1. Be unproductive

2. Hesitate and question

3. Share

4. Improvise

5. Invite and participate

6. Embrace the void

7. Play!

8. Support

9. Unite
Contents

On value ................................................. 8

33  WHAT IS LIVING AND WHAT IS DEAD IN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY? (2010)
    Tony Judt

    Jan Ritsema

57  ART AS TECHNIQUE (1917)
    Viktor Shklovsky

64  VALUES BEYOND VALUE? IS ANYTHING BEYOND THE LOGIC OF CAPITAL? (2013)
    Beverley Skeggs
1. Be unproductive ................. 80
   93 'MAKING DO':
      USES AND TACTICS (1984)
      Michel de Certeau
   104 BOREDOM (1924)
      Siegfried Kracauer
   107 ON LAZINESS AND LESS
      WORK (2015)
      Bojana Kunst
   119 HOW TO HEAL A DEPRESSION?
      Franco 'Bifo' Berardi

2. Hesitate and question ............ 130
   143 EXHAUSTION AND
      EXUBERANCE: WAYS TO
      DEFY THE PRESSURE
      TO PERFORM (2008)
      Jan Verwoert
   164 OF OTHER SPACES:
      UTOPIAS AND
      HETEROTOPIAS (1984)
      Michel Foucault

3. Share .................................. 174
   185 THE EXCHANGE OF GIFTS
      AND THE OBLIGATION
      TO RECIPROCATE
      (POLYNESIA) (1950)
      Marcel Mauss
   197 TIME/BANK:
      A CONVERSATION WITH
      JULIETA ARANDA AND
      ANTON VIDOKLE (2012)
      Julieta Aranda & Anton Vidokle

4. Improvise ............................ 204
   233 THE SPIRIT OF ADHOCISM
      (1972)
      Charles Jencks & Nathan Silver
   242 DO-ITYOURSELF MURDER:
      THE SOCIAL AND MORAL
      RESPONSIBILITIES OF
      THE DESIGNER (1971)
      Victor Papanek
   254 A CANDID CONVERSATION
      WITH THE VISIONARY
      ARCHITECT/INVENTOR/
      PHILOSOPHER R. BUCKMINSTER
      FULLER (1972)
      Barry Farrell/Playboy
   285 MAKING IT: PICK UP A SPOT
      WELDER AND JOIN THE
      REVOLUTION (2014)
      Evgeny Morozov

5. Invite and participate .......... 296
   313 DEFINE AND LET GO:
      AN INTERVIEW WITH
      JOHN HABRAKEN (2011)
      Klaske Havik & Hans Teerds

6. Embrace the void ................. 322
   353 SIMULATION AND VERTIGO (1958)
      Roger Caillois

7. Play! ................................ 338
   381 MANIFESTO! MAINTENANCE
      ART: PROPOSAL FOR AN
      EXHIBITION ‘CARE’ (1969)
      Mierle Laderman Ukeles
   397 EXERGUE (2009)
      Céline Condorelli

8. Support ................................ 368
   419 THE BIGGEST LIVING ROOM
      IN THE NETHERLANDS:
      FRANK VAN KLINGEREN’S
      KARREGAT IN EINDHOVEN,
      Richard Sennett
   426 MONTAIGNE’S CAT (2012)
      Richard Sennett

9. Unite .................................. 404
   41 Artist's contribution:
      NEW TRIBAL LABYRINTH
      Atelier Van Lieshout
   436 Afterword
   439 Acknowledgements
   440 Index
   443 Credits of the images
   444 Colophon
   439 Artist's contribution:
      FABRIC ISLAND
      Reto Pulfer
   217 Artist's contribution:
      GLAZE-TOWN
      Navid Nuur
so to speak, still in control of one’s own existence. If one were never bored, one would presumably not really be present at all and would thus be merely one more object of boredom, as was claimed at the outset. One would light up on the rooftops or spool by as a filmstrip. But if indeed one is present, one would have no choice but to be bored by the ubiquitous abstract racket that does not allow one to exist, and, at the same time, to find oneself boring for existing in it.

On a sunny afternoon when everyone is outside, one would do best to hang about in the train station or, better yet, stay at home, draw the curtains, and surrender oneself to one’s boredom on the sofa. Shrouded in tristezza, one flits with ideas that even become quite respectable in the process, and one considers various projects that, for no reason, pretend to be serious. Eventually one becomes content to do nothing more than be with oneself, without knowing what one actually should be doing—sympathetically touched by the mere glass grasshopper on the tabletop that cannot jump because it is made of glass and by the silliness of a little cactus plant that thinks nothing of its own whimsicality. Frivolous, like these decorative creations, one harbors only an inner restlessness without a goal, a longing that is pushed aside, and a weariness with that which exists without really being.

If, however, one has the patience, the sort of patience specific to legitimate boredom, then one experiences a kind of bliss that is almost unearthly. A landscape appears in which colorful peacocks strut about, and images of people suffused with soul come into view. And look—your own soul is likewise swelling, and in ecstasy you name what you have always lacked: the great passion. Were this passion—which shimmers like a comet—to descend, were it to envelop you, the others, and the world—oh, then boredom would come to an end, and everything that exists would be...

Yet people remain distant images, and the great passion fizzes out on the horizon. And in the boredom that refuses to abate, one catches galatellas that are as boring as this one.

The aim of this book is to draw on the relationship between art and work, as well as on reflections on the characteristics of artistic labor, in order to show how art approaches capital and at the same time resists the capitalist appropriation of human power and creation. The contemporary relationship between art and work is closely connected to the relationship between work and life as well as with the ways that life (subjectivity, sociality, temporality, movement) has been entering the core of contemporary production. My argument is based on the belief that art is a way of life, but not in the sense that the border between life and art is disappearing; in fact, this border establishes itself time and time again, creating forms and representations of life as well as shaping the language of art. Art is a form of life, its perceptive and aesthetic power, the life yet to come. These ways radically change the conditions of common life, the intensity of co-being and the existing forms of subjectivisation. Art could therefore be connected to the disclosure and shaping of life conditions as well as with perceptive, affective and presentational proposals. Such proposals can profoundly shatter the conditions of art itself, as they are articulated regardless of existing power relations.

Today, the relationship between art and life is highly topical because their merger underlies the capitalisation of human powers and their exploitation for the generation of profit. In contemporary ways of working, the boundary between production and reproduction is disappearing. In this, art is of central importance; it comes across as the ideal and most speculative representation of this disappearance, which is why it is at the very centre of the capitalist interest in generating value. It is therefore essential to critically analyse the labour of the artist and connect it to the post-Fordist way of working, as well as with capitalist exploitation procedures.

This kind of understanding of art is especially important at a time that often feels one crisis and transformation—a time of an excess prevalence of capitalism on the one hand and the radical powerlessness of political activity and the inability to think the future on the other. Interestingly, after two decades of 'political art' and constant transgression of the border between life and art, the art of today faces a deep crisis in terms of value articulation and its social role; at the same time, it is under attack from rightist politics in connection with the neoliberal understanding of freedom.

Although we have been confronted with numerous engaged, political and critical artistic projects over the last two decades, their pseudo-activity makes them ineffective and they fail to penetrate and affect the social field. The pseudo-engagement of art has also contributed to making art a target of dangerous populist reproaches that art is but 'leftist elitism'; in this, it is claimed that art is an activity...
that does not interest the public and has no social role or influence, whereby the artists enjoy subsidies from the state and their alleged 'laziness' is protected from the self-regulating and dynamic nature of the market.

Although there are several 'classic' arguments in this tradition that come up fairly constantly as a part of a completely erroneous moral belief (that artists supposedly do not work), these need to be looked at more closely. It is important to recognize that the arguments against the elitism of contemporary art belong to a fusion of populist and neoliberal rhetoric with the aim of profoundly reevaluating the articulation of the common and the community in contemporary society. In this, populist and corporate language, the community and the common are left to the decisions of 'free' individuals in the market; these people will choose (buy) whatever they like or whatever suits them most, and thus shape their relationships and connections with others in accordance with their own individual desires (interestingly, the belief in the *a priori* rationality of choice is never questioned in this instance). 222 Along these lines, art is a result of the choices made by individuals rather than for the common good; and beyond even this, in the light of populist rhetoric, any support for and cultivation of the common good is viewed as political elitism, an engaged leftist circle. 223 There are many layers to this problem. On the one hand, this populist argument against art requires a revaluation of the notion of the public and on the other it touches upon the core of the problematic politicization of art over the last two decades. It is a fact that, although the art of this period has never ceased to be interested in political activity, it has simultaneously become distance from the public political sphere.

In the conclusion of the book, I would like to discuss three different lines of argument that should indicate the possibilities of an affirmation of art and its public place today. I would like to show that these arguments need to be discredibly rethought so that the artist's work can withstand the exploitation of creative power and, at the same time, reveal itself as a potentiality of the common—so that the work of the artist may be open to the lives of everyone, not only to those who work.

I.

The first disobedience concerns the relationship between art and the economy—the 'economic' argument for the usefulness of art that goes something like this: it is bad not to support art because art also produces economic value. 224 This therefore concerns argumentation about the value of art, which goes hand in hand with the value of artistic work (both in the sense of works created by artists and works performed by them). Many active participants in the arts nowadays, who fight political pressure and radical financial cuts to subsidies and support for the arts on various fronts, articulate common interest as economic value; oftentimes, part of the arguments in favour of the arts is the fact that they form an important part of the contemporary economy and the creative industries, generating important economic value.

Although it is sometimes wise to use the language of one's opponent in political argumentation, this argument is actually false and does not affirm the value of artistic activity as such, but the arts do not have an economic value because one cannot speculate on the value of what is to come. The proposals for common being, which are articulated regardless of the existing power relations, can never be evaluated. If art really needs to be affirmed through the language of economics, it needs to be pointed out that art is not connected to the economy of the production of value but is much closer to aimless spending, to giving gifts without expecting a return. This is discussed by Robert Pflaler, who argues that the basic trait of the economy of art is actually lavish consumption. 225 Pflaler states that this misunderstanding is closer to Bataille's notion of consumption and points out something important when we think about the relationship between art and economics. It is not only that art spends senselessly; an enormous part of consumption is senseless in the contemporary capitalist economy as well, but the difference is that the senseless consumption in the arts is constantly visible: the fact that we openly embark on lavish senseless spending (and without any repayment at that) is the very power of art.

According to Bataille, every society will generate surplus; the surplus will be spent or wasted, but societies differ in the way this is done. 226 Therein lies the greatest difference compared to the present day. Today, we spend without noticing. Our consumption exists, but not on a grand scale abounding with pleasure. This is why today's society destroys its surpluses through forms of unconscious pleasure that are actually neurotic and devoid of pleasure. 227

The economy of invisible spending places its impediments everywhere; according to Pflaler, this is also the case in the arts.

In this field, there are the impediments and consumption mechanisms of curating and intermediation, so that there are at least two curators and agents per artist nowadays. The rest of today's artists are hardly productive at all: within an artist's work, actual artistic work only has a decreasing 10 percent share in comparison to studying the market, self-marketing, public relations, branding, socializing etc. 228

Therefore, the production of life and sociability are at the core of the ways of working in the arts; these are the ways in which creative powers are capitalized and also in which impediments are placed upon their consumption and spending. One could claim something similar for other creative fields like science and education, which are also under the considerable pressure of economization and rationalization. 229 It is no good to moralize over this kind of intermediation (in terms of art being destroyed by the various intermediators); it needs to be noted that constant spending and lavishing takes place in the intermediation.
and the economization of the arts—in the production and market models of the arts. At the same time, this intermediation functions as an impediment to lavishness; it attempts to make this spending ‘meaningful’, to control the affective atmospheres and forces of spending. This also has a lot to do with the instability of value, which must be rendered rational and transparent, at least in appearance.

Just as there are societies that know they make magic and those that are not aware of that, there are societies that know they spend and those that are not aware of it. It is the latter that have created huge spending mechanisms that gobble up their sources. Since they are not aware of it, they also miss out on the magical glow, the glamour of their spending, and thus no longer know the feeling of doing things on a grand scale.230

The contradiction of contemporary consumption can also be viewed along these lines: with today’s irrational, neurotic spending and a lavishness that radically alters and destroys nature, this consumption is utterly neurotic and destructive to life. In view of this, Pfaller claims,

Bataille’s objection to the advocates of efficiency would be entirely different. Bataille would not say: do give us some money so that the human side will not be completely extinguished in the process. But he would also not say: look, we can also be efficient from time to time and demonstrate the still invisible practicability of our undertakings.231

When defending the ‘economic effects’ of art, the answer to the question of why art needs to be defended in the first place should be based neither on the metaphysical ‘humanist’ argument nor on pragmatic arguments in terms of its efficiency and economic profitability. Lavish consumption resists the interpretation of art as something that defends the human essence in this time of raging capitalism, but also refuses to agree with the contemporary economic understanding of art as a part of the creative industries. These two interpretations are most frequent when art finds itself in the grip of financial strictness and under critical attacks. Public discussions attempt to shed light on the hidden essence of art (art civilizes, does something good etc.) or stress its usefulness (art gives rise to profit and value). According to Pfaller, Bataille’s response to the critical reproaches would be entirely different:

Let us talk openly. We have clearly not co-operated enough so far. This gives you a reason to limit us by means of various consumption mechanisms. However, as a test, simply give us the funds you now use for spin doctors, evaluation gendarmes, reform preachers, education agencies etc. and you will see: we will certainly use these sources down to the last cent, for cultural and cultural-theoretical expenses abounding in pleasure. Unlike now, we and you will be surrounded by the beautiful glamour of doing things on a grand scale.232

This beautiful glamour is not only an aesthetic category but also the category of common pleasure arising from consumption. The affirming of art with the language of economics is therefore yet another false consequence of the ‘political’ pseudo-activity of art; a time might be coming when the most radical politicization of art will be its detachment from any kind of economic value in order to reveal new affective and aesthetic articulations of the community. Art deals with social problems and it is constantly pseudo-active because we live in a time with a radical inability to establish and conceive of a reality through which people’s communities could be articulated. We live in a time of the disappearance and rearticulating of the public, the disappearance of the public sphere. If, therefore, we wish actually to speak of political art, we need to discuss its relationship with the common.

Along the same lines, we also need to rethink the social and political values of art, which are connected to the perception, recognition and establishment of the various forms of visibility of what we have and will have in common. At the same time, art is also closely connected to the new politics of temporality, which no longer participate in the endless production of the new, and in training for the creative contexts with which it will be possible to prevail in the contemporary market of provocative and political artistic projects. In this sense, art has a lot to do with ‘doing things on a grand scale’, as Pfaller argues; this refers to the pleasure of life and creation when spending and creating, the pleasure felt when creating and giving senselessly, in the endless lavishness and creation of a life in common.

II.

The second line of argument for disobedience concerns the artist’s relation to work, especially the usefulness and productive nature of that work, which affects every dimension of an artist’s life (and therefore also comes across as a fusion of life and work). Not only is this a time when numerous kinds of work and activities (not only artistic) are becoming ‘useless’ and unnecessary, it is also a time when one’s potential abilities must be constantly updated: one needs to constantly perform oneself in a way that allows one to become something other than one already is.

Contemporary work is strongly marked by transformation and flexibility; this does not actually open up new possibilities though, but frequently results in even more rigid and exploitative working conditions, in which every moment (including those of inactivity) is dedicated to seizing work better. Many artistic practices and ways of working should therefore be viewed as a resistance to this kind of definition of all activities through human work; for this reason, many contemporary artistic works are interested in methods of creation that have an interesting and incestuous relationship with laziness and non-work: mistakes, minimum effort, coincidence, duration, passivity, etc. This intertwining between work and non-work, or between activity and laziness, is also connected to what I discussed earlier: visible senseless spending. It reveals the materiality of work, which is closely connected to time and space and is no longer considered project-type headway towards the goal, but can also embrace long periods of passivity, sleep, inactivity etc.

In a photography series with the telling title of Artist at Work, the Croatian conceptual artist Mladen Stilinović is depicted in his sleep in his bed, covered with a blanket and in various sleeping positions. In 1992, the same author published the text In Praise of Laziness, inspired by Laziness as the Truth of Mankind (1921) by Kamiz Malevich, in which he claims that laziness is the mother of life. In his writing,
Malevich condemns socialism's obsession with work and is also critical towards capitalism, which enables laziness for a select few. In *Praise of Laziness* continues this comparison of the different concepts of laziness in Eastern and Western Europe (the socialist and capitalist worlds).

At the beginning of the 1990s, Stillinović offers an interesting interpretation and one that, in my opinion, is highly topical for the present time. He points out an interesting difference between artists from the West (Europe and the US) and the East (the former Eastern European countries):

As an artist, I learned from both East (socialism) and West (capitalism). Of course, now when the borders and political systems have changed, such an experience will be no longer possible. But what I have learned from that dialogue, stays with me. My observation and knowledge of Western art has lately led me to a conclusion that art cannot exist anymore in the West. This is not to say that there isn’t any. Why cannot art exist anymore in the West? The answer is simple. Artists in the West are not lazy. Artists from the East are lazy; whether they will stay lazy now when they are no longer Eastern artists, remains to be seen.

In this way, Stillinović’s manifesto touches upon yet another kind of wasteful consumption—laziness, which often wastes the most precious commodity of life in the present day, i.e. time.

After two decades have passed since the creation of Stillinović’s text, we can say that artists from the ‘East’ are no longer lazy either but participate in the methods of western artistic production, with the last traces of laziness having been successfully expelled by the transition processes. I therefore read Stillinović’s text as an insightful and humorous analysis of a certain situation that reveals many aspects of the close connection between art and capitalism, which was especially visible to artists from the East at the beginning of the nineties, because the history of their practices was characterized by a different attitude to work. In comparison with socialism, capitalism has always been characterized by the artistic system (a developed system of contemporary art institutions, the market mechanisms of the presentation of contemporary art etc.)—a system that developed contemporary art and was not known in socialist countries. But this is not about contemporary art not having existed in the East; it did, however, it developed under different circumstances.

There was an absence of what Stillinović ironically describes as the preoccupation of the artists from the West with irrelevant things such as production, promotion, the gallery system, the museum system, the competition system (who is first), their preoccupation with objects, all that drives them away from laziness, away from art. Just as money is paper, so a gallery is a room.

The artists of the East were therefore lazy and poor because the entire system of insignificant factors did not exist. Therefore they had time enough to concentrate on art and laziness. Even when they did produce art, they knew it was in vain, it was nothing.

The difference between the East and the West is thus reduced to a thought hypothesis that tries to affirm the creation of art in the East with the absence of the capitalist system of the production and dissemination of art. The contradictory nature of the hypothesis is deliberate, as it is generally believed that the development of art in the East was not similar to that in the West due to the absence of this system (contemporary art institutions and the artistic market). For this reason, 'Eastern' art is practically non-existent in the canonized collections of contemporary art; also, the history of contemporary art of the East is still more or less invisible.

At the same time though, it is true that the East formed other models for making and producing art as well as other methods of collaboration and connection between artists that were not part of institutional forms similar to those in the West.

Although the prevailing opinion at the beginning of the 1990s was that the art of the East remained somewhat invisible and marginalized because it had not developed its institutions, this lack could also be reflected on from an affirmative standpoint. It could be rethought what this subversive affirmation of the absence of production means—actually brings. This is what Stillinović does in his manifesto; his artistic work points out the problematic connection between art and work. Work is actually at the forefront in both communist and capitalist societies; work is believed to be the way one finds one’s purpose and becomes a part of society. In a communist society the artist is still able to question this centrality of work, disclose its hypocritical ideological matrix and point out the true layabouts at the centre of the ideology of work.

This is also what Stillinović does in a number of his works from the 1970s and 1980s that demonstrate the paradoxes of celebrating work through rest, for example in his series of works dedicated to the 1st of May (Labour Day) or by depicting the artist as a layabout (the photographic series *Artist at Work*). Today this disclosure of the non-work at the centre of work seems to have become impossible because today’s artists are always primarily focused on working; even artists can only be lazy in order to work better. In this, the central value of work, the constant changes to the different kinds of professional expertise, flexibility and the close connection between work and the manner of production are rarely questioned.

As I attempted to show in the book, the actual problem is that communication, creativity and potentiality of subjectivity are at the very core of artistic work. In terms of the manner of working, the contemporary artist is closer to what the artist should be doing; the contemporary ways of working and artistic pursuits seem to have nearly fused. At the same time, there is a modality to contemporary work that, despite all the freedom this work offers, does not allow for futile activities; as Stillinović writes, the artist of today cannot work with an awareness of what he/she does is actually nothing. Or, if we come back to Pfaffen, an awareness that the activity of the artist is actually visible and lavish senseless consumption. Quite the opposite: a part of artistic work is the numerous conceptualizations and determinations created by the mediators, in the sense that the artist’s work is hardly nothing and empty spending.

Useless as it may be, every activity must have a purpose and strive for a value on the market; every futile activity needs to be shown to have value. Stillinović’s text from the beginning of the 1990s points out...
of the public—everything that belongs to and is valued as the common good. It is in this public sphere where the artist needs to be active.

Even though the closeness of art and capitalism calls many practices into question, art still plays a very important role in the constitution of the social. After all, this always becomes apparent at the moment the public field has been put under a question mark: every intervention into the privatization of the public and every attempt to exploit the public sphere always highlight the issue of art. The attempt to leave art to private interests is therefore equivalent to striving for everyone to work for their own private interest and in this way, indeed, to become rich layabouts. As Schuster writes, the problem is that this easy life always slips away and the necessity of working remains.

III.

As Hannah Arendt writes in her book _The Human Condition_, all activities in the public sphere have become _labour_. This has resulted in the fact that everything we do is pushed to the lowest level of supplying life’s necessities and sufficient living standards.238 ‘Making a living’ thus becomes the centre of contemporary life. The consequence of the liberation of work is not only the entry of workers into the public sphere; without doubt, work also rules everything else. In this sense, the prevalence of work is by no means connected to freedom and emancipation but to the omnipresent yoke of necessity.

At the same time, the utopian liberation from work (also demanded by Marx) is not a proper answer to the prevalence of work, because work is closely connected to the materiality of life and the pains-taking preservation of nature. According to Arendt, this working life would never be human life proper if man-made world of things, the human artifice erected by _homo faber_, becomes a home for mortal men, whose stability will endure and outlast the ever-changing movement of their lives and actions, only insomuch as it transcends both the sheer functional-ism of things produced for consumption and the sheer utility of objects produced for use.239

According to Arendt, the only exception that society is still willing to grant is that of the artistic professions: ‘the artist, who, strictly speaking, is the only “worker” left in a labouring society’.240

I deal with the changes in artistic ways of working in order to show that today, the “artistic profession” is no longer so “exceptional” because the place of art in society has undergone profound changes in the last few decades. Subordinated to the necessity of work, artistic work no longer knows a division between life and work; every aspect of life is an aspect of labour. It is flexible and subordinated to the project-oriented logic of work. It is losing its autonomy and is regulated by numerous mechanisms of evaluation. Furthermore, the situation of artistic work is even more complex than that.

Although artistic work is no longer exceptional because it is subordinated to the necessity of work (i.e., it is more and more about working and less and less about creating), it does preserve its exceptional place within the capital and economic speculations on artistic life, which is ascribed social and economic value as a kind of life that is actually


239 Ibidem, 127.

240 Ibidem, 129.
free from work; in bizarre contemporary phantasms on creativity, it turns into 'pure creation'. Artistic work is therefore at the core of the twisted ideological relationship between work and freedom: cynically, the work that comes across as the freest is the work that is completely fused with life. The work considered free is the kind whose level of dedication and intensity leaves no further room for life. According to Arendt, work as liberation from work can be described as a highly intense life process, and contemporary work actually seems precisely that: a highly intense life that often has a devastating effect on the subjects who invest into it. As Arendt argues, this kind of work could also result in the downfall of humanity's 'arts',

all human productivity would be sucked into an enormously intensified life process and would follow automatically, without pain or effort, its ever-recurring natural cycle, i.e., its actual productivity.

Arendt primarily refers to the changes in work that were supposed to come with mechanization and automation, but her thoughts from the 1950s also bear weight from the contemporary perspective. Arendt develops this thought on the basis of the classic differentiation between the spheres of human activity from Aristotle onwards. According to Virno, these spheres—work, creativity and political activity—are no longer fundamentally different. Virno states that the basic characteristic of contemporaneity and post-Fordist work is the disappearance of any differentiation between these three different types of activity. He focuses especially on the vanishing difference between work and politics: many traits of political activity constitute part of the post-Fordist world of work. In his interpretation, the public nature of work not only comprises the fact that everything has become work but also that work has taken over the traits of a public activity.

Contemporary and communicative work is a virtuous kind of public work; it is performed for its own sake and it also generates a surplus value. As mentioned several times in this book, the public and political nature of work profoundly mark the artistic work of today: artistic work should no longer be about creating, but about activity (or working with political, engaged and communicative human powers); the production of subjectivity, sociality and flexibility should be at its core. These powers become the powers of life and nature that are quite intense and extremely 'fertile' nowadays, accelerating the natural rhythm of life.

According to Arendt, this does not change the basic character of this rhythm according to the world:

The rhythm of machines would magnify and intensify the natural rhythm of life enormously, but it would not change, only make more deadly, life's chief character with respect to the world, which is to wear down durability.

The intense use of human powers destroys the tenacity duration and persistence of the world, as well as the duration and persistence of subjectivity; for this reason, this use not only results in exhaustion and burn-out but also in the problematical subordination of our lives and activities to the ways of contemporary production. Art is therefore ambivalently close to capital. On the one hand, it is no longer exceptional; instead, it represents a way of seizing work to the fullest. On the other hand, it still indicates the material and embodied processes of creation that elude the necessity of life. Art is not useful and purposeful. It can result from a total coincidence or failure. The length of its duration is unforeseeable. Art lasts and is the potentiality of human powers that have not yet been realized. At the same time, art also does not belong to the intensification of the production of life. Quite the opposite, it is the anarchic force of waste, sleep and inactivity that opens up atmospheres and rhythms of life that are different from anything production-oriented. Because of its paradoxical autonomy, however, art is also fused with the entropy of life.

What might lie at the core of artistic autonomy, an awareness of the unrealized potentiality of creative powers; it opens up human activity and being to the kind of activity that is always less than it could be. The critical relationship between art and work could therefore be viewed through the prism of the possibility of working less; this does not concern lazy rebellion, the privilege of non-work or the extension of free time, but making it possible for artistic work to go on and on, so that it can be, to paraphrase Agamben, work without qualities. It is this ability to do less, to endlessly persist in this 'less' and in what could be, that opens up the human being to the temporal dimension and makes it historical.

According to Heller-Roazen, the human being owes its consistency to the possibility of being less than it is, which also gives human existence a temporal dimension:

value of virtuous work with my own statement on the speculative value of artistic life: what is invested in is not art but artistic and creative powers: the artist's life is at the core of the interest on the capital.

To grasp a human action as such, one must look to the shadows of the more minor acts it inevitably projects around it: to those unaccomplished acts that are less than it and that could always have been performed in its stead, or, alternately, to those unaccomplished acts with respect to which it itself is less than it could have been.

It is the potentiality of doing less that gives tenacity to human activity and gives art the permanent and autonomous power to rethink the borders between the various types of human experience: art actually opens the gateway leading to this useless confirmation of life.

Doing less could also be understood as a new radical gesture that opens up speculation about the value of artistic life and, rather than working towards the perfection of work, starts working autonomously for life itself. It is therefore an important aesthetic and ethical attitude for the artist as a worker. This less, however, is uncompromising and performed on a grand scale: what can make human activities common to us all is the fact that we have the wonderful ability to do less and to do something other than what we could be doing. Doing less also speaks of a specific attitude on the part of the artistic worker, who needs to withstand the creative speculations about his or her life in order to open up the temporal materiality of his or her own work. In this way, the artist's work yields to life, not in the sense of breaking the boundaries between life and artistic activity but always in the sense of placing its activity as the autonomous difference of a lesser act: it is enabling life through doing less. In this sense, doing less can be understood as an exceptionally

241 This is also how projective temporality operates: the life processes are made more intense by means of projects.
242 Arendt, 129.
243 Virno's statement on surplus value is key to understanding the changes in post-Fordist work and also poses the difference to Marx's understanding of virtuous work. In post-Fordism, the work considered by Marx as personal services becomes work into which capital is invested: industry changes into a communication industry and the shaping of factories of ideas. I can also connect the surplus value of virtuous work with my own statement on the speculative value of artistic life: what is invested in is not art but artistic and creative powers: the artist's life is at the core of the interest on the capital.
244 Arendt, 134.
important affective shift that can significantly influence the rhythmic and flexible atmospheres of contemporary artistic life and open up new ways of solidarity.

This would then be the third disobedient line of argument in the defence of art: do less, precisely when confronted with the demand to do more.

**Artist at Work: Proximity of Art and Capitalism**
Bojana Kunst

*Zero Books, 2015, pp. 176-193*  
We have kept the original note numbers of this text.

Bojana Kunst is a Slovenian philosopher, dance and theatre theorist, dramatist and teacher. Her research focuses on the body in contemporary performance, theatre and dance. She has published widely on this theme as well as on art and technology. Her most recent book, *Artist at Work: Proximity of Art and Capitalism*, addresses recent changes in the labour of artists from the perspective of performance.

**HOW TO HEAL A DEPRESSION?**

Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi

At the end of the year 2008 the global economy collapsed. It’s hard to say what will happen next, but it’s easy to guess that the recession is not going to go away anytime soon. The collapse of the global economy can be read as the comeback of the soul. The perfect machine of neoliberal ideology is falling to bits because it was based on the flawed assumption that soul can be reduced to mere rationality. The dark side of the soul, fear, anxiety, panic and depression has finally surfaced after looming for a decade in the shadow of the much-hailed victory and promised eternity of capitalism. In this essay I want to consider two different meanings of the word depression. By this word we mean a special kind of mental suffering, but also the general shape of the global crisis that is darkening the historical horizon of our times. We are not dealing here with a linguistic trick; we are not dealing only with a metaphor, but with the interweaving and interacting of psychic flows and economic processes.

In the year 2000 the US market experienced the effects of overproduction in the field of info-economy. After the dotcom crash and the breakdown of large corporations like World.com, Enron and so on, US capitalism changed course, and the economy of virtual production gave way to the war economy (Marazzi 2008). Thanks to the war, the economy restarted, but the cost of labor continued to fall, and economics growth was based on the expansion of the debt of the families and the state. The overproduction crisis did not go away, and reappeared in 2008 after the subprime crisis triggered the most astounding financial crash. The events of economic and psychic depression have to be understood in the same context, because they are interrelated. Not only because they are feeding each other, but also because psychoanalytic theory has something to teach social thinkers, and psychotherapy may suggest very useful methods for the process of social transformation.

Neoliberal ideology is based on the idea that the economy can be conceived as a balanced system of rational expectations and investments. But in the social space of the economy not all expectations are rational, and not all the investments are purely and mathematically economic. Desire is involved in this process, and the unconscious is speaking in the backstage of any act of investment, consumption and economic exchange. This is why the supposedly perfect balance of the market has become a catastrophic mess. Euphoria, competition, exuberance were involved in the dynamics of the market in the bull years. Panic and depression were denied, but they were always at work. Now they are resurfacing and disturbing the normal flow of capitalist valorization. Semicapitalism, the production and exchange of semiotic materials for capitalist production, has always exploited the soul, as a productive force and as a market place. But the soul is much more unpredictable than the