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A Just Transition to a Sustainable Economy: Green political economy, labour republicanism, and the liberation from economic growth

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1 Introduction

One of the key and long-standing concerns of green politics and green political economy has been around ‘limits to growth’. The basic argument is that it is ecologically impossible to have endless orthodox (GDP) economic growth on a finite planet: a sub-system (the human economy) cannot infinitely expand within a larger system that is not growing. Greens have long rejected as ecologically irrational and a form of ‘wishful thinking’ the idea of growth as a permanent feature of the human economy (Barry, 2016, 2019). Permanent economic growth is both impossible either extended infinitely into the future or extended to the world’s population as a whole; hence, growth is and has been unevenly enjoyed only by a minority of the human family. More recently, this green perspective has received support from over 13,000 scientists who in an open letter, ‘World Scientists’ Warning of a Climate Emergency’ (Ripple et al., 2020), have suggested that tackling climate breakdown will be all but impossible unless we overcome GDP growth:

Excessive extraction of materials and overexploitation of ecosystems, driven by economic growth, must be quickly curtailed to maintain long-term sustainability of the biosphere. We need a carbon-free economy that explicitly addresses human dependence on the biosphere and policies that guide economic decisions accordingly. Our goals need to shift from GDP growth and the pursuit of affluence toward sustaining ecosystems and improving human well-being by prioritizing basic needs and reducing inequality (Ripple et al., 2020, p.11).

While this biophysical critique and rejection of endless growth has been prominent within green analyses, greens have also advanced and developed non-ecological, resource, and pollution arguments against the ideology of growth. These include concerns about the link between growth and inequality (within and between nations), the delink (after a threshold) between human flourishing and continuing growth, and concerns around the negative impacts of the growth imperative on democratic politics and the further spread of democratic norms throughout society and the economy.

This chapter focuses on some of these non-ecological critiques of economic growth—as related ideas and practices of competitiveness, productivity, efficiency, and maximization—and offers a green political economy argument in favour of democratizing production. It also argues that from an ecological sustainability perspective, democratizing workplaces and production could, by enabling the realization of some of the internal goods of work, reduce ecologically damaging orthodox economic growth. These internal goods—comprising, *inter alia*, creativity, autonomy, and democratic decision-making—would, by constituting practices adding to human flourishing, decouple the sphere of production from being ‘locked into’ endless economic growth. A key issue here is to distinguish formally paid employment from work, and the chapter discusses how dominant growth-oriented measures of the economy only focus on employment and thereby exclude and normatively disvalue unpaid work.

The chapter then proceeds to critically analyse the dominant conception of ‘work as disutility’ within both the history of modern political economy and, more importantly, within neoclassical economics. This (mis)conception of work is one that both neglects to recognize the internal goods of work and frames a ‘productivist and growth’ oriented view of human labour that is used to justify ‘despotic’ workplace-management practices. Here the chapter briefly looks at

the historic and normative arguments for modern employment as a form of ‘wage slavery’, and why from a green republican perspective we should be concerned about it and supportive of attempts to reduce the undemocratic unfreedoms of this condition. Of interest here from a green republican political economy point of view is that the main justification used for maintaining (and extending) workplace dictatorships and denying democracy in the workplace is efficiency and the maximization of production. In a word, growth. The central claim advanced here is that if work is an undesirable activity, this may be because of how production is organized, who controls it, and how the benefits from it are distributed, not because of work per se. One needs to look therefore at how work and employment are organized and structured.

From a green republican and ecological sustainability point of view, democratizing employment could, by enabling the realization of some internal goods of productive labour, replace instrumentally orientated goals of output maximization, efficiency, and productivity with goals of sufficiency and optimization. Democratizing employment is thus a positive policy option in that it can reduce negative ecological and resource impacts of economic activity oriented toward growth, as well as expanding individual autonomy and creativity within that sphere. At the same time, a green republican political economy and the transition from the ‘actually existing unsustainability’ (Barry, 2019) of contemporary carbon-fuelled consumer capitalism, requires us to distinguish formally paid employment from non-remunerated productive labour as work. This chapter sketches a green republican defence of the need to *democratize employment and recognize work*, including re-orientating debate and public policy away from a dominant focus on employment and economic growth. Enabling employment to be structured and oriented towards goals other than increasing productivity at the micro-economic level is thus an important element of achieving a ‘post-growth’ economy at the macro level.

2 Green political economy and consumption

Advertising has us chasing cars and clothes, working jobs we hate so we can buy shit we don't need (*Fight Club*, 1999).

Do good lives have to cost the earth? Can we have high quality lives with low carbon and environmental impacts? These are some of the complex questions we need to ask in the 21st century—the ‘age of the Anthropocene’—with accelerating climate breakdown and exacerbating inequalities within and between societies. Providing answers and political/policy solutions—or more likely ‘coping mechanisms’—to these interlinked questions in the turbulent times ahead will (even if as yet we cannot see the urgency) dominate or at the very least profoundly frame and shape politics, economics, and culture in the decades ahead from local to global scales. Or we should hope that addressing the existential crisis facing life on this planet does dominate and frame human political thinking and acting, since if this does not happen, then, *ceteris paribus*, the outlook is grim for future generations of the human and more than human worlds.

A key focus for understanding and navigating a way through a climate changed and carbon constrained world has to be political economy (not be confused with its contemporary offspring, ‘economics’), and green political economy in particular. On the one hand, green political economy denotes the metabolism between the human economy and the much larger ecosystem and biophysical processes and systems on which it depends. That is, a green political economy focus draws our attention to the non-human energy, resource inputs, and pollution, et cetera, that are required, produced, and transformed as a result of human economic activities.

On the other, green political economy, like other critical forms of political economy, such as drawn from Marxist, post-colonial, or feminist thought, foregrounds human relations of power, ownership, and control of human, and more-than-human, assets, capacities, products, and the institutionalized organization of the human economic sub-system.

Much work in critical green political economy has rightly focused on excessive consumption and consumerism in the minority/overdeveloped world. This work has revealed how the lifestyles, aspirations for and views of the ‘good life’, and associated economic structures of globalized capitalism, which largely serves the interests of the minority world, have systematically locked the world into an ecocidal trajectory. This critical work on consumption and consumerism shows how, beyond a threshold, the ‘iron cage of consumerism’ within a growth-oriented economy creates dangerous ecological risks in increasing inequalities, status competition, ontological insecurity, and anxiety (Jackson, 2013). Consumerism can corrode solidarity and community and can, by orientating our attention inwards towards ourselves (notwithstanding the very social character of consumerism), reduce people from being citizens to individualized and privatized subjects, such as Foucault’s ‘entrepreneurial self’ under neoliberalism (Lynch and Kalaitzake, 2018). In short, consumerism as a permanent, as opposed to a transient, activity and goal is unsustainable, unfair, and undesirable. Just as the imperative of endless and infinite growth can lead to ‘uneconomic growth’—that is, cause more economic negatives than positives, and imperil long-term economic development—so, too, can consumerism (a key engine of modern growth) pass a point where it reduces, not adds to, human well-being and flourishing.

Some of the green political economy research in this area demonstrates the multiple co-benefits of strategies to *socialize* and *decommodify* consumption and to separate ownership of goods

and services from use and enjoyment. Other research stresses the need to recompose and reconstitute consumption in the minority world, such as Ian Gough's (2017) argument for strategies and policies to recompose consumption (based on distinguishing needs from luxuries) by attending to ecological sustainability and social equity. Yet while such critical work on consumption and consumerism is important and needed, my aim here is to reflect on how green political economy should analyse and reconfigure the organization of production and human collective labour as part of any transition from 'actually existing unsustainability'. Or, more specifically, any '*just* transition' needs to integrate this, given the possibility of *unjust* transitions from high carbon and high consumption ways of life and political economic orders (Barry and Mercier, 2018).

3 Green political economy and republicanism

The production of too many useful things produces too large a useless population
(Marx, 1959 [1844], p.51).

In mainstream policy (and academic) discourse on the transition from our current unsustainable and ecocidal economic system, production figures largely in terms of finding technological solutions to 'decouple' increasing production from energy, pollution, and resource use. Within this discourse, the aim is to alight upon technological innovations so as to decouple endless economic growth and consumerism—as a permanent target of the human economic sub-system—from the non-growing, regenerative larger ecological and biophysical system of which that human economy is a part. That is to say, 'green business as usual'. I have elsewhere criticized this 'techno-optimistic' strategy as unrealistic (in fact some of the thinking and policy proposals informing this strategy space are mythical) and therefore dangerous (Barry, 2019).

But it is also profoundly depolitical and depoliticizing (if not outright anti-political), hence its appeal to vested interests and those supportive of the political economy status quo, or those who have lost hope or faith in political and democratic solutions to our ecological dilemmas. However, such techno-optimist magical thinking on the human economic sub-system does not exhaust how we should approach analysing the sphere of production and the organization of human labour. For reasons that will be clearer below, I wish to maintain an important distinction between *employment* and *work*. I view employment as a sub-set of human productive labour or work, a key characteristic of which is that it is remunerated, that is, it is a form of wage labour. This common distinction between employment and work tracks another important distinction for green political economy between ‘formal’, money-based, and measured economic activities—as captured by GDP most importantly—and what are variously termed practices, activities, relationships, and exchanges within the ‘core’, ‘convivial’, ‘care’, and ‘reproductive’ human economy (Coote, 2010; Escobar, 1995; Illich, 1973).

I wish to make the argument that from a green *and* republican political economy perspective on the just transition away from an ecocidal growth economy, there are ecological, sustainability, and socio-ethical reasons for democratizing formally paid employment. We can begin this argument by asking whether a democratic society truly exists when the vast experience of the overwhelming number of its citizens is ‘wage slavery’ in formal, undemocratically organized employment. Consistent with long-standing green political arguments for greater democratization of economic and political life (Barry, 2019; Bookchin, 1982; Doherty and de Geus, 1996), the green republican asks ‘Why should democracy end at the factory/office/classroom door?’ Here green republicanism can be seen to echo older socialist and Marxist critiques of the exploitation of labour under industrial capitalism, critiques that themselves express recognizably republican political concerns about domination and the

curtailment of human freedom. For example, Quentin Skinner notes the republican tenor of Marx's description and condemnation of wage slavery:

I am very struck by the extent to which Marx deploys, in his own way, a neo-Roman political vocabulary. He talks about wage slaves, and he talks about the dictatorship of the proletariat. He insists that, if you are free only to sell your labour, then you are not free at all. He stigmatises capitalism as a form of servitude. These are all recognizably neo-Roman moral commitments (Skinner, in Marshall, 2013).

Some of the conceptual points of interest to this resistance to 'wage slavery', as well as the deep connection between socialist or labour-based struggle and republican self-government extended to the productive sphere, can be seen in the emergence and development in the early-19th-century USA of a distinct 'labour republican' politics, to which I turn to next.

4 Labour republicanism

Historical resistance to waged employment on the grounds of involuntary dependence and hence vulnerability to domination can be seen in many statements by 19th-century American radical labour leaders. For example, we have Thomas Skidmore, founder of the Workingmen's Party of New York, who noted that:

For he, in all countries is a slave, who must work more for another than that other must work for him. It does not matter how this state of things is brought about; whether the sword of victory hew down the liberty of the captive, and thus compel him to labor for his conqueror, or *whether the sword of want extort our consent, as it were, to a voluntary slavery, through a denial to us of the materials of nature* (Skidmore, 1829, in Gourevitch, 2015, p.81, emphasis added).

Or consider even Abraham Lincoln, speaking at the Wisconsin State Fair in Milwaukee in 1859, describing wage labour as an unfortunate necessity only for the ‘penniless beginner in the world’. He goes on to note that ‘If any continue through life in the condition of the hired laborer, it is not the fault of the system, but because of either a dependent nature which prefers it, or improvidence, folly, or singular misfortune’. In contrast to hired labour, Lincoln laid out a vision of respectability that required avoiding a job:

In these free States, a large majority are neither hirers nor hired. Men, with their families—wives, sons, and daughters—work for themselves, on their farms, in their houses and their shops, taking the whole product to themselves, *and asking no favours of capital on the one hand, nor of hirelings or slaves on the other* (Lincoln, 1859, emphasis added).

This ideal of rural land-based and craft-based self-sufficiency, though historical, is an obvious point of connection between republican political economy and a prefigurative green politics, as Dodsworth (2019) has argued. This prefigurative green political economy has been attractive as a vision for a minority of green thinkers and activists and ‘proto-green’ thinkers such as Alasdair MacIntyre (Barry, 2013; Breen, 2007). However, its agrarian, craft-based, localized, and small-scale vision is problematic as a normatively attractive and politically feasible political economy strategy for a just transition beyond unsustainable economic growth in the 21st century. Rather than an ‘anti-industrial’ strategy, what is needed for such a transition is a ‘post-industrial’ one; one that aims towards the ‘preservative transcendence’ of the many benefits of industrialism while ‘letting go’ of its many other negative dimensions. These negative dimensions include endless economic growth as a permanent feature of the human economic sub-system and, as argued in the next section, a view of human labour as ‘pain and toil’ that is to be minimized and only engaged in for its external benefits, such as wages.

In line with the sentiments expressed by Skidmore and Lincoln, one could posit that each citizen's independence depends upon everyone possessing equal and collective control of and access to productive resources, that is, the means of modern industrial production, not just land. However, land and access to it (if not individual ownership of it) via practices such as 'usufruct' are historical examples of 'commons regimes' that can be used to inform modern defences of and extensions of various types of commons, common goods, and common assets and resources. This shift from a focus on land to other resources can be observed in green political defences of the contemporary commons (Wall, 2014). This contemporary commons includes democratic control over productive assets (industrial or informational, for example), resources (renewable or non-renewable), and access to (decommodified) goods and services via the welfare state or provision in the 'core economy'. As such, greens can see themselves as inheritors of both the radical anti-enclosure movement and labour republican traditions.

The argument from wage slavery rests upon the idea that under capitalism workers 'assent but they do not consent, they submit but do not agree', as George McNeil, one of the most prominent members of the Knights of Labor, argued (in Oestreicher, 1986, p.42). The voluntarist language is very important. It seeks to express how, though they were not legally slaves, workers, because they lacked property, were compelled to sell the only thing they possessed—their labour (themselves for a period)—and work for others. Modern civic republicans and contemporary greens reject the liberal-capitalist *confusion* of voluntarist action with human freedom. In this, they share the sentiments of the early labour republicans in their resistance to wage slavery under industrial capitalism.

Removing the compulsion to enter into employment—something contemporary greens have promoted via policies such as a universal basic income, for example—or democratizing

employment via worker self-government would not only help realize the republican goal of freedom as non-domination. Democratizing employment could also enable the realization of goods internal to human collective labour, especially in a post-growth context. However, one of the obstacles intellectually and practically standing in the way of reconfiguring employment along more democratic lines—an obstacle that is functionally useful both for the growth obsessed capitalist political economy, and for the despotic, non-democratic organization of employment—is a profoundly narrow and negative view of work.

5 The shadow of ‘Adam’s Curse’: the ideology of work as disutility

To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, “You must not eat from it”, cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life’ (*Genesis*, 3: 17).

Pain for women in childbirth and ‘painful toil’ for men is the Christian God’s gendered punishments for humanity daring to eat of the tree of knowledge. This negative view of work still holds in common-sense, ordinary, and intellectual discussions of work. These discussions have been dominated by political economy (later economics) and its view of ‘work as disutility’, something essentially negative and for which one requires an *external* reward in the form of wages.

While defenders of capitalism—Weber’s analysis of the Protestant ‘work ethic’ comes to mind—saw work as ‘necessary pain’ for gain and/or salvation, even progressives and revolutionaries formed their utopian political alternatives to industrial capitalism in terms of

minimizing human labour through machinery and technology and presented non-work as central to the ‘good life’. Some of the roots of this lie in ancient Greece. The Greek word for labour was *douleia* and, like the Latin *poena*, meant sorrow. Manual labour in both Greek and Roman culture was for slaves and women in the domestic sphere. Free men did not do work, their leisure and status as free citizens being directly proportional to their freedom from work, allowing them the resources and time to pursue the higher goals of warfare, philosophy, poetry, large-scale trade, architecture, sculpture, or politics.

Fast forward to the late 19th century and Marx’s son-in-law Paul Lafargue writing in praise of idleness and leisure, and making the argument that it was capitalism that was preventing humanity from being liberated *from* work. Interested in profits and exploiting workers, the capitalist system entails that ‘[t]he blind, perverse and murderous passion for work transforms the liberating machine into an instrument for the enslavement of free men. Its productiveness impoverishes them’ (Lafargue, 1907 [1883], p.30). Alternatively, consider more recent anti-capitalist, technologically utopian workless proposals such as *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (Srnicke and Williams, 2015) or *Fully Automated Luxury Communism: A Manifesto* (Bastani, 2019). For this strand of anti-capitalist politics, it is not the truth, but machines that would set humanity free ... from work.

In this way, both defenders of capitalism (notably classical and later neoclassical economists) and critics of capitalism agree in some measure on this essentially negative view of human labour. This thus leads to a narrowly *instrumental* view of work, especially work qua employment, most commonly found in neoclassical economics. The very language mainstream economics uses to describe employment and wages is revealing: wages ‘compensate’ for the painful disutility of labour. To compensate someone is to recognize a loss of something

valuable that needs to be replaced with something else—‘free time’ for ‘wages’. Against this view, one of the main green republican reasons for democratizing employment is that this would allow the realization of some of the *internal* goods of human labour, such as autonomy, authenticity, creativity, cooperation, and self-realization (Barry, 2016). Yet all of these are summarily discounted in most mainstream political economic models and thinking with their ‘compensating wage’ model of work. A related issue here, and problematic from a sustainability perspective, is that both common-sense and dominant neoclassical economic thinking present increasing consumption as the main ways in which workers’ lives can be improved. In this way, we can posit a connection between work as disutility and consumerism, and all the latter’s attendant negative ecological and social consequences (Jackson, 2017). As David Spencer puts it, within orthodox economics:

there is a lack of hope and indeed outright pessimism about the prospects of erasing the disutility of work. The sense is that workers are destined to live out their days enduring work as a pain. Missing is any reform agenda that seeks to bring meaning and pleasure to work (Spencer, 2014, p.282).

Hence, there is a pressing need to challenge neoclassical/orthodox economic views of employment as ‘disutility’—that is, primarily only engaged in to secure wages. What are the origins of this claim, assumption, or, more correctly, ‘axiom’ in orthodox economics—a value judgement ‘smuggled in’ and present and perceived as a ‘fact’ (Barry, 2018)? Apart from ancient Greek and Christian views, a main source are classical political economists such as Adam Smith who defined work as ‘toil and trouble’ (Smith, 1979 [1776], 1.5.47), or early utilitarian philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham who noted that ‘[i]nsofar as labour is taken in its proper sense, love of labour is a contradiction in terms’ (Bentham, 1983 [1814–31], p.104). Even a liberal proto-green such as John Stuart Mill opined that ‘[w]ork, I imagine, is not a good in itself. There is nothing laudable in work for work’s sake’ (Mill, 1984 [1850], p.90). Dutiful

Christian political economists to a man, this was the prevalent view of work—or more specifically manual labour—in modernity (see also Arendt, 1958). Work or human labour was, in short, a ‘necessary evil’ that simply had to be endured, not something that could or should be enjoyed, and if possible done by someone (or something) else, and ideally done by someone else the fruits of whose labour could be enjoyed by those who did not do the work. That is, just as in antiquity, modernity under capitalism viewed outsourcing and owning the fruits of labour, not labour itself, as the goal that should be pursued: human freedom consisted not in work but *from it*. This was a view enthusiastically promulgated by neoclassical economics, but with a new twist: not only was work a disutility, but it should be also managed and organized for the purposes of maximizing productivity and profits.

Conceptualizing work as a ‘disutility’ also forms the basis of another problematic assumption found in both neoclassical economics and ‘common-sense’ views of the economy, the sphere of work, and production generally. This is the pervasive view, primarily from a ‘management’ perspective but also found beyond this, of workers as actual or always potential ‘shirkers’, a view providing the justification for the types of intrusive surveillance outlined in the next section. From a republican perspective, concerned as it is with freedom as non-domination, there is something suspicious and paternalistic, if not patronizing, about viewing work as something only motivated by and organized around external rewards. Not least since these rewards/compensations for employment leave the worker dependent upon another agent to determine and deliver them (leaving aside for the moment the bargaining power of the worker vis-à-vis whoever hires her). Such an instrumental view of work necessarily leads to—as well as being caused by—dependency on the will and power of others. Moreover, such dependency, of course, creates the conditions for vulnerability and unfreedom as discussed below. If work is a disutility, painful, toilsome, and so on, it is rational and ‘natural’ to assume workers will

seek to avoid it. In this way we move from Marx's 'wage slaves' to 'work-shy idlers', and a corresponding need to put in place employment-based processes to monitor employees and limit their default tendency to shirk.

6 Wage slavery and productive unfreedom: growth through discipline

The slave is sold once and for all; the proletarian must sell himself daily and hourly.

The individual slave, property of one master, is assured an existence, however miserable it may be, because of the master's interest. The individual proletarian, property as it were of the entire bourgeois class which buys his labour only when someone has need of it, has no secure existence (Engels, 1925 [1847], p.9).

Non- or anti-democratic forms of management and governance, such as we find in most, if not all, forms of modern employment, are, from a green and republican point of view, forms of domination and alienation—despotic experiences of non-autonomy on a daily and mass basis. We have already considered and dismissed the fiction of workers 'voluntarily' submitting themselves to such forms of 'despotic power', and associated ideas of unevenly based contractual relations between employees and employers. We can also note in passing that neoclassical economics assumes that individuals 'choose' whether to work or not, going so far as to view unemployment as 'voluntary leisure' (Osberg et al., 1986, p.13).

Notwithstanding the limits of the paradigmatic republican case of unfreedom in the 'master-slave' relation, let us take modern employment as a form of wage slavery and ask why green republicans should be concerned about it and supportive of attempts overcome the undemocratic unfreedoms of this condition. Consider some facts about how American

employers control their workers. Anderson points out that Amazon prohibits employees from exchanging casual remarks while on duty, calling this ‘time theft’. Apple inspects the personal belongings of its retail workers, some of whom lose up to a half-hour of unpaid time every day as they wait in line to be searched. Tyson prevents its poultry workers from using the bathroom. Some have been forced to urinate on themselves while their supervisors mock them (Anderson, 2017). She goes on to argue that:

About half of US employees have been subject to suspicionless drug screening by their employers. Millions are pressured by their employers to support particular political causes or candidates. Soon employers will be empowered to withhold contraception coverage from their employees’ health insurance. They already have the right to penalize workers for failure to exercise and diet, by charging them higher health insurance premiums (Anderson, 2017).

While one cannot say this is true of every workplace, the point is that these ‘private governments’ control individuals qua employees, often (especially amongst non-unionized workforces) without any or much inclusion of the voice of workers, with little countervailing worker power, and limited transparency and accountability in managerial decision-making. The scope of unelected, arbitrary power and authority that bosses have over workers and, thus, the real danger of causing multiple forms of on-going and sustained harms—dominating people, denying their liberty and dignity, and so on—is such that it should be of pressing concern for all republicans.

Of interest here from a green republican political economy viewpoint is that the main justification used for maintaining (and extending) workplace dictatorships and denying democracy in the workplace is efficiency, labour productivity, and maximizing production: in short, maximizing output growth while minimizing inputs. Introducing democracy and worker

voice into the workplace could lower productivity (think here of the constant media, government, and orthodox economic research pointing out ‘productivity gaps and weaknesses’ that hold back a firm, a sector, or a region from producing more and growing). But what if such a linear and instrumental focus on enhancing productivity and orthodox efficiency were less dominant? Indeed, what if this were seen as both ecologically irrational and socially deficient?

For straightforwardly ecological reasons around ‘limits to growth’, we could envisage a green republican policy preference for a less productivist and growth-orientated policy, or at least viewing growth as a temporary and contingent, not a permanent, feature of economic activity (Barry, 2019). Relaxing or abandoning altogether the demands of productivity, efficiency, and growth at the micro level of the firm could, *ceteris paribus*, contribute to the ‘in-built redundancy’ or ‘head room’ (a key characteristic of any resilient system) at a macro-economic level required to ensure the human economy stays within the sustainability parameters of planetary boundaries. That is, introducing non-productivity goals and associated practices—such as those related to the realization of some of the internal goods of collective human labour—within the productive sphere could contribute directly to a transition to a more resilient and sustainable macro-economy. To the oft-asked question as to whether the transition to a green, less unsustainable economy and society necessarily requires more or less democracy (Doherty and de Geus, 1996), we can say that the progressive democratization of the productive sphere could directly create a less unsustainable economy. Released from the imperative of productivity and the maximization of output, greater workplace democracy is more likely to result in less macro-economic unsustainability. However, it needs to be stated that the conceptual or normative linking of workplace democracy and sustainability, like the larger connection between democracy itself and sustainability (Doherty and De Geus, 1996), will always be contingent and contested, especially if one operates with a narrow ecological/climate

perspective on sustainability. This is because it is always possible for undemocratic and unjust forms of achieving 'brute' ecological sustainability. As Arendt (1963, p.94) noted, '[t]he cry for bread will always be uttered with one voice'—you do not need freedom for mere life. However, in terms of empirical evidence we are perhaps on firmer ground, with multiple examples of democratic workplaces, especially worker cooperatives, committed to sustainability outcomes. Perhaps one of the most well know and dramatic in its 'swords into ploughshares' narrative, is the Lucas Plan where workers and trades unions produced an Alternative Corporate Plan for Lucas Aerospace. Based on their intimate knowledge of and careful analysis of skills, machinery, work organization, and techno-economic potential, workers proposed the production of over 150 socially and ecologically useful products, including heat pumps, solar cell technology, wind turbines, and fuel cell technology (Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Stewards' Committee, 1976).

Equally, more opportunities for freedom within employment are possible once we unshackle the organization of production from the goals of efficiency, labour productivity, output maximization, and the ideological imperative of economic growth. While we cannot say for certain that workplaces organized towards achieving goals of sufficiency rather than maximization will somehow automatically lead to more democracy, creativity, autonomy, et cetera, the achievement of those internal goods of labour are made much more possible in a 'post-productivist' workplace.

If Marx was in awe of, as well as in thrall to (Barry, 2003), the productive power 'slumbering in the lap of social labour' under capitalism, then the liberation of social labour from growth and productivity can also be viewed as a liberation from capitalism, since capitalism is inextricably bound up with endless growth and capital accumulation. Democratizing

employment (which I also think a precondition for attaining some of the internal goods of employment such as autonomy, self-direction, creativity, and collaboration) is an obvious policy choice from a republican point of view for both realizing equal citizenship and cultivating its associated virtues and reducing forms of domination and unfreedom.

7 From employment to work

Having real control of our work and time not only means improving the quality of work, it also means expanding the proportion of our lives when we do not have to do paid work at all (New Economics Foundation, 2016, p.25).

A strong case can be made that a post-productivist, post-growth political economy is also a 'post-employment' (whether market or state-based) one, and one in which unpaid, non-remunerated forms of work increase, even as formally paid employment is progressively democratized. Alongside the long-standing green economic proposal for a universal basic income, the reduction of the working week is another policy that restructures the economy to enable it to become more sustainable and meet non- or more-than-economic human ends. As the New Economics Foundation puts it:

A 'normal' working week of 21 hours could help to address a range of urgent, interlinked problems: overwork, unemployment, over-consumption, high carbon emissions, low well-being, entrenched inequalities, and the lack of time to live sustainably, to care for each other, and simply to enjoy life (New Economics Foundation, 2010, p.2).

A shorter working week could help break the habit of 'living to work, working to earn, and earning to consume'; help distribute paid work more evenly across the population, reducing ill-

being associated with unemployment, long working hours, and too little control over time; and enable paid and unpaid work to be distributed more equally between women and men. It could also enable the ‘core economy’ to flourish by making more and better use of uncommodified human resources in defining and meeting individual and shared needs outside the market economy and welfare state systems.

The ‘core economy’ is the non-commodified set of assets, resources, and relationships that sustain human life and the ‘common good’ of human sociality. It is related to what others have termed the ‘life world’ or the ‘social economy’, as well as associated (but problematic) terms such as ‘social capital’. These assets, resources, and relationships do not have a market price, are produced for free—though not without human labour and work—and are not profit-directed or aimed at fulfilling bureaucratic state objectives. The core economy’s most important component is *time*. Hence, the positive impacts that restructuring the existing money economy via a basic income or reducing the formal working week would have in allowing more time for the core economy to grow, deepen, and develop. Thus, while the formal, capitalist money economy, which includes the state sector, would be governed by a ‘post-growth’ imperative macro-economically (even while allowing distributed growth between micro-economic sectors, that is, differentiated as opposed to undifferentiated growth), a post-growth sustainable economy would allow and indeed necessitate the expansion and growth of the core economy. And while this calls for a much more complicated story than is possible to relate here, the basic idea is that beyond the social and ecological limits of the quantitative economy lies the limitless qualitative economy: the end of more and the start of better.

8 Conclusion

If ye love wealth better than liberty, the tranquillity of servitude better than the animating contest of freedom, go home from us in peace. We ask not your counsels or arms. Crouch down and lick the hands which feed you. May your chains set lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen (Adams, 1776, pp.21–2).

We have enough evidence that orthodox economic growth beyond a threshold undermines human well-being and is corrosive of community cohesion and social solidarity. There comes a point where in answering the political economy question ‘What is the economy for?’ a threshold is reached beyond which economic growth becomes ‘uneconomic growth’. For this reason, we need to remember that while limiting economic growth is a major problem for capitalism, it does not automatically translate into a problem for individuals or communities. Yet this is only so if we adopt a green republican political economy perspective and begin to politically and creatively imagine ‘economic policy’ beyond ‘neoclassical economics’, an ‘economy’ beyond the ‘market’, and ‘work’ beyond ‘employment’.

Viewing productive work as a ‘disutility’ and workers as ‘skivers’ serves the capitalist state’s core imperative of capital accumulation/economic growth (Barry, 2018). The widespread ideological belief in endless and permanent economic growth as the only means to progress explains how undemocratic and unfree workplaces are both organized *and* legitimized within capitalist socio-economic orders. The productivity imperative within non-democratic workplaces results in macro-economic, ecological unsustainability, as well as illiberty-producing and unfreedom-reinforcing practices at the micro-economic level. Thus, what has been briefly sketched in this chapter strongly suggests that a new ‘macro-economics of

sustainability’ (Jackson, 2017; Nadal, 2011) also requires what might be termed a ‘micro-economics of democratization’.

A green republican political economy needs to challenge the ideology of growth within the consumer capitalist economic system, including moving beyond the latter’s carbon energy basis and employment focus. In the interests of human (and non-human) flourishing, the transition to a sustainable economy could create a more democratic and democratizing society and economy—a new social order that enhances the sphere of human freedom via replacing the ‘live to work, work to earn, earn to consume’ treadmill of contemporary despotically managed production and over-consumption. And key to this is envisaging political economies beyond orthodox, undifferentiated growth as a permanent feature of the human economic subsystem and as the measure of progress. As Ivan Illich noted, ‘[w]herever the shadow of economic growth touches us, we are left useless unless employed on a job or engaged in consumption’ (Illich, 1978, p.10). It is time to step out of the shadows.

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