

Critique of labor

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The Problem with Work:  
Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork  
Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries

Is resisting precarity the answer?  
Or is critiquing *work* the answer?

# From Wages for Housework to Basic Income

Who does domestic  
labor?

# Weeks' critique of traditional Marxism

1. Utopia of modernization
2. Socialist humanism

# Utopia of modernization

*To ensure that communism is achieved in the future, the offensive against capital must be partially suspended during the transition. Socialism thus involves a temporary intensification of capitalism, whereas communism is imagined abstractly as its pure transcendence.*

*Later Soviet policies and rhetoric provide the purest examples of this ideal of modernization.*

*With its affirmation of the heroic, world-building capacities of disciplined, proletarian labor, the vision depends upon and revolves around a valorization of the creative force of human labor, conceived narrowly as social production.*



# Socialist humanism

"If only we could have unalienated labor!"

*The problem with capitalism is that it estranges us from our essential nature, our authentic selves; alienation is in this sense the negation of productivity. 'For Marx,' Fromm argues, 'socialism meant the social order which permits the return of man to himself, the identity between existence and essence'*

*A transformation of the world of work  
into a cooperative process that is  
controlled by the individual producers...  
Why work less if work in its unalienated  
form as socialized production is the  
expression of and means to self-  
creation?*

In the end, socialist humanism  
also romanticizes work.

Reaction: Refusal of  
work

*The refusal of work is not in fact a rejection of activity and creativity in general or of production in particular. It is not a renunciation of labor tout court, but rather a refusal of the ideology of work as highest calling and moral duty, a refusal of work as the necessary center of social life and means of access to the rights and claims of citizenship, and a refusal of the necessity of capitalist control of production. It is a refusal, finally, of the asceticism of those – even those on the Left – who privilege work over all other pursuits, including "carefree consumption."*

*The refusal of work serves not as a goal,  
but as a path of separation that creates  
the conditions for the construction of  
subjects whose needs and desires are no  
longer as consistent with the social  
mechanisms within which they are  
supposed to be mediated and contained.*

*The vision of an alternative that marks the transition from antiwork to postwork in autonomist thought is offered as a contrast to socialism, which is defined as a system that would redeem work through public ownership.*



Write a critique of  
student labor.