1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 ACCROCHE: "THE CONCEPT OF WORK BETWEEN SOCIETY AND NATURE"

In the *accroche*, I will describe how something as self-evident as the work concept is in fact an ideological construct (ideological in the sense of the anthropologist Louis Dumont, and not in the Marxist sense). Therefore, I will briefly indicate that the concept of work begins in political economy and is then appropriated by natural science to be reimported into economic science.

Likewise, I will indicate that the motivation for the the thesis is to rethink what work is in the 21st century, taking into account the ubiquity of information technologies.

1.2 MAIN ARGUMENT: "RETHINKING WORK IN THE 21ST CENTURY"

In this section, I will state the main argument of the thesis: namely, that the origin of the computer is a particular conception of the organization of work, which we should take into account to understand the transformation of work (its forms, its meaning, its formal definition in law, etc.) in the 21st century. As such, this argument calls into question the "popular" understanding of the one-sided transformation of work by the appeareance and dissemination of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the late 20th century. Instead, this thesis proposes to read the computer as a technology for organizing labor, to then use this reading to understand the transformation of labor that ICTs are supposedly pushing for.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

In this section, I simply describe the contents of the two chapters of the thesis and hint at the conclusion.

The first chapter traces the origins of the computer in de Prony and Babbage. The idea is to pro-

vide the reader with enough background knowledge to understand that the computer is not a thing but a concept, and that the definition of this concept has to be approached historically. This chapter will define the early computer as a conception of the organization of work that reflects an engineering and managerial mentality. Likewise, this chapter will hint at the link between this conception of work and its definition in law as a relation of subordination.

The second chapter will describe Herbert Simon's interest in Babbage, and will speculate on how this reading shaped Simon's conception of the computer, the relation between the natural and the artificial, the changes in work produced by new technologies (artificial intellgence, computers, and automation), and the organization of work in society. Moreover, this chapter will criticize Simon's idea that the organization of work is a purely technical problem to propose an alternative view of work that emphases other criteria for organization such as justice, etc.

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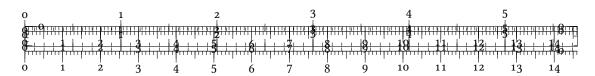
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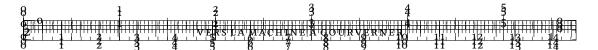
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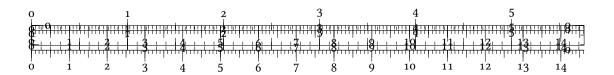
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CHAPTER 1

This chapter introduces the definition of the early computer as a technology for organizing work. The first objective of this chapter is to question the belief that the appropriate definition of the computer is in terms of its components. The second objective is to acquaint the reader with the history of the early computer by describing the project of the calculation of the logarithmic tables at the *Bureau du cadastre*, and the importance that this project had for Charles Babbage's calculating machines.

2.1 DID ADAM SMITH INVENT THE COMPUTER?

A story that although was present for a long time, seems today relegated to the confines of a few books on the history of computing.

Test: this is an article from diderot encyclopedia: A document from the imprimerie Firmin Didot describes the process.

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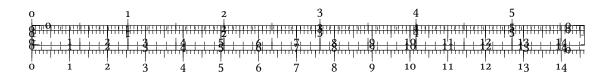
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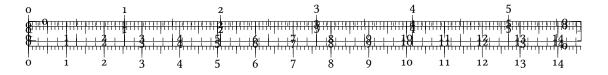
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2.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

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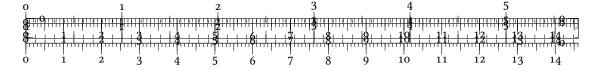
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CHAPTER 2

3.1 HERBERT SIMON READS BABBAGE

This section discusses Herbert Simon's reading of Charles Babbage. If possible, we should look for Simon's reading of de Prony's project. After all, his article from 1958 discusses Babbage's citing of the project in his book on European manufactures.

This section should discuss how the description of the organization of work as a simple technical matter has undemocratic undertones.

It could be interesting to look at what he has written on the organization of the workplace by machines and artificial intelligence. Should we be able to draw a parallel between his writing on organization and his views on democracy, we are all set.

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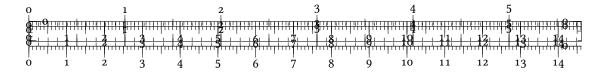
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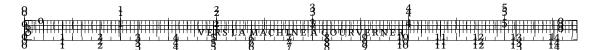
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3.3 COULD COMPUTERS BE DEMOCRATIC?

Has Simon discussed the issue of democracy at the workplace besides the one article on industrial democracy?

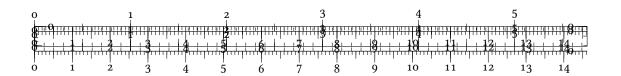
I want to talk about economic democracy as Alain Supiot does.

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3.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION



4

CONCLUSION

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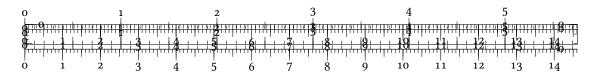
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