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The Future of Work? The Political Theory of Work and Leisure

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Abstract

The prospect of rapid technological development and automation has heightened attention toward issues of work and leisure, prompting many to ask what the future of work will be. Though this question is sometimes asked as a matter of forecasting, the path forward is not predetermined. A range of collective choices shape the conditions of people's work and leisure. It is essential for these choices to be guided by consideration of what the future of work *should* be. This article reviews recent literature in normative political theory about work and leisure, focusing on how they should be conceptualized, the multidimensional values and disvalues associated with both, and the grounds of people's claims to each. It highlights how the goods and bads of work and leisure are unequally shared by class, race, and gender, as well as the theoretical and practical advantages of considering people's interests in work and leisure in conjunction.

INTRODUCTION

The prospect of rapid technological development and automation, particularly from gains in artificial intelligence, has heightened attention to questions about the future of work, with some even asking what it would mean to have an "end of work" (Thompson 2015, p. 53). Central among these questions is whether speculation about dramatic transformations on the horizon is only an iteration of recurrent optimism and anxiety—as a recent analysis notes, one can find in the *New York Times* in almost every decade since 1920 engagement with the prospect of technological unemployment—or whether this time is indeed different, and either way, how technological change will affect the distribution and nature of work and leisure (Susskind 2021, pp. 15–21).

As one considers these questions, it is essential to emphasize that the path of technological development, and its effects on work and leisure, is not predetermined. Most basically, gains in productivity can be directed toward greater income and consumption, increasing leisure, and/or improvements in the quality of work (Cohen 2001, Rose 2020, Schweickart 2011, van der Deijl 2022), and any of these aggregate transformations can be realized with different effects on the distribution of social benefits and burdens.

More concretely, the direction of innovation is shaped by a range of collective choices. How technologies develop and are implemented is influenced by democratic governance and regulation, the exercise or absence of collective bargaining and other mechanisms of worker voice, research, academic and industry norms, social pressure, and educational systems (Acemoglu 2021, 2023; Acemoglu & Restrepo 2020; Bernhardt 2017; Reich et al. 2021). Each of these affects whether technological change will tend toward job displacement or creation, toward deskilling or upskilling work, and toward polarizing or spreading the goods of work and leisure (see, e.g., Celentano 2023).

Given the present context, when discussions of work and leisure are closely linked to the anticipation of widespread automation, it is worth emphasizing that efforts to improve conditions of work and leisure need not be tied to dramatic technological leaps. Political communities arguably have opportunities to expand leisure at almost any time (Schor 1992) and might improve work conditions gradually and steadily (Weil 2019). Nonetheless, the anticipation of momentous technological change has brought much wider and more urgent attention to issues of work and leisure, and so this opportunity ought to be used fruitfully to collectively deliberate about what our aims ought to be for the future of work.

The various political, social, and economic dynamics shaping the path forward would all benefit from a clear and principled assessment of what is valuable and disvaluable in work and leisure and to what people have legitimate claims. It is on these points that recent normative political theory and philosophy have a great deal to offer and will continue to be essential. Moreover, as I argue below, future normative analyses would benefit from engaging with issues of work and leisure as more interconnected concerns than is the current tendency in the literature. More integrated approaches would likely yield more creative insights, more effective policy proposals, and more thoughtfully considered societal aims.

FOCUS OF REVIEW

It is standard for normative theorizing about work and leisure to begin by noting that the subjects have received little philosophical attention. It is still true that they have received less attention than is warranted by their importance to society's functioning and to people's lives, yet recent years have seen a surge in writing about work and leisure.

The focus of this review is recent normative political theory and philosophy about work and leisure, in particular this literature's contributions to (*a*) conceptualizing work and leisure, (*b*) identifying the multidimensional goods and bads people can experience in their work and leisure, (*c*) articulating on what grounds people have claims of justice with respect to work and leisure, and (*d*) recognizing the advantages of considering people's interests in work and leisure in conjunction. The review will address the first three by examining work and leisure in turn, following the literature's tendency to treat them separately, before exploring what can be gained from instead examining work and leisure together.

Focusing on contemporary issues of work and leisure, the review surveys primarily the literature in analytic political philosophy. It engages principally with the treatment of work and leisure within liberal, democratic, and republican theory, all broadly understood, and draws on Marxist and feminist scholarship to some extent as well. As suits the subject, the literature reviewed spans both ideal and nonideal theory.

The review focuses on concepts, values, and entitlements, and less on how these values are realized or thwarted by different politico-economic regimes or policy interventions. Similarly, the review does not focus on claims to work and leisure in either the societal or global contexts specifically, and so does not focus on questions of international labor regulation and fair trade. While each of these subjects warrants its own review, the aim here is to consider the literature on work and leisure at a level such that the ideas surveyed should be of relevance across these contexts and approaches.

WHAT IS WORK? WHAT IS LEISURE?

Work and leisure are generally defined in opposition to each other, such that to be at work is not to be at leisure and vice versa. The basic textbook neoclassical economics definitions offer the plainest version of this approach, identifying leisure as time not engaged in paid work. While more complex economic models do not bifurcate time in this way, on the basic view, time is spent in either income-earning work or income-forgoing leisure (Cahuc et al. 2014, Ehrenberg et al. 2023). These definitions are commonly, if reflexively, used, in both ordinary language and political philosophy. Though a readily apparent weakness of these particular definitions is that they categorize unpaid household and caregiving labor as leisure, the more general view of work and leisure as each other's inverse is widely held.

An influential account is Marx's distinction between the "realm of necessity" and the "realm of freedom," the former being undertaken "to satisfy. . .wants, to maintain and reproduce life" and the latter being the "development of human energy which is an end in itself" [1978 (1894), p. 441]. Arguably, Marx's two realms reflect a key distinction, such that the core of the concept of work is necessity or compulsion (Muirhead 2004) and the core of the concept of leisure is freedom from necessity (Rose 2016).

Still, it is essential to emphasize that the concepts are inevitably shaped by context (Appiah 2021, Geuss 2021). Though there may be a core distinction between the concepts of work and leisure, neither term has a single correct conception; rather, which conception is apt depends on the purpose for which a definition is sought (Rose 2016, Shelby 2016). Further, though the common treatment of work and leisure as antonyms may suggest that a period of time is exclusively identified with one or the other, on some accounts, an activity may be described as both work and leisure, or as neither work nor leisure. An example of the former may be the play of a professional athlete (Cholbi 2023). An example of the latter is relaxation, on Aristotle's (1996, 1337b35–42; 1999, 1176b29–77a1) account, because it is undertaken instrumentally for the sake of relief from work and is not done for its own sake—as leisure is, as discussed below.

Work

With these framing points about work and leisure in place, we can expand on the definitions of each. With respect to work, some accounts attempt to provide a unified definition. Gomberg (2018, p. 514), for instance, while noting that it may be a challenge to give a full definition, suggests that "paradigmatically, work is a socially organized contribution to a larger group."

Other accounts define work with reference to a set of its typical features, recognizing that each instance of work need not have each feature. Muirhead's (2004) account, for instance, identifies four such features: pay (income-earning), contribution (meeting needs or wants), effort (straining), and compulsion (responding to force, need, or duty). There are important ways in which these elements can pull apart. Most significantly, some caregiving work, as noted, is unremunerated, despite being a vital social contribution (Engster 2007, Folbre 1994, Olsaretti 2013). The reverse may occur too, since some paid work may not in fact produce a net positive social contribution (Shelby 2016), such as "bullshit jobs" (Graeber 2018). When a case has some but not all features in a particular definitional set, it is a matter of convention or judgment whether it qualifies (Geuss 2021).

It bears emphasizing that, though there is value in specifying work's core meaning or its paradigmatic or typical features, there is no single true conception. Which features are necessary or sufficient for an activity to qualify as work in the relevant sense will depend on the particular purpose of that conception.

To illustrate, consider the contribution aspect of work. If the purpose is to identify what kind of social contribution people must make to be entitled to any public support, the account of contribution may be an expansive one, such that someone who "obeys the laws, respects others' expectations, and performs his civic duties (e.g., jury service, voting, national service, and conscription during wartime)" is contributing to social cooperation in the relevant sense (Freeman 2007, p. 230). Freeman distinguishes this kind of social contribution from work, but since it is a form of contribution also marked by necessity and effort, one could reasonably describe it (though Freeman does not) as the work of citizenship. If, instead, the purpose is to specify what kinds of social contribution can serve as the basis for meaningful work, the account of contribution may refer to any activities that meet the needs or wants of others, and encompass both unpaid work and paid work, accepting that, under some conditions, the market can serve as an indicator of contributive activity (Althorpe 2022). Whether serving on a jury, volunteering, parenting, or clock-punching qualify as work in the relevant respects depends on the purpose of specifying the relevant respects.

Leisure and Free Time

The core of the idea of leisure, in opposition to work, is freedom from necessity (Rose 2016). Building out from this central idea, definitions differ in their emphases of what in one's leisure time one is free to do or free from doing.

Aristotle identified leisure with activities done "for their own sake," in contrast to pursuits undertaken for instrumental reasons (1996, 1338a11–14). On Aristotle's account, the only activity that properly qualifies as leisure is philosophy, or the activity of understanding (1999, 1177b20–26), an idea that, as Walzer (1983, p. 186) notes, is "likely to appeal only to philosophers." Aristotle does, though, extend leisure to encompass music, if it serves "intellectual enjoyment" (1996, 1338a21–24), and modern accounts influenced by Aristotle's conception associate leisure with an attitude of contemplation [Pieper 1999 (1952)], or with any noninstrumental and skillful activity (Skidelsky & Skidelsky 2012).

A different approach that focuses on what one is able to do is Nussbaum's (2011) list of central human capabilities. Though it does not list or define leisure, it does include the capability of "being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities" (Nussbaum 2011, p. 34).

Though leisure does carry an association with these kinds of activities, it is more often defined in contemporary political philosophy by what one is free from doing in one's leisure time. Liberal theories of distributive justice typically adopt the textbook neoclassical economics definition of leisure as time not engaged in paid work (Cohen 2008, Dworkin 2000, Rawls 2001, Van Parijs 1995). This definition is generally used in the context of addressing people's preferences for income versus leisure (see Rose 2016).

Consistent with the idea that which conception of leisure is apt depends on the purpose it serves, defining leisure as time not spent in paid work has some advantages and uses. For one, when analyzing or addressing people's experiences in market work specifically, it can be expedient to describe any time outside of paid work as leisure. This approach also has the advantage of operational simplicity: By this definition, it is relatively easy to determine if a period of time is work or leisure and to collect data on people's paid work hours. (This advantage, though, is attenuated by the prevalence of income-earning work that does not involve punching a clock, e.g., salaried, gig, and self-employed work.) More substantively, this definition can be most apt when the target of normative concern is the "balance between work and the rest of life" (Estlund 2021, p. 67; see also Jauch 2020), such that leisure captures how much time people have outside the constraints of market work.

While the definition of leisure as time not spent in paid work is most apt for some purposes, its primary weakness is that it is difficult to identify what is valuable or disvaluable about such time specifically. It might be that time not engaged in paid work is valuable because it is time not subject to the arbitrary power of a boss, a form of domination (on this form of domination, see Gourevitch 2016). But such an account does not fit the work of the self-employed, or work conducted within structures that protect against the exercise of arbitrary power (for recent work on the self-employed, see González Ricoy 2023, Queralt 2023).

Time not engaged in paid work might instead be valuable because it is time that is unconstrained by necessity. In the terms of the labor slogan "eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what we will," leisure is the time that is free "for what we will" (Rose 2016, Rosenzweig 1983). But then the definition of leisure would, as noted above, wrongly include unpaid household and caregiving labor. Correcting for this, the definition could be modified to all time not engaged in paid work or household or caregiving labor (Schor 1992). This modified definition of leisure maintains most of the prior's operational simplicity, while rectifying the neglect of work still disproportionately done by women.

Yet, leisure defined as time not engaged in paid market work or unpaid domestic work still does not closely track the value of time that is unconstrained by necessity. This is for two reasons. First, other types of necessary activity, such as sleeping, bathing, and other personal care activities, constrain everyone's time to some extent and may generate substantially greater time constraints for those with time-consuming disabilities or health conditions; and second, some of the time spent in paid work, household and caregiving labor, and personal care is not actually necessary.

Following this line, some accounts depart much further from the idea of leisure as time not engaged in paid work, to articulate an idea of discretionary time (Goodin et al. 2008) or free time—"time not consumed by meeting the necessities of life, time that one can devote to one's chosen ends" (Rose 2016, p. 1; see also Walzer 1983). There are different ways of conceptualizing and operationalizing the relevant idea of necessity (Goodin 2017, Rose 2017), but these accounts share in distinguishing discretionary or free time from necessary time in paid work, unpaid household and caregiving labor, and personal care. Such accounts also do not have to be tied to these categories, only to the relevant sense of necessity, and so might include, for instance, commuting (Jenkins 2021, Nordström 2022) and personal "admin" (Emens 2015, Rose 2021).

As with work, there is no one correct conception of leisure or free time; which conception is apt depends on the purpose it serves (Rose 2016).

THE GOODS AND BADS OF WORK AND LEISURE

Any consideration of the future of work must be attentive to the multidimensional values and disvalues that people experience in work and leisure. What goods of work and leisure might be amplified, secured, and realized more widely, and what bads might be deepened, entrenched, and made more pervasive?

The Goods of Work

People may experience a range of goods in their work. For paid market work, a central good is providing a stable and adequate income, which can provide a means of economic agency (Claassen & Herzog 2021), of control over one's resources, and of providing for oneself and one's family (Greene 2019). Of course, depending on how a society's economic institutions are arranged, individuals may be able to obtain these goods without engaging in paid market work, as well as to obtain the other goods of work in unpaid work.

Gheaus & Herzog (2016) instructively synthesize "the goods of work (other than money!)" in an article I here follow and extend. Their account, which can be understood as "unpacking" (p. 71) the idea of meaningful work, identifies four such goods: excellence, social contribution, community, and social recognition. These four goods substantially, though not wholly, overlap with Veltman's (2016) account of "four primary dimensions of meaningful work" (p. 117).

Work provides an opportunity for one to develop skills and to realize accomplishments, and, especially if one spends a considerable portion of one's time at work, it may have a formative effect on one's capacities or displace opportunities to develop and exercise skills in other domains. This first good, which Gheaus & Herzog (2016) call excellence, can be interpreted broadly to encompass not only, e.g., talents and expertise, but also more general capacities such as autonomy and sociability (see Arnold 2012, Murphy 1993, Roessler 2012, Schwartz 1982, Veltman 2016, Yeoman 2014). Work that provides opportunities for excellence may also foster the experience of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).

Second, work provides an opportunity to make a social contribution (Gheaus & Herzog 2016) and can provide a sense of purpose (Veltman 2016). Contributing to the interests of others may be something people value in their lives (Tyssedal 2023) and wish or even need to do, and to do directly (Brownlee 2016). Further, one may have a duty to contribute to one's society (White 2003; see Shelby 2016 for discussion).

A third good of work is community—working collectively to achieve "joint accomplishments resulting from joint sustained effort" (Gheaus & Herzog 2016, p. 76). Workplaces can also bring demographically diverse people together in cooperative relationships (Estlund 2003). Veltman (2016) articulates a connected good: "integrating elements of a worker's life, such as by building or reflecting personal relationships and values or connecting a worker to an environmental or relational context with which she deeply identifies" (p. 117).

Fourth, work provides an opportunity to gain the recognition of others (Gheaus & Herzog 2016). As such, and in conjunction with the preceding goods, work may be a source of esteem (Gomberg 2007) and self-respect (Moriarty 2009).

The Goods of Leisure

The goods associated with leisure are many. These goods include particular states, activities, or opportunities that one can realize in one's leisure or free time: rest, recovery, physical and mental

health; time with friends and family; participation in community and democratic life; contemplation and quiet; flow, play, recreation, and celebration; curiosity and creativity; activities done for their own sake; and self-development and development and exercise of the mind (Coote et al. 2021, Csikszentmihalyi 1990, Nedelsky & Malleson 2023, Pieper 1999 (1952), Russell 2004, Skidelsky & Skidelsky 2012, Veltman 2021, Walzer 1983, Weeks 2011). Gheaus (2015) provides an evocative example of some of these goods by describing a society that chooses to put less emphasis on work so that adults can share with children in some of the goods of childhood, which she illustrates with the image of snow days, when children and adults both have the day off and play together, rather than either trying to continue with their usual occupations.

Another way of capturing the good of free time—time "for what we will" in the labor slogan—is that people can devote it to their own chosen pursuits (Rose 2016). To have more "time at one's command" (Walzer 1983) is to have greater temporal autonomy (Goodin et al. 2008).

Any list of the advantages of shorter hours of paid work—such as "potentially enriching personal relations, increasing real opportunities for creative activity and self-development, and supporting choices to care for others in the home, volunteer in communities, fulfil domestic duties, or simply enjoy more of the arts of living" (Veltman 2021, p. 61)—suggests the porousness of the boundaries between not only the concepts but the goods of work and leisure. This potential overlap reflects an ideal in which work and leisure are indistinguishable, with roots in Marx's [2000 (1932/1844)] identification of unalienated labor as free, spontaneous activity.

The Bads of Work and Leisure

The bads of work and leisure—ways in which the conditions of each can be inadequate, harmful, or otherwise contrary to people's interests—include the lack or inadequacy, or the antithesis, of the goods of work and leisure, as well as injury to other interests and values (see Gheaus & Herzog 2016).

Work can provide inadequate or insecure income or benefits. It can limit and degrade the development and exercise of people's capacities, as well as require workers to perform emotions in sometimes detrimental ways. It can expose workers to close surveillance and to sanctions for their off-duty conduct, constraining their autonomy within and outside of work. It can provide inadequate opportunities to contribute or can even be socially destructive. It can leave workers in isolation or expose them to harmful hierarchical or competitive relationships. It can damage workers' social standing or self-respect, or provide inadequate social recognition. (See citations in the section titled The Goods of Work, as well as Anderson 2017, England 2005, Graeber 2018, Hochschild 1983, Hsieh 2008, Hussain 2020, Rogers 2023, and Tomalty 2022.)

Additionally, work can negatively impact physical and mental health (Clougherty et al. 2010). Work can be marked by relationships of domination and exploitation, which are both directly injurious to people's interests in freedom from such relationships and liable to foster the preceding bads (Anderson 2017, Gourevitch 2016, Vrousalis 2018). Work can also entail alienation, a complex bad constituted by both the nature of work and work relations (Wolff 2003; for discussion, see Halliday & Thrasher 2020, Hsieh 2012).

The bads associated with leisure or free time include not having enough time—associated with the idea of "time poverty" (Williams et al. 2016)—and having the value of one's time diminished by unpredictable, inflexible, and nonstandard hours. One's leisure or free time may also be rendered less valuable if one has fewer of the external resources (such as access to public and private spaces) or internal resources (such as skills and capacities) that expand the possible uses of one's time. These bads can leave people with inadequate—in quantity and/or quality—time for developmental, familial, social, or political opportunities (see Kwok 2022; Preiss 2021; Rose 2016, 2017; Tomalty 2022; Tyssedal 2021; Veltman 2021).

Long work hours, as well as unconventional shift work, also increase the likelihood of injuries, stress, and other negative health outcomes (Dembe 2009), including disruptions to sleep (White 2022). Further bads may be associated with having one's time subject to the will of another, the acceleration of one's time, and the commodification of time, which Lau (2023) refers to as temporal alienation, compression, and erosion.

The Unequal Distribution of the Goods and Bads of Work and Leisure

The goods and bads of work and leisure are far from equally shared in the United States today. The distribution of advantages and disadvantages generally follows broader patterns of social stratification. The decades since the mid-1970s have been marked by polarization between "good jobs" and "bad jobs," as well as an increase in nonstandard work arrangements and in job insecurity for all workers (Kalleberg 2011; see also Autor 2019).

Employment itself is unequally distributed. To focus on one salient dimension of inequality, there is persistent hiring discrimination against Black Americans (Quillian et al. 2017), and Black Americans have higher unemployment rates than their White counterparts (Branch & Hanley 2022, Kalleberg 2011). Measures of unemployment understate racial disparities, as they do not include those who are incarcerated, of whom Black and Latino men are a disproportionate number. Moreover, incarcerated people often do unpaid or subminimum-wage work, then face difficulties finding employment upon release (Ajunwa 2022, Kalleberg 2011).

Unpaid household and caregiving work is also unequally shared. While men today do more than in the 1960s, women continue to do more than men (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel 2020). At the same time, many workplaces continue to be organized around an "ideal worker" model (Williams 2000) of full-time or overtime work with little or no accommodation for caregiving (Misra & Murray-Close 2014).

Work. During recent decades, the highest-paid workers have experienced disproportionate gains in earnings (Kalleberg 2011). Within this broader pattern of increasing wage inequality, racial, gender, and intersectional wage gaps persist (Blau & Kahn 2017, Kalleberg 2011; see also Branch & Hanley 2022, O'Flaherty 2019). On average, White women earn 80% and Black women 68% of what White men do. Further, mothers experience an earnings disadvantage and fathers an earnings advantage, relative to women and men without children (Misra & Murray-Close 2014).

There are also racial and gender gaps in positions of work authority (Smith 2002; on racial disparities in managerial positions, see also Ajunwa 2022, Branch & Hanley 2022, Kalleberg 2011). Notably, the degree to which one has decision-making authority at work is associated with lower levels of stress, and in turn better health outcomes and longer life expectancy—and, for those who fall under the authority of others, the reverse (O'Neill 2010).

Relative to White workers, Black and Hispanic workers are also more likely to suffer injury or death while working, Black workers are subject to a greater intensity of surveillance, and Black workers tend to have fewer social connections at work. Not surprisingly given all of the above, Black employees are substantially less likely to report job satisfaction than White employees (Ajunwa 2022, O'Flaherty 2019, Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel 2020).

Leisure. As to leisure, labor market polarization does not follow familiar patterns in one respect. Higher-paid, higher-skilled professionals and managers work longer hours and often express a preference to work fewer hours, while lower-skilled, hourly-wage workers work fewer hours and often express a preference for more hours. Further, some high-end employees are expected to be always available (Gerstel & Clawson 2015, Kalleberg 2011).

Yet, whether the otherwise advantaged are in fact disadvantaged in leisure depends on additional considerations. Depending on the account of free time, the long work hours of the highly

paid may be characterized as in fact a discretionary use of their free time (Rose 2017, Stanczyk 2017). Moreover, these workers enjoy a range of other advantages: They take more vacation time, have greater access to work flexibility policies, have more control over their work hours, and are more able to avoid weekend work (Gerstel & Clawson 2015, Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel 2020).

As with work, there are racial, gender, and intersectional disparities in free time. Women tend to have less control over their work hours and are more likely to work multiple jobs (men are more likely to work full-time and overtime) (Ajunwa 2022, Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel 2020). Black employees are more likely to have nonstandard hours or unpredictable schedules than White employees (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel 2020). A recent study of the service sector finds that women of color experience the most temporal precarity and White men the least (Storer et al. 2020).

Widening the lens reveals further disparities in free time. For instance, recent research considers how racial minorities must spend more time to obtain essential goods and services. For instance, Black Americans must travel farther to buy healthy groceries and have longer commutes to work and school; Black Americans and Hispanics spend more time waiting to vote and to receive health care; and even when crossing the street, Black Americans have to wait longer for a car to yield (Colen et al. 2024, Gee et al. 2019, Kwate 2017).

CLAIMS TO WORK AND LEISURE

Claims to Meaningful Work and to Workplace Democracy

Some basic claims with respect to work are widely endorsed in some form, namely freedom of occupational choice, freedom from discrimination, and freedom from sexual harassment. While these claims cannot be taken for granted in practice, they are generally accepted and have not been the focus of recent attention in normative political theory concerning work.[1] Instead, considerable attention has been devoted to whether people have more demanding substantive and procedural claims with respect to work.

The first focus of attention has been the development of arguments for meaningful work, which is broadly understood as work providing the above-described goods of work.[2] These arguments span from perfectionist [e.g., that work that unites conception and execution contributes to human flourishing (Murphy 1993)] to nonperfectionist [e.g., that complex work develops internal resources that enable one to pursue any conception of the good (Arnold 2012)]. (On the distinctions among these types of arguments, see Gomberg 2018, Hsieh 2008, Muirhead 2004; for a mild perfectionist argument, see, e.g., Gheaus & Herzog 2016.)

The second focus has been the development of arguments for workplace democracy, which is broadly understood as structures providing workers with the means of exercising governing power in economic enterprises. Such structures can take different forms. Here, too, a wide range of arguments have been offered, including that workplace democracy is justified for similar reasons as political democracy; that it fosters democratic skills and practices, supporting the stability of a democratic society; and that it is consistent with the values of freedom from domination and arbitrary interference, as well as relational equality (Frega et al. 2019, Hsieh 2008; see also Christiano 2022, O'Neill 2008).

[1]There are, of course, notable exceptions. There is scholarship on workplace sexual harassment in related disciplines (e.g., Basu 2003, Schultz 2018) and philosophical consideration of employment discrimination that is related to a more general interest in discrimination (e.g., Goff 2018, Moreau 2010). Freedom of occupational choice is also the subject of a small but growing literature (e.g., Fabre 2010, Kandiyali 2023, Otsuka 2008, Stanczyk 2012).

[2]On some accounts, meaningful work is understood to also require workplace democracy (see, e.g., Althorpe 2022, Schwartz 1982, Yeoman 2014).

An additional question that has received renewed attention amid heightened concern with automation is whether people have a right to work. Some scholars argue that the government should guarantee access to decent work, or more generally create public jobs and act to conserve private employment (Estlund 2021, Paul 2023).

Claims to Leisure and Free Time

Arguments for entitlements to leisure and free time and for limitations on work hours have been articulated on various grounds, most of which are suggested by the preceding discussions of the goods and bads of leisure. One, parallel to a claim to meaningful work discussed above, is that leisure contributes to human flourishing, and as such, people ought to have time for it (Skidelsky & Skidelsky 2012, Veltman 2021). Another is that workers ought to have protections against work hours, such as long hours or night shifts, that expose them (and those impacted by their work) to risks of injury, sleep disruption, and other harms to health (Dembe 2009, White 2022).

Further arguments extend this line to hold that people are entitled to leisure and limitations on work hours for the sake of ensuring their access to other important goods and opportunities. One recent argument (Lim 2017) holds that people ought to have free time to enable them to engage in political activity, including to resist domination in the workplace. (Conversely, see Elliott 2023 for the view that a democracy's demands for political participation should be respectful of people's claims to free time.) Another recent account maintains that the length and inflexibility of people's work hours ought to be limited to counter social alienation, in which one's social life and close relationships are displaced by the centrality of work (Bousquet 2023). Similarly, it is argued that people's work demands ought not to interfere with meeting caregiving obligations or the ability to enjoy familial relationship goods. As such, people ought not to be exposed to impoverished conditions that require them to work long hours, multiple jobs, or with long commutes; work and caregiving should be better synchronized (e.g., by matching work and school schedules); and workers ought to have adequate caregiving leave and limited and flexible work hours (Brighouse & Swift 2014, Eichner 2017, Engster 2007, Tronto 2013).

Arguments for limiting work hours for the sake of caregiving are closely connected to those for gender equality. Given pervasive gender norms, women continue to do more household and caregiving labor than men, and so they are marginalized by the "ideal worker" norm (Schouten 2019, Williams 2000). These accounts hold that, rather than attempt to universalize the breadwinner model, societies ought to deconstruct the gendered division of labor to enable everyone to engage in paid work, caregiving, and leisure (Fraser 1994; see also Nedelsky & Malleson 2023). (For feminist positions on socializing housework, see Forrester 2022; on shorter work hours, centering open-ended leisure rather than family time, see Weeks 2011.) A different line of argument for regulating long work hours, which also relates to the choice conditions workers face, is that government intervention to limit work time is justified because it counteracts a collective action problem, the working time rat race, which leads people to work longer than they prefer (Jauch 2020).

Another approach maintains that people are entitled to free time because it is time they can devote to their own chosen ends, whatever they may be. These arguments ground claims to free time in autonomy (Goodin et al. 2008; see also Neufeld 2017) or effective freedom (Rose 2016; see also Alperovitz 2011). They can also be grounded in the capabilities approach; as Nussbaum (2011, p. 36) notes, when women work a double shift of market and domestic work, this "is a crushing burden, impeding access to many of the other capabilities." (For an account suggesting that temporal justice ought to attend to variation in time's use value, or what one "can do or be" with that time, see Tyssedal 2021, p. 190.)

Two additional arguments for leisure derive from considerations about work. Some people may have claims to more leisure as compensation for worse work (Muirhead 2004). Furthermore, it may

be the case that "working just a few hours a day, or a few days a week, may be sufficient to meet personal and social needs for work," and this is increasingly likely with technological development (Veltman 2021, p. 61).

THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN WORK AND LEISURE

As the organization of the review here indicates, normative analyses of work and leisure tend to treat each domain separately. Though to some extent the literature on work engages with issues of leisure and the literature on leisure with issues of work, sustained and deep engagement with issues of work and leisure generally focuses on one or the other (exceptions include Walzer 1983; Veltman 2016, 2021).

This tendency may arise in part from perceptions of tension between the values and claims of work and the values and claims of leisure (see Veltman 2021 for discussion and rejection of this conflict). For instance, those principally concerned with justifying people's interests in meaningful work may be wary of providing a full-throated endorsement of the goods of leisure, to defend against the idea that leisure could serve as adequate compensation for degrading, alienating, or dominating work. Similarly, those primarily concerned with bolstering people's interests in leisure may be wary of valorizing work, or endorsing any duty to contribute, lest doing so entrenches an all-pervading work ethic. Less speculatively, the literature's dichotomous focus is likely in part simply due to academic specialization.

There are good reasons for political theory and philosophy to sometimes focus specifically on issues of work or of leisure. Most significantly, doing so can sometimes be instrumental to illuminating and countering injustices in contemporary practices. Focusing on work or leisure may be helpful for recognizing and responding to, for example, the harms stemming from the precarity of gig work or the disruptiveness of nonstandard work hours. If—to illustrate this point with an extreme—normative theorists were to cease seeing work and leisure as in any way distinct domains, in favor of exclusively focusing on, say, the underlying values of contribution or autonomy, they might be less perceptive of the on-the-ground obstacles people face.

Yet, as this review of the literatures indicates, the boundaries between work and leisure are not distinct, and the concerns of each blend into the other. While it would be an overcorrection to fully dissolve any distinctions between work and leisure, it would be a warranted correction for the literatures to engage issues of work and leisure as more interconnected than they have tended to. The remainder of this section provides a nonexhaustive list of reasons to treat work and leisure together.

First, doing so helps to recognize the shared conditions that enable people to realize the goods of both work and leisure. For instance, each literature emphasizes the connections between education and realizing the goods of work and the goods of leisure. Considering the ways in which education is essential to both can then inform how to shape educational institutions to more coherently serve both (for discussion, see Appiah 2021).

Second, considering work and leisure together demonstrates how shared underlying values can guide institutional and policy design and evaluation across domains. Societies should, for example, aim to ensure that people have robust opportunities to develop and exercise their skills and talents, and pursuing this aim directly, rather than through distinct work or leisure policies, may yield more creative and effective approaches. For instance, fostering opportunities for volunteer work—which may be work or leisure, depending on how these domains are conceptualized—may be a fruitful means of enabling more people to exercise a wider range of their talents, as volunteer work tends to be more "merit inclusive" than paid work (Tsuruda 2019; see also Goodin 2017 on the value of autonomy across domains).

Third, improving features of work and of leisure can be reinforcing aims. Two examples in the recent literature illustrate this: (*a*) Securing people's access to coordinated free time helps people develop relationships and thus the social capital that helps them obtain jobs and promotions (Cordelli 2022); (*b*) workers' self-esteem can be buffered from the effects of labor market and workplace competition if they have secure personal relationships, which can be fostered by limiting work hours and providing caregiving and vacation leave time (Gilabert 2023). In these ways, expanding and securing free time supports fairness in the labor market and mitigates bads of work.

Fourth, a more integrated approach would recognize and support different work/leisure configurations over the life course. Considering work and leisure together can illuminate defects in a model of market work in which people are expected to work full-time through middle age until ceasing work at retirement, in favor of arrangements in which workers have more free time during their working years (Jauch 2023) and have reduced work hours at the end of their careers (Halliday & Parr 2022; for broader consideration of mandatory retirement and age-integrated workplaces, see Bidadanure 2021). A joint approach can also indicate reasons to support measures such as sabbatical and educational leaves.

Fifth, analyzing work and leisure together can inform the normative assessment of gig work. The distinction between employees and independent contractors—the former being covered by regulations that entitle them to various protections and benefits not extended to the latter—has become more salient with the rise of the platform and gig economies (Vallas & Schor 2020). The growth of gig work raises a range of normative questions (see Bieber & Moggia 2021, Halliday 2021, McPherson & Satz 2019). As normative scholarship on the gig economy indicates, one aspect relevant to its assessment is how it affects workers' time, e.g., workers may be able to choose their hours but also may spend time waiting on-call for work. Evaluations of possible regulatory approaches benefit from considering how gig work "blurs the line between work time and leisure" (Bieber & Moggia 2021, p. 294) and how such work impacts access to the goods and exposure to the bads of free time.

Sixth, claims with respect to work may be affected by claims to leisure. If arguments for meaningful work depend on the fact that people must spend much of their time working, they will be weakened if people no longer spend as much time at work, whether because they receive a basic income (Van Parijs 1995) or otherwise have far more free time (Althorpe 2022, Gheaus & Herzog 2016, Hsieh 2008, Rose 2017). Such arguments may be redeveloped so as not to depend on this fact, or they may be recast as claims applicable only to those who must work full-time or as claims to opportunities to realize the underlying values in any domain.

Seventh, considering work and leisure together highlights how people's claims to the goods of work and of leisure may be partially substitutable. While there are reasons to reject the idea that having access to the goods of work or leisure can serve as fair compensation for being exposed to bads in the other domain (Yeoman 2014), claims to the goods of work and leisure may be substitutable in some respects. For example, one might hold that the extent to which "loneliness and isolation at work constitute a threat to social resources will depend on the extent to which fundamental social interests can be fulfilled outside of work" (Tomalty 2022, p. 136). The substitutability of people's claims may be only partial, in that people still have threshold claims with respect to both work and leisure, especially to avoid the bads of each.

Eighth, a joint approach may help to make progress on difficult indexing problems. A challenge for theories of distributive justice is assessing how well off some people are relative to others when the basis of comparison is multidimensional, a challenge known as the index problem (see Olson 2022). Rather than treating meaningful work or leisure time as components of the index directly, it may be more productive to instead make interpersonal comparisons of people's access to the underlying values of work and leisure (e.g., skills development, autonomy).

Ninth, the view that societies ought to understand social progress more expansively than increasing GDP has gained support in recent years (see, e.g., Nussbaum 2011; Rose 2020, 2022; Schor 2011; Stiglitz et al. 2010; Woodly 2022). While alternative understandings of social progress can take a range of forms, arguably an expanded vision ought to encompass the multidimensional values of both work and leisure. Societies make a range of collective choices that directly or indirectly impact people's experiences of the goods and bads of work and leisure, spanning fiscal and monetary policy, labor and employment law, and research and development investments. To guide these choices, societies might rely on indicators of social progress that incorporate measures of meaningful work and leisure time—or, following the preceding point, their underlying values. Such indicators ought to include the goods associated with both work and leisure, alongside other goods, not only because both are valuable, but because, following the points above, they are interacting aims, and societies would benefit from more openly assessing the dimensions on which they might choose to preserve and pursue gains.

CONCLUSION

Appiah (2021, p. 1) has recently argued that at the center of issues of work is "a hard problem":

> that work has come to matter in a series of interdependent dimensions of social and individual life, and that it is not evident how, as technology and society develop moving forward, we can easily construct new forms of social life that will satisfy human beings in all those dimensions in the way that the best jobs did and do.

As societies today respond to this hard problem, recent normative political theory and philosophy on work and leisure, as reviewed here, provide essential resources. This literature illuminates how these two major domains of life should be conceptualized, the goods and bads people experience in both, and the grounds of people's claims with respect to each. Further normative theorizing may benefit, as suggested above, by moving past the tendency to treat work and leisure as separate domains and engaging questions about the future of work and leisure in a more integrated way. Doing so may help us to see, with a wider and more creative lens, how socioeconomic arrangements might remedy existing injustices and inequalities and better realize people's interests and claims.

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