemployed. It is from the *center* that the shockwave begins which passes through the entire social structure. The “excluded” are not responsible for the fact that the corporations have chosen a policy of flexibility, for example, even though their situation is actually the consequence of this policy. They find themselves *disaffiliated*, and this qualification seems preferable than that of being excluded: they were unencumbered, but remain dependent on the center, which was never so omnipresent for the whole of society. This is why we are justified in saying that the question posed by the invalidation of some individuals and groups concerns everyone. This is not just an appeal to a vague moral solidarity. Rather, it is to take note of the interdependency of positions created by the same dynamic, that of the crisis of wage-earning society.

Awareness of the existence of such a continuum has begun to spread.¹⁵¹ In December 1993, the magazine *La Rue* published a CSA poll on “French confronted by exclusion.”¹⁵² Probably we should take this poll with a grain of salt, particularly when it bears on such an indeterminate theme. The results of this one, however, are disturbing. It looks exactly as if each group has internalized the objective risk that it assumes: workers and employees are more worried than intermediary professions and managers; and above all, 69 percent of eighteen to twenty-four year olds fear being left out, as opposed to only 28 percent of those sixty-five or older (who, on the other hand, fear this happening to someone close to them in 66 percent of the cases). This too is perhaps part of the “crisis of the future,” a society where old people are more confident of the future than the young. And, in fact, elderly people still benefit from protections accumulated by the wage-earning society, whereas the young already know that the promise of progress will never be delivered. These figures show a disturbing paradox. Those who are already beyond work are more secure than those who are still working, and above all, those who are preparing themselves to enter professional life express the deepest despair. The reactions to the CIP (the “minimum wage for the young”) in the spring of 1994 confirmed these impressions. Nothing is a more beautiful homage to the wage-earning society than the revolt of these young people who are acutely aware of the fact that they are in danger of not being able to participate in it. Significantly, this reaction has principally been that of relatively privileged young people, or at least those destined to follow the path of social advancement, rewarding

success in school and the ambition of being integrated by work. Adherence to the values of wage-earning society is not only a defense of “privilege,” as the demagogic critique of the “have’s” would like one to believe.¹⁵³ Rather it is the fear of the “have not’s,” and it is no coincidence that young people are the bearers of this. “For the first time since the war, a new generation has seen its conditions of professional advancement worsened in terms of employment, in the first instance, but also in terms of salary when they finally succeed in getting a job.”¹⁵⁴

Mirroring after the fact the despair of society in the second half of the eighteenth century (this was on the eve of the unexpected reversals of the French Revolution, but apparently no one at the time saw it), Paul Valéry says: “the social body very slowly lost its future.”¹⁵⁵ Perhaps our society is always in the process of losing its future. Not only the happy tomorrow, submerged for the last two or three decades, but the symbol of a future at least somewhat within our own control. Apparently youth are not the only people concerned, even if they feel most acutely threatened. More generally, to lose faith in the future is to witness the breakdown of the foundation upon which it was possible to deploy gradual strategies that would render tomorrow a better place to live than today.

The third option acknowledges the loss of the centrality of labor and the deterioration of wage labor, and attempts to find new escapes, compensations or alternatives for them. Probably not everything is to be condemned in contemporary life. New professional careers seem rather more unusual and interesting in light of the tightly expressed rhythms of industrial society: education and then training, marriage and then entrance for forty years into professional life, followed by a short retirement. This model is finished, but should this be lamented? (We should recall the denunciations of the “subway-job-sleep” way of life, which are not so far away). Shouldn’t we also see in contemporary problems the signs of a deep societal change that the economic “crisis” alone is not responsible for? Larger cultural transformations have affected the socialization of the youth and disturbed the traditional periodicity of the cycles of life. The entire organization of social temporality was affected, and all the different regulations that determine the integration of the individual in his different roles, both familial and social, have now become more flexible.¹⁵⁶ Rather than seeing anomie everywhere, we must also know how to recognize cultural mutations that make society more

flexible, institutions less frozen, and the regimentation of labor less rigid. Mobility is not always synonymous with precariousness. We may also discover that all professional careers characterized by frequent changes of employment are not reducible to this passive precariousness that is the effect of the destructuralization of the labor market. This may also be the case with young people in search of their destiny and experimenting, as they also do in matters of the heart, before stabilizing themselves when they turn thirty.¹⁵⁷ The most optimistic spirits conclude that “labor is finished,” or almost so, and that it is now high time to look elsewhere so as not to miss what has been distinctively invented today.

Still, we may wonder what are the concrete resources available for confronting this new crossroads? First of all, if we accept the casting away of the model of wage-earning society and its “rigidities,” there is a wider range of possible jobs. Of these, there are numerous services of personal assistance, taking care of the elderly and children, domestic aids, maintenance services of all kinds, etc. Two remarks deserve to be made here.

First, to attempt to systematically transform these activities into jobs would encourage the general “commodification” of society, which goes beyond even what Karl Polanyi denounced throughout his critique as the “self-governing market.” Making land and labor into marketable goods had deeply destabilizing effects from the point of view of the social. But the capitalism of the nineteenth century respected, or rather had not yet completely annexed, an entire gamut of practices deriving from what I have called proximate protections. It is also ironic to observe that optimistic discourse about the “explosion of jobs” is often set forth by a family of thought that is extremely critical of the social state, whose bureaucratic interventions and general regulations it denounces as having destroyed earlier forms of community. By way of an apology for these intimate relationships based on proximity, do we really wish to replace the reign of the regulatory state with the reign of commodities, and to make all human relationships (except, perhaps, within the context of the family) into commercial transactions?

Our second remark: when mentioning the “proximate services” and “personal assistance,” we refer to a nebulous array of practices appealing to completely different skills and aptitudes. With respect to services of a “personal” nature, at least two major kinds can be distinguished. Some derive from what Erving Goffman calls “ser-

vices of reparation.”¹⁵⁸ These forms of “intervention upon another” result from specialists endowed with relatively sophisticated technical competencies.¹⁵⁹ This largely pertains to the medical, social, or medico-social (we may also add lawyers, architects and counselors of all kinds). For many reasons, especially their cost, the expansion of these services can only be limited: one simply cannot offer psychoanalysis to all persons living in social isolation. On the other hand, there is a completely different kind of service provider whose need is felt to arise from the breakdown of informal networks of mutual assistance induced by urbanization, the reassertion of familial relations on the conjugal family, the constraints on the organization of labor, and so on. The manager who is too busy has no time to walk his own dog, and cannot ask this of his neighbors because he has no relationship with them. He also can’t cook, and so has pizza delivered, and so on. Thus there is effectively an “explosion of jobs,” or rather, of underemployments, which are in reality the financing of domestic services. André Gorz has argued that these relationships of work cannot be distinguished from a servile kind of dependency that makes of them a kind of “neo-domesticity.”¹⁶⁰ Not only because they are underqualified and underpaid, but also because the very essence of the task to be accomplished takes over an objectivated and institutionalized social relationship. We are now well beyond a modern relationship of wage earning, and also of the form assumed at the beginning of the industrial revolution, when the partners involved belonged to groups structured by the antagonism of their interests. These celebrated “services of proximity” subsequently risk oscillating between a paternalist neo-philanthropy and post-modern forms of exploitation of labor through which the rich are offered “personal services,” for example, funded by the lowering of taxes.

Probably all the services capable of being created may be reduced to these forms of neo-domesticity. Jean-Louis Laville deployed the entire gamut of these services.¹⁶¹ But the care with which he strives to dissociate them from modes of quasi-assistance or quasi-benevolence shows that very few examples are both innovative and forward-looking. Services may indeed exist that are forced to mobilize both monetary and non-monetary resources, to articulate the public sphere and the private sphere, personal investment and general regulation. But they are hardly socially visible, and have not gone beyond the experimental stage. This concern to promote a “solidary economy,” that is to say, to link the question of employ-

ment with that of social cohesion, to create bonds between people and at the same time activities, cannot be more respectable.¹⁶² But, at least under the current conditions, it is more a matter of declaring an intention than of ratifying a policy. There also exists, between normal employment and assistance, between social insertion and professional retraining, between the commercial sector and the protected sector, a “third sector,” sometimes known as the “social economy.”¹⁶³ These activities are in the progress of being expanded, especially through the “social” treatment of unemployment, at the heart of which it is often difficult to decide whether the objective being pursued is that of returning to work or establishing someone in a situation that is properly “intermediary” between work and assistance. More than 400,000 people in 1993 have been involved with these activities, which tend to be confined to an independent sphere of the classical labor market, and which do have their usefulness at such a catastrophic crossroads.¹⁶⁴ However, it is only as something of a euphemism that we can speak of these as “employment policies.”

We will hardly find there an “explosion of jobs.” But if the current crisis is indeed a crisis of integration by work, the savagely exploitative character of such jobs would do little to resolve this dilemma. It might even make it worse.¹⁶⁵ If employment is reduced to a “commodification” of services, what becomes the continuum of positions that constituted the wage-earning society, and what else is necessary to form a solidary society? An aggregate of baby-sitters, servers at McDonald’s, or baggers in supermarkets—do these really make a “society”? This is said without contempt for the people who devote themselves to these occupations. To the contrary, this is to ask what might be necessary to make these jobs into vehicles for finding personal dignity. A society of “full employment” is not necessarily a society of “full dignity,” and the way in which the United States has partially resolved the problem of employment is not necessarily an example to follow. The majority of the 8 million jobs created in the United States between 1980 and 1986 were paid a salary 60 percent less than the average industrial salary,¹⁶⁶ and the multiplication of low-status workers apparently did nothing to combat grave signs of social dissociation, which include urban violence, high crime rates, drugs and the establishment of a veritable “underclass” of the miserable and deviant, completely cut off from the rest of society.¹⁶⁷

These thoughts must be given two further nuances, but without changing their overall focus. Technological developments in progress also demand qualified and highly qualified workers. Indeed we may even define “post-industrial society” in terms of the preponderance of new industries, such as information, health, and education, which produce symbolic goods rather than just material goods and mobilize highly qualified professional skills.¹⁶⁸ But, at least from the perspective that concerns us here, the real question is whether the “spillover” of jobs lost can be offset by the creation of these new jobs. The answer is no, even though it is impossible today to measure the magnitude of the deficit.

On the other hand it is obvious that we are in the midst of a profound transformation of the relationship that social subjects, and especially the young, have with work. Maybe we are even on the verge of leaving behind the “civilization of labor” which, since the eighteenth century, placed the economy in the dominant position, and production at the foundation of social development. This would then manifest an outmoded attachment to the past rather than underestimating the innovations that are made and the alternatives that are sought in order to overcome the classical conception of work. For what establishes the social dignity of the individual is not necessarily the wage-earning job, nor even the labor itself, but its social utility, that is to say, the place it holds in the production of society. Thus we acknowledge that profound societal transformations are also at work during the “crisis,” adding, of course, with Yves Barel, that their potentially positive effects remain largely “invisible” for the time being.¹⁶⁹ What are perfectly visible, however, are the traps that befall those ambitious spirits who hasten to overcome the alienation of labor and the subjection of wage labor. An overcoming of this magnitude represents an enormous cultural revolution. And it seems paradoxical that a responsibility so overwhelming would be delegated to the most fragile and impoverished groups, such as the recipients of the RMI, who would have to demonstrate that social insertion is equivalent to professional integration, or the youth of the ghettos, charged with inventing a “new citizenship,” whereas most often they are denied even the minimum recognition in everyday life, as, for example, when they are turned over to the police or when they apply for housing or employment.

Labor remains not only an economic but also a psychological, cultural, and symbolic good, and the reactions of those who have

lost it confirm this. Two-thirds of the recipients of the RMI demand, mainly, a job, and youth gradually turn themselves away from internships when they realize that these do not culminate in “real work.”¹⁷⁰ This is understandable. If they do nothing that is recognized, in effect they are nothing. Why in only a few years has the tag of “RMI-ist” become such a stigma, and most often experienced as such by its “beneficiaries”? This fact is all the more unjust insofar as it is for many a last recourse that they accepted when they failed to find a job. But social life does not function on the basis of good will. And if it no longer functions by labor, it is still good to have several arrows in one’s quiver, such as leisure, culture, participation in other valorizing activities, and so on. But except for certain privileged minorities or other marginal groups who accept being submitted to social opprobrium, allowing them to stretch their bow and shoot their arrows in several directions, this is a power ordinarily drawn from labor. What will be the social destiny of a young man or woman—these cases begin to present themselves—who after several years of servitude becomes an RMI-ist at the age of twenty-five because this is the legal age of the first contract? Knowing that his or her life will continue in this way for another fifty or more years, one cannot even imagine the nightmare of such a life deprived of work.

When virtually the whole world has dismissed the model of the “dual society,” many reconcile themselves to it by celebrating any of its possible achievements—from the development of a segment of “social utility” to the opening of “new well-springs of employment,” with the expectation that this will give the supernumeraries something to do.¹⁷¹ But in the context of the problematic of integration, the question is not just of giving everyone something to do, but also giving them a status. From this point of view, the debates that arose about the SMIC are revealing. The status of “SMIC-ard” is hardly enviable. But the SMIC is the passport that gives access to wage-earning society, and allows us to understand the real difference between the mere fact of holding a job and the fact of being a wage-earner. The SMIC gives way to a range of positions that vary widely in terms of salary, meaningfulness, recognition, or the prestige and power that they provide. Nonetheless, they are, as we have seen (cf. chapter 7), *comparable*. They are hierarchical, identifiable and come into competition with one *another under the system of wage-labor*, which includes, along with mon-

etary retribution, additional collective regulations, procedures, conventions and guarantees that have the status of law. The SMIC is the first echelon by which a worker may be distinguished from an occupier of any job that is not situated within the epistemology of wage earning. In this way we can see that persistent symbolic struggles will occur around the SMIC because it represents one of the blocks that impedes the resolution of the salaried society.¹⁷² It may also represent, for the future, a reference point for defining a minimal level, in terms of remuneration for labor and of statutory guarantees, that the new activities of a post-salaried society must respect so that the disappearance of this model will not take place from the bottom.

The fourth option is to effect a redistribution of "scarce resources" arising from socially useful labor. This outcome must not be confused with a restoration of the salaried society. I have emphasized the irreversibility of both the system of labor and the structure of the social state, whose articulation would guarantee its fragile balance. Wage-earning society is an historical construction that has succeeded other social formations; it is not eternal. However, it should remain a living reference point because it has achieved an unprecedented synthesis between labor and social protections. This outcome is undebatable on the stage of Western civilization. Salaried society is that social system which has done the best job of dispelling the large-scale vulnerability of the masses and guaranteeing a greater participation in social values. In other words, the wage-earning society is the sociological basis upon which Western-style democracy rests, with all of its virtues and limitations. It has not achieved consensus, but rather the regulation of conflicts; not an equality of conditions, but at least the compatibility of their differences; not social justice, but a control and reduction of the arbitrariness of the wealthy and powerful; not government by all, but the representation of all interests and their elevation to be debated on the public stage. In the name of these "values"—and of course with and for the benefit of those men and women who share them—we may wonder about the best way to avoid throwing away this inheritance.

The most rigorous option would demand that all members of society maintain a close attachment to socially useful work and the prerogatives that are associated with it. The strength of this position rests on the fact that labor remains the principal foundation of citizenship insofar as it includes, until proven otherwise, an economic

and social dimension. Labor, and especially wage labor, is obviously not the only socially useful work, but it has become the dominant form of it. The growth of wage labor has emancipated labor and workers from being trapped by local subordination; peasants from the tutelage of tradition and custom; and women from being prisoners of the domestic sphere. The wage earner is an externalized producer for the market, that is to say, anyone can enter into the context of a regulated exchange. It gives general social utility to “private” activities. The wage acknowledges and rewards labor “in general,” that is to say, activities that are potentially useful to all. Thus in contemporary society and for the majority of its members labor is the foundation of their *economic citizenship*. It is also, in principle, the basis of *social citizenship*: labor represents the participation of each individual in production for society, starting with the production of society. Thus it is the concrete medium that serves as a basis for the construction of social rights and duties, responsibilities and recognition, as well as for subjection and constraints.¹⁷³

But this “construction”—expensively purchased indeed, and only gradually and imperfectly encouraged during the long history of “undignified wage labor”—can no longer continue to function under *these conditions*. As Alain Minc, who was one of the first to perceive the structural nature of the “crisis,” has observed: “the economy of scarcity that we are now entering calls only for a last resort: sharing. Sharing of scarce resources, that is to say, productive labor, primary revenues and socialized revenues.”¹⁷⁴ This pessimistic note is difficult to avoid if one is skeptical about the potential of these new “well-springs of employment” to create real jobs, and also skeptical of the magnitude of the “spillover” of ravaged sectors into productive sectors so as to recycle the entirety of available manpower. If some people remain supernumeraries, and there are further increases in the large-scale vulnerability of the masses, then how can we avoid the danger of allowing the situation to deteriorate further? The only way to avoid this seems to be to find some way of redistributing the “scarce resources” of productive labor and minimal protections in order to avoid increased economic insecurity and the culture of waywardness.

The proposition for sharing labor seems to be the most logical answer to this problem: to make it such that each person finds, keeps or recovers a place in the continuum of socially recognized positions associated, on the basis of effective labor, with decent living

conditions and social rights. Is such a demand attainable in reality? I cannot even begin to answer such a difficult question in a few words, or even in a long account such as this one.¹⁷⁵ Two remarks, then, to make it clear what is at stake.

It is true that general measures such as the reduction of the work-week from forty to thirty-five or even thirty-two hours are not miracle solutions to be applied mechanically. Real work is less and less a quantifiable and interchangeable constant: there are “invisible” components to labor and personal investments in a task, which are not only measured by the time one is present at the job. Indeed these become more and more predominant in modern forms of wage labor.¹⁷⁶

But criticisms of the redistribution of labor along the lines of a “cake” that one can share do not do away with the problem. Everyone has always known that the “work” of a French high-school teacher and that of a specialized worker are incommensurable with one another, and no one has ever proposed reducing the former in order to create room for an unemployed factory worker. On the other hand, the attributes attached to socially recognized jobs, which apply both to the SMIC-ard and to the professor at the College de France, are embedded in a collectivity of positions both irreducible and interdependent, that is to say, solidarity. Surely they cannot be shared (like a cake), but they might be partially reorganized, insofar as they form a complex totality including at the same time labor, wages, social protections, legal guarantees, etc. If share they must, it is a question of these goods becoming “scarce.” This is certainly a difficult operation to undertake. But this proves at least in principle that such a sharing is not just a “simple-minded idea,” that is to say, simplistic, as its critics allege. In my sense, the sharing of labor is less an end in and of itself than a means—apparently the most direct—of accomplishing an effective redistribution of the attributes of social citizenship. If this redistribution were effected by other means, ultimately linked with the sharing of labor, then the very same objective from the point of view of social cohesion might still be achieved.¹⁷⁷

Raising the question of the sharing of labor or the redistribution of scarce resources in these terms demonstrates that this not only entails technical difficulties but also a fundamental political question. The tentative proposals made in the direction of reducing the work-week—ranging from the thirty-nine hour law of 1982, a fail-

ure in terms of creating jobs, to the few “experimental” measures instituted by the five year plan for creating jobs in 1993—clearly demonstrate that these patch-work solutions are not up to the magnitude of the task at hand. Similarly, measures undertaken to redistribute the sacrifices demanded by the deterioration of economic and social conditions are often derisory, at least when they do not penalize those who already find themselves in the most difficult positions. For example, unemployment is surely today’s most serious social risk, whose destabilizing and de-socializing effects are the most destructive for those who endure it. Ironically, however, it is on the subject of unemployment that one must demonstrate the most “discipline,” through a ruthless logic for reducing the rates and indemnities for its compensation. Drastic measures have been taken since 1984 to lower the compensations given to the bottom tier, and the unemployed have thereby enjoyed the privilege of being the first to have to tighten their belts in the effort to economize the management of social benefits.¹⁷⁸ Even more gravely: according to a memorandum of November, 1982, compensation for unemployment comes to be disassociated, depending on its length and the previous fate of the unemployed, from a system of social insurance financed on a contributory basis and distributed on a level of parity, and transferred to a system of so-called solidarity, by which the state assumes responsibility for compensating some groups of people deprived of jobs.¹⁷⁹ This was a major innovation because it makes it such that some of the unemployed—the long-time unemployed, workers previously poorly integrated into employment—become detached from a system based on work and are transferred to a system of “solidarity” consisting in practice of allocations for assistance paid at a low rate. This was decided without any public debate, and for the rationale of preserving the accounting balance of the UNEDIC. What results from this is actually a tremendous deterioration of the notion of solidarity, which under the Third Republic meant the membership of each in the entire society, and which becomes instead merely an allocation of minimal resources to those who no longer actively “contribute” to the functioning of society.

Deterioration such as this challenges the state’s uniquely regal function of safeguarding national unity. This function includes, it has been said, an aspect of “foreign policy” (to defend its place in the “concert of nations”), as well as a “domestic policy” (to preserve social cohesion). Just as war has a cost, which is often exorbi-

tant, so too does social cohesion have a cost, which may also be extremely expensive. This convergence is more than an abstract idea. It is no coincidence that awareness of the organic relationship between social cohesion and a definitive state-led social policy came during the disasters of World War II, particularly in Great Britain. William Beveridge is perfectly explicit on this point:

The main proposition of this relationship is the following: the British people must make the state explicitly responsible for guaranteeing each at every moment a sufficient expenditure, in general, in order to make their human potential available to the nation of Great Britain.¹⁸⁰

For, he adds,

If full employment is not achieved or preserved, no liberty will be safe, because for many it will have no meaning.¹⁸¹

The mandate that must be undertaken by the state in order to safeguard the unity of the British people is of the same kind, and just as important as, the one it undertakes to repulse foreign invasion. The question of full employment is thus the momentary form taken on by the question of preserving the social bond in an England still traumatized by the memory of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Today in France, since the return to full employment is almost certainly impossible, the *analogous* question is that of sharing of labor, or at the very least, some guarantees constitutive of social citizenship (which, at least in my opinion, I cannot conceive of being separated from work). It is an analogous question if it is true that this mediation might allow the interdependent relationship of all citizens within the social body to be preserved or restored. We must consider the question of the cost of this in terms of the sacrifices we might agree upon as necessary to preserve the unity of society.

In principle the state expresses the will of its citizens, and thus it should be up to them to decide, by public debate, up to what point they are committed to paying this cost. I will make three brief remarks to dispel the various pseudo-objections that obscure the stakes of the choices at hand.

The first would be to resuscitate the specter of national workshops or of the state as entrepreneur of society. If necessary, the economic disasters of “real socialist” countries would alone be enough to prove that one cannot abolish unemployment by decree,

and that the state planning of production leads to disaster. Any formula for sharing labor has no chance of succeeding unless it is accepted and negotiated by the different partners, thus by business so as to concretely reorganize labor, culminating in a more efficient utilization of equipment, etc. Also, any major reform of social protection is unthinkable without some cooperation in planning it and without negotiations over how to put it into effect. But we might imagine, for example, legal framework setting forth obligations in matters of working hours, minimum wages and social minimums, entrusted to the different “partners” to adjust them or to adapt them by negotiation.¹⁸²

Secondly, the weakening of nation-states in the European context and the rise of widespread global competition render the exercise of imperial prerogatives in matters of employment policy and social policy more difficult. However, awareness of this increasing difficulty does not overturn the variables at the root of the problem. The policies of nation-states have always been tightly constrained by international factors, including their social policies (cf. above, the necessary “compatibility,” whether explicit or implicit, between the levels of welfare benefits of competitor nations). That competition becomes even fiercer today, and that the margin of the manpower of each nation-state becomes tighter, does not absolve us of the requirement to preserve national cohesion. Indeed, just the contrary: it is under conditions of crisis that the social cohesion of a nation is particularly necessary. Between the local level—with its innovations, but also often with its failures and egotisms—and the supranational level—with its constraints—the state still remains the means through which a modern community represents itself and defines its fundamental choices. And just as nation-states were compelled to make alliances, even during the era of their hegemony, they may today be driven, or constrained by international factors, to institutionalize more narrowly their partnerships in the social domain (cf. for example, the problem of the creation of a “social Europe” proud of its name in the face of competition, which occurs also on the social level, from the United States, Japan and countries in Southeast Asia).¹⁸³

Finally, the stakes of the debate are also obscured when one presumes that a different social policy is incompatible with the pursuit of a realistic and responsible economic policy. This is to confess that accepting the laws of the market leaves no margin to maneuver,

which amounts to denying the very possibility of political action. But there is nothing to this. The game is stymied only if one surrenders to the status quo *on all different levels at the same time*. That is to say, one can accept the economic game and still remain committed to redistributing the sacrifices that stem from this choice, and by doing so still conform to these economic exigencies. Thus it is true that the financing of social protections has perhaps reached, or will soon reach, its breaking point, if the means of paying for them remain in the present condition: a minority of active workers will soon pay for a majority who are inactive, and among the active, some groups of wage-earners are overtaxed by more than double.¹⁸⁴ But ways of financing social benefits on a wider and less unjust scale—a generalized social contribution, for example—would nourish a greater solidarity that would not fall disproportionately on the shoulders of the wage earners and on businesses. These latter might even find this in their interest, insofar as the current mode of financing penalizes them. More generally, the absence of a major tax reform, which has been universally lamented for decades, betrays an absence of political will more than the existence of unavoidable economic constraints.

Second example: when one makes the good health of business an unequivocal demand on which national prosperity hinges, one forgets to specify that business serves the general interests effectively by their competitiveness, by assuring jobs, and so on. But they also serve the interest of shareholders (the remuneration of investment capital). In the vein of this “falling behind,” the insistence on exacting maximum benefits in order to invest and remain competitive is generally seen narrowly in terms of the necessity of arriving at the optimum organization of labor and the maximum reduction of the costs of wages. However, if the corporation is really this living articulation of capital and labor that exists to produce more and to produce better, whose praises are sung today, “it would appear at least as logical that we just as vigorously defend compensation for both labor and capital on an equal footing.”¹⁸⁵

Third example: the burden of labor costs that ostensibly frustrate competitiveness may just as easily be seen as arising from low wages, and in particular from the SMIC. But even the disparity of wages at the high end brings to light the coherence of the salarial epistemology. If wage labor includes the whole continuum of positions that we have previously described, then there must exist some rough comparability between all positions, and the “incomparability” of

certain salaries—of the CEOs of corporations, for example—frustrates this. The link between wage disparities and competitiveness is no longer so evident. In Germany, often presented as the model of economic success, the highest salaries are comparatively much less.¹⁸⁶

Thus the insistence on the “massive constraints” of the international market may often serve as an alibi for redirecting us away from certain practices that obey a *social* and not an economic logic. These merely serve to replicate inherited conditions and institutional sluggishness rather than a respect for “fundamentals.” This is a good tactic of war, if social life is indeed a war where the strongest must maximize their advantages. But do we need to offer a Machiavelian explanation? “Men will hardly renounce the commodities of life unless constrained by necessity.”¹⁸⁷ Apparently this is the spirit in which the history of social relations must be read, but then it is a story full of sound and fury, perpetually threatened by social cleavages between those who enjoy “commodities” and those who are deprived of even the possibility of acquiring them—that which is today called “exclusion.” One last theme that crosses the whole system of social relationships is that solidarity is founded through continuity across differences, and the unity of society may be found in the complementary positions occupied by different groups. Maintaining this today requires a certain sharing of “commodities.”

We have been compelled to interpret the development of the society of wage labor as the tenuous creation of such a solidarity, and the current “crisis” as calling into question the kind of conflictual interdependencies that make up its cement. But, as we have also highlighted, there is at this time no other credible alternative to a society based on wage labor. If this seems to lead to a lamentable paralysis, this is not to be overcome by the creation of a lovely utopian vision of a world where all the dreams of the “makers of plans” may be indulged. The main elements of the puzzle are already in place: social protections that remain substantial, an economic situation that is not disastrous for everyone, some quality “human resources,” and so on. But at the same time, we confront a social fabric that is unraveling, an available labor force condemned to uselessness, and the growing despair of all the casualties of the society of wage labor. Shifting the balance is probably the best we can do, because no single person is in control of all the variables that determine the transformation in progress. But, weighing heavily

on the course of things, two variables will undoubtedly be determinative: the intellectual effort of analyzing the situation in its full complexity, and the political will to govern it by imposing a safety net on society by maintaining its social cohesion.

Notes

1. In a speech from January 20th, 1880, Leon Gambetta declares that one has to attach oneself to “what I would call the solution to economic and industrial problems, and what I would refuse to call a social question... One cannot resolve these problems but one at a time, with study and good will, and especially with knowledge and hard work” (*Discours politiques*, IX, p. 122, cited in G. Weill, *Histoire du mouvement social en France*, op. cit., p. 242). Is this a way to “divide the difficulties and parties to solve them better,” according to the *Discours de la méthode* by Descartes, or is it “a way to divide the social question to better elude it”?
2. Y. Barel, “Le grand intégrateur,” *Connexions*, 56, 1990.
3. H. Arendt, *Condition de l’homme moderne*, op. cit., p. 38.
4. A liberal state may be obligated to “do social work” reluctantly and as rarely as possible; a socialist state would do social work by default, because it would not be able to immediately implement radical transformations. It is the socialist-democratic state that sees social reforms as a good in themselves, because they represent concrete steps towards the realization of its proper ideal. Reformism assumes here its full purpose: reforms are means to realize political goals.
5. The moment of its nearest rapprochement, at least as a proclaimed intention, was probably that of Jacques Chaban-Delmas’s “new society,” inspired by Jacques Delors. It was an explicit intention to abandon the politics of confrontation and revolutionary aspirations in favor of a compromise negotiated with all social partners. “The government proposes the employers and the syndical organizations to cooperate with the state for common interests” (speech on general politics from September 16th, 1969, cited by J. Le Goff, *Du silence à la parole*, op. cit., p. 227).
6. For an expose on the exhaustion of the social-democratic model during the 1970s, see R. Darendorf, “L’après-social-démocratie,” *le Debat*, Nr. 7, December 1980.
7. Let us remember how Jean Fourastie presented for the first time the now famous formula: “Must we not call glorious the thirty years [...] during which France passed from the millennial poverty of languishing life to contemporary lifestyles and levels? This is certainly better than the expression “les trois glorieuses” from 1830, which, like most revolutions, either substitute one despotism to another, or in the best case are only an episode between two mediocrities?” (*les Trente Glorieuses*, op. cit., p. 28). Apart from the fact that the “trois glorieuses” of 1830 were days and not years, we can leave Jean Fourastié the responsibility for his judgment on revolutions. But to reduce the situation of 1949 France to a “traditional languishing life,” “characteristic of millennial poverty,” is not serious. This is another reason to avoid the expression of the “Trente Glorieuses.”
8. It is about one of the most consistent heritages of “factory despotism” from the nineteenth century. It was based on the definition of “contract of borrowing” according to the Napoleonic Code: “A contract of labor concluded without determination of duration can cease at the initiative of one of the contracting parties” (Article 1780 from the Civil Code).
9. See F. Sellier, *la Confrontation sociale en France*, op. cit., p. 136-138.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
11. See J. Le Goff, *Du silence à la parole*, op. cit.

12. One could offer the same analysis of most “social acquisitions” of that period. Thus, the syndical sections introduced after the accords of Grenelle from 1968 played an essentially consultative and informative role, but have no decision-making power on the policies of their respective company. On these points, see J. Le Goff, *Du silence à la parole*, op. cit., p. 231 sq.
13. Cited by J. Le Goff, *Du silence à la parole*, op. cit., p. 203.;
14. See B. Fourcade, “L’évolution des situations de l’emploi particulières de 1945 à 1990,” *Travail et emploi*, Nr. 52, 1992. The analysis of this author confirms that the constitution of a paradigm of employment of CDI type is correlative with the ascent to dominance of the salaried society. Before the 1950s, there was no general employment norm, but a plurality of employment situations, among which self-employment occupied an important position. And starting with the mid-1970s, the “particular situations of employment” increasingly regain importance; see below.
15. The collective conventions foresee special procedures and indemnities in case of layoffs, whence the fact that layoffs mean costs and disadvantages for the employer as well (whence the fact, moreover, that after the period of full employment, the employers will privilege less protected forms of hiring than the CDI). But these dispositions are far from being the equivalent of employment security.
16. In 1973, 38 percent of the workers have become property owners. But two-thirds among them have debts amounting to half of their real estate value. Also, 75 percent of workers have a car, a washing machine and a television. But 75 percent of the new cars, more than half the washing machines and half of all the televisions are bought with credit (see M. Verret, J. Creusen, *l’Espace ouvrier*, op. cit., p. 113-114).
17. This ideology witnessed a reemergence at the beginning of the 1980s. For a particularly virulent expression, see P. Beneton, *le Fléau du bien*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1982.
18. For a deployment of this analysis, see J. Donzelot, *l’Invention du social*, op. cit., chapter IV, 1.
19. Besides the vestiges of a perennial extremist right wing, hostile to progress, it was above all ultra-leftist groups and exacerbated forms of spontaneity whose audience remained marginal in spite of spectacular manifestations. In their predominant orientations, neither criticisms of society based on consumption nor the celebration of revolutionary action by different forms of Marxism contradict the bases of the historical school of thought which promotes wage-earning society. The former denounce the waste of creative impulses in society in the direction of commodities, the latter denounce their confiscation by dominant groups.
20. See J. Donzelot, *l’Invention du social*, op. cit., chapter IV, 2.
21. Cited in J. Fournier, N. Questiaux, *le Pouvoir du social*, op. cit., p. 97. This work presents a relatively comprehensive catalog of the progress that has yet to be made in the social domain from a socialist perspective... briefly before the arrival in power of the socialists.
22. The confrontation between sociologists and economists realized in 1964 in Darras, *le Partage des bénéfices*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1965, expresses well this tension between two conceptions of progress, which the critical version does not deny, but regarding which it demands a rigorous explanation of the theoretical and practical conditions necessary for its democratic realization. I attempted here to draw a summary of the movement of criticism of institutions and medico-psychological and intervention forms, in “De l’intégration sociale à l’éclatement du social: l’émergence, l’apogée et le départ à la retraite du contrôle social,” *Revue internationale de l’action communautaire*, 20/60, Montreal, Fall 1988.
23. M. Gauchet, “La société d’in sécurité,” in J. Donzelot, *Face à l’exclusion*, op. cit., p. 170.

24. J. Habermas, "La crise de l'Etat providence et l'épuisement des énergies tropiques," *Ecrits politiques*, trad. fr. Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1990.
25. D. Olivennes, "La société de transfert," *le Debat*, Nr. 69, March-April, 1992.
26. Ibid., p. 118. On the demographic dimension of the question, see J.-M. Poursin, "L'Etat providence en proie au démon démographique," *le Debat*, Nr. 69, March-April 1992. From the perspective of labor, the financing difficulties extend not only to unemployment, but also to the multiplication of precarious, badly paid jobs which allow only feeble social contributions and demand high compensations at the same time.
27. W. Beveridge, *Full Employment in a Free Society* (1944), trad. fr. Paris, Domat-Montchretien, 1945, p. 15.
28. Ibid., p. 16.
29. P. Laroque, "De l'assurance à la Sécurité sociale," *Revue internationale du travail*, LVII, Nr. 6, June 1948, p. 567. The expression "*freedom from want*" appears from the first time in the Social Security Act of 1935, during President Roosevelt's New Deal.
30. P. Laroque, *la Sécurité sociale dans l'économie française*, Paris, Federation nationale des organismes de Sécurité sociale, 1948, p. 9.
31. Two indices of this "exceptionality" of unemployment: its system of indemnities by the Assedic starting with 1958 is not incorporated into social security; a pamphlet issued by the ministry of labor under Pierre Beregovoy in November 1982 puts unemployed persons on "solidarity," a polite manner of re-naming assistance.
32. On this point, see François Fourquet's analyses, in particular "La citoyenneté, une subjectivité exogène," in *la Production de l'assentiment dans les politiques publiques. Techniques, territoires et sociétés*, Nr. 24025, Paris, ministry of equipment, transportation and tourism, 1993.
33. J. Habermas, "La crise de l'Etat providence et l'épuisement des énergies utopiques," loc. cit.
34. For an interpretation in economic terms inspired by the school of thought advocating regulation, see for example J.-H. Lorenzi, O. Pastré, J. Toledano, *la Crise du Xxe siècle*, Paris, Economica, 1980, or R. Boyer, J.-P. Durand, *l'Après-fordisme*, Paris, Syros, 1993. In this perspective the actual "crisis" results from the exhaustion of the "Fordist" model, combined with a loss of gains in productivity, an exhaustion of the consumption norm, and an inactive or slightly productive tertiary sector. But the level of analysis chosen here does not oblige us to an analysis of these "causes."
35. To take the measure required for coping with the degradation: in 1970, there are 300,000 employment seekers registered with the ANPE, from which 17 percent were registered since the previous year (this unemployment, called "exclusion unemployment," affects more than a million persons today). The true "flourishing" of unemployment dates from 1976, when the number of unemployed persons reaches a million. In spite of a slight progression of the number of jobs (22 million in 1990 against 21,612,000 in 1982), the number of employment seekers has been increasing almost always ever since. During the crisis of the late 1980s, 850,000 jobs are created, but unemployment decreases by only 400,000 (see *Données sociales*, Paris, INSEE, 1993). For a recent discussion of unemployment, see J. Freyssinnet, *le Chomage*, Paris, La Decouverte, 1993.
36. See B. Fourcade, "L'évolution des situations d'emploi particulières de 1945 à 1990," loc. cit. Let us remember with this author, that before the generalization of the CDIs the "particular employment situations" were very numerous (Fourcade counts more than 4 million of them in 1950). But these were generally closer to independent employment forms, which could be qualified as "pre-salarial" in the sense that they were more or less absorbed by the generalization of salaried work, and they coincide

- with the development of unemployment. They are a manifestation of the degradation of the wage-earning condition. On the evolution of the juridical structure of the work contract, see the synthesis by S. Erbès-Seguín, "les images brouillées du contrat de travail," in P. M. Menger, J.-C. Passeron, *l'Art de la recherche, Essais en l'honneur de Raymonde Moulin*, Paris, La Documentation française, 1993.
37. A. Lebaube, *l'Emploi en miettes*, op. cit. One will also find many updated data on the labor market in B. Brunhes, *Choisir l'emploi*, Paris, La Documentation française, 1993.
 38. In terms of "stocks," as say the economists, in 1990, only 58 percent of young males and 48 percent of young women of twenty-twenty-five years of age work full-time under CDI, whereas in 1982 these rates are 70 percent and 60 percent, respectively (see J.-L. Heller, M. Th. Joint-Lambert, "Les jeunes entre l'école et l'emploi," *Données sociales*, Paris, INSEE, 1990).
 39. M. Cezard, J. L. Heller, "Les formes traditionnelles de l'emploi salarié se dégradent," *Economie et statistiques*, Nr. 215, November 1988.
 40. J. Jacquier, "La diversification des formes d'emploi en France," *Données sociales*, Paris, INSEE, 1990.
 41. Along the same lines, André Gorz cites a study made by a German research institute, which foresees for the coming years a rate of 25 percent of permanent, qualified and protected workers, 25 percent of "peripheral" workers, underpaid, underqualified and badly protected, and 50 percent of unemployment or marginal workers dependent on seasonal work and petty jobs (*les Métamorphoses du travail*, Paris, Galilee, 1988, p. 90).
 42. These transformations of the work relationship obviously do not mean that all these new situations have no regulations. The contrary has been the case for the past twenty years; there has been intensive work of juridical elaboration to inscribe these situations into the right of labor (thus was forged this apparently strange notion of "intermittent contract with undetermined duration"). But it is typical that these new elaborations are being made with reference to the CDI and are rather derogatory towards it. On these points, see S. Erbès-Seguín, "Les images brouillées du contrat de travail," loc. cit.
 43. F. Dauty, M.-L. Morin, "Entre le travail et l'emploi: la polyvalence des contrats à durée indéterminée," *Travail et emploi*, Nr. 52, 1992. On the different conceptions of salarial relations, see J. Rose, *les Rapports de travail et d'emploi: une alternative à la notion de pauvreté au Moyen Age de relation salariale*, GREE, Cahier Nr. 7, Université de Nancy II, 1992.
 44. Contrary to Japan, Germany and Sweden, but less so than the United Kingdom or the United States, France tends to privilege external flexibility, which explains the high unemployment rates and more employment precariousness: salaried persons are less involved in the enterprise, and the less qualified tasks are most frequently treated externally by persons very dependent on the current conjuncture (see R. Boyer, *l'Economie française face à la guerre du Golfe*, Commissariat general du Plan, Paris, 1990).
 45. M. Aglietta, A. Bener, *les Métamorphoses de la société salariale*, op. cit., See also M. Maurice, F. Sellier, J.-J. Sylvestre, "Production de la hiérarchie dans l'entreprise," *Revue française de sociologie*, 1979.
 46. An apology supported by the conversion of government socialism to the virtues of the market after 1982. As with all converts, he readily falls into proselytizing. See J.-P. Le Goff, *le Mythe de l'entreprise*, Paris, La Découverte, 1992.
 47. See X. Gaulier, "La machine à exclure," *le Debat*, Nr. 69, March-April, 1992.
 48. See N. Aubert, V. de Gaulejac, *le Cout de l'excellence*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1992.
 49. X. Gaulier, loc. cit.

50. See A.-M. Guillemard, "Travailleurs vieillissants et marché du travail en Europe," *Travail et emploi*, Nr. 57, 1993.
51. P. d'Iribarne, *le Chomage paradoxal*, op. cit.
52. Hunting for qualifications can have perverse results. If one employs overqualified candidates, underqualified employment seekers will find themselves excluded from the type of work for which they were suitable, by persons who are more qualified than they are, but who are also less suitable for these kinds of jobs.
53. A prospective study sponsored by the Bureau of Information and economical provision foresees that in the year 2000 at least 60 percent of jobs will require a qualification level lower than the high school baccalaureate.
54. Thus we recently witnessed the emergence of unemployment among functionaries, without there being a possibility to determine the extent of this tendency. See Ollivier Marchand, "La montée récente du chômage des cadres," *Premières Informations*, 356, July 1993. In 1992, the percentage of unemployment among functionaries was 3.4 percent against 5.1 percent for intermediary profession, and 12.9 percent for workers and 13.3 percent for employees.
55. R. Tresmontant, "Chomage: les chances d'en sortir," *Economie et statistiques*, Nr. 241, March 1991, p. 50.
56. F. Fourquet, N. Murard, *Valeur des services collectifs sociaux*, op. cit., p. 37.
57. See M. Piore, "Dualism in the Labor-Market: The Case of France," in J. Mairesse, *Emploi et chômage*, Paris, Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1982.
58. See G. Duthil, *les Politiques salariales en France, 1960-1990*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 1993. A first collective realization of the shift from the work issues dominant until the 1970s, focused on the fixation of labor within the enterprise, to issues focused on flexibility and adaptation to change, with the resulting risk of status erosion that appeared in France during the second colloquium of Dourdan in December 1980. See *Colloque de Dourdan, l'Emploi, enjeux économiques et sociaux*, Paris, Maspero, 1982.
59. The question of the impact of these dislocalizations on the degradation of the national labor market for the coming years is surrounded by controversy. For a detailed point of view (but which dates back to 1980), see P. Eisler, J. Freyssinet, B. Soulage, "Les exportations d'emplois," in J. Mairesse, *Emploi et chômage*, op. cit. A more recent projection on a European scale foresees that the proportion of world production localized in Western Europe will decrease from 27.3 percent in 1988 to 24.6 percent in 2000, which is considerable, but falls short of the disastrous scenario which is presented sometimes (see G. Lafay, "Industrie mondiale: trois scénarios pour l'an 2000," *Economie et statistiques*, Nr. 256, July-August 1992).
60. See B. Perret, G. Roustang, *l'Economie contre la société*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1993. The importance of this process was previously stressed since the beginning of the emergence of wage-earning society (see chapter VII). But it has stalled since. In 1954, services represented 38.5 percent of salaried workers; today they make up about 70 percent (see B. Perret, G. Roustang, op. cit., p. 55).
61. These remarks permit to discern an ambiguity on "disindustrialization." Disindustrialization is a fact, with the social consequences it carries for deconstruction of the classical working class (see the difficulties and the relative loss of importance of the large-scale industries like metallurgy). But, as is shown by Philippe Delmas (*le Maître des horloges*, op. cit.), industrial activities remain the most important creators of wealth, and they are the only one that can trigger growth. Moreover, the most prosperous and best-paid sector is generally connected with industrial activities. Alain Minc (*L'après-crise est déjà commencée*, Paris, Gallimard, 1982), insists as well on the predominant role of industrial activity as main creators of social wealth and the one most likely to assure international competitiveness to a nation.

62. A. Sauvy, *la Machine et le chômage*, Paris, Dunod, 1990.
63. Thus, in relation to the predominance of services, the average gain of productivity per hour of labor passed from 4.6 percent per year from 1970 to 1974 to 2.7 percent from 1984 to 1989 (see B. Perret, G. Roustang, *l'Economie contre la société*, op. cit., p. 117). For a summary of the effects of "new technologies" on the organization of labor, see J.-P. Durand, "Travail contre technologie," in J.-P. Durand, F.-X. Merrien, *Sortie de siècle*, Paris, Vigot, 1991.
64. See D. Linhart, M. Maruani, "Précarisation et déstabilisation des emplois ouvriers, quelques hypothèses," *Travail et emploi*, Nr. 11, 1982.
65. *Données sociales*, Paris, 1990, p. 72.
66. M. Erlbaum, "Petits boulots, stages, emplois précaires: quelle flexibilité pour quelle insertion," *Droit social*, avril 1988, p. 314.
67. G. Duthil, *les Politiques salariales en France*, op. cit., p. 132.
68. M. Pialoux, "Jeunesse sans avenir et travail intérimaire," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 1975.
69. Thus the development of what is sometimes called "hybrid status" – neither wage earner nor artisan, and working in fact at the demand of employers without work contract or social protection. The number of these jobs, which are not counted anywhere in a systematic manner, is hard to evaluate, but their increase is a reliable indication of the degradation of salary situation (see D. Gerritsen, "Au-delà du "modèle typique." Towards a socio-anthropology of employment," in S. Erbès-Seguin, *Du silence à la parole*, op. cit., p. 248-249). See also the vast continent of the black labor market, by nature hard to apprehend, but which certainly harbors much precarity (see J. -F. Lae, *Travailler au noir*, Paris, Metallie, 1989). For all these uncertain forms of employment, social protection is either nonexistent, or it is very precarious as well.
70. S. Beaud, "Le rêve de l'intermédiaire," in P. Bourdieu, *la Misère du monde*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1993.
71. L. Rouleau-Berger, *La Ville intervalle*, Paris, Meridiens-Klincksieck, 1992.
72. J. Donzelot, P. Estèbe, *l'Etat animateur*, op. cit.
73. As Dominique Schnapper shows in 1981 (*l'Epreuve du chômage*, Paris, Gallimard, 1981), at first, life in unemployment can be very different according to social status and mobilizable cultural capital. A young and educated public could take this time as an extension of the period of disposability and post-adolescence, while it was rather a tragedy for the worker who lost his job. But these analyses should be seen within the context of a less tense conjuncture of the labor market, and the feeling of "holidays" is transient.
74. See a synthetic point of view in C. Dubar, *la Socialisation. Construction des identités sociales et professionnelles*, Paris, A. Colin, 1991.
75. See R. Sainsaulieu, *l'Identité au travail*, Paris, Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, première édition, 1978.
76. A collection of texts compiled by Suzanna Magri and Christian Topalov, *Villes ouvrières, 1900-1950*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1990, describes well these forms of popular sociability through which geographic proximity is the basis of the solidarities that serve as "security string" against the ups and downs of existence.
77. R. Hoggart, *la Culture du pauvre*, op. cit., and 33 Newport Street, trad. fr. Paris, Gallimard-Le Seuil, 1991.
78. Y. Barel, "Le grand intégrateur," loc. cit., p. 89 and p. 90.
79. For an illustration, see in F. Dubet, *la Galère: jeunes en survie*, Paris, Fayard, 1987, p. 92 et seq., the comparison between the behaviors of the youth from a small town in decline, still impregnated with working-class culture; and the youth from large suburbs without class tradition.

80. Thus, the rate of divorce is 24 percent for individuals who have stable employment, and 31.4 percent for the individuals who work in precarious conditions, and 38.7 percent for individuals who have been unemployed for more than two years ("Precarité et risques d'exclusion en France," CERC, Nr. 109, third trimester, 1993, p. 30).
81. On the indications of this increase in family instability starting with the 1960s – marriage, birth, divorce, cohabitation without marriage, and "illegitimate birth" rates – see L. Roussel, *la Famille incertaine*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 1989.
82. Synthesis on this evolution in I. They, *le Démariage*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 1993. The author shows as well that this evolution, which concerns all the families because it is based on material aspects, affects them differently, lower-class families being generally less protected by the universalist prescription of this very liberal right.
83. It is above all about "monoparental families." See N. Lefaucheur, "Les familles dites nonparentales," *Autrement*, Nr. 134, January 1993.
84. Rather, as Claude Martin says after an empirical and very precise investigation, family dissociation "accelerates the process if precarization of those who were already vulnerable before the rupture" (*Transitions familiales; évolution du réseau social et familial après la décision et les modes de régulation sociale*, thesis for a doctorate in sociology, Université Paris VIII, p. 464). One will find much research done on these questions in J.-C. Kaufman, *Célibat, ménages d'une personne, isolement, solitude*, Bruxelles, Commission des Communautés européennes, October 1993.
85. I proposed here a hypothesis to depend this cumulative effect between the fragilization of the relational fabric in general and the particular fragility of economically disadvantaged families in "L'Etat providence et la famille: le partage précaire de la gestion des risques sociaux," in F. de Singly, F. Schultheis, *Affaires de famille, affaires d'Etat*, Nancy, Editions de l'Est, 1991; see also F. de Singly, *Sociologie de la famille contemporaine*, Paris, Nathan, 1993.
86. One can evaluate – but a census of this type of population is particularly difficult – those totally unable to work (type SDF) at about 1 percent of the population in working age. About 5 percent of the possible active population associates a quasi-exclusion from the labor market to a great material and relational poverty. They represent the extreme point of the process of disaffiliation (see "Precarité et risques d'exclusion en France," CERC, loc. cit.).
87. And when they are well made, they cannot be read in an unambiguous way. Thus, the situation of unemployment can lead to a rupture of family ties, but also to a mobilization of family resources (see O. Schwartz, *le Monde privé des ouvriers*, op. cit.).
88. P. Bourdieu, "Suspendue à un fil," *la Misère du monde*, op. cit., p. 487-498.
89. Let us add that it will also be a question of space, of neighborhoods, of the city, of urban planning policies, which the homogenizing and centralizing will of the DATAR from the 1960s exemplifies perfectly.
90. On the spirit of this politics which associates the pointed targeting of "populations at risk," their treatment with a professional technicity and "clinicalness," and the deployment of central administrative directives, see R. Castel, *la Gestion des risques*, op. cit., chapter III.
91. In the 1960s, two important reports make up the basis of a specific policy, one with regard to senior persons (P. Laroque, *Politique de la vieillesse*, Paris, La Documentation française, 1962, from which some recommendations will be taken up in the Vith plan), the other towards disability (F. Bloch-Lainé, *Etude du problème général de l'inadaptation des personnes handicapées*, Paris, La Documentation française, 1969, at the origin of the Law from June 30th, 1975 in favor of disabled persons). The attention accorded to the problems of dissociated families results in 1976 in the

vote for aid for the isolated parent (API), which contrarily to family allocations, takes in charge the situation of “monoparental families.”

92. Lionel Stoleru, *Vaincre la pauvreté dans les pays riches*, Paris, Flammarion, 1973.
93. R. Lenoir, *les Exclus*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1974.
94. On the whole context of the rediscovery of poverty in the beginning of 1970s, see B. Jobert, *le Social en plan*, Paris, Editions ouvrières, 1981.
95. E. Alphandari, *Action sociale et aide sociale*, Paris, Dalloz, 1989, in particular p. 118 et seq., “the distinction between social aid and social security.” There are more and more social payments situated in between these two: national solidarity funds, allocations to handicapped adults, API. See also C. Guiton, N. Kerschén, “Les règles du hors-jeu,” in *l’Insertion en question* (s), Annales de Vauresson, Nr. 32-33, 1990.
96. F. Bloch-Lanié, *Etude du probleme general de l’inadaptation des personnes handicapées*, op. cit., p. 111.
97. Thus, in spite of the appearances, the API conserves this very ancient criterion for access to aid, by reinterpreting it in the context of modern society. The mother who educates her child alone is temporarily exempted from work (because she has to consecrate herself to her child for three years). But this obligation is at the same time fundamentally retained, since after this period she will have to start working again (if she can find a job).
98. Unless I am mistaken, the term insertion appears previously in two official texts: in 1972 an “insertion allocation” is instituted, to facilitate the mobility of young workers, and article 56 of the 1975 law in favor of handicapped persons concerns “the professional insertion or reinsertion of the disabled” (see P. Maclouf, “L’insertion, un nouveau concept opératoire en sciences sociales?” in R. Castel, J. -F. Laé, *le RMI, une dette sociale*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1992). But these are occasional usages which do not mobilize specific technologies. Also, the numerous references to “reinsertion” of those who leave prison say only that ex-prisoners must be helped with appropriate means to adapt to normal life.
99. See M. Messu, “Pauvreté et exclusion en France,” in F.-X. Merrien, *Face à la pauvreté*, Paris, Editions ouvrières, 1994, and M. Autès, *Travail social et pauvreté*, Paris, Syros, 1992.
100. See A. Pitrou, *la Vie précaire. Des familles face à leurs difficultés*, Paris, CNAF, 1980.
101. G. Oheix, *Contre la precarité et la pauvreté. Soixante propositions*, Paris, Ministère de la Santé et de la Sécurité sociale, February 1981.
102. It is about three “plans Barre” which, starting in 1976, touched more than a million young persons and involve internships and exemptions for the companies. This initiative brings a huge protest clamor with it in many circles. See F. Piettre, D. Schiller, *la Mascarade des stages Barre*, Paris, Maspero, 1979.
103. The goal is “the study of juridical, financial and administrative measures susceptible to open to more social concerns the conception, the management of urban life, and the implementation of some experimental operations” (*Journal officiel* from March 10th, 1977).
104. B. Schwartz, *l’Insertion professionnelle et sociale des jeunes*, Paris, La Documentatino française, 1981, for the training of people age 16-18 without qualifications. H. Dubedout, *Ensemble refaire la ville*, Paris, La Documentation française, 1983, for the social rehabilitation of disadvantaged neighborhoods; G. Bonnemaïson, *Prévention, répression, solidarité*, Paris, La Documentation française, 1983, to fight delinquency in disadvantaged neighborhoods. In the same context there are zones of private education (ZEP) initiated in 1981 by the minister of national education, Alain Savary, to reinforce the means of school enrollment for the most disadvantaged children.

105. I am taking here, as in all my arguments, the term of “integration” in its general sense, which includes the integration of immigrants as a particular case. A young Arab, or a young black person, can encounter additional difficulties to “intergrate” because of racism, the attitude of certain employers or landlords, and certain characteristics of his family socialization. But if these traits can be additional disadvantages – as they were for the Britons a century ago and half a century ago for the Italians – they should be seen within the context of common problems for working-class youth. There is no underclass on an ethnic base in France – at least not yet – although there are socially disqualifying characteristics, low economic level, an absence of cultural capital, stigmatized lodging, condemned modes of life, etc., to which ethnic origin can be added. On the differences between French suburbs and American ghettos, see for example L. Wacquant, “Banlieues françaises et ghettos noirs américains, de l’amalgame à la comparaison,” in M. Wieworka, *les Visages du racisme*, Paris, La Découverte, 1992; on the specific problems encountered by immigration on a national scale, see D. Schnapper, *la France de l’intégration*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991.
106. For a synthetic point of view on these policies, see J. Donzelot, P. Estèbe, *l’Etat animateur*, op. cit.; for an analysis of the implications of these new approaches with regard to classic forms of social intervention, see J. Ion, *le Travail social à l’épreuve du territoire*, Toulouse, Privat, 1990.
107. Especially since they are often associated at the ground level. One finds often in a site classified as “DSQ” (social neighborhood development) a “communal counsel for the prevention of delinquency,” a “local mission” for the insertion of young persons and schools within the regime of “priority education zones.”
108. B. Schwartz, *l’Insertion sociale et professionnelle des jeunes*, op. cit. The Prime Minister, in his letter of mission statement, had also requested to present propositions so that “young persons from 16 to 18 never be condemned to unemployment or too precarious jobs,” which implies an optimism similar to that of the government.
109. See M.-C. Jaillet, “L’insertion par l’économie,” in *Evaluation de la politique de la ville*, volume II, Paris, Delegation ministerielle de la ville, 1993.
110. M. Aubry, M. Praderie, *Entreprises et quartiers*, Paris, ministère de la Ville, 1991.
111. See M.-C. Jaillet, “L’insertion par l’économie,” loc. cit.
112. On these points, see J. Donzelot, P. Estèbe, *l’Etat animateur*, op. cit. For a more disabused appreciation of the impact of these policies, see Ch. Bachman, N. Le Guenec, *Violences urbaines, 1945-1992*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1995 (to be published).
113. One should nuance these somber diagnostics, however. On the one hand, because one works, lives, exchanges and also loves in these cities, which is well shown by Jean-François Laé and Numa Murard in *Argent des pauvres* (Paris, Le Seuil, 1981). On the other hand, because by a posture that evokes that of nineteenth-century philanthropists, some “social observers” are badly placed to capture the positiveness of popular practices. Possibly some cities and suburbs are the “postmodern” equivalent of popular neighborhoods, which obviously cannot be recognized if one projects on them the populist, idealist image of the “popular neighborhood” type Menil – reminiscent of the “Belle Époque,” with its bistros, its chansons, its guignettes, and its bar dancers – but also with its misery, its anger and violence, which were less poetic. On this point, see the *avancées* of Daniel Behar, “Le désenclavement, entre le social et le local, la Politique de la Ville à l’épreuve du territoire,” in *Evaluation de la politique de la ville*, op. cit., volume II. Also, we should remember that what some call “urban crisis” does not date from today. One need only read Victor Hugo or the chronicle on diverse facts in the press of the “Belle Époque” to realize that these objective parameters of such a “crisis” (the degradation of working-class habitat,

- overpopulation, the presence of “dangerous classes” in the city, etc.) were much more pointed then than they are today. What is new is doubtlessly the tendency to treat locally a crisis which is much more general.
114. M. Autès, *Travail social et pauvreté*, op. cit., p. 287 et seq.
 115. Even at the local level, the problem of participation of the “users” in this gives place to mitigated evaluations. For example, an investigation on nine files presented by the cities to obtain an SDQ contract shows that in one case an association of users has played an important role, even if it is an association close to the municipality (see M. Ragon, “Médiation et société civile: l’exemple de la politique de la Ville,” in *la Formation e l’assentiment dans les politiques publiques. Techniques, territoires et sociétés*, Nr. 24-25 1993).
 116. F. Levy, *le Développement social des quartiers. Bilan et perspectives*, Paris, 1998. See also J.-M. Delarue, *Banlieues en difficultés; la rélegation*, Paris, Syros, 1991, especially p. 40 et seq., which evokes the “deterioration” of the situation of these young persons between 1981 and 1991. For a sociological analysis of these sites, see F. Dubet, D. Lapeyronnie, *les Quartiers d’exil*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1992.
 117. For a more pessimistic summary of what was (or rather, what was not) done with regard to local citizenship, see C. Jacquier, “La citoyenneté urbaine dans les quartiers européens,” in J. Roman, *Ville, exclusion, citoyenneté. Entretiens de la Ville*, II, Paris, Editions Esprit, 1993.
 118. Law Nr. 88-1088 from December 1988 regarding the minimum revenue of insertion, *Journal officiel*, December 3rd, 1998. This formulation is taken from the Preamble of the 1946 Constitution, but it had not been executed until then.
 119. *Ibid.*
 120. In fact, the recipients of the RMI are heterogeneous. The new measure “recuperated” ancient figures of Third World-type poverty, which had not been addressed by previous forms of social aid. Nevertheless, it is the presence of those who started to be called in 1984 “the new poor,” that is, a new profile of dispossessed and destabilized persons, which triggered the establishment of the minimum revenue of insertion (see R. Castel, J.-F. Laé, “La diagonale du pauvre,” in *le RMI, une dette sociale*, op. cit.)
 121. The application from March 9 1989 seems to be like professional insertion: “For most recipients of RMI, the insertion process will have as more or less long-term objective professional insertion. Indeed, this is the best way to guarantee autonomy and durable social insertion” (ministry of solidarity, security and social protection, document from March 9th, 1989, *Journal officiel*, March 11th, 1989, paragraphs 2-3).
 122. See P. Valereyberghe, *RMI, le pari de l’insertion*, report of the national commission of evaluation of the RMI, Paris, La Documentation française, 1992, 2 volumes. Two extensive national investigations were done by the CERC (“Advantages and difficulties of RMI beneficiaries,” April 1991). See also *le RMI à l’épreuve des faits*, Paris, Sycos, 1991, which accounts for the evaluations commissioned by the Mission recherche-experimentation in about 15 departments, S. Paugham, *la Société française et ses pauvres, l’expérience du RMI*, Paris, PUF, 1993, S. Wuhl, *les Exclus face a l’emploi*, Paris, Syros, 1992.
 123. See S. Paugham, “Entre l’emploi et l’assistance. Réflexion sur l’insertion professionnelle des allocataires du RMI,” *Travail et emploi*, Nr. 55, 1993.
 124. One should also note that, as the CERC investigation shows, most recipients who find work do not do so with the help of the RMI. They developed their own professional strategies, while the RMI gave them some breathing room.
 125. *Le RMI à l’épreuve des faits*, op. cit., p. 63.
 126. *Ibid.* For a synthetic reflection on the sense of the notion of contract in the RMI, see R. Lafore, “Les trois défis du RMI,” *Actualité juridique*, Nr. 10, October 1989.

127. P. Valereyberghe, RMI, *le pari de l'insertion*, op. cit., t. I, p. 332.
128. See D. Demazière, "La négociation de l'identité des chômeurs de longue durée," *Revue française de sociologie*, XXXIII, 3, 1992.
129. P. Berger, T. Luckman, *la Construction sociale de la réalité*, trad. fr. Paris, Meridiens-Klincksieck, 1989, p. 189.
130. On the definition of "asocial-sociability," see *la Gestion des risques*, op. cit., chapter IV. I had proposed it on the basis of the analysis of situations of groups in which the culture of interrelations becomes independent and a "society" in itself. I had also indicated that this kind of existence could also characterize certain social situations in which the actors were condemned to a relational game because they were not able to master the structure of the situation. Such situations have become numerous since then.
131. S. Wuhl, *les Exclus face à l'emploi*, op. cit., p. 185.
132. E. Goffman, "Calmer le jobard: quelques aspects de l'adaptation à l'échec," in *le Parler frais d'Erwing Goffman*, trad. fr., Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1989. Goffman explains that in the social game, there should always be a door left open to walk out honorably for the one who lost. The loser, in these conditions, does not completely lose his face and can keep a "self-presentation" that is not entirely disqualified; neither he nor the others are completely duped. On the other hand, the reactions of a person who is thrown into their loss with full might are unpredictable and can be uncontrollable – and I will add: especially if the person had not been aware that he was in a game.
133. One talks, however, of a lack of adaptation, marginality, delinquency, etc: there has always been a rather large spectrum of non-conformist behavior, especially in working-class circles, around "perfect" integration. But these non-conformities do not put into question the norm of conformity as long as it was accepted that a person could integrate themselves if they so desired.
134. I take the title of Krzysztof Pomian, "La crise de l'avenir," *le Debat*, Nr. 7, December 1980.
135. J. Plassard, cited in B. Perret, G. Roustang, *l'Economie contre la société*, op. cit., p. 104.
136. It is true that the indiscriminate use of deregulation, for instance in the form of uncontrolled internal flexibility, can be counter-productive for enterprises. But their policies of ensuring maximal profitability is different from the desire to maintain social cohesion. The question will be, for example: to what point can I externalize the maximum of activities to be as competitive as possible? The question will not be the cost in terms of unemployment and precarization due to my maximalist productivism.
137. Y. Chotard, report to the general assembly of the CNPF, Paris, January 13th, 1983, in M.-T. Joint-Lambert et al., *Politiques sociales*, Paris, Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, Paris, 1994. On the brutal way in which French employers led "modernization" in the name of flexibility in the 1980s, see A. Lebaube, *l'Emploi en miettes*, op. cit.
138. On the United States, see F. Lesemann, *la Politiques sociale américaine*, Paris, Syros, 1988: on the situation in Great Britain after the policies of Margaret Thatcher, see L. Ville, "Grande-Bretagne: le chômage diminue, l'emploi aussi," dossier of the *l'Expansion*, Nr. 478, June 2-15th, 1994.
139. A. Minc, *le Nouveau Moyen Age*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993, p. 220. Michel Albert's analyses (*Capitalisme contre capitalisme*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1991) go in the same sense. If there are two schematic forms of capitalism, it is not that the market as such recognizes any limits. But, in different contexts, it encounters counter-forces that are more or less powerful. In the "Anglo-Saxon" countries, they generally leave much

freedom to the market; while in the “alpine” or Rhine countries it is contained within more social regulations.

140. K. Polanyi, *la Grande Transformation*, op. cit.
141. Closer to us, we can interpret the considerable difference between the gravity of the 1930 crisis in France and Great Britain. Great Britain already had an almost entirely wage-earning and urbanized society, the bulk of whose resources and protections depended on industrial work; while French “archaisms” permitted it to mute the effect of the crisis and find solutions by retreat to the countryside, to artisanship, and pre-industrial forms of work (there were “only” about a million unemployed in France in the 1930s.). Memories of the Great Depression are so deeply engrained in collective English memory that the struggle for full employment was unanimously seen as a top priority in social policies after the Second World War, while the risk of unemployment was not taken into account in France, not even by the best minds.
142. Let us remember that for Polanyi the dead end to which self-regulated markets leads gave rise to two main types of response: the constitution of social states in the countries which remained democratic, and fascism in German (see *la Grande Transformation*, op. cit., chapter XX).
143. During the 1980s, the advantages of real estate assets and financial capitalism and high salaries increased, while the progressiveness of obligatory taxes decreased. The proportion of the population concerned by this over-enrichment is difficult to establish in the zone where revenues are not very transparent, but it must have benefited about 10 percent of the highest revenues. On the other hand, the part of revenue held by 10 percent of the poorest households diminished by 15 percent between 1979 and 1984 (see the report of the CERC, *les Français et leurs revenus, le tournant des années quatre-vingt*, Paris, La Documentation française, 1989).
144. M. Lallement, “L’Etat et l’emploi,” in B. Eme, J.-L. Laville, *Cohesion sociale et emploi*, op. cit.
145. See “Precarité et risques d’exclusion en France” CERC, Nr. 109, op. cit.
146. The principle of equal access and treatment does not preclude differences in public service modes of action to struggle against economic and social inequality. The responses to needs can be variegated in space and time and must be a function of the diversity of situations” (ministry of public function and administration modernization. General management of administration and public function, Paris, March 18th, 1992, p. 4).
147. One can hypothesize that frequent attempts to “displace” the social question towards the urban question insisted on the strong presence of the state on the terrain through public services, while the state does not dispose of personnel as such on the level of enterprises (work inspectors are restricted to a role of control and post-factum intervention, and “employment policies” legislate from the outside). The question of terrain can also be seen as another way of asking the question of work – however, it would be illusionary to think that the question of employment could be treated on the level of terrain.
148. If this second version prevailed – a more probable hypothesis if the situation is prolonged – one can fear a turn in social politics towards more assistance, following a rationale of the type: insertion politics is complicated, costly, and its results are insignificant; it would be enough to secure a minimum of survival to the most dispossessed persons. The RMI would become minimal income, and urban policies would take an overtly security-based character. That is the “liberal” solution, advocated by Lionel Stoleru since 1974, to leave the “dirty work” to the market. This would also be a frank recognition of dual society and its institutionalization.
149. There were even two projects of social organization, one “revolutionary” and one “reformist,” each with its own variations, and this duality, with the competition

between the organizations adhering to it, was doubtlessly one of the reasons for the defeat of the worker's government. Nevertheless, these currents could weigh in the same sense at the moments of great "worker's conquests."

150. On the trade union of the unemployed founded in 1982, see the monthly *Partage*, which is also one of the best sources of information on the problems of employment and unemployment, on the debates they trigger and the search for alternatives to the present situation.
151. One can date to the end of 1992 – beginning of 1993 the sudden amplification of this awareness, which had large repercussions on the media and political discourse. This was doubtlessly the effect of the psychological threshold of the 3 million unemployed, reached in October 1992, and also of the discussions on the achievements of the socialist power which had won in 1981, largely because of the capacity it was believed to have to solve the unemployment problem.
152. "Exclusion, la grande peur," *la Rue*, Nr. 2, December 1993.
153. F. de Closets, *Toujours plus!* Paris, Grasset, 1982.
154. N. Questiaux, conclusion of the CERC report, *les Français et leurs revenus*, op. cit.
155. P. Valéry, "Montesquieu," *Tableau de la littérature française*, t. II, Paris, Gallimard, 1939, p. 227.
156. See M. Bessin, *Cours de vie et flexibilité temporelle*, doctorate thesis in Sociology, Paris, University Paris VIII, 1993.
157. C. Nicole-Drancourt, *le Labyrinthe de l'insertion*, Paris, la Documentation française, 1991, and, by the same author, "L'idée de précarité revisitée," *Travail et emploi*, Nr. 52, 1992.
158. E. Goffman, *Asiles*, op. cit., chapter IV.
159. For an analysis of the field of "intervention on the others," see A. Ogien, *le Raisonnement psychiatrique*, 1990.
160. See A. Gorz, *les Metamorphoses du travail*, op. cit., p. 212 sq.
161. J.-L. Laville, *les Services de proximité en Europe*, Paris, Syros, 1992; see also in B. Eme, J.-L. Laville, *Cohésion sociale et emploi*, Paris, Desclee, de Brouwer, 1994, the two contributions of J.-L. Laville, "Services, emploi et socialisation," and by B. Eme, *Cohésion sociale et emploi*, op. cit., and B. Eme, "Insertion et économie solidaire."
162. See J.-B. de Foucault, "Perspectives de l'économie solidaire," in J.-L. Laville, B. Eme, *Cohésion sociale et emploi*, op. cit., and B. Eme, "Insertion et économie solidaire," loc. cit.
163. See F. Bailleau, *le Travail social et la crise*, Paris, IRESCO, 1987.
164. See M. Elbaum, "Pour une autre politique de traitement du chômage," *Esprit*, August-September 1994.
165. The traveler could only be struck by the contrast, twenty years ago. In "advanced" countries, and especially in the United States, domestic services were very rare and expensive and were replaced a long time ago by electric appliances. On the other hand, in the less "advanced" countries, servant work was abundant and almost free. From a historical point of view as well, servant work was abundant until the nineteenth century, where it represented about 10 percent of the urban population, before becoming a quasi-prerequisite of high society. We could ask ourselves if today's proliferation of this type of service is not an index of "third-worldization" of "developed" societies.
166. P. Delmas, *le Maître des horloges*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 1991, p. 68.
167. On the notion of *underclass*, see E. R. Ricketts, I. Sawill, "Defining and Measuring the underclass," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, vol. 7, Winter 1998.
168. See on the point the analysis of Alain Touraine. See also R. Reich, *l'Économie mondialisée*, trad. fr. Paris, Dunod, 1993, which describes the rise to power of the

- “symbol manipulators” at the expense of producers of material goods and classic service providers.
169. Y. Barel, “Le grand intégrateur,” loc. cit.
 170. P. Valereyberghe, *le Défi de l’insertion*, op. cit. Also, in 1988, eighty-four unemployed out of a hundred were looking for a “normal” employment of undetermined duration, ten, a partial, permanent employment, and four, a temporally limited employment, and two a non-salaried job (*Enquete emploi*, Paris, INSEE, 1988, annex 5).
 171. A limited position in this sense, the proposition made by Roger Sue at the summer university organized by the trade union of the unemployed in 1993 to abandon completely the merchant sector to the ferocious competition which is its law, to make up a convivial and protected “sector of social utility” (see *Partage*, Nr. 83, August-September 1993). I do not know whether reservations for Native Americans are convivial, but they are certainly protected, it seems.
 172. It seems in fact that the role played by the SMIC in the increase of general salary cost was very limited, and this cost could also be reduced by technical measures, such as the alleviation of charges for this type of employment. But as for the administrative authorization of layoffs – whose suppression would permit, according to the employers, to create many jobs, while this was not so in reality – it is about measures whose symbolic sense prevails over their economic importance; which takes nothing away from their general importance, quite the contrary.
 173. See A. Gorz “Revenu minimum et citoyenneté, droit au travail et droit au revenu,” *Futuribles*, February 1993.
 174. A. Minc, *L’après-crise est commencé*, Paris, Gallimard, 1982. Michel Albert declared later in the same spirit, “What is limited is the *global number of work hours*” (italicized by the author, *le Pari français*, Paris, Seuil, 1983), and proposed a model of work division, the “prime for volunteers to work reduced hours.”
 175. For different propositions on how to realize this division, see D. Taddei, *le Temps de l’emploi*, Paris, Hachette, 1988; the various works of Guy Aznar, in particular *Travailler moins pour travailler tous*, Paris, Syros, 1992; F. Valette, *Partage du travail, une approche nouvelle pour sortir de la crise*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1993; J. Rigaudiat, *Réduire le temps de travail*, Paris Syros, 1993; F. See also the various contributions made by André Gorz, who proposes the conceptually deepest version of the question. This problem of sharing work is often wrongly confused with pleadings for universal allocation, or a citizenship income, or an existence income (see a critical dossier in “Pour ou contre le revenu minimum, l’allocation universelle, le revenu d’existence,” *Futuribles*, February 1994). I say wrongly, because the idea of a division of income implies a different model of society. It implies the split between incomes on one hand and rights attached to work on the other hand, which the issue of work division is attempting to keep intact. On the economic impact of different formulas of work division, see Y. Bouin, G. Cete, D. Taddei, *le Temps de travail*, Paris, Syros 1993, which stresses the importance of in-depth reorganization of work or these plans to succeed. Simulations of the OFCE suggest the possible creation of about 2.5 million jobs if the work week is reduced to thirty-five hours, provided that this reduction comes with other measures (see J. Rigaudiat, *Réduire le temps de travail*, op. p. 102 sq.)
 176. For a critical point of view on sharing work, as too “simplistic” an idea, see P. Boissard, “Partage de travail: les pièges d’une idée simple,” *Esprit*, August-September 1994; D. Mothé, “Le mythe du temps libéré,” *ibid.*, A. Supiot, “Le travail, liberté partagée,” *Droit social*, Nr. 9-10, September-October 1993.
 177. On this question of redistribution and the different forms it has to assume in the framework of a welfare state, see Pierre Rosanvallon’s suggestions, “Une troisième crise de l’Etat providence,” *le Banquet*, Nr. 3, second semester 1993.

178. See J.-P. Viola, “Surmonter la panne sociale,” *le Banquet*, Nr. 3, second semester 1993. We notice thus that there is more strictness towards the unemployed than towards the beneficiaries of health insurance or retired persons, and above all for the direct beneficiaries of health expenses such as doctors, pharmacists, pharmaceutical laboratories, etc. It is true that “employment policies” and “social treatment of unemployment” take up enormous sums (in 1991, 256 billions of francs, or about 3.5 percent of the GDP). But this abundance of measures often has the objective only of assuaging the break bit by bit. The treatment of employment and unemployment as it has been done for the last twenty years show that what is most lacking is the definition of a coherent policy, and not sufficient funds.
179. On the implications of this publication by Pierre Bérégovoy, then minister of labor, and on its long-term consequences, see A. Lebaube, *l'Emploi en miettes*, op. p. 57-62.
180. W. Beveridge, *Full Employment in a Free Society*, op. p. 144.
181. *Ibid.*, p. 279. Beveridge, in spite of his hostility to Marxism, even considers forms of collectivization as means of production if it became absolutely necessary to realize the categorical imperative of full employment.
182. Such an offer could be interpreted as a modern reformulation of the old principle of law of labor, and the recourse to this principle could have bad reception insofar as it was given in the working movement of a revolutionary potentiality. But it lost it, if one should believe the preamble of the Constitution of 1946, taken back in the Constitution of 1958: “Each individual has the right to work and to obtain an employment.” Would it be subversive to ask that the Constitution of the Republic to be respected?
183. It is also almost in the same words that Michel Albert interprets the conflict between both models of capitalism which he has built, the “Anglo-Saxon” and the “Rhenan” (*Capitalisme contre capitalisme*, op. cit.).
184. The portion of fiscal and parafiscal revenues with respect to primary income requested, at the beginning of the 1980s, 49.2% for workers versus 26.6% for the independent professions and agricultural farmers.
185. R. Boyer, J.-P. Durand, *l'Après-fordisme*, op. cit., p. 120.
186. Cf. M. Albert, *le Pari français*, op. cit., p. 97 who notes that the salary of a cleaning lady is almost twice higher in Germany than in France, whereas the after tax income of the better paid profession is slightly lower than in France.
187. N. Machiavel, *Histoires florentines*, trad. Fr. In *Œuvres complètes*, La pléiade, Gallimard, p. 1001.

Conclusion: Negative Individualism

Thus the essence of the social question today will be, once again, the existence of the “useless of the world,” supernumeraries, and beyond them a nebulosity of conditions marked by insecurity and uncertainty about tomorrow that testifies to the return of mass vulnerability. If we imagine for just a moment the whole span of this relationship between man and labor, this may seem paradoxical. It has taken centuries of sacrifices, suffering and even the use of force—the dictates of legislation and of regulations, the constraints of need and of hunger as well—in order to fix the worker to his task, and subsequently to hold him there by means of a bundle of “social” advantages that go into forming a *status* constitutive of his social identity. Yet it is at the very moment when this “civilization of labor” appears to have been definitively imposed through the hegemony of wage-labor that the edifice itself is shattered, bringing back to the foreground the old popular obsession of having to “live from day to day.”

Still, this is not a matter of the eternal return of unhappiness. Instead it stems from a complete metamorphosis that poses in a wholly new and contemporary way the question of the duty to make sense of a vulnerability that *exists even after the rise of social protections*. The treatment that I have attempted to construct here may be read as a story of the passage from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, in which the evolution of wage labor played the determining role. As to what will be the next critical juncture at least one thing is clear: we are no longer part of—and can never get back to—a *Gemeinschaft*. And the largely irreversible nature of these changes may be understood as originating from the very processes that established wage-labor at the heart of society. Perhaps wage-labor has retained, on the model of the *corvée* (cf. Chapter III), a “heteronomous” dimension, in the words of André Gorz, or an “alienated” aspect, to speak in Marxian

terms, and strictly speaking, as common sense might always have suggested to us. But these transformations in the constitution of society have consisted, in part, in removing the most archaic aspects of this subordination, and in the other part, in replacing them with assurances and rights, as well as by an access to consumption above and beyond the satisfaction of basic needs. Wage-labor had thus become, at least in several of its permutations, a full-fledged *condition*—capable of competing with, and sometimes even winning out over, two other rival conditions that had long since been submerged: that of the property owner and that of the independent worker. Despite our current economic difficulties, this transformation is still underway. Numerous liberal professions remain in the process of becoming increasingly wage-earning professions, for example, doctors, lawyers and artists sign virtual labor contracts with the institutions employing them.

Thus we must greet with some hesitation the proclamations of the death of wage-earning society, whether these are pronounced with joy or regret. These are fundamental errors of sociological analysis: contemporary society is still predominantly a wage-earning society. But just as often these analytical errors are ideologically motivated: an impatience to “overcome wage-labor” in order to achieve more congenial systems of activity is symptomatic of a rejection of modernity rooted in nostalgic longings for “the enchanted world of feudal relationships,” an age when social protection was guaranteed by kinship, or even by traditional tutelage. I have made here the opposite decision (admittedly equally “ideological,” but can it be otherwise?) that current-day problems are not a proper occasion for settling accounts with a history that also entailed urbanization and the technical mastery of nature, the growth of the free-market and of secularism, universal human rights and democracy—a story, justifiably, of the passage from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*. The virtue of my choice is to clarify what is at stake in completely abandoning the legacy of wage-earning society. France has taken centuries to arrive at its current position, and it has accomplished all this precisely by consenting to play the game of wage-earning society. If the rules of this game are to be modified today, our awareness of the importance of this heritage merits our proceeding with some caution. We must try to imagine what would be the necessary preconditions for transforming a wage-earning society rather than simply resigning ourselves to its liquidation.

In order to do this, we must struggle to imagine what social protections might consist of in a society that is increasingly *a society of individuals*. Indeed the history that I have attempted here may also be read, paralleling the history of the development of wage-labor, as the story of the rise of individualism, *of the difficulties and risks of trying to exist as individuals*. The mere fact of existing as an individual and the possibility of availing one's self of protections entails a conundrum, because social protections are the consequences of participating in collectivities. The contemporary rise of what Marcel Gauchet calls a "mass individualism," in which he discerns "an anthropological process of wide-ranging consequences," calls into question the fragile balance that wage-earning society had achieved between the cultivation of the individual and membership in protective collectivities.¹ What can it mean today to be "protected"?

The state of abjection produced by the complete lack of social protections was first experienced by populations who found themselves outside the framework of a society of statuses and orders—a society with a "holistic" emphasis, in the words of Louis Dumont. "No man without his Lord," said the old English adage. But also, and until even later in the social structure of the "Ancien Regime," no artisan failed to derive his social existence from his profession; there are scarcely any bourgeois who are not identified by their condition; and even few nobles who do not define themselves by their lineage and rank. Even for French society on the eve of the Revolution, Alexis de Tocqueville still refuses to speak of individualism, but at the very most of a "collective individualism," wherein he notes the identification of the individual with "small societies that exist only for themselves":

Our ancestors lacked the word "individualism" that we have forged in our image, because in their time, there were indeed no individuals who did not belong to a group and who could be considered absolutely alone; but each of the thousand small groups of which French society was composed thought only of itself. This was, if I dare say it this way, a kind of collective individualism that prepared souls for the true individualism with which we are acquainted.²

This kind of belonging in collectivities guaranteed at the same time the social identity of individuals and what I have termed their "protection of proximity."

However, in this society there are forms of individualization that we might distinguish as *negative individualism*, which is obtained by *subtraction* with respect to belonging in a community. This ex-

pression, like that of “collective individualism,” may be somewhat shocking insofar as we generally understand by individualism the valorization of the individual subject and his independence with respect to collective belongings. Modern individualism, says Louis Dumont, “postulates the individual as a moral being, independent and autonomous, and thus (essentially) nonsocial.”³ Indeed, what Alan Fox calls “market individualism” began employing this image of an individual as master of his business, pursuing with ferocity his own interest, and defiant toward all collective forms of belonging.⁴ Borne further by liberalism, this is imposed at the end of the 18th century by means of a dual political and industrial revolution.

The power of this triumphant individualism, and also the persistence of “collective individualism,” may have obscured the existence of a form of individualism that associated the complete independence of the individual with his complete absence of substance.⁵ The vagabond represents the paradigmatic case of this. The vagabond is a being absolutely unencumbered (disaffiliated). He belongs only to himself, without being the “man” of anyone, nor being able to be included in any collectivity. This is a pure individual, and as a result of this fact, one who is completely abject. It is through this individualized point that he is fully exposed: he is detached from the social fabric of those relationships of dependency and interdependencies that structured the society of the time. “*Sunt pondus inutilae terrae,*” in the words of the 16th century jurist from Lyon previously quoted: vagabonds are the useless weight of the earth.

The vagabond pays dearly for this lack of position that sets him on the other side of the mirror of social relationships. But the main lesson we should draw from this figure is the fact that, as we have seen, he represents a limiting condition with respect to a wide range of social positions whose status is just as poorly defined in a regimented society. “The Fourth World” who have no estate, strictly speaking, and who partake of different kinds of wage-earning, or proto-wage-earning, relationships before the consolidation of a modern wage-earning society. Within the framework of a society of orders there comes into being a virtual hive of individualized positions, in the sense that they are de-linked with respect to traditional regulations, and that new regulations have not yet been firmly put in place. This may be understood as a “negative” individualism because it is largely defined negatively in terms of a “lack” or “ab-

sence”—the lack of respect, lack of security, lack of protected goods and stable bonds.

The evolution that is effected at the end of the 18th century may be seen as the collision between two different forms of individualism. “Positive” individualism arises through the effort to reconstitute all of society on a contractual basis. By the imposition of the contractual matrix, *it will be demanded, or indeed dictated, that impoverished individuals behave like autonomous individuals*. What is a contract after all? “The contract is a convention by which one or several persons oblige themselves to one or several others to give, do or forbear something.”⁶ It is a voluntary agreement between “independent and autonomous” beings, as Louis Dumont observes, in principle free in their goods and their persons. These positive prerogatives of individualism are subsequently applied to individuals who, in terms of their “liberty,” experience mainly the lack of attachments and, in terms of their “autonomy,” know only the lack of supports. In the contractual system, there is no reference to any collectivity, except that which is formed among the contractors themselves. Nor is there any longer reference to social protections, except the juridical guarantees that secure the liberty and legality of contracts.

These new rules of the contractual game will hardly encourage new protections. They will, to the contrary, have the effect of destroying any remnants of collective belongings, thus taking on the anomic character of “negative” individuality. Pauperism—admittedly, an extreme example, like the vagabond—exemplifies this complete desocialization that reduces a segment of the industrial population to nothing more than an aggregation of unskilled individuals.

However, as we have shown, the full force of this shock-wave of the contractual order fell only upon a limited section of the populace. Its force was in some degree blunted by the rural culture, by the persistence of preindustrial forms of organizing labor and by the force of modes of proximate protections that were associated with them.⁷ But we should also appreciate that for groups whose conditions depended entirely on contractual labor, the whole development culminating in a wage-earning society consisted of overcoming the fragility of the contractual order in order to acquire a *status*, that is to say, a value above and beyond the purely contractual structure of the wage relationship. Transcending the “pure” contract for labor, these additional elements of status operated as checks on the

worst effects of negative individualism. The labor relationship progressively shifts from a personalized relationship of subordination to a contract for hire, and the identity of wage-earners comes to be derived from the uniformity of rights that are accorded them. "A status (collective) comes to be established in the midst of a labor contract (otherwise autonomous and individual) by the submission of this contract to a public order (heteronomous and collective)."⁸

In other words, it is really a matter of the process of *de-individualization* that inscribes the worker in abstract systems, collective conventions, public regulation of the right of contract, and social protection. Thus it is neither tutelage, on the one extreme, nor simple contract, on the other, but rather rights and solidarities arising from wholes structured around the performance of common tasks. The universe of labor in wage-earning society does not form a society of individuals, strictly speaking, but rather a hierarchical buttress of collectivities constituted on the basis of the division of labor and sanctioned by law. Moreover, especially in the case of the masses, life beyond work is also structured by involvement in communal networks, neighborhoods, friendships, clubs, unions, etc. With respect to the condition of desocialization represented by pauperism, the working class itself was "fabricated" from forms of sociability that might be intense and solid.⁹

Thus, if each does indeed exist as an individual and thus a "private" person, one's professional status is public and collective, and this anchorage allows for a stabilization of lifestyles. Such a de-individualization may even allow for a deterritorialization of protections. Insofar as these are established by the system of juridical regulations, these new protections do not necessarily have to be transmitted through interdependency, or by personalized relationships of subordination like the patronage of the boss or acquaintances that offer various proximate protections. This allows for mobility. "Having a right," we might say, should in principle be just as well guaranteed in Maubege as in Cholet. Reterritorialization by law, in sum, or the creation of abstract districts, completely distinct from close, personal relationships, and through which individuals may circulate under the aegis of the law. This is the disaffiliation accomplished by the law.

Today this complex network of collectivities, social protections, and systems of individualization finds itself being called into question in a manner that is itself extremely complex. The changes that

go into the making of a greater flexibility, both within the domain of labor and outside of it, may have an irreversible character. The segmentation of jobs, like the inexorable growth of services, brings along with it an individualization of working behaviors entirely different from the collective regulations of the "Fordist" system. It is no longer enough just to know how to work, but one must know first and foremost how to sell and to sell one's self. Individuals are thereby compelled to define their professional identities themselves, and to advertise this through a relationship that emphasizes personal capital as much as overall technical skills.¹⁰ This disappearance of collective environments and markers applying to everyone is not limited to the sphere of work. Indeed the human life cycle itself becomes flexible, with the extension of a "post-adolescence" often devoted to the culture of waywardness, the avatars of an anguished professional life, and a post-professional life that often stretches from a premature retirement all the way to the ever retreating strictures of old age.¹¹ A sort of deinstitutionalization, understood here as a break with respect to objective frameworks that structure the existence of subjects, crosses the entire range of social life.

This general process may have contrasting effects on the different groups it touches. On the side of labor, the individualization of tasks allows some to escape from collective restraints and to better express their identities through their employment. For others, however, it means a segmentation and fragmentation of tasks, insecurity, isolation, and the loss of social protections.¹² The same disparity may be found in social life at large. This is to assert one of the common provinces of sociology, which reminds us that certain groups belonging to the middle classes possess a familiarity, blurring even into complacency, with the culture of individuality. This translates into a preoccupation with one's self, and among the perverse side-effects of this, into the propensity to subordinate all other concerns to one's own narcissism. Thus, this "culture of narcissism"¹³ or this "therapy for the normal"¹⁴ was brought to fruition with the rise of psychoanalysis in the 1970s. But at the same time it was easy to demonstrate that this concern for one's self mobilized a particular kind of cultural capital and encountered strong "resistance" in mass culture, both because they were poorly outfitted to give themselves over to it, and also because their main attentions were elsewhere.

The culture of the individual is not dead. One of its extreme permutations may be seen in the 1980s "cult of success."¹⁵ And today

we can discern the development of another kind of individualism, this time at a mass level, which appears to be a transformation of the “negative” individualism that developed in the interstices of preindustrial society. This is a fundamental metamorphoses and not simply a reenactment, because this new individualism is the product of the weakening or of the wholesale loss of collective regulations, and not of their extreme rigidity. But it nonetheless retains the essential feature of being *an individualism that stems from the lack of frameworks* and not from an excessive devotion to subjectivity. “This has little in common with a movement for self-affirmation—the valorization of the individual is not necessarily the main variable in a process of individuation. Instead it might very well be a breakdown of the collective framework.”¹⁶ Hence the ideal-typical case of a young drug addict of the suburban ghettos might very well be the analogue of the form of disaffiliation originally personified by the vagabond in preindustrial society. He is completely individualized and vulnerable because of a lack of belonging and supports with respect to such integrative frameworks as labor, family ties, and the overall possibility of crafting a better future. His body is his only asset and his only bond; and even this he drives, relishes and destroys through an orgy of absolute individualization.

Like the case of the vagabond, however, this portrayal is important mainly because it pushes to the extreme limit features that we can discern on a larger scale throughout society at large. These same conditions of insecurity and precariousness are evident in the treacherous pathways made in the tense odyssey of just getting by from day to day. For many young people in particular, it is necessary to try to rid themselves of the indeterminacy of their condition, that is say, to choose, to decide, to find ways of retaining some shred of self-respect in order to avoid simply giving up. These experiences seem to be the very antithesis of the cult of “me” developed by the disciples of success or those explorers of the rituals of subjectivity. They are nonetheless high-risk adventures by individuals who have become such mainly by just dropping out. This new individualism is not an imitation of the psychological culture of the educated classes, even if it might borrow some aspects from it.¹⁷ This is first and foremost an individuality of vulnerability because it is fragile and threatened with decomposition. Consequently it risks being carried as a burden.

This bipolarity of modern individualism offers us a system for understanding the challenges confronted today by wage-earning society. Let us say this one last time: the main achievement of this social system consisted in creating a continuum of social positions that are not equal but comparable, which is to say *compatible with one another and interdependent*. This is the way, and the only way so far discovered, of achieving the Third Republic's theoretical ideal of a "society of likeness," that is to say, a modern democracy, and making it compatible with the growing demands of the division of labor and the increasing complexity of social stratification. Only the construction of a new order of social protections, inscribing individuals in abstract collectivities cut off from former relationships of tutelage and direct communal belongings, might guarantee without too many obstacles the transition from an industrial society to a wage-earning society.

This explanatory model (individual versus collective), which should not be mythologized, but which was indeed capable of maintaining "social compromise" until the beginning of the 1970s, is threatened by the development of individualism and by the creation of new forms of individualization. But these processes present contrasting effects because they reinforce "positive" individualism, even as they give birth to a mass individualism that is "negatively" riven by uncertainty and the lack of social protections.

At such a moment, the methods of administering the social are deeply transformed and *recourse to "contract" and to the decentralized treatment of problems* enjoy a widespread comeback. This is not accidental. Contractualism embodies, and at the same time drives, a recomposition of social exchanges on an increasingly individualistic pattern. Similarly, the localization of social services evokes those earlier relationships of proximity between directly concerned parties that uniform legal regulations had erased. But this recomposition is, in the strict sense of the word, ambiguous, because it lends itself to more than one interpretation.

This new system of social policies may indeed be seen from the perspective of how things stood before social protections, when individuals, including the most diminished, had to confront the tremors caused by the birth of industrial society by their own means alone. "Have goals, and apply yourself in searching for a job, for housing, in your creativity by forming an association or starting a rap group, and someone will help you," it is said today. This admo-

dition cuts across all policies of insertion, and takes on its most explicit form with the RMI's "contract of insertion": a grant and a follow-up toward a project. But should we not wonder if—as was the case with the earliest forms of the labor contract at the beginnings of the industrial revolution—imposing this contractual matrix is not equivalent to asking the most destabilized individuals to behave like autonomous subjects? For to "create a professional project," or better yet, to construct a "life plan," makes no sense when, for example, one is unemployed or threatened with eviction. This is a demand that even many well-integrated subjects would be hard-pressed to complete, for they have always followed paths well-marked for them by others.¹⁸ It is true that this kind of contract is often fictive, because the applicant is hardly up to the level of what is asked of him. But what this really amounts to saying is that the social worker is effectively the judge of the legitimacy of what the contract says, and he grants or denies financial assistance as a function of this evaluation. Thus he exercises a veritable moral magistracy (because in the final analysis it is a matter of determining whether the applicant really "deserves" the RMI), very different than the provision of a benefit through a rights-bearing collectivity, anonymous surely, but at least guaranteeing the automatic dispersal of the benefit.

Many of the same perverse effects of the individualization of application procedures are produced by the other decisive policy change in the provision of social benefits, namely their re-territorialization. This movement goes well beyond simple decentralization, because mandates are given to local authorities to prioritize their objectives, to set goals and to negotiate their achievement with the various concerned parties. At the extreme, the local becomes the global. But the novelty of these policies does not abolish their similarity to traditional structures and the social protections previously afforded by circles of intimates. This most ancient form of care-taking, whose various historical permutations we have considered, already entailed what one might call a "negotiation," if the word had then existed. Indeed it was always obligatory for the one soliciting relief to make his communal belonging known. But this element of proximity (cf. Chapter I, "My neighbor is my kindred") situates the solicitor in a network of tutelary dependencies of which Karl Polanyi's description of the "parish serfdom" of the English Poor Laws is the most extreme example. And indeed what guarantees do we have that these new "reciprocal," "partnered," "global," etc. provisions do not give

birth to new forms of paternalism? In point of fact, “the locally elected” official is rarely a local despot, and the “project chief” is not a harsh patroness. But our historical detour in this work reminds us that even today, there have always been “good poor” and “bad poor,” and that this distinction hinges on more or less arbitrary moral and psychological criteria. Without the mediation of collective rights, the individualization of relief and decision-making power based on local acquaintances and entrusted to local authorities always risks culminating in the old logic of philanthropy: perform acts of allegiance and you will be helped.

But this social right itself is growing ever more particularized, individualized, at least to the extent that a universal rule can be tailored to the individual. Thus even the right to work, for example, has also been fragmented by being recontractualized. Despite general regulations giving a well-defined status and identity to collectives of wage-earners, the multiplication of special types of labor contracts gives way to the balkanization of people’s relationships to work: contracts for labor on a limited term, temporary work, part-time work, etc. These intermediary conditions between employment and non-employment also find themselves the objects of new forms of contractualization: contracts for a return to employment, contracts of employment solidarity, contracts of reinsertion in alternance, etc. These latter measures are especially revealing of just how ambiguous such processes for the individualization of rights and protection may be. For example, the contract of return applies to “persons encountering particular difficulties gaining access to employment” (Article L 322-4-2 of the Labor Code). Hence, it is something unique to one’s personal circumstances that grants access to this kind of contract.¹⁹ Access to this right is also contingent on the variable of a deficiency, of “particular difficulties” of a personal or psychosocial nature. This is profoundly ambiguous because, on the one hand, applying positive discrimination on behalf of persons in difficulty is totally defensible: they may need to be brought up to normal before rejoining everyday life. But at the same time this procedure reactivates the very logic of traditional assistance that the right to work had seemingly abolished: namely, the knowledge that in order to be relieved, one has to display the signs of his incapacity, or deficiency with respect to a common system of labor. As in the case of the RMI and local policies, recourse to this kind of contract risks betraying the powerlessness of the State to master an increasingly complex

and heterogeneous society, and throwing back to particular agencies the administration of all those who cannot be covered by general rules.

This ambiguity cuts across virtually all social policies and employment policies, which have been in the process of being reformulated for the last twenty years. Above and beyond the economic "crisis," these policies have been confronted by a profound process of individualization that also affects other main spheres of social existence. Thus we can make the same kind of analysis with respect to the structural transformation of the family. The "modern" family has gradually disposed of its relational networks, and during the last few years relationships between its members have become contractualized on an individualized basis. But, as Irène Théry observes, this "liberation" of the family with respect to traditional tutelles produces different effects depending on the kind of family, and the members of the most economically vulnerable and socially destitute families may feel the negative side of this newfound liberty when overcome, for example, by a divorce, separation or a decline in social status.²⁰ The reality, here and elsewhere, of what it actually means to exist as an individual is not immediately evident to our consciousness. Herein lies a paradox whose depths we must plumb: one experiences more comfortably his own individuality insofar as he possesses objective resources and collective protections.

This takes us to the heart of the question posed by the crumbling of wage-earning society, at least in the form that we saw at the beginning of the 1970s. This is the essence of the social question today.

One can hardly denounce the hegemony of the State over civil society, its bureaucracy and the inefficiency of its machinery, the abstractness of social laws and their inability to arouse concrete allegiances; and at the same time condemn the transformations that now seek to take into account the particular situations and call for the mobilization of its subjects. This would be a total waste, for this movement toward individualization is probably irreversible. But one can do something more than come to an impasse by revealing the differential cost of these transformations for certain groups of the population. He who cannot pay otherwise must *continually pay by his own sweat*, and this is an exhausting exercise. This effect is very easily seen in the RMI's procedures of contractualization: the claimant brings nothing other than the story of his life, with its failures

and losses, and this crude material is scrutinized in order to derive a perspective for rehabilitation in order to “construct a project,” to define a “contract of insertion.”²¹ The fragments of a shattered life-history are the only medium of exchange allowing access to a right. This does not seem to be the kind of treatment for an individual that is befitting a citizen of the whole.

Thus the contradiction that runs throughout the current processes of individualization is profound indeed. It threatens society with a fragmentation that would render it ungovernable. It further introduces a new polarization between those who are able to combine individualism with independence because their social position is secure; and those who experience their individuality as a cross to be borne because for them it signifies only a lack of attachments and protections.

Can this challenge be met? No one can say for sure. But we can agree on the path that must be pursued. Public power is the only authority capable of building bridges between these two poles of individualism and of imposing a minimum level of cohesion on society. The heartless constraints of the economy exert increasingly centrifugal pressures. Older forms of solidarity are too exhausted to form the basis for any sustained resistance. What the uncertainty of our age seems to require is not less State action—particularly when it threatens to abandon itself completely to the laws of the market. Nor is it likely that we need more of the State—especially the desire to rebuild by force the edifice of the beginning of the 1970s, undermined once and for all by the collapse of older collectivities and the rise of mass individualism. What we are left with, then, would seem to be a State policy that would redirect its interventions in order to accommodate these processes of individualization, to disarm these points of tension, to avoid these fault-lines and rescue those whose heads have fallen below water. What we need is a protector-State, at least, for in a society that is hyperdiversified and consumed by negative individualism, *there can be no social cohesion without social protection*. But this State must target its interventions with the greatest possible precision by assiduously tracking this process of individualization.

In raising this demand we should not expect that some new form of statist regulation is likely to fall from the heavens. For as we have already emphasized, the whole range of public policy has been attempting to transform itself for the last two decades along these lines.

But this has all come to pass in the context of a social State oscillating between novel initiatives intended to face up to what is new in the current situation, and attempts to push off these responsibilities—to business corporations, to local activism, to a philanthropy overwhelmed by new souls, or even to resources that the orphans of wage-earning society should themselves deploy—of serving as the guarantor of belonging to all members of society. To be sure, when the boat fills with water, everyone had better grab a bucket and bail. Yet in the midst of the uncertainties that are legion today, at least one thing is clear: no one can replace the State, whose primary function remains that of captaining maneuvers and avoiding the wreck of the ship of state.

Notes

1. M. Gauchet, "La société d'insécurité", *loc. cit.*, p. 176.
2. A. de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien régime et la Révolution* (first edition 1856), Paris, Gallimard, 1942, p. 176.
3. L. Dumont, *Essai sur l'individualisme*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1983, p. 69. Cf. also P. Birnbaum, J. Leca (dir.), *Sur l'individualisme*, Paris, Presses de la FNSP, 1986.
4. A. Fox, *History and Heritage*, op. cit., Chap. 1. Fox dates from the 16th century the debut of the flowering of this triumphant individualism (yet nonetheless fragile, cf. for example, the common fate of those "Lombard" bankers ruined after having made the lords and even princes pay so dearly), but we spot this profile of entrepreneurs who are hardy and out for gain since the time of the "deconversion" of feudal society of the 14th century. Cf. for example, the personage of Jean Boinebroke, drapery merchant in Douai at the end of the 14th century, who exploited the artisans that he employed with such cynicism that they awaited his death and made him a posthumous process. (G. Espinas, *les Origines du capitalisme*, t. I, "Sire Jean Boinebroke," Lille, 1933).
5. It is necessary to add one other form of individualism that we might distinguish as "aristocratic," located near the summit of the social pyramid. "In societies where the feudal system is but an example, we can say that individualization is maximal in those places where sovereignty is exercised and in the greatest zones of power. The more one is the possessor of power and privilege, the greater one is distinguished as an individual in the various rituals, discourses, symbols." (M. Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, Paris, Gallimard, 1975, p. 194). This form of individualism has been gradually replaced by that which develops alongside commerce and industry. In the society of the "Ancien Regime," there was also a necessary place for the "adventurer," who appeared as a literary theme in the picaresque Spanish novels and multiplied in the 18th century (cf. the personage of Casanova). The adventurer is an individual who enjoys his liberty in the interstices of a society of orders in the process of deconversion. He knows the traditional rules perfectly well, but flaunts them all by scorning them and avoiding them in order to make his individual interest and pleasures triumph.
6. Code civil, article 1101.
7. We should recall that the contractual recomposition that overturned the system of labor respected the tutelary core of the familial order. If a liberal legislation like the

Le Chapelier Law had been imposed on the family as it was imposed on labor, the social order would probably have resisted. It is only very slowly that domestic law has come to incorporate these contractual dimensions, whereas, conversely, the law of labor has offset its statutory guarantees. But at the beginning of the 19th century the populations that furnished the material for the descriptions of pauperism were characterized both by their erratic relationship to work and by the decomposition of their family structure: naïve young men and women who move to the cities and lose the pure morals that they have derived from their rural upbringings, unions among the male and female workers of the first large-scale industrial factories always described as fragile and immoral, giving rise to illegitimate children, etc. Neither a systematic relationship to work, nor strong families ties, nor embeddedness in structured communities: these are the main features of negative individual that all go into the making of a mass disaffiliation.

8. A. Supiot, *Critique du droit du travail*, Paris, PUF, 1994, p. 139. This work deploys in a very precise manner the role played by the right of labor to come from the pure contract of labor to the status of wage-earner.
9. Cf. analysis of E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class*, *op. cit.*, and R. Hoggart, *la Culture du pauvre*, *op. cit.*, also several studies on the sociability of workers that emphasize, often in mystifying ways, the strength of its solidarities. For an update on popular culture, Cf. C. Grignon, J.-C. Passeron, *le Savant et le populaire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1989.
10. Cf. analysis of B. Perret and G. Roustang, *l'économie contre la société*, *op. cit.*, chap. II. For an optimistic interpretation of this process, Cf. M. Crozier, *l'Entreprise à l'écoute*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1994 (first edition, Paris, Interéditions, 1989).
11. Xavier Gaulier, "La mutation des âges", *le Débat*, number 61, september-october 1991.
12. Cf. A. Supiot, *Critique du droit du travail*, *op. cit.*
13. C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, New York, WW Norton and Co., 1979.
14. R. Castel, J.-F. Le Cerf "Le phénomène psy et la société française", *le Débat*, number 1, 2 and 3, 1980.
15. Cf. A. Ehrenberg, *le Culte de la performance*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1991.
16. M. Gauchet, "La société d'insécurité", *loc. cit.*, p. 175.
17. This is accordingly only a particular reference to "the cultural" that often holds such a prominent place in the lives given over to waywardness—not the culture of those who frequent museums or symphony concerts, but a continual quest to put on a play or form a rock group, for example, driven by the semi-fantastic idea of being someday recognized, with the backup plan probably some vague identification with the bohemian hell known by some of the great artists before one day, suddenly, fame will immortalize them. Probably very few of these young people will gloriously depart from these "intermediary zones," but there is here an example of these "subjective" adventures stemming primary from a loss (loss of work in the first place, for twenty years ago most of these youth from a working class background would have been directly apprenticed or in a factory), who however are probably not lacking in courage or sometimes even in grandeur. On the notion of these "intermediary zones," cf. L. Rouleau-Berger, *la Ville intervale*, *op. cit.*
18. Cf. J.-F. Noël, "L'insertion en attente d'une politique", in J. Donzelot, *Face à l'exclusion*, *op. cit.*
19. Cf. A. Supiot, *Critique du droit du travail*, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
20. Cf. I. Théry, *le Démariage*, *op. cit.*
21. Cf. I. Astier, *Revenu minimum et souci d'insertion: entre le travail, le domestique et l'intimité*, PhD thesis in sociology, Paris, EHESS, 1994.