



# The Ends of the Humanities

**Perspectives from the Humanities and Social Sciences**

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# **Why (only) the Humanities can say what Arbeit is**

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# 1. Work?

When considering work, no matter if in private or public, whether conveyed face-to-face or through the media, it is usually a conglomerate of social, political, medical, psychological and economic perspectives, amongst others. This conglomerate then generates an ever-changing amalgamation of knowledge from a great many specialist fields of knowledge, especially in those that fall under the scope of the humanities.

So, for example, can a moderator of a talk show concerning the train driver strikes in recent years, approach the actual subject of the programme: the workload of the railway employees, initially through a psychological character analysis of trade union bosses, and from there on discuss the salaries which the train drivers get for their work. Economic scenarios to the strike then develop, which engage the occupational health considerations of night work that are also connected with the social and physical situations of strain that effect those commuters using the railway to get to work.

That this is possible in close succession on one single talk show, and that the viewers can engage with all the different perspectives surrounding the focus of work, but nevertheless still have the impression that the whole show and what is being discussed on it, is all to do with one same integral theme 'work' (and all this even though this term, that emerges from an intersection between different viewpoints, has hardly anything to do with the previously established working vocabulary anymore) is threefold clear. Firstly, it is clear that 'work' constitutes as a socially produced, discursive subject, mainly in the intersection between different specialist fields of knowledge and their discourse (from sociology and politics through to medicine, economics and psychology), whereby both the multi-discursive subject 'work' and the subjectivities connected with it, can be taken into consideration (and must) (cf. Parr 2017).

Secondly, this example clearly shows that 'work' is one of *the* central topics of modern society, in that the important individual life questions (those of privacy) come together with problems of society as a whole (those of community and politics). Kai Wessel's 2003 TV drama *HAT ER ARBEIT?* can be seen as an example of this. Within the show, not only questions of family in relation to the world of work are tackled but also political, economic and individual psychological problems. This fact alone, that it is also possible in a single TV show, and that viewers can engage with all these areas within the programme, show that work is one of, if not the, central, integral focus of modern society (for similar instances of this see *Prinzessinnenbad*, *Yella* or *Acht Stunden sind kein Tag*). Because work as a theme *and* as social experience plays such an important role in the living environment and, moreover, because it is capable of connecting society as a whole, it must continually be asked, what is to be understood as work, when the term is made up of an amalgamation of knowledge all stemming from very different societal sub-areas. That is not least a task for the humanities.

Thirdly, and finally, the example makes it ultimately clear that the body of knowledge stemming from the different specialist fields in practical situations is further developed into an integral day to day understanding of 'work', in which the process of bringing together specialist knowledge from very different origins is, in general, conveyed by the media. From there, it is the medial representation that generate our everyday under-

standing of 'work' and, with that, the social discursive nature of 'work', which is consistently new and different. Our understanding about 'work' must then, in sum, be understood and analysed as a genuine *medially* conveyed understanding, which, in contrast, means nothing else than this discourse within the media and society will always be taken into consideration. The multidimensional reflection of the humanities upon work has to thus also incorporate its presentation in the media (cf. Luhmann 2004: 9).

Work cannot be analysed from a standpoint of special discourses themselves, however, but only from an academic standpoint. This allows the special discourses that make up the constitution of 'work', and their understating of one another, to be attained. In short: work can be analysed from the perspective of the humanities, here understood in the broader American sense, *and* can be analysed from a theoretical-methodical perspective, which in relation to Michel Foucault, differentiates between specialist area of knowledge, discourse and discursive processes. Primarily this multi-perspective grasp on the complex subject of work, on one side from the fields of knowledge that make up its constitution, and from the other its conveyance in the media, makes it possible to view it in its broadness and in relevance to society as a whole, so that the discursivisation of 'Arbeit' circulating within society can be reconstructed. They regulate, to paraphrase Foucault, what can be said about work at a particular point in time and in a particular cultural context, what must be said and, frequently more important, what is not allowed to be said (1991).

It is an ever-encountered finding in everyday life and in media representation, that work has 'something' to do with our society as a whole and likewise with our private lives on the whole. With a dual perspective that emanates from the discursive spectrum relevant for work, to the aggregation of this discourse that is carried out by the media *and* the present communicated knowledge also with the maintained social stratification in mind, many more things can be accurately answered than was previously the case.

This also applies to those socially-discursive subjects that are the most closely linked with work life, for example the enigmatic sub-complex of this broad subject 'work', the concept of 'burnout' (Graham Green's *A Burnt-Out Case* [1960] is named as the first documented case of the expression. For more on the history of the phenomenon of burnouts see Bernhardt 2013). The phrase *Managerkrankheit* (stress disease) came into existence at the end of the 1960s and was first and foremost coupled with psychological discourses. The reason for this is not that health insurance for managers was less important, but rather the question of therapy, which made a psychological perspective particularly relevant. The aftermath showed that there was a development in two dimensions:

1. On the axis of the spectrum of specialist areas of expertise and their discourse, increasingly more specialist areas of knowledge and, along with them, further special discourses have come into play to date: namely psychology, but also medicine, health insurance, therapy culture, politics and trade unions.
2. The reason for this expansion is that on the second most important axis, namely that of social differentiation, (also meaning hierarchisation), the phenomenon of 'burnouts', symbolically speaking, moves downwards through the hierarchy: from managers down to 'leading' employees, from there to the middling and mi-

nor employees and further down the line. With each of these levels, additional 'voices' come into play. Because along with the employees, the legal health insurance, for example, join in and try to definitively narrow down the phenomenon 'burnout'; it is here where medicine comes into play, followed by speakers for the social sciences and eventually those from therapy culture.

At the end, the social theme 'burnout', being integral to the way we speak about the effects of work upon the individual, was again one of the very first concepts that arose in the intersection between different subjects of the humanities. As it is conveyed by the media, it therefore can and must be analysed from the standpoint of the humanities. In its dual-expansion tendency on the horizontal axis of the differentiated areas of knowledge and on the axis of social stratification, the "fluide Phänomen" (ibid.: 35) 'burnout' is placed not only as a discursive occurrence but also virtually as a perfect example for what Jürgen Link, in continuity with Foucault, proved to be the structure of a dispositive (Link 2008). This is particularly the case given that 'burnout', as maintained by Sarah Bernhardt, can be linked with other dispositive-tending phenomenon like 'stress' (Bernhardt 2013: 36) and especially 'depression', that in the 1990s took over the place of 'burnouts' for the discursive position.

How the socially discursive subject 'work' can be viewed from the different perspectives within the humanities, will be shown in the following section with some examples through which the significance of the humanities will be made clear. Our first example is a selection of three films from the 1920s and 1930s that develop very differing conceptions of work. The second example is Joachim Zelter's 2006 novel *Schule der Arbeitslosen*, in which the coupling of the discursive semantics of 'work' and 'unemployment' and with that, other, different fields of knowledge, is conveyed in the form of metaphors. With these two examples, two very different possibilities are shown in how to analyse 'work' or other discursive subjects that concern it; all from the standpoint of the humanities.

## **2. Work in the Films of the 1920s and 1930s. From *Metropolis* to *Kuhle Wampe***

Fritz Lang's famous film *Metropolis* has, amongst others, been analysed from the perspectives of utopian, or rather, dystopian research and through religious, mythical, and capitalist critical, as well as structural lenses respectively (the film is characterised by a series of constitutive pairs of opposites, semanticized in the spaces depicted as well as the characters of the protagonists and their arrangements for configurations. The binary opposites of: 'high above *versus* deep below' [in the middling-zone of the earth's surface, the characters of the 'upper' level; the factory owners and the shareholders, can meet with the those of the 'lower' level such as the masses of workers], as well as 'above-ground *versus* underground', 'individual *versus* the mass', 'decadence *versus* religion', 'artificial *versus* natural', 'affluence *versus* poverty' and 'only-child *versus* many children'). It has not yet been asked, however, which form of work is being performed in

this film and which definition of work actually forms the basis of *Metropolis* (Füllsack 2009; Walther 1990). The hordes of grey workers, keeping Marx in mind, execute initially alienating, high-grade manufacturing work, through which the individual no longer knows to which collective goal he actually contributes, and therefore has no more insight into the collective process of work (incidentally even less than the viewer). When considered from the viewpoint of individual psychology, work then makes no sense to the individual and therefore no satisfaction can be gained from it.

Equally, like the form of work, the workers *also* lose their individuality to the greatest extent, even becoming somewhat unnatural, as they work from a clock that rotates on a 13 hour cycle. When their function as workers is established, they then appear, with little exception, only as a mass that moves forward in large formation, not dissimilar to soldiers whose faces or other individual features are not shown. If individuals amongst them appear out of the masses as religiously overdetermined leaders or emancipators, they are listened to by the crowds of workers, but in a different way than if they were in the workplace. Kracauer (1984: 158) saw in this mass-scene a “Neigung“ of Fritz Lang’s “zu pompöser Ornamentalisierung“ and the working masses, who for him are less motivated, in these mass-scenes counteract the “tröstenden Ansprache des Mädchens Maria“ and the flood.

The machines and, above all, the “Herz-Maschine” dominate *Metropolis* in a similar way to the work being executed. Above the displays and levers, the workers as a whole, as well as the individual worker, subscribe to a view that the bodily machine must work until collapse on an otherwise invisible, enduring machine (cf. Cowan 2007). That being the case in the technical sense, the worker in the mythical sense becomes ‘Maschinenfutter’, and the machine, in turn, becomes the gluttonous *Moloch*. The concept and medial representation of work being a symbiotic relationship between the body and technology seems relatively unconnected to the mystical representation of sacrifice in *Metropolis*. On the whole the fixtures in the *Metropolis* working world are less similar to a science-fiction scenario, but rather to the mines in the 1920s, shown by the typical mine cages and bars in which the miners descend into the depths of the earth, and the machine halls with the mostly still mechanical, but above all thermodynamic, power units (electricity is available but not yet dominant). The established factory clothes like work-overalls, belts and hats, which for their part appear as uniform, can also be added to this.

The thermodynamic in *Metropolis* is, however, not simply the ‘state of the art technology’, but at the same time also offers a symbolic excess. The narration “von wild gewordener Technologie und industrieller Reglementierung beschäftigt sich obsessiv mit steigenden Temperaturen, mit Druckzuständen kurz vor dem Bersten, mit Flüssigkeiten, die zu kochen beginnen, bevorstehenden Explosionen und Fluten”, which consequentially appear as a kind of symbolic and factual ‘bursting of a dam’. “Der Film zeichnet allerlei Kräfte auf, die” symbolically seen “aus der Tiefe heraufquellen”, and cannot be repressed any longer (Elsässer 2000: 21).

In saying this, how far can we connect *Metropolis* to the contemporary political discourses of the ‘work-focused’ parties in the 1920s? Here the film picks up on a great many discursive elements relating to the politicised workforce. The spectrum ranges



from the *Revolution*, connoted by the playing of the Marseillaise in the background, to the social-democratic alliance between ‘brain’ and ‘hand’ via the ‘heart’ (not the most convincing ending).

When one summarises these already few considerations, it becomes apparent that every attempt to figure out how work in *Metropolis* is represented, demands different humanity-based perspectives, from factory histories, via psychology and also through to the semiotics of film and cultural sciences. What work is again only becomes clear through an intersection of a great many *humanity-based* specialist discourses, unlike through a scientific definition of work, like the physical ‘output in a given time’, which would offer up very little analytical potential.

In the case of *Metropolis*, one doesn’t get very far by approaching the film with such a physical definition of work. Charlie Chaplin’s 1936 *Modern Times*, however, seems to be a different case. In the opening credits a clock fills the screen, which almost symbolically links the work and the worker (‘factory worker’) together. There are attendance recorders upon entrance to the factory and precisely fixed breaks. Admittedly, on closer inspection, this is not about ‘output within a given time frame’ in a physical sense, but rather about the ensuing think-model of Taylorisation and, with this, optimisation of the work process (including the workers). At the same time, as opposed to *Metropolis*, a further, interesting reversal takes place. Because the workers in *Modern Times* come tolerantly into the factory but no longer formed into masses (made cinematically evident through an analogy between herds of sheep and streams of people going to work), by using the system of Taylorism, they then arrive as individuals, albeit not as people, but merely as exchangeable individuals, out of whom the maximum amount of work and profit is to be extracted.

This form of Taylorism is particularly effective as it not only generates permanent control, but, and what is even more effective, generates their corresponding subjectivities, which are so engrained in this system, that they cannot be altered any further and therefore continue to conform. This becomes apparent, when the ‘factory worker’ in *Modern Times* carries out the same repetitive screw movement across the conveyor belt (now electrically operated), regardless of whom or what he encounters. The Taylor-esque subjectivity plays out even more subtly in the private sphere, namely when the imagined idyllic, civilised evening meal of the ‘factory worker’ and his girlfriend is similarly organised in an efficiently Taylor-esque way (cf. Frederik 1913; Giedion 1948; Ellenbürger 2015: 13). This begins with the setting of the table and is nowhere near finished, as indicated by Todd Herzog in a lecture, when a cow appears in the kitchen entrance ‘just in time’ to be milked.

In *Modern Times*, work is something that concerns both privacy and publicity in equal measure und deserves medial representation. It is something that is structured to a high manufacturing grade and therefore is alienating, but in a very different way than in *Metropolis*. Work, factory, and at least some workers themselves in Chaplin’s films, are, in opposition with *Metropolis*, made even more aesthetic, and reminiscent of the ‘New Objectivity’; but simultaneously handling it ironically. What at first glance appears somewhat exaggerated, even set up, is however so far motivated that the electrical energy, which is regulated by the beautiful, muscular, male body, is itself something

that cannot be made visible. Almost in reversal of the social-democratic trade union slogan; “wenn mein starker Arm es will, stehen alle Räder still”, here it is the strong arm of the aestheticised body that regulates the speed of the conveyor belt and it is this arm that sets the pace.

In opposition to both *Metropolis* and *Modern Times*, Bertolt Brecht’s 1932 *Kuhle Wampe oder Wem gehört die Welt?* shows, above all, the absence of work and its side effects upon very different developing subjectivities, namely that of unemployment, for which one is seen as personally responsible and with accompanying consequences that stretch all the way to suicide. Factories and their workers, now male and female, are only occasionally present in the background, in some way to indicate what “die Suche nach Arbeit” is concentrated on, itself becoming an activity that fills the day, and therefore comes to be seen as work (Gersch/Hecht 1971: 98). With this, Brecht devises a definition of work that’s reverse simultaneously incorporates the *harte Arbeit an der Arbeitslosigkeit*. Work finds its actual representation in contrast to the ever-present discursive verbiage of the ‘parental generation’, for example “Wer sich Mühe gibt, kann auch etwas erreichen”, also found in embroidered form in the kitchen as some type of wall decoration. So too with

Beklag’ nicht den Morgen,  
der Müh’ und Arbeit gibt.  
Es ist so schön, zu sorgen  
für Menschen, die man liebt.

It must be added that this is only the case when one is *not* unemployed.

For Brecht, the definition of work is therefore made up of the opposites of *Arbeit haben versus arbeitslos sein*, also seen in Billy Wilder’s *Menschen am Sonntag* from the year 1930, as well as in Renè Clairs *À nous la Libertè* that includes ‘leisure’. What both *Metropolis* and *Modern Times* have in common, however, is the semantic contrast between an ‘indoor’, ‘(alienated) work’, ‘in the city’ *versus* an ‘outdoor’, ‘self-determined life’, ‘before the gates of the city’.

### **3. Unemployment as work. Joachim Zelter’s *Schule der Arbeitslosen***

The seemingly ‘freeing’ nature of work, as evoked by Brecht’s wall decorations, can, however, also tend towards blurring the boundaries of work. Since the so-called New Economy has developed in the 1990s, the expression “blurring the boundaries of work” (*Entgrenzung der Arbeit*) has been used to attempt to understand a phenomenon, which involves the altered conditions of the organisation of work and what is meant by the deregulation of traditional boundaries between the economic market and the private sphere. This blurring the boundaries of work is always a question of the relationship between ‘work’ to ‘non-work’, in other words between work and other occupa-

tions, that are typically not seen as professional work, but as something that falls into the sphere of leisure or of the family, or into other related fields.

When the blurring of lines between work and non-work is discussed in the economic or social sciences, it is always meant as a blurring of the, as I call it, market economy. These sciences, and also literary and cultural studies also always refer to work as an economic category (cf. Voß 1998; Pongratz/Voß 2003; Gottschall/Voß 2005; Kratzer/Lange 2006). Admittedly the blurring of work's boundaries must not solely be restricted to its economic or social aspects. In fact, it can be found in contemporary literature, for example in Joachim Zelter's novel *Schule der Arbeitslosen* (2006), that work also crosses its own linguistic barriers.

In this part of the essay, we want to show, not only *that* but also *how* Zelter's novel converts unemployment into work through the use of metaphors, and not only *that* but also *how* in this linguistic blurring between the sphere of work and non-work, various historically developed fields of expertise come into contact with one another, which once again can only be examined from the perspective of the humanities or that of the social sciences (cf. Balint 2017: 115–165).

Metaphors must not be understood as merely rhetorical representations with ornamental function. In fact, in relation to Blumenberg (1998 and 2001), Lakoff (1979; with Turner 1989) and Johnson (with Lakoff 2011), as well as more recent metaphor research that shows how metaphors transport particular codes and semantics from a source area into a target area (cf. Specht 2014), metaphors can be considered as images that warrant thought and reflection. What is peculiar about metaphors, is that they reflect upon their target areas in novel, unusual manners and create relationships of similarity in which the source areas determine the semantics of the target areas.

Zelter's satirical, dystopian novel concerns a group of unemployed individuals, who complete full-time, methodical and absurd training from a further education centre run by the Federal Employment Office in "Sphericon" (SdA: 5). The focus is placed upon strategies for finding work and how to apply for jobs. How absurd these measures really are, is made clear later in the narrative when a post for an Application Trainer is advertised in Sphericon, for which all those who are unemployed should apply, and (with one exception) all do. At the end of the training, the group is not released into the world of work, but, along with other groups and with police involvement, deported instead to Sierra Leone. In this (curious) way the problem of mass unemployment is solved.

The text offers both an insight into the people, or rather, the professional categories and institutions that are incorporated into the further education schemes and also into the administrative, bureaucratic formalities that go along with the search for gainful employment; the relevance of the text to the present day is therefore apparent. The problematic tendencies of their date of origin, which needs to be reflected upon critically, is strengthened through the primary characteristics of the dystopian genre, but also through the short time period that exists between the timeframe of the plot (2016) and the novel's year of publication (2006).

Sphericon, on which the hermetically self-contained compound of the novel's narrative is established, is, as described in the novel, a "stillgelegte Fabrik in einem niederge-

gangenen Industriegebiet” (SdA: 5). Within this, the characterisations of “stillgelegt” and “niedergegangen” are themselves adjective, metaphorical expressions, in which stoppage and low spatial position embody the end of fordistic, production-orientated functions.

Sphericon anoints itself as the “School of Life” (SdA: 19), so that unemployment appears as work and the measurements to fight unemployment appear as measurements for life improvement, especially with the exclusion of any positive connotations of work and life, and the seeming removal of any negative connotations of unemployment.

In the passages where unemployment is considered to be work, the transfer of semantics from the working world to other areas of life occurs often. This appears in a speech for the welcoming and induction of the “Trainees”—as the unemployed individuals are affectionately named (SdA: 30). Through this, the functionality of Sphericon becomes clear. It is stated that the unemployed will receive a particular amount of “Bonus Coins” per week, depending on the work performed. “Bei uns gibt es kein Taschengeld”, says the leader of the Further Education Centre, “sondern Lohn, Lohn für Arbeit, Bonus Coins” (SdA: 33). Under the recourse of payment, a concept of unemployment is derived that becomes congruent with the concept of paid work, of employment, and therefore increases its value. Unemployment in Sphericon appears to not only mean work, but right from the beginning, seems to have fundamentally transcended itself. This “Lohn für Arbeit” doesn’t last however; in his speech the so-called “Schulleiter” (SdA: 32) reduces the value of gainful employment and euphemistically increases the value of unemployment to a particular form of work, namely that of “Sucharbeit”:

Die eigentliche Arbeit ist heute nicht mehr die Arbeit selbst, sondern die Suche nach Arbeit. Ein arbeitsloser Mensch ist nicht ein Mensch ohne Arbeit. Im Gegenteil. Er ist ein Mensch mit einer ungleich schwierigeren Arbeit, der Arbeit, überhaupt eine Arbeit zu finden. Dies ist die anspruchsvollste Form von Arbeit. Vielleicht gar die höchste und vollendetste Form. Arbeitssuche ist ein irreführendes Wort. Sucharbeit ist das Wort. (SdA: 34)

Indeed, unemployment seems to have many similarities with employment: organisation, coordination and research relate to both. The passage actually concerns something else: the destabilisation of the conventional meaning of work and the legitimisation of the measures that belong to Sphericon’s self-image, and within that, the legitimisation of Sphericon itself. In contrast to the expression “Suche nach Arbeit”, the destabilising metaphor “Sucharbeit” doesn’t determine the result, but the *process* of searching for work within the semantic of compound nouns. Consequently the metaphor of “Sucharbeit” portrays an indirect evaluation of conventional expression, regarding its accurateness, or rather, its actuality. Such a metaphor also generates an alternative understanding of work that verges on the contemporary, thriving expression “lebenlanges Lernen”.

The argumentative paradox that is expressed in this text passage essentially suggests, however, that this “Sucharbeit” is not necessarily something constructive; being hailed

as the “anspruchsvollste[n] Form von Arbeit”, it then seems likely that owning that job is not very appealing and beneficial. In, and for, Sphericon it seems that the way is the goal, as suggested by a benevolent interpretation; here work is the end in itself, and therefore so is Sphericon. Admittedly, this work is destructive and shaped by violence, and the novel raises the dogma of unemployment as work to a seemingly colonialist struggle and militaristic metaphor. At the same time this metaphorical blurring the lines between work and non-work also doesn't stop at the supposedly 'free' weekend. In fact, through the description of leisure activities performed by the unemployed, it extends to an overlap with the temporal blurring of the boundaries between work and non-work:

An den Wochenenden findet kein Unterricht statt. Die Trainees dürfen morgens länger schlafen. [...] Nicht wenige sitzen an einem Computer und arbeiten an autobiographischen Konzepten. [...] Oder bereiten sich geistig auf die Coin-Ausgabe vor. Oder spielen Computerspiele: “Job Quest“ sowie dessen Nachfolgeverson “Job Attack”. Bei diesem Spiel geht es nicht nur darum, eine Arbeitsstelle zu erobern, sondern sie einem anderen wegzunehmen. (SdA: 91 et seq.)

This passage makes clear the close link between the modifications of work and the modification of the media: if the name of the game of “Job Quest” is, if anything, neutral, then the metaphor in the version “Job Attack” elicits a glaring battle and an association with aggression. The concluding statement about the new orientation of the game's content (no longer just to “erobern”, but also to “wegnehmen”) that in the game is likened with ruthlessness, seems to be almost self-explanatory. At the same time it is important that the image of work medially presented in Sphericon and the image of work conveyed during times of leisure does, by no means, differ from the concept of ‘unemployment as employment’ that is represented by Sphericon itself. Furthermore, the combat and sport metaphors can reflect the quintessence and the concept of the game.

It is no surprise then, that “Job Attack” is presented in so many differing medial ways; in order to convey to the unemployed, a new working mentality and not least inherent ‘work values’. In the long running TV series “Job Attack” it means that “Jede Folge zeigt die Suche eines neuen Protagonisten, der im letzten Moment, nach unzähligen Kämpfen und Rückschlägen eine Stelle bekommt, nicht einfach bekommt—vielmehr verdient, erkämpft, erzwingt—wie ein unabweises Schachmatt.”(SdA: 43) In addition to the computer game and the TV series, “Job Attack” is also available as a musical and a book.

There is also a radio version that is constantly played from loud speakers across Sphericon that in a mantra-like fashion promotes the possibility of a heroic return to the world of work. That this return is only possible in the fictional sense, or rather, in one's imagination however, and that the exclamation “Die Welt ist voller Job-Attackers” (SdA: 93) is also only applicable in a fictional, or rather, imaginative sense, is made clear by the end of the novel.

Struggle, war and militaristic metaphors also dictate Sphericon's concept of unemployment, whether named as “Verfolgung von Arbeit gegenüber Verteidigung von Ar-

beit” or as “Eroberung von Arbeit gegenüber Verteidigung von Arbeit” in the speech of the school’s leader. In contrast, actual gainful employment represents a much less sophisticated “Verteidigung von Arbeit”, and, in this respect, “nur noch eine milde Form von Nacharbeit”. Simply put, it means the implementation of “Verteidigungsmaßnahmen, Befestigungsarbeiten” (SdA: 34). This is how the workers are stylistically transformed in the school master’s speech, from subjects of work into warriors. Existing or imagined jobs are manned like fortifications, whose preservation requires certain skills like aggression, deception, power of reasoning and creativity. As expressed by the School leader in a speech as:

Finte[,] List. Akribie und Ausdauer. Rhetorische Fähigkeiten, Schauspiel Fähigkeiten. Überdies analytische wie strategische Fähigkeiten. Nerven aus Stahl. Angriffslust. Die Überwindung gewaltiger Bollwerke. Das Anrennen gegen ständige Hindernisse. Das Kapern unzugänglicher Plattformen.

The quote makes obvious that during “Sucharbeit” the whole person is challenged, a challenge that corresponds to liberalised economic strategies of “Menschenführung” as described by Ulrich Bröckling (2007), which result in an entrepreneurial self (“unternehmerisches Selbst”). This “unternehmerische Selbst” refers to, amongst others, those work values and strategies of marketable or competitive work of ‘creativity’ and ‘empowerment’ respectively; both are inferred in the above passage. Simultaneously, the power character of Sphericon’s demands upon the unemployment echoes in the background.

From Sphericon’s perspective, these repressive power structures seem necessary; indeed, only being founded upon the incapacitation of the unemployed and through viewing them as patients. Consequentially, “im Jargon der Bundesagentur” they are called “Patienten”, and spoken to as “Sterbenskranke[n]” (SdA:7). In the wider context of the novel, work is semantically overdetermined as an illness. Furthermore, the metaphors refer to the archilexeme illness and contribute to the understanding of unemployment as a disease.

In those passages where the school psychologist Lichtenstein appears, the pathologisation of the unemployed is clearly substantiated. Lichtenstein works on an “Abhandlung über die Emotionen und seelischen Bedingungen arbeitsloser Menschen”, that bears the title “Psychogenese von Langzeitarbeitslosen”. Here he pursues the question of “inwiefern bestimmte Persönlichkeitsmerkmale Arbeitslosigkeit begünstigen” (SdA: 87). In this analysis, Lichtenstein concludes (at which his conclusion is circular, inasmuch as it simultaneously includes his hypothesis):

Arbeitslose Menschen seien überwiegend – und zwar nicht erst mit der Arbeitslosigkeit, sondern bereits vor ihrem Eintreten – symptomatische Persönlichkeiten [...]. Die Genese ihrer Erwerbslosigkeit geht einher mit Symptomen der Selbstverachtung und reduzierter Belastbarkeit. Die kognitiv-emotionale Ausrichtung ist chronisch pessimistisch [...]. Ihre Gefühle sind weniger die Folge als die Ursache ihrer eigenen Lage. Eine Kapitelüberschrift in Lichtensteins Abhandlung

lautet: Can your personality make you unemployed? Der Aufsatz ist auf Englisch. Er ist mit Statistiken gespickt. Eine Statistik besagt, dass Menschen ab einer bestimmten Körpergröße weniger wahrscheinlich arbeitslos werden als Menschen, die unter dieser Körpergröße liegen. [...] Lichtenstein betrachtet Karla: Schon auf den ersten Blick liegt sie deutlich über dieser Körpergröße. Sie ist groß, schlank, attraktiv. Man sieht ihre Größe, selbst wenn sie nur sitzt, an ihren langen Beinen. Statistisch gesehen dürfte sie gar nicht arbeitslos sein. (SdA: 87 et seq.)

Thus, unemployment is defined by Lichtenstein as a mental illness and, in addition, is associated with physiognomic characteristics. With reference to the physiognomic, the text unmistakably regards Johann Caspar Lavater as an intertextual archetype for Lichtenstein. The statistical analysis of the school's psychology can consequently be read as an allusion to Lavater's four volume work *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntniß und Menschenliebe* (1775–1778). With this, the author undertakes a systemisation of physiognomics, relying on a substantial image archive, which emanates from the assumption that the intellect of a human being can be gauged through his or hers given facial features and bodily attributes, that apparently allow infallible inferences upon a person's personality.

Lavater's Cause and Effect Model of physiognomics, namely based on natural indices but also on false assumptions, met justifiably sharp critique from Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, not only in his 1778 essay, *Über Physiognomik, wider die Physiognomen. Zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe*, but also in an anonymously published paper from 1783 with the telling title *Fragment von Schwänzen. Ein Beitrag zu den Physiologischen Fragmenten*. Zelter's novel takes this conflict and uses it in an ironic way two-fold. On one side in the form of an amalgamation of the Lavater-paraphrase with reference to Lichtenberg in the name of the school philosopher Lichtenstein, and on the other in the conjunctive and distant first sentence of the speech: "Arbeitslose Menschen seien überwiegend", that warningly suggests to view the following representations with scepticism. If only "eine Statistik" proves the relationship between bodily and physical characteristics, then the validity of Lichtenstein's theory is therefore questioned again. The instability of Lichtenstein's thesis ultimately substantiates itself in recourse to Karla, who serves as an opposing example to the physiognomic Cause and Effect semiotic model.

The expressions used in the text effect two things: on the one hand they highlight the discursive complexity of unemployment being understood as work and therefore also the complexity of work itself. It manifests itself as a conglomerate of historical and contemporary societal perspectives and disciplines, such as psychology, physiology, medicine, sociology, the national economy, philosophy and many others. On the other hand, the metaphorical expressions examined clearly show the meaning and devastating consequences of understanding unemployment as an illness, especially when the elevation of unemployment to a form of work cannot be anything else other than a form of illness.

Overall, the novel facilitates a differentiated view on two particular aspects of work: Zelter unmasks this blurring of lines between work and non-work as a linguistic and

discursive phenomenon. This is particularly impressive when we realise that what is traditionally seen as the opposite of work, is then converted into work. It also becomes apparent, that the use of metaphors stemming from the working-world outside the boundaries of this world promotes the (self-)legitimation of work as a hegemonic sphere. The *Schule der Arbeitslosen* involves semantics that offer more than an ostensible interpretation or merely platitudes, and show the blurring of linguistic boundaries of work. They seem to make Immanuel Kant's previously progressive concept of work being the meaning of life, appear almost threatening.

Our two examples that at first glance, appear to be very different indeed, have shown that work will always be constituted as a subject of many perspectives, in the intersection between different discourses. The humanities and the social sciences play no small part in this and therefore work can only be exhaustively analysed from the perspective of the humanities.

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