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Leisure to Attend to Our Spiritual Business

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Abstract

Time is central to Martin Hägglund's discussion of secular faith and spiritual freedom. Time is precisely what is finite in this life and presides over the relationships we value and our risk of losing them. Hägglund adopted the notion of *disposable time* from Karl Marx's *Grundrisse* and reframed it as the more descriptive *socially available free time*. Following Marx, Hägglund advocates the revaluation of values so that *socially available free time* would become the measure of wealth rather than *socially necessary labour time*.

A close examination of the origin of Marx's analysis of *disposable time* suggests that questions of faith and freedom were inherent in the concept as it was expressed in the 1821 pamphlet, *The Source and Remedy of the National Difficulties* that influenced Marx, in the writings of William Godwin that inspired the 1821 pamphlet, and ultimately in theological views on the doctrine of the calling that Godwin secularized in his pioneering advocacy of leisure as a universal human right. Marx's innovation was to show that the creation of disposable time is the basis of all wealth. Under

capitalism, disposable time is expropriated in the form of surplus labour time, thereby inverting the relationship between necessary and superfluous labour time—the superfluous becomes necessary (for capital) and the necessary superfluous. Marx's analysis of the inversion of necessary and superfluous labour time bears close resemblance to Ludwig Feuerbach's critique in *The Essence of Christianity,* which had influenced the early Marx, of the inversion of collective humanity and the divine.

Keywords
disposable time, spiritual freedom, secular faith, free time, labour time, method of inversion, theology, Sabbath

This Life

> Now, because worshipping God cannot be without a time, the Lord has therefore appointed a certain time in which we should abstain from outward or bodily works; and yet should have leisure to attend to our spiritual business.
>
> Heinrich Bullinger

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The premise of Martin Hägglund's *This Life: secular faith and spiritual freedom* is that spirituality—and consequently freedom—is grounded in our mortality. Secular faith arises from an acute awareness of the risk of losing the relationships we cherish and manifests in our commitment to act to sustain the lives of the objects of our affection.

In this context, freedom is not the absence of constraints on our actions but the presence of the possibility to do what needs to be done to fulfill our commitments. As Hägglund wrote in the introduction, "secular faith is the condition of freedom. […] We are free because we are able to ask ourselves what we ought to do with our time" (Hägglund 2020: 11).

This Life, which won the René Wellek Prize in 2020, has received wide acclaim outside the usual haunts of Marx scholarship, with reviews in *The New Yorker*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, and *The New Republic*; and companion essays published in *The New York Times* and *The New Statesman.* Even the *Wall Street Journal* has weighed in, taking issue with Hägglund's critique of capitalism and religion. In his review of *This Life* in *Radical Philosophy*, Nathan Brown called it "a rare example [of] philosophical writing that achieves conceptual rigour in the medium of a style open to anyone […] who wants to think about

how life ought to be lived and about what we must do, collectively, to make it livable in common" (Brown 2019: 34).

Time looms over Hägglund's discussion of secular faith in the first part of the book and inevitably forms the ground of spiritual freedom in Part II. After all, time is precisely what is finite in this life. At the beginning of chapter 5, "The value of our finite time," Hägglund credited the writings of Karl Marx as containing "the greatest resources for developing a secular notion of freedom" (Hägglund 2020: 212).

While faith and freedom may have immediate subjective appeal, the deeper issue Hägglund addresses is "the possibility to do what needs to be done." In the book's conclusion, he offers as an example of what he means by doing "what needs to be done" an account of Martin Luther King Jr. organizing a general strike in Memphis in the days leading up to his assassination.

Hägglund's account of Marx's analysis of the concept of value is commendable. As he pointed out, "Marx's critique of capitalism stands or falls" on that analysis (ibid.: 252). Unfortunately, according to Hägglund, Marx's analysis has been widely misrepresented as an extension of the labour theory of value as formulated by Adam Smith and David Ricardo rather than as a critique of that theory's contradictions.

In his discussion of Marx's analysis, Hägglund remarked that Marx did not provide an explicit explanation of *why* the measure of value under capitalism is contradictory. He then offered his own explanation: capitalism "treats the negative measure of value [i.e., the expenditure of work effort] as though it were the positive measure of value and thereby treats the means of economic life as though they were the end of economic life" (ibid.: 257). Hägglund's explanation is, however, close to the explanation Marx *did* give in the *Grundrisse* of why the measure of value under capitalism is contradictory. But Marx spread his account over three passages, separated by over 300 pages in the English translation (Marx 1973a: 397–401, 608–610, 706–708). This explanation has thus far largely escaped the notice of Marx scholars. The clue to its location, however, is contained in the "striking" use by Marx of "the English term *'disposable time'* in italics in the original rather than the German *verfügbare Zeit"* (Hägglund 2020: 265). In stressing freedom's dependency on disposable time—which he relabelled as "socially available free time"—Hägglund has felicitously raised the question of what Marx actually meant by the term and how it relates to his analysis of value and of disposable time's shadow, socially necessary labour time.

The superfluous as a condition for the necessary

Marx had used the English term, disposable time, because he was quoting and paraphrasing from an English pamphlet, *The Source and Remedy of the National Difficulties,* which was published anonymously in 1821. The pamphlet's author has subsequently been identified as Charles Wentworth Dilke.

Disposable time became a central support of the conceptual scaffolding of Marx's critique of political economy as it unfolded in the *Grundrisse*. In a well-known passage of notebook VII, Marx identified the fundamental contradiction of capital to be "that it presses to reduce labour time to a minimum, while it posits labour time, on the other side, as sole measure and source of wealth." At the conclusion of this very dramatic and crucial passage, Marx again quoted *The Source and Remedy* in a rough translation, "'Truly wealthy a nation, when the working day is 6 rather than 12 hours. *Wealth* is not command over surplus labour time' (real wealth), 'but rather, *disposable time* outside that needed in direct production, for *every individual* and the whole society'" (ibid.: 706). Astonishingly, the intimate connection between Marx's argument in this key passage of the *Grundrisse* and his citation of *The Source and Remedy* at the end has gone largely unremarked in published commentary on the so-called "fragment on machines."

In an earlier paper (Walker 2021), I reviewed the background of the pamphlet and its author, the pamphlet's influence on Marx, and the incongruity of how little attention has been paid to it by scholars, aside from the article (de Vivo 2019) that had precipitated mine. For example, in *Time, Labor and Social Domination* (Postone 1993), Moishe Postone described the passages in notebook VII of the *Grundrisse* as a key to understanding Marx's analysis in *Capital*. Although he emphasized the significance of disposable time in those passages, he did not acknowledge the concept's source. In my earlier article, I noted two articles (Blumenfeld 2014, Magun 2010) that acknowledged the pamphlet's influence on Marx and one book (Lapides 2008) that made direct reference to the pamphlet's text. Since the publication of my article, I have found other articles that cite the pamphlet's influence (Fleck 2012, King 1983, Musto 2021, Reiner 1964), but they present no analysis of how Marx adapted and fundamentally transformed Dilke's concept. In the present paper, my focus is on that adaptation and transformation.

In his discussion of "the famous Fragment on Machines," (Tomba 2013: 76–81) Tomba did not even mention disposable time. He warned that those celebrated passages from the *Grundrisse* "should not be given excessive weight" and referred to his earlier article with Bellofiore (Bellofiore and Tomba 2014 [2009]) in which they discussed disposable time with the caveat that "the Marx of *Capital* reminds us that capital will never allow this disposable time to translate into a reduction of the direct producers' labour-time" (ibid.: 364).[1] But this

[1] Bellofiore and Tomba repeat the phrase, "the Marx of Capital," three times in their article, suggesting an 'historicist stage-theory' of Marx's thought, which is oddly out of sync with Tomba's compelling argument for the simultaneity of different temporalities in capitalism, as opposed to a series of successive, distinct stages. My own view is that thinkers never entirely free themselves from older influences and habits of mind—even despite public renunciations—and often anticipate insights that they will only become fully aware of and articulate later on.

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is precisely the point Marx was making already, *at length*, in the *Grundrisse*, as I will show in what follows.[2]

For Dilke, disposable time had been a synonym for liberty, "liberty to seek recreation—liberty to enjoy life—liberty to improve the mind" (Dilke 2019: 34). But for Marx, disposable time played a more ambivalent role. On the one hand, it represented emancipation not only from excessive everyday toil but ultimately from the system of wage labour itself. On the other hand, disposable time was traditionally appropriated and enjoyed by the wealthy and, under capitalism, it is systematically converted into surplus *labour* time. Disposable time is thus a presupposition of capital.

"The whole development of wealth," Marx wrote in notebook IV of the *Grundrisse*, "rests on the creation of disposable time." That categorical yet enigmatic statement echoed and amended a quote from *The Source and Remedy* Marx had paraphrased two paragraphs earlier: "Wealth is disposable time and nothing more." Wealth—whether in the form of productive capital, luxuries, or free time—is, by definition, superfluous to subsistence. Under capitalism, Marx continued, "the existence of *necessary* labour time is conditional on the creation of *superfluous* [*überflüssig*] labour time" (Marx 1973a: 398).

Capitalism thus inverts the expected, natural relationship between the necessary and the superfluous. The antithetical nature of this superfluous labour time is not only that it exploits workers through additional hours of unpaid labour but also that it subordinates even the possibility of earning a living to the prospects for exploitation. Thus the tendency of capital, Marx observed on the following page, is to "increase the labouring population, as well as to constantly posit a part of it as surplus population—population which is useless until such time as capital can utilize it" (ibid.: 399).

Marx reprised the bleak theme of surplus population in notebook VI, where he argued that "appropriation of alien surplus value" required the existence of "a surplus population, which does not work" (Marx 1973a: 608). Any impediment to capital realizing surplus value renders untenable the performing of labour that is *merely* for subsistence. This section of notebook VI is given the heading, "Necessary labour. Surplus labour. Surplus population. Surplus capital" in the English translation. In it, Marx sketched an intricate preview of what he would eventually codify as socially necessary labour time:[3]

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[2] Magun highlighted the *antithetical* nature of disposable time for Marx in both *Capital* and the *Grundrisse,* posing the possibility for "free, authentic human action" but also the providing foundation for "the cyclic, infinite, and frenetic increase of capitalist production" (Magun 2003: 1143).

[3] Arzuaga gives a vivid account (Arzuaga 2019: 829–830) of the relationship between this dizzyingly condensed passage from the *Grundrisse* and the category Marx subsequently defined as socially necessary labour time.

> Labour capacity can perform its necessary labour only if its surplus labour has value for capital, if it can be realized by capital. Thus, [...] necessary labour appears as superfluous, because the superfluous is not necessary. [...] Thus the relation of necessary and surplus labour, as it is posited by capital, turns into its opposite (Marx 1973a: 609).

Marx invoked this inversion of the superfluous and the necessary again in notebook VII where he returned to the theme of disposable time. There he analyzed the opposition between the antithetical drive of capital to reduce necessary labour time so as to increase surplus labour time and "the free development of individuality," which would entail "the general reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created" (ibid.: 706).

A few pages later, Marx returned to the topic of disposable time again. In a tone that might best be described as rhapsodic, Marx delved into the profound paradox of disposable time, repeating that key term, *in English*, seven times and concluding with yet another quote from *The Source and Remedy*. Marx's argument was that under capitalism, the creation of large amounts of disposable time appears both as free time for a few, as in all previous epochs, but also, uniquely to capitalism, in the methodical expansion of surplus labour time. Not the creation of useful goods but the creation of surplus value is the purpose of work under capitalism. As a consequence of this drive to reduce necessary labour time and increase disposable time, capitalism unintentionally creates a possibility for socially disposable time, which would enable the reduction of working time to a minimum, freeing up time for the free development of individuals and for society as a whole (ibid.: 708).

But capitalism fiercely resists the realization of that possibility in its insatiable drive for surplus value, produced by surplus labour time. If it is too successful, the drive for surplus labour leads to crises of overproduction and consequently of unemployment—expanding relative surplus population. In Marx's view, this crisis tendency would reveal that appropriation of surplus labour is incompatible with the sustained growth and distribution of production. It would become evident to the working classes that they must repossess their surplus labour as disposable time. When that occurs, the antithetical nature of disposable time would cease, and the needs of the social individual would become the measure of necessary labour time. Under these revolutionary conditions, the production of wealth would increase alongside the increase of free time for all.

According to Marx, "real wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals." In a hypothetical post-revolutionary society, disposable time would become the measure of that wealth. Value, which in capitalism is based on the expenditure of labour time, "posits wealth as founded on poverty" (ibid.: 708) and degrades the individual to mere worker, while the labour-saving machinery extends the hours of work rather than reducing them.

The method of inversion

Marx's analysis in the *Grundrisse* of capital's inversion of necessary and superfluous labour time bears an uncanny likeness to the inversion in religion between earthly life and God, heaven, and the anticipated afterlife in Ludwig Feuerbach's critique of religion in *The Essence of Christianity.* Feuerbach's critique had a profound impact on Marx's and Engel's thinking in the 1840s, and Marx adopted the concept of species-being (*Gattungswesen*) from Feuerbach.[4]

As Feuerbach explained, "that which in religion is the predicate, we must make the subject, and that which in religion is a subject we must make a predicate, thus inverting the oracles of religion; and by this means we arrive at the truth" (Feuerbach 1845: 59). He invoked religion's inversion of truth again in the concluding chapter:

> And we need only, as we have shown, invert the religious relations—regard that as an end which religion supposes to be a means—exalt that into the primary which in religion is subordinate, the accessory, the condition—at once we have destroyed the illusion, and the unclouded light of truth streams in upon us. (ibid.: 271)

Feuerbach described the doctrine of immortality as "the final doctrine of religion; its testament, in which it declares its last wishes" (ibid.: 173). He dismissed the argument that the characteristics of a future life are inscrutable as an invention of religious skepticism and instead presented a concise definition of immortality as an ideal image of *this* life, rid of its contradictions:

> The future life is nothing else than life in unison with the feeling, with the idea, which the present life contradicts. The whole import of the future life is

[4] In *For Marx*, Louis Althusser famously argued for an "epistemological break" between Marx's writings from the early 1840s and his later thinking. This rupture was allegedly signalled by Marx's disclaimers in the drafts posthumously published as *The German Ideology* and its chapter, "Theses on Feuerbach." In support of his "dual theme of the problematic and of the epistemological break," Althusser cited "the pages of extraordinary theoretical profundity in Friedrich Engels's Preface to the Second Volume of *Capital"* (Althusser 1969: 32–33n). Immediately preceding and setting the context for those pages of profundity, Engels had been discussing a "'little known pamphlet' which Marx saved from falling into oblivion." That pamphlet, "but the farthest outpost of an entire literature which in the twenties turned the Ricardian theory of value and surplus-value against capitalist production in the interest of the proletariat, fought the bourgeoisie with its own weapons" (Engels 1971: 12–14), was, of course, *The Source and Remedy of the National Difficulties,* which Althusser ignored, along with its key term adopted by Marx of disposable time, in both *For Marx* and his subsequent tome, *Reading Capital*.

> the abolition of this discordance, and the realization of a state which corresponds to the feelings, in which man is in unison with himself. (Feuerbach 1845: 177)

In a September 1843 letter to Arnold Ruge, Marx expressed his enthusiasm for Feuerbach's critique of religion and envisioned applying the same method to a critique of politics:

> Our whole object can only be—as is also the case in Feuerbach's criticism of religion—to give religious and philosophical questions the form corresponding to man who has become conscious of himself.
> Hence, our motto must be: reform of consciousness not through dogmas, but by analysing the mystical consciousness that is unintelligible to itself, whether it manifests itself in a religious or a political form. (Marx 2010: 144)

In the section of chapter one of *Capital* on the fetishism of commodities, Marx returned again and again to the theme of religion as a model for the commodity. A commodity is "a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties" (Marx 1976: 163). "In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion" (ibid.: 165). "For a society of commodity producers […] Christianity with its religious cult of man in the abstract, more particularly in its bourgeois development, i.e. in Protestantism, Deism, etc., is the most fitting form of religion" (ibid.: 172). "Hence the pre-bourgeois forms of the social organization of production are treated by political economy in much the same way as the Fathers of the Church treated pre-Christian religions" (ibid.: 175).

Also in the section on fetishism, there is one clear holdover from Marx's analysis in the *Grundrisse* of the inversion of necessary and superfluous labour time: "…the labour-time it costs to produce the means of subsistence must necessarily concern mankind, although not to the same degree at different stages of development" (Marx 1976: 164). In the *Grundrisse*, he had written, "The relation of necessary labour time to the superfluous (such it is, initially, from the standpoint of necessary labour) changes with the different stages in the development of the productive forces" (Marx 1973a: 398).

Disposable time versus disposable population

In a more roundabout way, the concept of disposable time also stemmed from a critique of religion. Charles Wentworth Dilke was a disciple of William Godwin, who stated, "The genuine wealth of man is leisure, when it meets with a disposition to improve it. All other riches are of petty and inconsiderable value" (Godwin 1823: 149). Dilke expanded Godwin's maxim to the "fine statement," that Marx admired in his *Theories of Surplus Value* notebooks (Marx 1973b), "there is, thank God! no means of adding to the wealth of

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a nation but by adding to the facilities of living: so that wealth is liberty [...] it is disposable time, and nothing more" (Dilke 2019: 34).

In *The Source and Remedy of the National Difficulties*, Dilke's argument that disposable time is real wealth served as the hinge between an abstract analysis of the natural limits of capital accumulation and a treatise about why, in practice, accumulation has never reached those hypothetical limits. Dilke conceded that his image of an idyllic world of leisure was "Utopian speculation" (ibid.: 34). It also acted as a counterfoil to an imaginary dystopia Dilke described later in the pamphlet as the "last paragraph" of a future historian, chronicling the moral degradation of a society in which "the splendour of luxurious enjoyment in a few excited a worthless, and debasing, and selfish emulation in all" (ibid.: 42).

Considering Godwin's consistent use of the conventional term, "leisure," Dilke's substitution of the awkward and somewhat ambiguous phrase, "disposable time" is a mystery that may shine additional light on the context of his argument. Dilke's meaning is clearly not that disposable time is something to be used once and then discarded. It is, after all, real wealth, liberty, and an opportunity for self improvement. "Disposable time" appeared only once prior to the pamphlet's publication in sources indexed by Gale Primary Sources—in Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon*. In that book, Bentham discussed a scheme for keeping inmates busy for all the waking hours of their confinement (Bentham 1791: 430). For Bentham, disposable time represented the period prison officials could fill with sedentary work after an inmate had become exhausted by strenuous physical labour and was unable to do any more. The incompatibility of Bentham's usage with Dilke's could hardly be plainer.

An analogy with "disposable income" may seem plausible but that term wasn't common in the early 19th century literature either. The term does appear in a few parliamentary debates and treatises on political economy. One of the latter stands out as a likely candidate for influence on Dilke's word choice—but not for its use of disposable income. *An inquiry into the extent and stability of national resources* by Thomas Chalmers, introduced the concept of "disposable *population*" as its key analytical category:

> After the subsistence of all the necessary population, an immense quantity of surplus food is still unconsumed, and an immense population, supported by that food, is still unoccupied; and the productions of their industry are still in reserve to widen the sphere of enjoyment, to add to the sweets of human life, and the comforts of human society. This remaining population constitutes the third division of the population of the country; and to it I give the name of the Disposable Population. (Chalmers 1808: 7)

Chalmers was as upbeat about this disposable population as Dilke was wary of "all unproductive classes" that "destroy the produce of the labour of a society, and consequently prevent or delay the further increase of capital"

(Dilke 2019: 36). For Dilke, this expanding population of unproductive classes was a curse, not a blessing:

> Now, if these men were employed in the creation of fresh capital, or in productive labour, we have seen that the consequences would be, of necessity, that in a short time, a very trifling interest, or no interest at all, would be paid for the use of capital, and the produce of labour would have so multiplied that men must abridge that labour; and this is the first indication of a real national wealth and prosperity. (ibid.: 37)

Dilke's list of the unproductive classes, "soldiers, sailors, parsons, lawyers, counsellors, judges, and innumerable other persons" (ibid.: 36), overlapped conspicuously with the occupations Godwin had satirized in his essay, "Of trades and professions": "the trader, the lawyer, the physician, the divine, together with the military and naval professions" (Godwin 1823: 216). Many of those same occupations also appear in Chalmers's inventory of the disposable population:

> In addition to the indolent proprietor, who consumes but a small proportion of his own produce, it takes in the rulers and legislators of the country, the officers of justice, the practitioners of law and physic, the members of literary and ecclesiastical establishments, soldiers, artists, manufacturers, and tradesmen, who all contribute in their respective departments, to the comfort, security, and elegance of human life. (Chalmers 1808: 7)

The category of disposable population is far more amorphous than those lists by Godwin, Dilke, and Chalmers suggest. The disposable population is defined by what kind of work its members do *not* do. At the other end of the spectrum from the judges and doctors are Henry Mayhew's costermongers, chimneysweeps, and scavengers, rat catchers and rag buyers, porters and paupers. It encompasses Marx's lumpenproletariat, the reserve army of the unemployed, Helen Bosanquet's "industrial residuum," and occupiers of David Graeber's "bullshit jobs". A multitude of stations in between the legislator and the pickpocket constitute the disposable population. Those at the bottom end are treated as disposable in the throwaway sense. Incidentally, Marx mentioned Chalmers's notion of disposable population in the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1973a: 601) and alluded to it again in his fascinating discussion of surplus population that I cited above (ibid.: 608–610).

Dilke's objection to what he called unproductive classes was not to their existence but to their proliferation. In his analysis, this population was supported by the extraction of surplus value from the productive workers. In the absence of government intervention, the proportion of unproductive to productive classes should diminish as capital accumulates because, "as capital increases, interest, or labour to be given for the use of capital, will, after a short time, decrease" (Dilke 2019: 38). Whether Dilke's argument is persuasive or

not, he clearly viewed the maintenance of a constant or increasing proportion of the "disposable population" as anathema to the realization of real wealth—disposable time. The growth of these unproductive classes was one of the factors preventing achievement of "that real national prosperity, when men would no more labour…

> '…than sufficed
> To recommend cool zephyr, and make ease
> More easy, wholesome thirst and appetite
> More grateful…'" (Milton, *Paradise Lost,* quoted in Dilke 2019: 35)

According to Dilke, foreign trade was another of the main mechanisms explaining "why society never has arrived at this enviable situation, this real national prosperity, although so immediately within its grasp" (ibid.: 35). Instead of a regained paradise, foreign trade, the proliferation of unproductive classes, and other artificial barriers to real capital accumulation heralded a dystopian future that Dilke outlined in that imaginary "last paragraph of the historian that generations hence shall trace the character of this age and country" (ibid.: 42).

A secular doctrine of the calling

William Godwin, author of *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* had been educated as a Dissenting minister. Many commentators have noted the persistence of Godwin's Calvinist habits of thought, despite his wavering successive professions of atheism and deism. "The Calvinist doctrine of the calling," observed William Stafford, "can be discerned just below the surface in *Political Justice*. It is a man's duty to labour in the station to which God has called him; he is answerable for every scrap of time, every thought and deed" (Stafford 1980: 292).

While astutely observing the Calvinist subtext in *Political Justice*, Stafford overlooked Godwin's emphatic reformulation of the doctrine of the calling through the elevation of leisure. In Book 8, "Of Property," which Godwin touted as "the key-stone that completes the fabric of political justice" (Godwin 1793: 323), he urged the gradual elimination, not of private property *per se*, but of those institutions of property that compelled the many to labour ceaselessly—not to improve their own condition, but mostly to provide superfluous luxuries for the few. In chapter 6, Book 8, "Objection to this system from the allurements of sloth," Godwin outlined his vision of a leisure society.

Godwin's argument was distinctly *not* that the direct elimination of inequality would result in a leisurely paradise on earth. Rather, his expectation was that equality would *follow* the universal intellectual improvement fostered by the expansion of leisure. To demonstrate this prospect, Godwin performed a series of rough calculations on the principle that "the object, in

the present state of society, is to multiply labour; in another state, it will be to simplify it." The resulting estimate was "that half an hour a day employed in manual labour by every member of the community would sufficiently supply the whole with necessaries. Who is there that would shrink from this degree of industry?" (ibid.: 356)

One may question the assumptions and conclusion of Godwin's calculation without gainsaying the premise that much more labour is performed in the world than is necessary to secure a comfortable subsistence for the whole population. Godwin's criticism of the pursuit of distinction through extravagant consumption, as opposed to the enjoyment of a frugal life with abundant leisure, had a moral undertone consistent with the Calvinist and Puritan emphasis on humility. Thus, Godwin's secular reformulation of the doctrine of the calling sought to preserve those higher virtues of the doctrine of grace that are desecrated by a work ethic distorted by capitalist worship of accumulation.

Godwin soon returned to the topic of leisure in *The Enquirer: Reflections on education, manners, and literature*. Two essays in that book, "Of riches and poverty" and "Of avarice and profusion" examined, respectively, the cultural disadvantage to the poor of a lack of leisure and, second, a reprise of the theme that human subsistence required relatively few material goods, which could be procured with relatively little work—if the work that needed to be done was shared by all. In the latter essay, he argued that:

> …hours which are not required for the production of the necessaries of life, may be devoted to the cultivation of the understanding, the enlarging our stock of knowledge, the refining our taste, and thus opening to us new and more exquisite sources of enjoyment (Godwin 1823: 156).

Godwin concluded the first essay, declaring:

> The genuine wealth of man is leisure, when it meets with a disposition to improve it. All other riches are of petty and inconsiderable value. Is there not a state of society practicable, in which leisure shall be made the inheritance of every one of its members? (ibid.: 149)

A third essay in *The Enquirer,* "Of trades and professions," engaged the topic of vocation with caustic sketches of the careers of the merchant, the lawyer, the physician, the minister, the soldier, and the sailor that offer scant prospect of "splendour and value in the eye of God" (Calvin 1846: 35). Instead, Godwin's accounts of the moral depravity of those careers demonstrated the hypocrisy that arises from the detachment of those secular occupations from their increasingly remote ethical grounding.

There can be no doubt that in referring to occupation, Godwin specifically had in mind Calvin's doctrine of the worldly calling. Throughout a later work, *Thoughts on Man: his nature, productions and discoveries,* he repeated the proposition that almost every person "is endowed with talents, which, if

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rightly directed, would shew [sic] him to be apt, adroit, intelligent and acute, in the walk for which his organisation especially fitted him" (Godwin 1831: 53). In *Thoughts on Man*, Godwin also clearly stated what had been a persistent subtext in his earlier writing—that leisure was *no less* a part of a person's calling than was one's trade or occupation:

> The river of human life is divided into two streams; occupation and leisure—or, to express the thing more accurately, that occupation, which is prescribed, and may be called the business of life, and that occupation, which arises contingently, and not so much of absolute and set purpose, not being prescribed: such being the more exact description of these two divisions of human life, inasmuch as the latter is often not less earnest and intent in its pursuits than the former. (Godwin 1831: 164)

Godwin stressed that leisure was of primary importance for self improvement, citing the example "that schoolboys learn as much, perhaps more, of beneficial knowledge in their hours of play, as in their hours of study" (ibid.: 165). Arguably, Godwin's secularization of the doctrine of the calling was more consistent with the spirit of Calvin's discussion of the particular calling in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* than was, say, Benjamin Franklin's *Necessary Hints to These that Would be Rich* or *Advice to a Young Tradesman*. It was undoubtedly more consistent with the views of Protestant theologians popular in England, such as Heinrich Bullinger and William Perkins.[5]

The mandate for incorporating leisure into the doctrine of the calling derives theologically from the fourth commandment to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. Heinrich Bullinger, a contemporary of Calvin and successor to Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, offered a Protestant warrant for Sabbatarianism that found its most profound resonance in England:

> We know that the Sabbath is ceremonial, so far forth as it is joined to sacrifices and other Jewish ceremonies, and so far forth as it is tied to a certain

[5] In chapter two of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber presented excerpts from those two works by Franklin to illustrate "the spirit of capitalism." The guiding question of his inquiry was: "What was the background of ideas which could account for the sort of activity apparently directed toward profit alone as a calling toward which the individual feels himself to have an ethical obligation?" (Weber 1930: 75). Although Weber stated his particular interest "in the origin of precisely the irrational element which lies in this, as in *every* conception of a calling [emphasis added]" (ibid.: 78), he mentioned neither Heinrich Bullinger nor William Perkins, two Protestant theologians very widely read in England. The latter having incorporated Sabbath rest and lawful recreation into his explanation of the doctrine of the calling. Weber's cursory mention of Sabbatarianism characterized that movement as arising from ascetism and antagonism toward "spontaneous enjoyment of life and all it had to offer" (ibid.: 166).

> time; but in respect that on the Sabbath-day religion and true godliness are exercised and published, that a just and seemly order is kept in the church, and that the love of our neighbour is thereby preserved, therein, I say, it is perpetual, and not ceremonial (Bullinger 1849: 259).

Bullinger's sermon on the Sabbath became required reading for English Protestant clergy. Although Puritans were not the only Sabbatarians in 17th century England, they soon became closely identified with the movement. *A Treatise of the Vocations* by the moderate Puritan leader William Perkins, incorporated Sabbath observance directly into the doctrine of the calling, first, by analogy, as a warning against covetousness, citing Jesus's teaching about the Sabbath being made for man, Perkins added, "then much more were riches made for man, and not man for riches" (Perkins 1626: 768). Second, he upheld Sabbath rest as one of the factors that promoted constancy in one's calling. Vacation, in Perkins's treatise, comprised two elements. The *principal* vacation is "for religion's sake [...] and it is commanded in the fourth commandment, Remember the Sabbath Day—that is, the day of rest, or of vacation—to keep it holy" (Perkins 1626: 774). The second form of vacation is (lawful) recreation, "because it is a necessary means to refresh either body or mind, so we may better do the duties which pertain to us" (ibid.). This latter kind of vacation, however, must be taken on the days assigned to labour and not on the Sabbath because, as Perkins pointed out, "recreation serves for labour" (ibid.: 775).

Godwin substituted "the cultivation of the understanding, the enlarging our stock of knowledge, the refining our taste" for religiously prescribed practices of Bible study, church attendance, and engaging in religious conversations. Opening "new and more exquisite sources of enjoyment" was Godwin's prescription for attending to our spiritual business (Godwin 1823: 156).

Late in life, Godwin composed an exposé of the social and moral desolation of what he saw as the essence of Christianity. Published posthumously under the ponderous but less controversial title, *Essays by the Late William Godwin never before published*, Godwin's *The Genius of Christianity Unveiled*, challenged the doctrine of immortality with particular objection to the "creed of hell and damnation" (Godwin 1873: 15). Godwin's indignation toward that doctrine was partly due to the gross disproportion between "everlasting torments meted of an infinite majority of mankind" and the pettiness of offences that led to such punishment (ibid.: 17).

In examining the question of "what shall we do to be saved," Godwin proclaimed Christianity, "like all the sallies of mortal enthusiasm, a mass of contradictions" (ibid.: 129). He identified two contrasting principles from which, "the form of a blameless life may spring." The first is disinterested benevolence toward all others and a genuine will to do good. The other consists of "the miserable calculations of the benefit to accrue to himself" (ibid.: 131). By treating this life as a state of probation for the future world, Christianity upholds the latter, "founded upon a principle of bargain and sale. So many acts of piety towards God, and charity towards man, will

purchase me heaven, and so many will exempt me from ever-lasting punishment" (Godwin 1873: 132).

Godwin also objected to the system of heavenly rewards and eternal punishments on the grounds of liberty. He concluded the essay fragment, "On Liberty" with a comparison of freedom of thought to the uninhibited play of school children—"Even boys, when they are out of school, are permitted to frisk, and to try the strength of their voices" (ibid.: 220)—echoing his earlier observation, in *Thoughts on Man*, that was mentioned above.

Conclusion: remember the Sabbath to keep it holy

To a modern, industrial sensibility, a weekly day of rest would seem an obvious and basic remedy to the physical and psychological fatigue that would come from unrelieved work. In his interpretation of the Sabbath ritual, however, Erich Fromm downplayed the individual "social-hygienic" aspect of the day of rest—although he did not deny that such considerations also exist. What Fromm called attention to is a different conception of work among the ancient Hebrews. In that view, work entailed the interference with and transformation of physical nature and the social sphere. Thus the primary purpose of the Sabbath was to give the earth and society a rest from work. Rest for the individual worker would follow inevitably from that, because individuals are part of physical nature, just as they are part of society (Fromm 1951: 241–249).

The Sabbath also reflects the prophetic goal of re-establishing a paradisical harmony between the earth and all its inhabitants and thus is an "anticipation of the Messianic time" in which Sabbath peace will re-establish a permanent and universal harmony on earth, "the Sabbath is not only the symbolic anticipation of the Messianic time but is considered its real precursor. As the Talmud puts it, 'If all of Israel observed the Sabbath fully only once, the Messiah would be here'" (ibid.: 247).

In "On the Concept of History," Walter Benjamin repeatedly invoked messianic time and the messianic idea, realm, world, or power.[6] "In the idea of classless society," Benjamin wrote in a draft thesis "XVIIa," omitted from the final version of the essay, that "Marx secularized the idea of messianic time. And that was a good thing. It was only when the Social Democrats elevated this idea to an 'ideal' that the trouble began" (Benjamin 2003: 401). In another fragmentary text, "Capitalism as religion," Benjamin observed that in the merciless,

[6] Benjamin dwelt on the messianic without once mentioning the Sabbath. Throughout his collected works, in fact, Benjamin appears to have observed some kind of idiosyncratic *bilderverbot* regarding the Sabbath. Was Benjamin's omission of the Sabbath intentional? In the first thesis of "On the Concept of History," there is a hint it was. There, he compared historical materialism to a chess-playing automaton that, "can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is wizened and has to keep out of sight" (Benjamin 2003: 389).

unrelenting cult of capitalism, "There is no 'weekday,' no day that would not be a festival day in the dreadful sense of an unfolding of sacral pomp, of the most extreme exertion of the worshipper" (Benjamin 2021: 90). This cult of capitalism is the *opposite* of messianic time; it abolishes the Sabbath by rendering superfluous more and more of the 'weekday' work from which the Sabbath had prescribed rest. "Labour no longer appears so much to be included within the production process; rather, the human being comes to relate more as watchman and regulator to the production process itself" (Marx 1973a: 705).

Although Benjamin viewed the secularizing of messianic time as a good thing, he objected strongly to Marx's notion that the classless society could be "conceived as the endpoint of historical development [i.e. progress]" and attributed to it the subsequent passive anticipation of "the 'revolutionary situation,' which, as we know, has always refused to arrive" (Benjamin 2003: 401–02). Instead of historical development, Benjamin advocated the restoration of "a genuinely messianic face […] to the concept of classless society" (Benjamin 2003: 402).

What is a "genuinely messianic face"? I am not sure I understand what Benjamin meant by it. But I *do* understand what he meant by elevating a good thing—the secularization of messianic time—to an ideal. In his second thesis, Benjamin referred to "a secret agreement between past generations and the present one" (ibid.: 390). And "like every generation that has preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* messianic power, a power on which the past has a claim." I would thus interpret Benjamin's "genuinely messianic face" to refer to this weak messianic power rather than to some grandiose ideal, which, as Benjamin warned, *"has always refused to arrive*." I would describe this weak messianic power as "Sabbath-like" in the sense that if "only once" there was universal observance of the "*spiritually* available free time," the classless society would arrive.

To put that in more explicit terms, we do not need to wait for the revolution—"which, as we know, has always refused to arrive"—to do what needs to be done to protect and sustain the relationships we cherish. How we decide what needs to be done depends on how well we understand that the political economy of capital "posits the superfluous in growing measure as a condition—question of life or death—for the necessary" (Marx 1973a: 706). How we act in the face of such a compulsion is, *literally*, a question of life or death. Martin Hägglund's call for a revaluation of value that prioritizes socially available free time over the labour time necessary for the expansion of capital echoes Marx's statement in the *Grundrisse* on what the measure of wealth should be:

> For real wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals. The measure of wealth is then not any longer, in any way, labour time, but rather disposable time. Labour time as the measure of value posits wealth itself as founded on poverty, and disposable time as existing in and because of the antithesis to surplus labour time… (Marx 1973a: 708)

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