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WORK ON A LABOR THEORY OF MEANING

Kenneth Casebeer*

Work...is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off;... work forms and shapes the thing. The negative relation to the object becomes its form and something permanent, because it is precisely for the worker that the object has independence. This negative middle term or the formative activity is at the same time the individuality or pure being-for-self of consciousness which now, in the work outside of it, acquires an element of permanence. It is in this way, therefore, that consciousness, qua worker, comes to see in the independent being [of the object] its own independence.

—Hegel: Lordship and Bondage

Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.

—Hegel: The Truth of Self-Certainty

Free action is the labor of self-consciousness. Labor performs, it embodies, it accomplishes. Labor translates time and effort into something. People interested in freedom therefore need to investigate how labor connects what consciousness implies: an agency or subject seeking to know itself in meaningful surroundings and the other or object by which in the first instance the subject differentiates itself as conscious. For much of Western history people have thought this relationship an easily articulated and natural vision: self-sufficient individuals changing an external world to suit themselves and interfering with each other as little as possible or necessary. It is a model which has not held up. More and more the subject or self and the object or world external to the individual both seem made up, invented. Our singular or individual lives gain their self-understanding less from within than from a “web” of meaning learned from the contexts of interaction to which we all contribute. Our security lies in the recognition of each other as universally in the same predicament, even as we notice that our singular experiences in the social network define both what we contribute and what we take away as different and par-

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2 Id. para. 175.

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ticular. Our singular lives, then, generate particular meaning whose content is interdependent and whose subjectivity is therefore an inter-subjectivity.

Also, contrary to the model, our world is no longer a directly known and relatively static resource. It is an object known only mediatly through partial and often conflicting explanations associated with complexes of artificial or human created circumstances. The artificiality or sociality of what consciousness works at as free action takes a particular form for the individual. Lives considered abstractly become propositions or contributions struggling for recognition and yet fearful of the consequences of gaining it. For us, the experience of modernity is the experience of a world which can be carved up in innumerable explanations and justifications. Even the most appealing yield grotesques. The rule by position, or positivism, staggers under the weight of twentieth-century despotism and bureaucratic suffocation, and the rule by nature seems random seen through the lens of technology, the speed of change, and the insistence of the weak that humanity, not nature, maintains the cruelty of their condition. Modernity and its putative successors commit our lives to politics, to struggle, whether passively or actively, over the meaning of the social circumstances we each approach differently but which cannot be escaped. This history entails that we reside within the state, at least as one of our addresses. More than government, the state manifests the inescapably political in the constitution of social structure and the legitimation of its meaning. Institutions and the officials who inhabit them fail to exhaust the state's social presence. They fail to fully account for the distribution and meaning of power within social organization. It is a salient question, therefore, as to whether and how argument might be a form of politics with an integrity which does not simply mimic or follow action, and a form of politics which does not freeze but nurtures freedom. This is an essay which, in its most blunt form, argues that freedom knows itself in work produced under conditions and ethics of democracy, that democracy has authentic and unalienated meaning only under conditions of social equality, and that ideas count in the construction of social conditions and social meaning.

I. IDEOLOGICAL FORM: LABOR AND TRANSFORMATIVE ARGUMENT

The possibility of transformative argument is the possibility of

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3 What follows is a formal argument. It is therefore synthetic rather than original. Because it is meant to interpret and represent a tradition of thought, the expressed ideas
argument as in itself political action. A strong version of this beginning depends on an epistemology, or way of knowing the social context, in which the criteria for what is true or taken as “factual” is simultaneously normative of what should be true. In short, appraising or speculative argument demands a demonstration in both senses of the word: an offer of proof and a way of acting.

The possibility of transformative argument suggests that its normative component contains both knowledge of material surroundings and will, located in consciousness as subject. History for the individual begins in consciousness, her dynamic potential, and ends in the externalization of expression or expenditure of human time. Yet history remains hypothetical form and not yet historical unless recognized in lived circumstances, and remains a dream of embrace or a fragile projection unless confirmed in the sociality of other conscious selves. Still, confirmation remains apparent and ritualized unless its history is history for the self just as it is for the recognizing others—not congruent, less shared convention than jointly situated. History only exists in social interiority. Free action requires reconstruction of a consciousness of social experience which is capable of becoming continuously less false than any predecessor to the modern human condition of inescapable interdependence in material conditions, and, given such interdependence, to the equal warrant of each to understand—that is, participate—in the continuous explanation of those conditions. In short, free action requires an articulation of the experience of democracy.

The affirmation and constructive character of democracy as praxis—both idea and practice—associates consciousness with participation, and meaning with productive activity. I call the production of meaning embedded in the reproduction of society “social labor.”

Taking the form of a programmatic statement or ideology, this Essay outlines some of the entailments of democratic experience as critical construction. In this initial, vulnerable, and extremely tentative fashion, an attempt begins to illustrate the political necessity of a constructive, affirmative, and defensible program for social change. This claim involves the simultaneous disavowal of utopian programs and proceduralist solutions to the antinomies of the dominant ideology,

usually cannot be attributed to single sources. Only direct quotations or paraphrases will be immediately footnoted. Particular debts are owed to contemporary work by Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, Roberto Unger, Drucilla Cornell, Seyla Benhabib, and Charles Taylor, and to the traditions of Hegel, Marx, Hannah Arendt, Wittgenstein, and Dewey. The traditional arguments, however, are assumed rather than fully reproduced.

4 For a discussion of the contemporary relevance of Hegel’s idea of social labor, see C. Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society (1979).
liberal individualism;\(^5\) seeks to vindicate immanent critique in the manner of the Frankfurt School; argues the contemporary inevitability of pragmatist solutions to the problem of critique; and suggests that it is unwise to abandon the legal arena as a contested terrain in the contemporary period. In short, what is sought is a theoretical reason to move in one social direction rather than another.\(^6\) Further, this twin beginning is prioritized such that democratic equal warrant is a precondition to argument as transformation. This is because the construction of social structure constitutes power, and thus the social relations in which power gains meaning cannot be indifferent to the form of its political content.

Chiefly, this beginning philosophically requires: the collapse of the fact-value distinction, a coherence theory of truth, decentered subjectivity, synthetic social construction of ideas, norms of participatory social integration, and the overcoming of false consciousness by means of critique of ideology. Collectively, these conceptual moves describe a strong view of history in which the present appears as if in historical narrative\(^7\) and action follows the form of labor: most generally, the construction of intelligibility.

II. LABOR: TRADITION

In the social theory tradition, “labor” is the fundamental social activity, although recent methodology calls this assumption into question.\(^8\) This deemphasizing of labor represents a mistaken turn for the Hegelian wing of the tradition. The nature of the mistake only partly depends on the claimed loss of centrality of employed work in shaping individual identities and interests. More depends on theoretical confusion of employment, and by extension all work, as it has come to be restricted in both symbol and practice by political, economic, and cultural systems of domination, with labor as an emancipating form of life. Rethinking the historical role of labor as a concept thus intrudes on the social theory corpus.\(^9\)

Hegel’s insight into the interdependence of human nature and its contingency in history begins a new, perhaps our own, epoch as surely as the atomistic state of nature and the mechanistic reason of Hobbes

\(^5\) On liberalism and its antinomies, see R. Unger, Knowledge and Politics (1975).
identified the previous, and as yet unyielding, world view. For Hegel, labor and linguistic interaction represented two aspects of overcoming the domination of nature over humanity—labor to overcome the domination of nature and transform it to satisfy human needs, language to mediate sensory perceptions. Although linked in the absolute identity of spirit, the two forms of action were irreducible, as labor related to causal processes and language to consensual, and therefore interactive, norms.

When Marx removed the idealist grounding of both labor and language in favor of historical materialism, each concept remained separate within the conceptual forms of material conditions and social relations. However, the range of options available to social choices depended on the priority of material reproduction of the conditions of historical societies. Accordingly, the self-formative process shifted from Hegel’s externalization of the spirit to Marx’s reflection of conditions of human existence. Still, nature only appeared to humanity as mediated by labor which therefore achieved epistemic priority. Yet the triumph of labor over nature came at the expense of trapping all thought in the technical manipulation of barriers to transforming resources into action. Resources included all factors of production, in turn including other human beings by virtue of their labor. Reducing all interaction to technique made plain the forms of exploitation and domination, but at the same time limited the ability to overcome such relations to the transformation of material conditions. Change in conditions required the agency of a personified group or class of the alienated to effectuate change. In the end, if history does not evolve to produce this outcome, it is unclear how a system of meaning capable of generating a critical program could be independently discovered or developed.

Building on the extension of the critique of rationality by Weber, Georg Lukács argued that patterns of acting or of rationalizing conditions of production were contingently reified into a consciousness, and thus the social relations, of a particular history of economy. As all social life increasingly appeared as a series of exchanges in the form of commodities, the conditions of producing and maintaining society themselves dialectically intensified the total and voracious experience of exchange. Priority of material conditions as opposed to consciousness ceased to be the most interesting conceptual question. Rather, difficulties or crises in reproducing material conditions created an instability in necessary assumptions about human organization which permitted breaking through the social totality sustained by the ideol-
ogy of commodity exchange as a form of life. Yet once again, such a possibility depended on the vagaries of history.

The Frankfurt School, led by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, responded to Lukács's argument by widening the autonomy of conditions and relations. They directly attacked the ideology he had observed of technical manipulation of a conceptualized reality. To them, Lukács's recommended dissolution of the reified consciousness of commodity forms of interaction attacked only a particular manifestation of false objectivity. Thus an independent realm of reason in history, shorn of idealist grounding, began to be seen as controlling, in part, the development of material conditions. Nevertheless, behind the conceptual evolution of technology, reason served to maintain the domination of those who could control technological organization and production. Labor thus marked off the sector of experience in which the uses of workers' products were appropriated in exchange relations assumed by an organizational form in turn controlled by ever more technical reproductions of the division of labor. In response to the altered status of ideas, Horkheimer and Adorno generated a negative dialectic attacking the ideology or false consciousness of technical progress. But as the form of material conditions had become subordinate to technical relations, neither labor nor interactive conceptualization could generate more than negation of current technique. Thus, no affirmative critique could be constructed, and the meaning of progress in generating material change became problematic. For the Frankfurt School, recognition of the interdependence of selves hidden behind the apparent atomistic will of contract could never escape distortion while linked to social relations conceptualized in conjunction with technological manipulation of all nature outside each self. For them, the self-interest of exchange simply generalized to a technique of reason. The only way to pursue interconnectedness required continuously tearing down any theory of self-identity which would limit the understanding of the other to some form of a conceptualized use value.

Jürgen Habermas simultaneously acknowledges the collapse of material conditions and social relations into systems of purposive-ra-

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tional actions, and resurrects the separation of labor and interaction. Labor equates with purposive-rational action, whether in instrumental manipulation of nature or organizations, or in strategic interaction toward political or personal interests. The problem of scientific or technological rationality is not the manipulation of the other per se, but technology's universal extension to all aspects of life. This becomes particularly acute given the Frankfurt writers' earlier demonstration of the lack of separation of material conditions and social relations as spheres of instrumental behavior. By rearticulating human activity outwardly directed in labor (material or social) as subject overcoming object, and inwardly directed in self-discovery through meaning generated by the interactive production of language, two openings emerge within purely historical experience. First, another realm of activity—communication—appears, from which it is apparently possible to generate self-consciousness and ground critique of material conditions and strategic relations. Second, the form of communicative consciousness returns to Hegel's insight of interdependent interaction by which to break the inherent domination of subject-object relations embedded in technical rationality. Habermas recognizes that in practice, purposive action is inseparable from communicative interdependence, but insists that analytically a complete self-consciousness depends on the irreducibility of labor and communication in the differentiated experiences of working according to technique and working according to justificatory norms. False consciousness can be identified by reference to its failure to be produced according to universal pragmatic norms experienced as necessary to the mutual recognition presupposed by communicative, as opposed to strategic, interaction. Emancipation emerges from the contradiction between ideological domination and the potential for communicative reflection. In this way a political program can be contextually defined in opposition to situations of domination, domination residing in those social situations produced pursuant to purposive-rational manipulations beyond those in some sense necessary to continued survival.

While agreeing with the essentials of Habermas's critique of rationality, and indeed the importance of a communicative ethics, a program of equal warrant for interdependently constituted selves must further attempt to rehabilitate the epistemic importance of social la-

14 See J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests (J. Shapiro trans. 1968).
bor. Social labor remains central for several reasons. First, because the reproduction of society is embedded in networks of interactions and partly accomplished by virtue of communicative and symbolic structures. Second, because those interactive settings themselves are constructed according to the same norms and institutions governing all production, including meaning. Third, because pragmatic standards of overcoming alienation by practices recognizing the self in the other seem more a matter of construction or labor than of action according to a regulatory ideal or procedure.

Meaningful critique must embrace more than linguistic practice. More than simply distorted communication, the experience of alienation encompasses distorted meaning. The difficulty is not that consensual norms founded in reciprocal agreement differ from rules of technical manipulation, but that the meaning or knowledge necessary to distinguish them as two types of action must itself be produced. To the extent that critical bite stems from a hermeneutic or interpretive understanding generated by communication as opposed to empirical standards or technique, it would seem that only a stronger theory of truth than coherence determines when the appearance of mutuality in communication is authentic, and that such truth must be grounded outside interpretations. This requirement seems inconsistent with a purely analytic separation of labor and interaction. If not, it must be the case that programmatic coherence standards parallel to Habermas’s communicative rationality can in principle work to critique social labor according to standards of collective construction or interdependence, just as they critique action in the form of communication.

An understanding of labor which is no longer limited to Marx’s understanding of work as value production is necessary. That is, an understanding which treats social labor as the socially organized productive activities in which humans interact with material nature but in which the material world has been so mediated by human processing that any knowledge of it obtains solely from social constructs. In short, a labor theory of meaning is needed which understands both fact and value to be simultaneously known by virtue of interdependent production. Such a theory would contain similar regulatory ideals to those of mutual communication, but appropriate to the workplace or the situation of construction more generally, and thus would provide grounds for a critique of current practice in pragmatic terms. Unlike negative dialectics, this immanent critique would be aimed less at the symbolic level of communicative understanding and more at the union of ideology and practice.
Seyla Benhabib has carefully developed an argument which in some ways parallels both the work of Habermas and this Essay, that also needs to be distinguished. Within the tradition of Hegel and Marx, Benhabib develops the work model of activity as a philosophy of the subject. The subject's labor fully mediates human access to the world or other (object), simultaneously constituting its facticity and expressing its value experienced as use. Human capacities are expressed in their being historically externalized. Labor transforms and thus objectifies its object, the surrounding world. However, Benhabib believes with Habermas that actions of externalizing the self in work cannot account for the experience of mutual reciprocity which constitutes symbolic interaction. Unlike Habermas, she is willing to argue that the separation of communicative interaction and self-actualization are more than analytically separate in that they correspond to the separate epistemic situations of intersubjectivity and transsubjectivity—the latter corresponding to the systematic viewpoint of a third-party observer. Action, if limited to work, makes the human subject monological and ignores other modes of experience such as language and culture. Further, it is this separation of interaction and self-actualization that requires differentiating norms of system fulfillment from those of utopian transfiguration. The communicative ethic contains a utopian content allowing the participation of difference and plurality seemingly denied by the subject as a working individual or a working collective society defined by its division of labor. Collective work means history can only express one meaning, thereby providing no empirical account for a plurality of expressive experiences. But as Benhabib recognizes, "[i]f, for social agents, the meaning and validity of their actions reside in their understanding of these actions, then the agents can only solve the problems of their collective life insofar as they participate in processes which define the problem as well as the answer." Communication may provide some answers to some disjunctions of experience and meaning, but by itself communication in Benhabib's terms cannot generate or account for the problems associated with production of meaning or of conditions of modern society.

Benhabib unnecessarily limits labor to Hegelian expressive activity and Marxian self-actualization of individual selves or a collective singular self. A labor theory of meaning, however, presupposes only that human activity constitutes intelligibility, not any particular version of the working subject. Just as acting according to mutual recognition is consonant with symbolic interaction or communication

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16 See S. Benhabib, Critique, Norm and Utopia (1986); see especially id. at 133-43.
17 Id. at 103.
and would be authenticated in immanent critique of strategic behavior in communicative forms, so is the broader notion of intelligibility. When intelligibility is actualized in recognition of interdependent contextual social conditions, the mutuality now made conscious is not that of the Hegelian-Marxian subject, but rather the intersubjective self. This is also Benhabib's ultimate goal. But if this burden can be carried by a labor theory, the impossible task of justifying the viewpoints of transubjective observation and utopian norms, both of which stand outside the actions of individuals in historic time, can be dispensed with. To do so, the labor theory of meaning accepts as politics the inherent indeterminacy caused by conflating producing conditions and learning (producing) moral interaction. Strategic behavior, of course, cannot then be held off by utopian moments of communicative interaction. Strategy must instead be redirected via conscious efforts to control alienation in both communication and instrumental action.

Interdependence can only be meaningfully or coherently known in or as a result of interaction, and only authenticated by reconstruction of consciousness consonant with the content of the self as intersubjective. Pragmatically, as interaction approaches authenticity, the confirmation of the self in the other is no longer through use of the other, and therefore a relation of dependence, but rather the redirection and overcoming of individual strategies in mutual recognition—consciousness of intersubjectively reciprocal constitution. The emphasis on interdependence and consciousness of mutuality of Habermas and Hegel is thus introduced into Marx's centralization of social labor and historical contextuality, but without deriving the character of ideas and communication from a distinguished material circumstance.

### III. Labor: Construction

The fundamental experience of modernity, both who we are as individual selves, insofar as that identity can be known, and our collective relationship to nature, including the conditions and needs of survival, is an experience of social construction. Moreover, this life process is not optional. Our awareness of time passing is omnipresent, there is always the question of what to be. Consciousness of social construction makes central the expenditure of human creative activity, namely labor, and in particular, the relation of labor to the

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18 See Warnke, Marxism and Expressivism, Comments on Benhabib's Critique, Norm and Utopia (Book Review), 12 Phil. & Soc. Criticism 374 (1987).
reproduction of the social structure context of human life. The modern world is a produced layering of social structures and conventions, each related and involved in the others, whether we speak of instrumental exploitation of "natural" resources in social modes of production, of the satisfaction of human needs, of technologies of resource organization, or more ambiguously, of instrumental and symbolic systems of languages and scientistic models of knowledge. The modern world, then, consists of historically generated contexts of use. Nothing of or in the world yields direct contact. All our experience is either mediated by received tradition, institutionalized practices, or our own collective labor. Even internal processes such as dreaming or thinking, or external interactions of emotions, which lie strictly outside social labor are known by symbols produced in social construction. Even that which we do not think of as processed by our collective labor is characterized or known dialectically through active human involvement or science. The concept of "the natural," then, is a characterization of comfort or appropriateness to the current social construction.

Making and testing knowledge claims about objects is one among the many activities that we pursue; it is part of our form of life and only makes sense within it, and consequently can in no way provide the model for the whole. So argues Wittgenstein. Registering facts about objects itself presupposes an activity of the subject, a subject whose nature must be understood in different terms and the exploration of which, indeed, ultimately challenges the very distinction between ourselves and objects around us with which we started. So argues Hegel.

The particular content or meaning of social structures and human interaction in society will depend on the history of the political economy of social reproduction—both the modes of organized production of material conditions of the society and the appropriate social relations necessary to such production. In addition, however, it is a mistake to necessitate the separation of life-world production (the human mediated world we take for granted) and conscious relations of interaction. It is simply impossible on other than purely analytical

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19 See Honneth, Work and Instrumental Action, 9 New German Critique 31 (Spring/Summer 1982).
or conventional grounds to separate qualitative sectors of our experience: extraction of resources, natural or synthetic; from the production of material conditions; from the production of technologies of manipulation; from the production of culture, including symbolic communication; from the production of ideas, names, and conceptual synthesises. First, these actions are all organized and technologized. Second, they are all linked in production chains by increasingly intricate divisions of labor. Third, they overlap and crosscut each other in myriad and nonprioritized patterns and institutions. Consciousness of social contexts from a societal standpoint comes to be produced in the same manner as material conditions. At this point, the technology of resource exploitation seems virtually parallel to the use of any complex convention or idea. That is, to the extent the world is an experience of translating human time into intelligibility, meaning and its phenomenal objects, whether condition or relation, stand in a dialectical relation to each other in which the conditions of existence taken as real can be apprehended in observable appearances manifested in discourse and artifacts.

A borrowed example contrasts the subjective intentions of individual employees and employers, themselves products of multiple individual social experiences and backgrounds, with the social intentions of the language of expression of such interests in the social relation of employment constituted by economic and legal constructions such as contract, wage, pension, and compensation. While analytically separate as interests and yet again as products of social experiences, the history of employee and employer involves not simply translation of individual experience into contract rhetoric but a learning of ideologically appropriate behavior constituting meaning for and between the parties as well.  

It is crucial to note that this position entails the rejection of both a traditional separation of material conditions and social relations (base and superstructure) and its accompanying material priority, and Habermas’s separation of spheres of purposive-rational activity (overcoming the domination of the external world) and interactive discourse (overcoming the domination of the internal world of the self), at least in any but an analytic sense.

24 Habermas insists on his strategy because the basic epistemological concept of ‘constitution’, which refers to the formation of object domains, causes confusion in social theory. It suggests that speaking and acting subjects ‘produce’ their social life-context in a way similar to that in which
The burden of developing a critical consciousness from within a nondifferentiated, communicatively interactive labor production of meaning is accepted here. If workable under criteria of coherence, the resulting meaning would serve the same functions as, or would be equivalent to, the life-world. Denying the Nietzschean possibility, the very ability to stand outside the production of social existence disappears. Social constitution via a labor theory of meaning does not require this, while a communicative competence known as true seemingly does. Further, social constitution does not exclude the adoption of a systems standpoint as a conventional mode of analysis, so long as the ability and content of this representation is understood as itself a part or strategy of social reconstruction. But nonrelativistic and noninstrumental rationality is problematic, and is thus itself an object of social struggle.

Equating labor with the translation of human time into intelligibility abstracts it from the traditional role played by work in political sociology. Labor marked off a sector of human experience from other areas of life and from the economic activity of ownership and control of productive organization and process. Doubt develops about the traditional notion. First, the rise of service economies and heterogeneity of work forms and the consequent redefinition of the role of class associated primarily with work corresponds to the growing inseparability of instrumental sectors of activity—from industry to servicing to managing to educating. The economically rational and the

they make products of instrumental action. I prefer to introduce the concept of the life-world as a complementary concept to communicative action; and I understand communicative action as the same medium through which the symbolic structures of the life-world are reproduced. At the same time, instrumental actions, that is, interventions in the objective world, present themselves as the medium through which the material substratum of the life-world is reproduced, that is, through which the life-world develops processes of exchange with external nature. From the perspective of an outside observer who objectivates the life-world, these ‘material exchange processes’ can be analyzed as functional interconnections and as self-regulating systems.

Habermas, A Reply to My Critics, in Habermas: Critical Debates 254, 268 (J. Thompson & D. Held eds. 1982). The status and context of this preference for life-world over social constitution is unclear. It seems in tension with purely analytical separation of labor and interaction, and yet it also seems necessary for communicative interaction to be set against social labor. Habermas does not specify how the life-world informs the organization of economic and political relations, or conversely how the reproduction of state and economy proceeds without structuring communicative contexts. See Baxter, supra note 20, at 72.


For a redefinition of the use of class analysis, see C. Offe, supra note 8.

Keane, On Tools and Language: Habermas on Work and Interaction, 2 New German Critique 82, 93 (Fall 1975).
technically rational begin to merge in human capital theory and rational choice theory. Second, the exploitation or domination of workers as a separate or personified class was explained by reference to a labor theory of value, leading to the market-created separation of use and exchange values. The value of labor embodied in the use of the resulting product was thought to be exploited by the owners of the means of production who paid the worker only a portion of the value the product commanded in exchange for other products or money. For the previous reason, as technique collapses into the economic, as use collapses into exchange in all realms—economic, political, cultural—domination becomes first, cut away from a simple class analysis, and second, more broadly identified and understood with the rational accommodation of economic and political power.\textsuperscript{28} Class distinctions do not disappear but they are a consequence of the construction of relational behavior associated with structures of power. Again, as power becomes more marked by acquisition, a consumption-oriented division of labor distills meaning in historical culture; consumption is learned to exhaust use and then exchange. Beyond expanding the terrain which labor illuminates by extending labor beyond value to meaning, labor theory provides a critique of the inauthenticity of meaning as accumulation. Communicative regularity seems less capable of expanding its thin theory of authenticity when interactively limited to empirically consumptive experiences of communicating individuals.

Two alternatives to communicative regularity seem plausible: (a) jettisoning the centrality of work or labor as a central category of analysis in favor of a more heterogeneous but also indeterminate set of variables lacking coherent political outcomes,\textsuperscript{29} or (b) seeing the importance of labor as more abstract than valorization, as the constitution of fact and value or "factvalue."\textsuperscript{30} The key issues cease being only about who controls material production and the social relations embedded in it, but rather who controls the rationalization of the production of social meaning, which in turn gives rise to organizational manifestations of such power in socialized productive relations. The advantage of this conceptual choice sociologically is that the old Marxian questions remain relevant, if no longer exclusive, and shifted to different contexts of domination.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{28} On the relationship between social and political organization and rationality, see J. Cohen & J. Rogers, On Democracy (1983).
\textsuperscript{29} See, e.g., S. Resnick & R. Wolff, Knowledge and Class 139 (1987).
\textsuperscript{30} See, e.g., S. Benhabib, supra note 16, at 65-66.
\textsuperscript{31} For the redeployment of Marx, without distinguishing between economy and culture,
The epistemic priority of a labor theory of meaning does not suggest a functional or structural priority of economic processes over political, technological, or cultural social processes. Each sphere is imbricated in the others. In fact, this labor theory partly seeks to overcome the pressure to reductionism as an epistemic bow to causal-ity. At the same time, the dimension of social practice within which the world is constructed out of its “real” setting remains labor more broadly understood as a construction of meaning. The key to conceptual and therefore economic domination for the current historical period remains most prominently the form of social relation as individual or atomistic exchange. As the material conditions of social life themselves take on more and more the appearance of a technology of exchange, all life seems simultaneously material and consumptive, and therefore involves strategic symbolic interaction, not simply instrumental behavior within conditions of interdependence. To adopt Habermas’s distinction, the instrumental refers to technological manipulation of material circumstances of satisfaction of human needs, and strategic behavior identifies intentional manipulation of cultural and communicative contexts for personal benefit. All objects including other humans tend to be reduced to consumption by an avaricious individual subject.

Contemporary understanding cannot escape our social situation of an increasingly complex and often simultaneous webbing of exchanges of goods, resources, energy, information, and even discursive meaning. The individual cannot escape the culturally induced perception of playing against the web. At the same time, she engages in wishful thinking to believe the self actually sufficient just because of those singular life experiences given the interactive constitution of all her meaning of such experience. To be clear, the individual’s dialectical structure of experience involves a life history which is conscious in a personal identity or self-intention, but whose knowledge or meaning of that life history is collectively constituted by the intersubjectivity of interactive relations and interdependent social conditions. Singularity of personal experience and particularity of personal meaning should not be cavalierly equated once they are no longer posited as nature but historically constructed.

Individuals, by virtue of the constructing of meaning which is

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32 1 J. Habermas, supra note 22, at 285.
33 See S. Benhabib, supra note 16.
34 Cornell, Dialogic Reciprocity and the Critique of Employment at Will, 10 Cardozo L. Rev. 1575, 1582-83 (1989).

their labor, do have access of some kind to the product originating in their social relations. Just as different artists or musicians interpret the same images or passages in distinct signatures, each of us filters even joint experience of partially received meanings within their very construction. Yet value relations and power relations, as contexts of interpretation, must be constructed and explained; moreover, they must be learned. As both value and power in society are problematic and historically specific, social reproduction will require both articulation of the relation of conflict to the "needs" of the society's mode of production, and mediation of social struggle within the socialized relations of production. This is the source of difference. The construction of power apprehended in social structure and interpreted in social relations authenticates the presence of difference in self-consciousness, or else, and perhaps simultaneously, it engenders a self-understanding of domination correlated to alienation and inauthenticity. The decentered subject thus struggles to replace the enlightenment's self-others monad.

To be conscious is to adopt a stance of recognition or location in the social web, not simply a determined role in the social structure or on grounds of utility, but as a participant in a social history. This stance, by virtue of the interdependence of productive and social relations, is dynamic, inescapable, and manifold. As each personal history reflects a substantially unique constellation of interactions and received experience, collective intersubjectivity involves a certain sense of each, determining each, and all determining all, in historical construction. It also ultimately reflects a nondistinction as to whether the subject is the self or society.

This is an important sense in which a labor theory of meaning contrasts with the theories of overdetermination of Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff, and Louis Althusser. Overdetermination posits that all theories are known by virtue of their connections with all other theories and conditions. Causality ceases to be an interesting question and therefore any sense of economic or any other determinacy disappears. The theoretical strengths of such an argument are, first, the explicit political nature of any theory pursued against all other theories as each overdetermines the other, and second, the rejection of any empirical or rational epistemology (essentialism). The recognition that all particulars of meaning are dialectically constitutive

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of all other particulars within a social totality, however, does not in itself require overdetermination. Any essentialist theory which argues knowledge is necessarily related to a reality underlying knowledge; whether as a matter of fact (empiricism) or of thought (rationalism) is also opposed by noncognitivist theories such as pragmatism. Particularly, if the reproduction of theory in intersubjective relations is produced in the same manner as the reproduction of interdependent social conditions, the social division of labor mediates the relationship of thought (whose materials are the result of social constructions) and being (whose content is known by social construction). In this sense, pragmatism is not a weak form of empiricism since its consequentialism is itself within historical construction. Yet, unlike overdetermination theories, causality, priority, and the origins of conflict do matter, understood from the internal and dialectical standpoint of social construction. That is, a theory of action can be judged by whether acting accordingly reconciles or further alienates social actors from and within the production of meaning. Of course, many actions will lead in both directions. From this standpoint, although theory cannot escape a political justification, any theory is not just as good as any other. The content of an ideology is not simply a pejorative applied to other theories for political purposes, and therefore, politically indeterminate except as an existential choice.

A society predictably will attempt to integrate its members through their learned aspects of consciousness. This socialization obscures whether the integration is by virtue of a shared false understanding of social "needs" or imposed through socially constructed power. The historically specific mechanisms and control of socialization simply become crucial to the "efficient" organization of labor in that period. The labor of construction is thus charged with "rational" politics, by virtue of which the stance of knowledge is integration rather than transcendent universality.

The true system of thought, like the rational form of life does not stand over and against the others like a 'lifeless universal,' but grows out of a progressive deepening and enrichment where nothing is ever lost or wasted but is overcome and preserved in a newer, more comprehensive whole.36

Hence the struggle over the content of knowledge is the struggle over the division of labor.

IV. DEMOCRACY: RATIONALITY

That the way things are is not the way things should be is also part of present experience in the form of the residual experience labeled “alienation.” Alienation, at first experienced as the exploitive separation of the self and its product, is generalized to the distancing of individual experience from control over self-identity (participation in intersubjective constitution of the self in others). Overcoming alienation cannot generate a determinate or singularly appropriate program. Rather, progress stems from the motivation born in suffering the disjunction between present practices and their attributed explanations inhering in legitimation or learned interpretation of social practices. “Packages” of meaning and the justifications of actionable judgments made upon their reliability can be tested for internal consistency and the norms associated with the processes of the subject “known” as interactively constitutive of them. But such disjunction and the assertion of the emancipation of work, recognizable in some collective sense as one’s own, cannot be limited to communicative contexts. For in each case of contradiction, a specific form of action is made manifest by the location of its alienation and therefore its lack of interactive intelligibility. “What distinguishes phenomenological critique from mere skepticism is that the falsehood of experience is viewed as a learning process in which knowledge of the inadequacy of previous experiences is integrated into and becomes an aspect of subsequent experiences.”

It is made actionable by virtue of workable social practices and their explanation, which reduce the residual of experience known by its alienation. It thus seems both possible and necessary to see with Habermas that a recognition of rationality is a product of discourse which respects interdependence and equal warrant. A rationality possessed only in interaction represents an advance over a critical tradition dependent on subject-object dichotomies and implying both access by the subject to know experience in some transcendental way and the ability to suppress the urge to dominate the other, whether as nature, another subject, or self. Rationality implies choice. Choice implies alternatives which are in principle knowable or conscious. Consciousness is inherently false to the extent it is associated with experience which does not satisfy both conditions of interdependence and equal warrant simultaneously. It is false to the extent that equality means formal opportunity to participate, dissociated from actual interdepen-

37 S. Benhabib, supra note 16, at 51.
38 See Honneth, supra note 19.
dence of material wealth and its production by an argument of individualistic response to constellations of social relations such as markets. Formal opportunity is meaningless because it suggests that opportunity stands outside social practices rather than depending on the resources only generated, used, and known by virtue of social activity, itself known only by social production. Consciousness is equally false to the extent that interdependence validates hierarchical determinations of the rigidity or inevitability of economic organization inconsistent with every participant's right to question the "naturalness" of the current structure of ordinary relationships from within those relations. If the former view makes choice empty, the latter makes it perverse.

It simultaneously seems both possible and necessary to see with Lukács that the lack of separation between production of culture and production of material society makes discourse inherently conflicted—at once symbolic and strategic. Still, strategy can be explained without attributing conflict to the trap of the totalization phenomenon. Strategy must be redirected in intentional action which recognizes difference by attacking domination. Habermas means communicative interaction to be a moral evolutionary experience to be set against and indeed replace that purposive instrumental or strategic behavior simply extended or learned from the necessary reproduction of material conditions. Yet if communication is not to be simply a regulatory ideal, an account of consciousness must determine true communication (mutuality of coherence) from false communications or purely and nonreciprocal strategic behavior within interaction. What the universal pragmatic of Karl-Otto Apel and perhaps Habermas "neglects is the possibility that growing rationality may be accompanied by a decline of moral sensitivity, a possibility which underscores the point that ethics is not purely a matter of thought but also of action." This is, of course, an issue for consciousness accompanying labor as well.

A critical concept of work must grasp categorically the difference between an instrumental act, in which the working subject structures and regulates his own activity on his own initiative, according to his own knowledge, in a self-contained process, and an instrumental act, in which neither the accompanying controls nor the object-related structuring of the activity is left to the initiative of

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41 F. Dallmayr, supra note 11, at 250.
the working subject. But it is the pragmatism of directly responding to alienation by re-
structuring the labor of intelligibility in a participatory interactive work which generates knowledge, defining the difference between so-
cial labor and communicative rationality. First, this in no way reduces the importance of the communicative ideal even as labor as meaning generalizes and displaces it to other forms of interaction. Further, removing the distortion of communication in itself implies radical change in social relations of work. Finally, if the use of lan-
guage presupposes a context of interaction, so does social labor. In
this way, social theory preserves the emancipatory potential still avail-
able in social labor.

The process of emancipatory reflection, which as Habermas sup-
poses, takes place in acts of communication, breaks radically through relations of interaction which have been distorted by the given social structure; it attempts to recover the goal of mutual understanding, immanent in such relations, from the society’s repressive form of organization. This process would corre-
pond to a morally oriented process of action in the area of social labor, which recovers the work content of instrumental acts from the dominant forms of work. The valid normative claim which thus comes to expression results from the moral vulnerability which grows not from the suppression of communicative modes of mutual understanding, but from the expropriation of the workers’ own work activity. The moral knowledge which is constructed on the basis of such experiences is embodied in acts of work which maintain their autonomy even in the organizational reality of ex-
ternally determined work relations.

In terms of a labor theory of meaning, such expropriated meaning negates the authentication of the individual as a mutually interdepen-
dent member of society, whose work is a real-time repository of the mutuality of intersubjective constitution.

On the other hand, if argument (discourse) is produced in the same manner as other commodities, then when it is a conceptualiza-
tion of relations between producers of commodities, argument is si-
multaneously manifest in material condition and consciousness. The possibility of transformative arguments, as both input and product of rational discourse remains only that—a possibility. Yet on these

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42 Honneth, supra note 19, at 52-53.
43 Rorty, supra note 6, at 34-35.
44 Keane, supra note 27, at 96-97.
45 See Wellmer, Reason, Utopia and the Dialectic of Enlightenment, in Habermas and Mo-
46 Honneth, supra note 19, at 53-54.
terms, an identification of false consciousness within discourse does not necessarily depend on a prior displaced conflict in economic relations, even if the rate of transformation does in part depend on such recognition. Change is an outcome of simultaneous effects in discursive and productive relations.

At the present time, systemic relations of domination contaminate the products manifesting the intersubjectivity of social organization. Understanding and articulation of social relationships of production (or indeed any human activity) necessarily are the products of conflict, since historical forms of production embody conflicts of real interests, and consciousness of the forms of production mediates conflicting interests as contributions to knowledge. Understanding must contain a dominant interpretation and therefore the recognition of its own opposition. Consciousness on these terms at least weakens a purely structuralist account of knowledge.

Can the subject be both decentered—constituted in consciousness in an interactive way—and strategic or political? To the extent the individual acts according to learned social practices themselves purposive to social constructions or mimics their teachings, the action remains strategic. Yet to the extent the individual recognizes that these patterns of behavior and the meanings associated with them in the process of reproducing them are interdependent, an attempt to act in accordance with interaction will conform to their decentered construction. To do so will either reduce or fail to reduce the alienation involved in reproducing the dominant and suppressed interests inherent in the meanings utilized in the experience itself. Any successful reduction of alienation must therefore also account for difference. In this way strategy could consciously evolve historically and pragmatically in the recognizing of oneself in the other. Nor would such a dynamic logically tend toward a Luddite levelling. The recognition of no substance to the self except that which is known by reference to its recognition in the other stimulates not only the moral demand of mutuality, and therefore respect for difference, but also the self-preservation of technology directed to a material progress shared by all. Indeed, this recognition suggests a further reciprocity of intersubjectivity and ecology.

It is possible to be a bit clearer at this point about the need to

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48 For phenomenological critique of structuralism and law, see Heller, Structuralism and Critique, 36 Stan. L. Rev. 127 (1984).
50 Keane, supra note 27, at 99.
move beyond dialogical reciprocity. Hegel's universal will became particularized in a civil society of persons who expressed their identity in making the other into property and confirmed their particularity in exchange. Such a regime generated an abstract right of negative character, a right not to be interfered with, but no positive right of welfare to overcome contingencies blocking satisfaction. Drucilla Cornell suggests that the Hegelian need of reciprocal recognition should not be limited to contract because, given inequalities, while the relation is formally reciprocal it is not necessarily mutual. On these terms the subject expands from universal contractual alienation of objects to universal participation in conversation or exchange of ideas.\textsuperscript{51} The significance of this reading for Hegel's social philosophy is not that "the universal will of political and legal institutions is understood as an all-encompassing subjectivity, Geist, but rather because it is conceived of as the Mitte, or network of reciprocally constituted individuals which promises individual flourishing."\textsuperscript{52} The accompanying understanding of right is a principle of "nonsubordination" which dynamically and contextually creates a positive duty to the underlying conditions and welfare which make communication authentic or "eye to eye." This would include the obligation of government to give reasons in imposing, or demand that reasons be given as the requirement of enforcing private will in imposing, conditions or outcomes of substantive inequality. The contract transaction relation protected by negative rights of noninterference is subsumed by the dialogic transaction relation protected by positive rights of nonsubordination. At the same time, the particularized subject still pursues reciprocal recognition outside the state in a civil society.

To be both reciprocal and mutual in more than form, to be actually so, requires more than offering reasons justifying inequalities of conditions or entitlements. The reasons must be meaningful and unalienating to individuals of equal interdependence. This suggests, in Hegelian terms, a further broadening of universal participation into interaction. The interaction of social construction of meaning, in order to generate authentic meaning, requires actual participation in meaning experienced as power. It therefore correlates to a right of care or integration into a democratically conceived and structured community. This is important to achieving the shared aim of Cornell, The crowning achievement of modernity is precisely the embodiment in right of relations of mutual recognition in which each sees

\textsuperscript{51} Cornell, The Poststructuralist Challenge to the Ideal of Community, 8 Cardozo L. Rev. 989 (1987).
\textsuperscript{52} Cornell, supra note 34, at 1606 n.58.
the other as a self-conscious "I." The subject, as we have seen, becomes a self-conscious "I" by taking possession of itself as other than a merely natural, immediate being. It is this potential to become a personality that marks each one of us a distinctive person.\(^5\)

As both positions develop intentionally between Hegel and Marx, "dialogic reciprocity" tilts toward Hegel and "interactive labor as meaning" tilts toward Marx.

V. CONSCIOUSNESS: LEGALITY

Conflicts, and therefore threats to social reproduction occurring in forms of material production, are often deflected into overtly political institutions. While Marx thought such political conflicts and their resolution derivative, Habermas argues the interdependence of the political and economic:

[...] no longer coincides immediately with the relations of production, i.e. with an order of private law that secures capitalist economic activity and the corresponding general guarantees of order provided by the bourgeois state. But this means a change in the relation of the economy to the political system: politics is no longer only a phenomenon of the superstructure.\(^4\)

But while ideas are not simply derivative of economic practice, their relation is also not entirely independent. On the contrary, functioning markets are partially constituted through instrumental actions of the state and indirectly buttressed by false consciousness of natural social organization backed by legal encoding. First, if material conditions and social relations including legal relations are produced in the same manner, not only is there a lack of primacy between them, but also law becomes both integral to social reproduction and embedded in and of the same material conflicts. Second, legal institutions explicitly function as arenas of conflict, self-consciously and falsely for rights holders who have learned to believe consumption is a zero-sum game, and functionally for society as a means of diffusing or mediating interests threatening the dynamic stability of the division of labor. Legal discourse functions in the steering of social organization as an overt articulation of social meaning. Third, the form of this articulation is the mediation of conflict by identifying "justifiable" claims, whether legislated, administrated, or adjudicated. Note, however, that the notion of the state is not reducible to the actions of government actors or

\(^5\) Id. at 1592-93 (footnote omitted).

legal institutions. The state encompasses all official political articulations and constructions of the legitimacy of power. Legal ideology expresses the relational surface of empowered social structures as part of the medium of social discourse.\textsuperscript{55}

Hegel in fact established an interconnection between legal norms which combined mutual recognition in interaction with a formal stabilization in processes of labor. However, this recognition did not refer directly to the other, but to the other's products in exchange.\textsuperscript{56} Thus, instrumental action, or labor and interaction, or consciousness of mutual reciprocity, were linked in legal recognition of the products of labor. Hegel viewed labor as separated from interaction. A labor reunited with communication through collectively produced meaning would take a different form of legal recognition. The atomized contractors recognized in the property of their products would become draftpersons, constructors, and consumers recognized in their control of resource investment decisions and resultant communities of meaning.\textsuperscript{57}

Overcoming domination and its residual alienation will not result from sympathetic reenactment or simulation of the situation of the other. The formal equality of pluralistic regard for the particular interests of autonomous individuals suggests a mutuality of recognition in the legitimacy of reciprocal argument. This form of universality, however, limits the normative question to what should be done to communicate, and rests the idea of equality on the overlooking of difference. It is unclear why democratic solidarity follows from dialogic community even as the conditions of true dialogue create mutual respect. In opposing to the universality of dialogue an ideal of critical social integration, the focus shifts to what to become collectively, and is thus distinguished from the old notions of integration founded in economic reductionism. Yet this stance seems to problematically require conceiving of a collective experience of decentered subjects without a concept of the universal which destroys difference—that is, a meaning of collective experience which is the underpinning of individual and social differences within an equality which does not restrict the significance of those differences. It demands beginning in contexts, preserving what is emancipatory about present circumstances, including those aspects of liberal individualism which give constitu-

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\textbf{55} & See J. Habermas, Legitimation Crisis (T. McCarthy trans. 1975). \\
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tive meaning to individual participation in intersubjective experience. In this way a universal need to achieve recognition in authentic social meaning for an individual set of life experiences is subsumed in the social integration of an unalienated political organization. Contrary to Apel and Cornell, integration on these terms respects mutuality of difference more than a communicative universality which, because it lacks an account of power, cannot escape the disruption implied by a division of labor necessary to reproduce the conditions in which dialogue is historically embedded. These historical conditions include manifestations of power such as legal entitlements and the cumulative meanings of domination continuously reproduced as the product of alienated labor.

Contemporary legal institutions recognize the interests repressed within legal discourse, but at the same time insist ideologically that there is no real conflict, or at least no conflict beyond resolution, given fair procedure and just rules. But despite the style and form of rational discourse, legal argument does not exist in and of itself; rather it encodes social relations as politics, including and overlaying its own institutional politics. As the purpose of legal argument is both descriptively and by advocacy that of representation, the construction of legal arguments per se involves an ideology of the dominant. The marshalling of factual representations of human interaction, whether in dispute, exchange, incentive, or command, by manipulating levels of generality sets frames of reference to which abstract normative arguments are appended. The result is more or less intentional legitimation of "natural" relations within the existing social context including material prerequisites, and derivative instrumental explanations of collective force to secure them against countering expressions of social conduct.\(^5\)

The actions of the state in the form of law then are simply the expressions of the formal legal tasks of conflict mediation as articulation of the dogmatic form of social consciousness. These arguments are usually also located in the rhetoric of past events of the same type,\(^5\)

\(^5\) The peculiarity of legal discourse is that it tends to constrain the political imagination and to induce belief that our evolving social arrangements and institutions are just and rational, or at least inevitable, and therefore legitimate. The modus operandi of law as legitimating ideology is to make the historically contingent appear necessary. The function of legal discourse in our culture is to deny us access to new modes of conceiving of democratic self-governance, of our capacity for and the experience of freedom. Legal discourse inhibits the perception that we have it in our power to alter and abolish existing patterns of domination and denial of human potential. It is, in short, the vocation of legal thought to render radical nonliberal visions of freedom literally inconceivable.

creating the logical illusion of continuity. This is not to suggest that
the conceptual images so constructed are not used to explain, re-in-
force, or legitimate a real continuity in the exercise of power within
the social relations so encoded. Nor does it suggest that the produc-
tion of such constructions does not itself entail actual social relations
which affect the product. Of course, encoding the conflicts of social
relations, rendering their oppositions “natural” to an underlying so-
cial structure and restricting the outcome of those structures as power
to manageable challenges, cannot be accomplished by parroting only
the interest favored by the social structure. The favored are only
known in relation to the disfavored. Domination can only be under-
stood in relation to the minimal facilitation and protection of the
dominated. Moreover, legitimation of social power affects the domi-
nated consciousness by simultaneously stimulating anger and aliena-
tion over the injustice of the legal regime, while suggesting the
inevitability of social situations and the fault of the dominated. Law
seems ambivalently both legitimate and illegitimate.

Nevertheless, also by virtue of this dialectical interdependence,
an opening exists for changes in legal meanings. Transformation of
the legal relations discourse requires immanent critique of the rela-
tionship between the surface of legal rhetoric and structural replica-
tions of social organization on the one hand, and the legal system’s
promise of a substantively fair arena of argument, informed by empir-
ical judgments accounting for the effects of social domination within
legal institutions, on the other.\textsuperscript{59} The point is to uncover the images
of historically contingent, that is human, experience taken as natural
which are the most important outcome relevant structural necessities
of distinctly legal argument. Yet, while the surface logic of legal
images reflects the dominant interest’s interpretation of constructed
experience, the present meaning of legal experience rests in a deeper
structure which organizes expressions of both dominant and sup-
pressed interests.\textsuperscript{60} The missing key to that meaning which is known
by its absence is not the reversal of dominant and suppressed interest
in articulating the surface logic of doctrinal meaning structures. Such
attempts are doomed to instability, indeterminacy, and eventual sub-
sumption. They appear ridiculous to the social relations legally en-
coded, yet they fail to account for the structure of legal consciousness
in relation to social meaning which undergirds the doctrinal surface.

\textsuperscript{59} For a discussion of the use of deviant doctrine against itself, see R. Unger, The Critical
Legal Studies Movement (1986).

\textsuperscript{60} For the entailments of the encoding of dominant and suppressed interests in law, see
Thompson, The Rule of Law, in Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of The Black Acts 258
(1975).
It is rather the structure of meaning, implied by an alteration of consciousness opened through removing the inevitability of present conceptualizations of experience associated with dominant and suppressed interpretations, which should be constructed in counter ideology. This transformation can occur by a change of material conditions reducing the hierarchy or antidemocratic meaning which eventually resides in legal interpretation. But transformation can also occur by rearticulating suppressed interpretations, even legal interpretations, in a manner which cannot be reconciled with their presupposed organizing structure.

Law is made prominent by the centrality of its role in present history. The prominence should not be considered accidental given: (1) the necessity of legitimation in society’s reproduction of the conditions of its own existence; (2) that experience cannot be articulated outside social existence; and (3) that existence remains conflicted and alienating. The overcoming of alienated existence requires work. This labor constitutes itself as consciousness, be it false or coherent. The inescapability of social experience creates responsibility, and with it an ideology of an active politics of argument. That responsibility, however, is no less subject than any other intelligible aspect of contemporary existence to its collective or decentered construction. Thus, the appearance of individualism and the exchange institutionalization of social relations in present conditions is itself the occasion of dominance. History does not evolve but it does inevitably continue. Any ideal, such as communication or dialogism, will remain simply palliative unless actualized within historical struggle. Such a politics will involve an ideology appropriate to effective operation within major contemporary structural institutions. Therefore, at the middle level of constructing legal argument, withdrawal is not really an option, because the legal institution will continue with or without representation of alternative ideologies. Of course, legal institutions must concurrently be forced to allow substantively effective participation where formality presently suffices. Given this beginning, a pragmatic acceptance of responsibility demands democratic equal warrant as the most appropriate place to begin linking construction of idea and practice, as we labor toward new intelligibilities.

VI. WORK: PRODUCT

This Paper intrudes upon an ongoing, collective effort of imagination of a better existence which can be justified. As defined, all labor signifies this artifactual quality as it gains an intelligibility signified by intrusion into a synthetic tradition of ideas. This artifact rep-
represents itself as an alternative: on the surface an ideology of political agency, in structure a repetitive critique of social theory manifest in this Essay at the level of the sections devoted to (1) tradition, (2) construction, (3) rationality, and (4) legality. The replication takes the following form. Separation of action and meaning fits social phenomenon badly. Such separation, taken as knowledge, demands an essentialist epistemology, a correspondence theory of truth to sustain itself. Finally, domination encodes alienation as successive conceptualizations of the generic fact of power natural to social system organization. As a structure of critique it defines the alternative argument as a commitment to the confines of history—what we have made ourselves collectively is not optional, what we can become we must build together from now.

The implications of the present work which construct its alternative nature, and thus its self-identified trade on future argument, principally involve these ideas: (1) meaning is produced socially by virtue of relations qualitatively similar to relations of production of all social conditions; (2) the interdependence of material conditions entails the self as constituted in intersubjective historical relations; (3) labor as the transformation of human time into intelligibility produces ideologically charged meaning; (4) false consciousness is susceptible to an immanent critique of ideology by virtue of the disjunction between an individual meaning which denies the mutuality of selves experienced intersubjectively, as opposed to the interdependent conditions and relations of meaning's production; (5) the forces of production in their most abstract form constitute an inescapable politics in the form of the division of labor; (6) the division of labor in the reproduction of historical societies reflects both differentiated experience based on self-identity (difference) and institutionally mediated power; and (7) an unalienated existence integrates a social experience characterized by interdependence of conditions, and interaction of persons, and the equal warrant of each to participate in social construction or labor. Collectively, these ideas constitute an ideology of society in the form of democracy which knows its truth as equality.

61 See supra text accompanying notes 8-18.  
62 See supra text accompanying notes 19-36.  
63 See supra text accompanying notes 37-53.  
64 See supra text accompanying notes 54-60.