

Chapter VI. The master drama of modern capitalism: Employment for workers

“Die Entstehung der Armut ist überhaupt eine Folge der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, und sie ergibt sich im ganzen notwendig aus derselben” ... “Es ist in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft nicht eine bloße Not, mit der der Arme zu kämpfen hat. Die Natur, welche der Arme sich gegenüber hat, ist nicht ein bloßes Sein, sondern mein Wille. Der Arme fühlt sich als sich verhaltend zur Willkür, zur menschlichen Zufälligkeit, und das ist das Empörende in der letzten Analyse, dass er durch die Willkür in diesen Zwiespalt gesetzt ist.” ... “Der Mangel an Arbeit ist, wie bemerkt wurde, ein Hauptumstand, der die Armut herbeiführt. Es tritt bei einem gedeihlichen Zustand der Kultur immer eine Überbevölkerung ein. Wenn der Armut Gelegenheit zur Arbeit gegeben wird, so wird dadurch nur die Menge der Waren vermehrt. Nun aber ist es gerade der Überfluss von Waren, der den Mangel an Arbeit herbeigeführt hat...”¹

We saw that the ancient master drama ended with the general loss of land of the largest part of the population. Thereby, the subsistence of the new-born non-owners or workers became dependent on the new-born owners. The non-owners either needed the owners to offer jobs or to make gifts to the former. But whether owners offered jobs depended on whether they could use the non-owners' work to close profitable M–C–M'-circuits. That was the result of the social system having allowed the economic subsystem, dominated by capitalism as its guest system, to take charge of social goods procurement. Now, even if the economic system, in its crisp beauty,

1 *Hegel* (1983) page 193. Translation by the author: “The origination of poverty is, as such, a consequence of civil society, and in the whole results from it by necessity.” ... “In civil society it is not a mere natural hardship, with which the poor has to fight. The nature, which the poor has as its opposite, is not only a factual existence, but my will. The poor feels himself as behaving himself to arbitrariness, to human randomness, and the outrageous, in the last analysis, is being put into this discord by arbitrariness.” ... “The lack of work is, as has been observed, a main circumstance, which causes poverty. In an advantageous condition of culture always a surplus population occurs. If the poor are offered an opportunity to work, thereby only the plenty of commodities is augmented. It is, however, just the excess of commodities, which has brought about the lack of work....”

does not care about the excretion of human surplus populations and their suffering and processes on unshattered, the social systems cannot let go.... If things go badly, then individual biological systems, which men are, will be put under stress. Individuals will, first, starve and become physically and mentally ill. Then, the cultural system will react: Writers will write novels, artists paint pictures, singers sing songs, directors shoot movies, priests will pray, etc. and all that will spill over into the political system. Now political ideologists and social reformers will write articles and give speeches, people will discuss and rally on the streets, party leaders will make demands, and there will be upheaval, rebellion, revolution, physical force and civil war. The powerful elites will, of course, as they did before, seek to defend their positions and there will be fights.

In fact, in parallel with the renaissance of capitalism in modernity, the social system had become much more sensitive and irritable to human suffering, including to even the suffering of the lower classes. The European Middle Ages left over Christianity with the idea, which had appeared so unspeakably weird initially, that *all* humans were created in God's likeness, and each cultural wave after the Middle Ages, from humanism, via Protestantism to the natural law, the Enlightenment, and, certainly, socialism, had only put more emphasis on this idea and claimed a more generous applicability for it. Yes, in everyday life, the lower classes were still trained and drilled to look up to the "hochwohlgeborene" nobility, like the upper classes continued to look down onto the "pauvre fol peuple" as something essentially different from them, but increasingly the contradiction between the *imago dei*-concept and the philosophies of modernity, on the one side, and the practices of everyday life, on the other, came to the forefront. When *Frederick the Great* of Prussia declared himself as "*first servant of his people*" 250 years ago, he "officially", so to speak, rebased the legitimacy of government on a functional role directed to the well-being of the people, even if he did not talk about equality within "the" people, his statement admitted at least that severe sufferings of the lower classes were a bad thing. The French Revolution of 1789 drew the first drastic corollaries from all this. It followed the French revolution of 1848, the Chinese Taiping rebellion from 1850 to 1864, the Paris Commune of 1871, the Russian and the Chinese revolution, "people-democratic" regimes in Eastern Europe, and revolutionary attempts and regimes in Africa and South America. The world entered into an era of "mass politics", with Communism and Fascism, becoming the two main novel political offers after the carnages of WWI. Whether, they will turn out to have been transitory stages to a universal "mass democracy",² we shall see. The relevance of the modern master drama, which we shall examine now, for society was greatly amplified by these developments. It is the true sting behind all macroeconomics.

2 For the argument of this book, we do not need a more developed concept of "mass- democracy". See, however, Kondylis (1991) and Furth (2008) and Furth (2015).