

E X C H A N G E

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## LIMITED TIME

ROBERT PIPPIN AND MARTIN HÄGGLUND  
ON *THIS LIFE*

### INTRODUCTION

**T**HE SUBTITLE OF Martin Hägglund's new book, *This Life: Secular Faith and Spiritual Freedom*, indicates its ambition. In the first half of *This Life*, Hägglund undertakes a critique of conventional religion, as well as of any philosophical outlook that understands our finite lives to derive their value from an infinite, unlimited being. Hägglund recommends instead what he calls "secular faith." As he illustrates in a chapter contrasting Augustine's *Confessions* with Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle*, this is a faith based on our recognition that "eternal life is not only unattainable but also *undesirable*." Even many putatively religious people, Hägglund contends, show through their actions that they believe their lives and projects have meaning in themselves, quite apart from their belief in immortality or eternity. Moreover, for secular people, it is important to acknowledge that finitude and failure—the fact that we will lose those we love, that our projects may come to nothing, and that we ourselves will die—are not defects to be addressed by the right spiritual or philosophical perspective but conditions of the possibility of the lives we lead meaning anything to us at all.

Once we have made this acknowledgement, Hägglund argues we will come to see that our ultimate value and resource during this life is *time*—the time we have to spend with the people we love and to pursue the projects that are meaningful to us. Accordingly, in the second half of the book, he undertakes a critique of capitalist society based on the way it compels us to sacrifice our time on the altar of "surplus value." "When I sell my labor time

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to someone else for a wage,” Hägglund writes, “I am therefore necessarily *selling my own life*.” Primarily through his readings of Hegel and Marx, Hägglund develops the view that, to do justice to the idea of our “spiritual freedom”—which he defines as the ability to ask “which imperatives to follow in light of our ends, as well as to . . . transform our ends themselves”—we will need to create a society that prioritizes the creation of free time over that of surplus value. This society will measure wealth not by its GDP or any other strictly economic criteria, but rather by the amount of “socially available free time” it is able to produce, which we can then use to “pursue and explore what matters to us.” Such a society Hägglund calls “democratic socialism.”

At a time of renewed enthusiasm for socialism and radical democracy on the left, *This Life* has been heralded as making the “spiritual case for socialism” (Jedediah Britton-Purdy, the *New Republic*), and for inviting Marxist socialists to “think through their ultimate premises” (Samuel Moyn, *Jacobin*). The book has also received some criticism for its arguments against religion—a thread picked up in the exchange below, between the University of Chicago philosopher and Hegel scholar Robert Pippin and the author of *This Life*, Martin Hägglund. Beyond the viability of Hägglund’s translation of “faith” into a secular context, Pippin explores the attempt to harmonize Hegel and Marx in the second half of *This Life*. At issue is the question of whether, for a society to achieve freedom in the Hegelian sense—that is, to “make the idea of freedom actual”—it would be necessary or sufficient for it to overcome the main tenets of market capitalism: wage labor, private property, the orientation of the economy toward surplus value. Both sets of remarks are adapted from a colloquium on *This Life* hosted by Yale University on March 29th.

— JB

## REMARKS

ROBERT PIPPIN

**I**N THE LIMITED time we each have available, we must choose a manageable issue among the scores of important topics that Martin Hägglund has introduced in his book, *This Life*. And because it is always more productive to respond critically rather than with a laudation, I have chosen two issues which I either do not fully understand, or, if I do, disagree with. The first concerns the issue of secular faith. The second concerns the notion of a free life that emerges in Hägglund's interpretation of Marx and that is central to his defense of democratic socialism.

A basic idea Hägglund insists on is that human life must be understood to be finite. Especially important for him is that fact that it ends, and this end, our individual death, is ultimate. This is important not only because it is true (for me, the only reason to believe the claim), but, for Hägglund, even more so because nothing we attempt could be meaningful or valuable to us if it were not true. (I agree, but this is a potentially misleading way to argue against the religious notion of immortality; it suggests that we ought to believe in such finality whether it is true or not, since otherwise nothing would have any value. And we can't believe something just because it would be good to believe it. This has something to do with the issue of faith I want to raise in what follows.) But we are finite in other senses too. As Hägglund points out, we cannot accomplish any of our ends alone, and so we require cooperation from others, who in turn require cooperation from us.

My first question would be whether Hägglund's characterization of our relation to this finitude in all its senses as a matter of secular "faith" is apt. For Hägglund, since our projects are "worldly" and temporal, since their success is always uncertain and dependent on contingencies we cannot control, and since our life projects as a whole always end absolutely with our death—and since there is no natural completion to life in historical creatures like us—sustaining our commitments in achieving these projects, indeed, sustaining our commitment to the value of life itself, must be understood as a matter of faith. I am not entirely sure I understand why that term is as important as it is for Hägglund, but, from what I understand, I think it important that it be interrogated. Here is some of what he says: "To have secular faith is to be devoted to a life that will end, to be dedicated to projects that can fail

or break down.” And, more fully, “To have secular faith is to acknowledge that the object of our faith is *dependent* on the practice of faith.” By the “practice” of faith, I assume he means something like “keeping faith” with our commitments through adversity, but that is just another way of saying that a commitment is not a *commitment* unless we take real steps to realize it and follow through. (Keeping faith in one’s marriage just reflects a belief that there is more value in continuing it than in ending it.) But *having* a commitment is not the same as *having faith* in the commitment. And the former doesn’t require the latter, except in the trivial sense just noted. Hagglund goes on, “I call it secular *faith*, since the object of devotion does not exist independently of those who believe in its importance and who keep it alive through their fidelity.” To my ears, devotion and faith are terms that belong in a religious context, and can’t be dissociated from it by appending the adjective “secular” to it. If I believe some goal in life is important, or that life itself is valuable, then it is difficult to see how *this value* depends exclusively on me valuing it. If whatever value that is ceased to matter to me, it would of course no longer be “alive” for me, but I would have simply ceased to believe that *that goal* was valuable. The question of faith, on the other hand, is traditionally intertwined with the idea of the limitations of reason. When a religious person says they have faith, they are claiming that there are fundamental questions that necessarily arise in a human life that human reason cannot resolve. Philosophers have tried to argue that in any such case, the only reasonable stance is the suspension of belief, not belief without reason. But the faithful claim that this suspension or some highly qualified commitment (valuable but all things considered and under conditions of great uncertainty) is not possible, that living out a human life requires a wholehearted commitment to some values that cannot be justified in any sense. Since there are false prophets and many different revelations, in much of the Christian tradition, such a faith requires grace, a divine gift that cannot be predicted or controlled, can only be prayed for. Faith, if that is what we need, is in much of this tradition very hard, a difficulty that reaches its culmination in Kierkegaard, where it is often described as if it were both necessary and virtually impossible.

Much of this does not transpose well into a secular context, since it suggests, at least to me, no real transposition; that religious faith and secular

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faith are two options on a par. We owe to Nietzsche, at least as I read him, the idea that once we resolutely abandon any religious perspective as a delusion, human life will look very different without such a contrast between the secular and the divine. Human life will look neither like something that lacks value and significance, nor as something that can have such value if we simply concede that our sense of its value is on a par with religious faith. On such a view—Hägglund’s, I think—the religious have faith that life has a transcendent purpose ordained by a wise God and revealed in time; the secular “have faith” that a finite human life, in the sense roughly sketched above, is intrinsically valuable in itself. But Nietzsche emphasizes that this historical transition to a post-religious (and for Nietzsche post-philosophical) life is fraught with enormous difficulties, and even provokes a crisis of nihilism or valuelessness, largely because vestiges of religious expectations have been transposed into a secular context. Even a secular faith in the value of truth (or, to jump ahead to Hägglund’s context, something like the value of free time) is for Nietzsche a potential source of nihilism. Such commitments invest hope in something that will not do for us what such redemptive hopes aspire to. That human beings could desire to live what Hägglund calls a secular life—the possibility of an erotic attachment to the value of living without a commitment to intrinsic, objective value or a religious consolation—is something Nietzsche treats as existentially extremely difficult except for a few extraordinary human beings. Even for them, such a revaluation requires such a massive transformation of the emotional economy of the human soul that Nietzsche himself floundered a bit, pinning his own hopes at various times on art, on Wagner, on a mythic reorientation he called the Eternal Return of the Same, and finally on his own role as something like a new Socrates, embodying by his life and writing such a new way of living.

This is not to side with Nietzsche (I don’t; I don’t think our post-religious lives need to be based on such a revaluation and transformation) or even to criticize Hägglund. It is just to say that if one believes we do need such a revaluation and transformation, such a reinvestment would not be accomplished simply by a rejection of a religious point of view and its replacement by a secular faith. (Not to mention that the conditions for such a transformation occurring seem extremely obscure to me). Nothing of the difficulty is addressed by, I suppose, encouraging people to “have faith”

somehow in a secular life, or trying to persuade them that they actually, by what they do and say, already have such faith, that it is the only way their lives have meaning.

Moreover, people who have religious faith hardly believe that nothing except fulfilling the criteria of eternal life matters in “this life.” They believe there is a revelation that has shown them how to live, and that revelation is supposed to enjoin them to all sorts of commitments and tasks in this life, from good works to charitable attitudes, which are hardly fearfully undertaken only in the light of some divine sanction if they do not. The revelation has revealed the goodness of this way of life, that it is the best way to live, and a “true believer” would not be “true” if she acted only in the light of the afterlife. No one, I assume, needs to cite instances of genuine, loving commitment to others manifested by the devout.

To return to an earlier point, if we are committed to the value of a human life, ours and anyone else’s, it does not seem to me to make sense to say that unless we “have faith” that it matters—unless that is just a trivial shorthand for “we believe it does”—we won’t be able to be committed to it. It has come to matter, and we would not be able to recognize ourselves if we ignored how much it matters. People care for their children because their children matter to them, whether they are all going to die, whether they can completely protect them from harm, or not. They simply matter to them. They do not have faith that they matter. If someone sustains their love for me because they have faith in the value of love or have faith in their love for me, I hope they just mean they love me. Any embellishment by faith is close to saying, “I am not sure of such a value, or of my love, but I have faith.” If I say that in loving you, I have faith in you, it simply means I trust you. Anything in addition would be what, in another context, Bernard Williams called “one thought too many.” So I don’t understand why we should say that our “ability to care depends on secular faith.” Our ability to care depends only on what we find worthy of caring about. If someone says, “How could you, given that you may be able to do nothing effective about what you care about or whom you care for, and you can’t be sure it is worth caring about, and we will all die in the end anyway,” those questions seem to me irrelevant. I am “able” to care for my children or social justice without any of that coming up. Why should it?

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I can return to the political context by agreeing with Hägglund that a uniquely modern problem is being able to experience my life as “my own.” This can mean a number of things, from “owning up” to the commitments I have made to a form of self-understanding that reaches some satisfying depth, some understanding of what I am actually committed to and what it means to me and why. But I don’t agree that the issue is exhausted or even primarily addressed by the kind of personal “struggle” so endlessly documented by Karl Ove Knausgaard. I understand that Hägglund’s focus is on what he calls “spiritual” freedom, and that this “requires the ability to ask which imperatives to follow in the light of our ends, as well as the ability to call into question, challenge, and transform our ends themselves.” But Hägglund wants to claim that such spiritual freedom is ultimately intelligible only in terms of what he calls an economy of time, and this leads him into Marx and to questions of political economy. This train of thought seems to me sound, since it involves the indispensable realization that any question of being able to lead our own lives, not to be subject to the will of others for their own benefit, must be addressed to *social* individuals, persons whose lives are inextricably intertwined with and have, for a good part of our lives, come to depend on others in social and political contexts. But when Hägglund introduces a loose Hegelian framework to explain what this sort of address entails, he seems to me to present only half the picture. He says such things as:

Rather than seeing the laws of the state as imposed on us and as coercively restricting our self-interest, we should be able to see ourselves as bound to the laws of the state by virtue of our own commitment to lead a free life, which requires that the laws of the state in turn are seen as contestable and transformable by us.

It is certainly true that individual freedom requires collective self-legislation. But in Hegel’s view, human being or spirit (*Geist*), as collectively self-forming over time, is a “product of itself,” which can sound quite paradoxical. It is less paradoxical if we understand better Hegel’s famous claim that any “I” is also a “We,” and any “We” also an “I.” That is, Hegel is committing himself to that famous dialectical relation between any such collective or group subject and the individual persons who are its participants. Such a collectivity is not possible except as constituted in some way

by the attitudes and commitments and—in this context—the legislative will of these participants. It would not exist were there not these attitudes and commitments. This does not reduce in any way the reality of *Geist* as *Geist*; such attitudes and commitments *do* achieve the status of collective agency. But the direction of dependence famously goes both ways for him. Individuals should not be understood as, *ex ante*, atomistic, self-sufficient origins of such commitments, as if *Geist* comes into being only as a result of constituting or legislating acts by spiritless (or *geistlose*) atomic individuals. They are the individuals that they are only as “formed” (or *gebildet*), always already within such collectivities. So Hegel will insist: “to take conscious individuality so mindlessly as an *individual* existing phenomenon is contradictory since the essence of individuality is the universal of spirit.” This is expressed in full Hegelese, but in itself this is a very old idea, apparent in the philosopher equally as influential on Hegel as Kant: that is, in Aristotle’s insistence that, considered outside the *polis*, the political community, a human being is not comprehensible as a human being. He is either a beast or a god. But Hegel’s bi-directionality and historicity greatly complicate such a picture. *Geist* simply is this co-constituting relation: the product of individuals who are themselves the products of their participation in *Geist*. It has no substantial existence apart from this mutual reflection.

This introduces a famous problem, one addressed in different ways by Hegel and in Marx’s theory of ideology. Since so much of the formation of an individual’s preferences, sense of self-worth, understanding of the social bond and even self-understanding descends from a long process of socialization, and since Hegel regards the idea of some individual capacity for a reflective and liberating assessment of this inheritance as naïve, any account of freedom, of being able to recognize my life as my own, to see myself in my deeds and practices, must include a strong formative component. This component must go far beyond the democratic participation of individual adults in control of the legislative process, and far beyond the organization of the forces of production described by Hägglund. This is because Hegel is interested in the necessity of relations of mutuality of recognition, or a kind of standing or status in the social world that includes but also goes beyond the organization of our work environment. For one thing, Hegel insists on the indispensability of property ownership as the relation of concrete individuality. For another,



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Hegel's approach introduces a complex social-psychological dimension into his self-realization and self-identification account of freedom.

By contrast, the picture of democratic socialism and its reduced labor time and increased free time painted by Hägglund attributes, for Hegel, far too much liberating power to the constituents of that socialism. I mean his three main components: a revaluation of values such that the measure of value or "wealth" in general is re-estimated in terms of socially available free time (the real-world conditions for such a widely accepted revaluation are not clear to me, especially after a century of consumer capitalism), the collective ownership of the means of production and the organization of labor and distribution of wealth according to the principle "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." Here is a typical description of that goal:

We can affirm as a feature of our freedom that all the members of the household now have more times to lead their lives: to pursue their education or chosen profession, to connect with people who matter to them, to engage in sports or dancing, to observe nature, to read or paint, to learn new skills, or to engage in some other way with the question of what they *ought* to do with their time.

The problem with the goal of such a revaluation and restructuring is not that it is utopian. It has to do, first, with a central aspect of our finitude that Hägglund does not raise. Our access to the resources we need and the resources themselves are finite. This means that much of what we do will inevitably conflict with what others would otherwise have been able to do in pursuit of their ends. We also find that our pursuit of what we value can be affected, often negatively, by others' pursuit of what they value. Our finitude ensures human conflict and so requires some anticipatory resolution of potential conflict. Since any such resolution can and will inspire defectors, any resolution must be enforceable and the domain of any such resolution is thus politics. That is, there must be a state, the rule of law, and that means a monopoly on the control of coercive violence. This in turn requires a publicly available and widely accepted justification for the selection of the agents of such use of violence, and an agreement about the scope and limits of such use.

This is certainly not the extent of the issues that arise when we realize that our finitude requires a cooperative and potentially contentious life, and it has been a distorting emphasis that so much modern political philosophy has been limited to questions of legitimacy, often to the exclusion of an equal consideration of the psychological nature of the broader social and political bond itself. (A merely strategic view of political participation is far too limited, especially when it comes to issues of self-sacrifice and active participation, rather than mere compliance.) The most dramatic expression of this problem is Weber's: What, if anything, distinguishes the organized use of coercion by one group against others for the sake of that group's self-interest from the legitimate authority of the state? There are many who think that Marx's answer to that question is: nothing. But for my purposes it is important that this question of power and its distribution be noted, as well as the inevitability of conflict in any social order and regime.

A second problem, as noted at the outset here, is that there are all sorts of dimensions to our finitude, and in a world of scarce resources and conflicting values, there are innumerable ways in which what people choose to pursue will conflict with what others will choose to do. If agents experience widespread marginalization, denigration or even broad contempt for what they choose to do, then they will experience a psychological injury that no common view of toleration for their mere right to pursue their ends will solve.

This challenge was not insurmountable for Hegel because he thought that modern Western societies were converging on a set of instructions that could both ensure concrete individuality and genuine social cooperation in mutual recognitive relations, and he tried his best to give a fine-grained account of that convergence in an analysis of the bourgeois family, modern gender relations, property entitlements, rights protection, social standing as members of essential labor groups, a modern rationalized civil service and an active democratic political life. Virtually none of what he thought was emerging has come to pass, and in the industrialized West, we have instead experienced cultural anomie, the emergence of an unimaginably influential media owned and directed by corporate interests with no regard for its consumers' psychological health, and many more contributions to widespread social pathologies. To imagine in that world that persons, liberated to pursue

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what they want in their free time, will pursue in a cooperative and respectful way “what they *really* want” does not seem to me plausible. Nor does it seem to me plausible that the main reason that what Hegel thought he detected emerging did not come to pass was a stubborn commitment to a conception of value dependent on a capitalist economy. For one thing, the sale of labor power measured by time is a signal feature of mid-nineteenth-century industrial capitalism, and the common values necessary to sustain modern global-finance capitalism, with its armies of salaried and managerial workers, government and NGO employees and radically different class structure, do not seem to map easily onto each other, despite the still widespread oppressive conditions of factory labor.

Hägglund addresses this general problem, but his view seems to be that once we succeed, somehow, in transforming “our measure of value from socially necessary labor time to socially available free time,” individuals will simply be able to come together and address the issue:

We must develop democratic institutional forms of acknowledging one another as social individuals who are ends in themselves. These institutional forms of democratic life must enable us both to discuss collectively what needs to be done in our community and to engage individually the question of what to do—what is worth doing—with the socially available free time that is produced by the reduction of socially necessary labor time.

Hägglund acknowledges that the success of such an arrangement presupposes “having been educated to exercise our spiritual freedom.” But I see no reason to believe such education (not, of course, “school education,” but the socialization process in general) is possible in late modernity, or who will do it, or that his list of basically middle-class free-time activities—sports, dancing, reading, painting, etc.—will result, as opposed to video-game playing, endangered-species hunting, jet skiing, TV watching and pot smoking.

It is possible to respond by simply saying that this is all fine if that is what suitably educated persons choose, but this is also to concede what our finitude ensures: misrecognition in the form of exclusion, judgmental condemnation, tribalism, indifference and mutual invisibility and misunderstanding. What we need is not mere free time. In Hegelese that would be mere negative

ROBERT PIPPIN

freedom within an insufficiently determinate institutional structure. Rather, we need socially significant and productive (and respected) work, loving relationships and genuine mutuality. A widespread acceptance of the value of free time and the public ownership of the means of production will not, I think, ensure that.

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MARTIN HÄGGLUND

**W**HAT DOES IT mean to take up Hegel's idea of freedom today? What does it demand of us, both in the practice of philosophy and the practice of politics?

Hegel's idea of freedom articulates the most revolutionary demand possible, namely, that "no one is free until everyone is free." Moreover, Hegel's radical philosophical claim is that the idea of freedom is inseparable from material and social conditions. The idea of freedom is not abstract but must be embodied in concrete practice, which requires that we participate in institutional forms that acknowledge the freedom of everyone to lead their own lives. The freedom to lead our own lives is *not* a matter of being free to follow our supposedly natural inclinations. Rather, the freedom to lead our own lives is itself a social-historical achievement, which requires that we are *formed* as free subjects by the institutional practices through which we come to understand ourselves and our inclinations in the first place. It is impossible for any one of us to be in the realm of freedom alone. From the beginning, who we are and what we do is unintelligible without the recognition of others.

The demands of the idea of freedom are at the heart of *This Life: Secular Faith and Spiritual Freedom*, and Robert Pippin's response to the book provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on what it means to follow through on these demands. As I will seek to show, what is at stake in our exchange is whether Hegel's idea of freedom is compatible with the capitalist mode

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of production and the measure of value it entails. No contemporary scholar has made more important contributions to our understanding of Hegel than Pippin, but his avoidance of Marx and the problem of capitalism entails that he not own up to the institutional transformations that are required for an actual free society to be possible.\*

As Pippin recalls in his response—and as I outline in the book—Hegel “thought that modern Western societies were converging on a set of instructions that could both ensure concrete individuality and genuine social cooperation in mutual recognitive relations,” most notably through the advent of the modern state, the basic regulations of a market economy and institutions safeguarding the fundamental rights of freedom. For Hegel, an actual free society requires that we can recognize our commitment to the common good as the condition of possibility for our own freedom. But this is not primarily a psychological issue. The point is not to ensure that everyone as a matter of psychological fact identify with the common good. Rather, mutual recognition is a matter of creating institutional structures that allow everyone to recognize the formation and cultivation of the common good as enabling the formation and cultivation of their own freedom.

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\* Because I focus on the question of freedom, I will limit myself to a few remarks in response to the questions that Pippin raises regarding my notion of secular faith. To begin with, my notion of secular faith is not “on a par with” and does not depend on the contrast to religious faith. There was secular faith before there was any religious faith and there will be secular faith even if we let go of all forms of religious faith. Why? Because there is always—in all forms of commitment—a question of fidelity and betrayal. To be committed to anyone or anything is to *keep faith* with the commitment. In this fundamental sense, we all have secular faith by virtue of sustaining any commitment. Pippin questions why I use the term “faith,” but as I demonstrate in *This Life*, Hegel’s own insight concerning the form of self-consciousness can and should be understood in terms of secular faith. Contrary to what Pippin claims, I never make the case that we need to have faith *in* our commitments, which would indeed be absurd. Secular faith is not a second-order faith in our commitments, but designates the temporal dynamic *of* any commitment. There are not two steps involved here, as though I could first be committed and then decide whether or not I should keep faith with the commitment. Rather, the demand to keep faith with the commitment is built into the commitment itself, since any form of commitment is a temporal activity and needs to be maintained from the beginning. For the same reason, it is always possible that I can fail to sustain the commitment. This risk of failure is not only a negative threat but also an intrinsic part of what positively animates the commitment, since without the risk of failure there would be nothing at stake in keeping faith with the commitment. This is the basic dynamic of secular faith. Any form of commitment—any form of trying to do something and trying to be someone—can make sense only in relation to the possibility of failure, loss and death. Again, these are not two steps. I do not have to *add* a sense of fragility to my commitment. Rather, in being committed I necessarily take myself and what I care about to be fragile. This is one act, not two.

As Pippin points out, however, “virtually none of what [Hegel] thought was emerging has come to pass, and in the industrialized West, we have instead experienced cultural anomie, the emergence of an unimaginably influential media owned and directed by corporate interests with no regard for its consumers’ psychological health and many more contributions to widespread social pathologies.” Moreover, apropos the kind of education Hegel envisaged—the progressive *Bildung* that would allow us to actualize our freedom—Pippin strikingly contends that “I see no reason to believe such education ... is possible in late modernity.”

The obvious question to raise here is why Pippin thinks it has all turned out this way.

If we follow Hegel’s own logic, the failure of a form of life to be what it takes itself to be—in this case: the failure of modern social life to embody a genuine mutual recognition of our freedom—cannot be an accident or a mere failure of moral psychology but must testify to a contradiction between the avowed ideals of an institution and the actual practical form it legislates for itself. Yet, when Pippin seeks to explain why things have not turned out the way Hegel envisaged, he does not offer any account of an immanent contradiction in our institutional practices but instead has recourse to psychological notions of dissatisfaction, greed or corruption, which amount to contingent causal explanations rather than to an account of rational failure. As he asserts in a related essay, “a plague can completely erode the moral life of some community, and it can stay eroded for centuries. So can ever more frenzied and hysterical consumption, what may be the death spiral of global capitalism ... and the beginning of a centuries-long ecological catastrophe.” This analogy should give us pause. A plague is largely something that *happens to us* (a contingent disaster), whereas the spiral of capitalist production and consumption that entails ecological catastrophe is something that *we are doing to ourselves*.

As I show in *This Life*, the reason we are doing it to ourselves can be found in Hegel’s own *Philosophy of Right*, which seeks to give systematic expression to the institutional rationality of a free society. The key problem here concerns the production of wealth in civil society. Hegel assumes that an actual free society—which would embody the idea that no one is free unless all are free—is compatible with the capitalist mode of production, where

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wage labor is the foundation of social wealth. At the same time, Hegel's own account of civil society gives us the resources to call into question this contention, particularly through his treatment of the problem of "the rabble." Hegel's notion of the rabble refers to any social group that cannot recognize the demands of society as their own. His main example is those who are left suffering from poverty by the market economy of civil society. "The poor man feels excluded and mocked by everyone," Hegel writes, "and this necessarily gives rise to an inner indignation." Importantly, Hegel notes that the disposition of the rabble can arise due to great wealth just as well as great poverty. "The rabble disposition also appears where there is wealth," he notes, and goes on to provide what sounds like a prediction of Donald Trump: "The rich man thinks that he can buy anything, because he knows himself as the power of the particularity of self-consciousness. Thus, wealth can lead to the same mockery and shamelessness that we find in the poor rabble. The disposition of the master over the slave is the same as that of the slave. . . . These two sides, poverty and wealth, thus constitute the corruption of civil society."

Now, the problem of the rabble is acute for Hegel, since he maintains that the institutional rationality of a free society requires that the production of wealth is not an end in itself but is for the sake of the well-being of each citizen. Well-being is here not merely a matter of basic sustenance, but of having the social possibilities to lead a free life that can be recognized as dignified by oneself and by those whom one recognizes in turn. The commitment to the welfare and dignity of each citizen is contradicted, however, by the dynamic of wage labor that is the condition for producing social wealth under capitalism. As Hegel points out, the market economy of civil society can provide only two possible solutions to the problem of poverty and unemployment, with both solutions being fundamentally unsatisfactory. On the one hand, the poor can be supported by charity or public-welfare provisions, but this is ultimately inadequate, since it does not allow for the social recognition of having a meaningful profession through which one contributes to one's own well-being and to the common good of the society to which one belongs. On the other hand, the livelihood of the poor can be provided by the creation of more paid employment—more wage labor—"which would increase the volume of production" in civil society. Yet, as Hegel perceptively-

ly observes, “it is precisely in overproduction and the lack of a proportionate number of consumers who are themselves productive that the evil consists, and this is merely exacerbated by the two expedients in question.”

The problem of overproduction arises when the production of commodities exceeds the purchasing power (the wages) of those who produce the commodities. Civil society is led to overproduction by trying to remedy the effects of poverty and unemployment, which in turn generates new forms of poverty and unemployment. To resolve the problem of overproduction, civil society is driven “to go beyond its own confines and look for consumers” in other nations. Far from resolving the problem, however, the international expansion of capitalist markets reproduces the problem of overproduction and the formation of a rabble on a global scale.

Thus, in a remarkable anticipation of Marx’s argument, Hegel shows that the problem of overproduction and unemployment is unavoidable as long as the production of social wealth depends on wage labor. The failure to achieve institutional rationality under capitalism is not reducible to historical or psychological contingencies, but is due to what Hegel himself concedes is a “deep defect” in the production of wealth in civil society, which prevents it from being conducive to actual social freedom. As Hegel strikingly concludes, “despite an *excess of wealth*, civil society is *not wealthy enough*—i.e. its own distinct resources are not sufficient—to prevent an excess of poverty and the formation of a rabble.”

Hegel here points the way to what I analyze as the deepest contradiction in the capitalist measure and production of wealth. What distinguishes the capitalist mode of production is wage labor for the sake of profit, which entails that socially necessary labor time becomes the essential measure of value. As a consequence, the measure of our wealth is *not* our actual capacity to produce goods and reduce socially necessary labor time. Even when the necessary labor time in our society is reduced thanks to technological innovations, we cannot democratically decide which forms of labor should be available to pursue in our expanded realm of freedom. We cannot create new occupations on the basis of what would be *important* and *meaningful* to do for ourselves and for our society, but must find occupations that are profitable on the market, since only such occupations generate a growth of value in the economy. This is why capitalism is an inherently alienating



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social institution. To lead our lives *for the sake of profit* is self-contradictory and alienating, since the purpose of profit treats our lives as means rather than as ends in themselves.

Moreover, as I show in detail, the capitalist measure of value is inimical to the production of real social wealth, since it valorizes socially necessary labor time rather than socially available free time, requires unemployment as a structural feature, and has an inherent tendency toward destructive crises. The attendant problems of inequality, exploitation and commodification cannot even in principle be solved through the redistribution of capital wealth, since the wealth itself is produced by unequal relations of production, exploitation and commodification.

For the same reason, I hold that the best way to read Marx's work is as the continuation of Hegel's phenomenology of spirit, which demonstrates the inherent contradiction in our historical form of life. By Hegel's own lights, the dynamic of wage labor turns out to be fatal for any attempt to justify capitalism as compatible with the institutional rationality of a free society. While the social form of wage labor bears the democratic promise of freedom and equality within itself, the dynamic of wage labor ultimately makes it impossible to achieve and sustain an actual democratic state, which would enable everyone to see themselves in the institutions on which they depend and to which they contribute.

Thus, the dynamic of wage labor allows us to understand that the deepest reason things have not turned out the way Hegel envisaged is a *rational failure*. Pippin flatly denies this. In his response, he engages neither with my reading of the *Philosophy of Right* nor with my analysis of the inherent contradiction in the measure of value under capitalism. Instead, he merely asserts that it is not "plausible" that our failure to achieve institutional rationality is due to "a conception of value dependent on a capitalist economy":

For one thing, the sale of labor power measured by time is a signal feature of mid-nineteenth-century industrial capitalism, and the common values necessary to sustain modern global finance capitalism, with its armies of salaried and managerial workers, government and NGO employees and radically different class structure, do not seem to map easily onto each other, despite the still widespread oppressive conditions of factory labor.

Pippin here neglects my actual arguments concerning the form of value under capitalism. Socially necessary labor time as the measure of value is *not* restricted to “oppressive conditions of factory labor” but renders intelligible why both mid-nineteenth-century industrialism and modern global finance are forms of *capitalism*. We live in a global capitalist world because all of us depend for our survival on the social wealth generated by wage labor. In order to generate wealth through the social form of the wage relation, we must exploit labor time and consume commodities that are made for profit. The production of all our goods and services is mediated by the social form of wage labor, since even the amount of free time we have to produce goods or services for nonprofit depends on the wage we receive or the capital we have. Moreover, the production of the capital wealth that is distributed in the form of wages requires that there is a “growth” of value in the economy, which is only possible if we continue to exploit and commodify our lives for the sake of profit.

Moreover, since the generation of profit is our *collective* purpose under capitalism, which determines how we *materially* reproduce our lives, we cannot overcome its power through mere individual will or a change of the official worldview of our society. That our collective purpose is profit is not reducible to an explicit ideology, a conscious belief or a psychological disposition. Profit is our collective purpose not because of what we have to *think* but because of what we have to *do* under capitalism. We cannot maintain ourselves—cannot reproduce our lives—without the surplus value that is transformed into profit and accumulated in the form of capital that is distributed as wealth. The more we exploit and commodify our lives as well as our environment, the more wealth we have to distribute; the less we exploit and commodify our lives as well as our environment, the less wealth we have to distribute.

Under capitalism, then, our collectively determined purpose is the generation of profit, which is directly inimical to the institutional rationality of a free society. Under capitalism, all of us will tend to understand ourselves as individuals who have no intrinsic motivation to care for the common good, since we cannot see ourselves in the collective purpose of our society. Indeed, no one can see herself in the purpose of profit, since it treats our lives as means rather than as ends in themselves.

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Accordingly, I argue that the idea of freedom demands the overcoming of capitalism and the advancement of what I call democratic socialism. On my account, the achievement of democratic socialism requires not a mere redistribution of wealth but a *reevaluation of value*. Such reevaluation concerns not only a *theoretical* but also a *practical* transformation of how we reproduce our lives, all the way from our production of goods to our education and other forms of social institutions. Rather than private ownership of the means of production, which exploits socially necessary labor time for the sake of generating capital wealth, we must own the means of production collectively, developing our technologies and producing our goods for the sake of increasing socially available free time.

In response to Pippin's concerns, three of my central points regarding democratic socialism are here worth recalling. First, my notion of socially available free time does *not* designate—as Pippin claims in his response—“mere free time” to do whatever we want “within an insufficiently determinate institutional structure.” On the contrary, I emphasize that our free time must be available in social and institutional forms because it does not concern a mere *quantity* of time. Rather, our quantity of time is inseparable from the *quality* of our free time, which requires institutions that allow us to shape, cultivate and transform our commitments in mutual recognition of our dependence on one another.

Second, collective ownership of the means of production does not mean that we are prevented from having private property in a concrete sense. We can have our own houses, our own computers, our own books and so on, in the sense that we can use them for our own ends and no one has the right to take them away from us against our will. While we can have private property in a concrete sense, however, we cannot have private property in the abstract sense that transforms property into a commodity that can be bought and sold for profit. The recognition of your property *as* your property is not based on your right to its abstract value as a commodity (or as a means for producing commodities), but on your right to its concrete specificity as valuable *to* you and as useful for you in leading *your* life.

Third, democratic socialism does not presume that we will all magically cooperate without antagonisms. We will never be absolved from the economic problem of the scarcity of resources and the fragility of social bonds.

The question of how we should live together will always be at issue and run the risk of breaking apart what binds us together. The point is not to have a society which *secures* that we cooperate in mutual recognition of the freedom of one another. To secure mutual recognition is neither possible nor desirable, since such security would eliminate our freedom. The point is rather to have a society that *enables* our cooperation in mutual recognition of the freedom of one another. Nothing can secure the actual exercise of mutual recognition, but mutual recognition can be enabled or disabled depending on the principles to which we strive to hold ourselves.

To that end, I specify the three principles of democratic socialism: the measure of wealth in terms of socially available free time, collective ownership of the means of production and the pursuit of labor from each according to her ability, to each according to her need. These principles express what the revaluation of value demands in practice. The principles of democratic socialism are not posited as an ideal that is external to the lives we lead. Rather, the principles make explicit what is implicit in the commitment to equality and freedom through which we are already trying to justify our liberal democracy and our capitalist economy. The commitment to equality demands that we pursue our labor from each according to her ability, to each according to her need; the commitment to freedom demands that we measure our wealth in terms of socially available free time; and both of these demands can be met in practice only if we own the means of production collectively, employing and developing them for the benefit of our shared lives rather than for the sake of profit.

The principles of democratic socialism are therefore the conditions of possibility for mutual recognition and institutional rationality in Hegel's sense. For our mutual recognition to be enabled rather than disabled, the purposive principles of our society must be possible to grasp in practice as being *for the sake of* both the common good and our individual ability to lead a life. To be emancipated rather than alienated we must be able to see ourselves—to recognize our own commitment to social freedom—in the purposive principles of our society. These principles must do justice to the inseparability of our material and spiritual life, to how economic questions of priority are at the heart of our exercise of freedom both individually and

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collectively. The principles of democratic socialism designate what those principles of a free society must be.

To be sure, a set of principles does not by itself entail an effective transformation of our society. Given the power relations of capitalism under which we live, the achievement of democratic socialism can only be the result of a sustained and difficult political struggle. An indispensable part of the struggle, however, is to clarify to ourselves what is wrong with our current form of life and where we are committed to going. I am under no illusion that my account of democratic socialism is sufficient to secure that it will be achieved, but I hold the account to be necessary to orient our struggle for freedom and grasp the meaning of a truly emancipatory social revolution. The *probability* of change is not a given fact of the world that can be observed from a neutral standpoint; the probability of change is itself something that is transformed by an account that discloses the *possibility* of change in a new light.