

rethinking the nature of work

bell hooks' chapter on rethinking the nature of work delves into the complexities of labor, particularly from a traditional feminist perspective. while i agree with most of her points, the argumentation in some areas feels somewhat underdeveloped. as a philosophical piece, it seems to lack explanations for many of her claims.

hooks quite extensively highlights the need for an economic reform, particularly for women, in a consumerist society. this point resonates well with me, as it acknowledges the unique challenges faced by the struggling class. however, the scope of this discussion could be broadened. similar challenges are faced by other marginalized groups, such as neuroatypical individuals, art students, people with disabilities, queer people, gig workers, e.g. An inclusive approach to this reform that encompasses the experiences of all minorities/discriminated groups would make the argument more comprehensive and impactful, i think.

the text's perspective on men and household duties is another area which left me wanting more. hooks suggests a lack of familiarity as a reason for men's disengagement from these tasks. while this may have been true in the past, i think in modern society, it's more about societal expectations and gender roles than actual lack of knowledge or ability. many men, influenced by societal norms, perceive household duties as beneath them. addressing this requires a cultural shift towards valuing all forms of domestic work, regardless of gender. people should take pride in being helpful, even when it doesn't directly help themselves!

while the author doesn't explicitly address it, i feel we should be very much aware of different types of work. while i'm a relatively privileged person, i would not consider income as rewarding to my own value as a person. income is something we need because today's society requires us to have money to be able to survive. it's only after we survive we can actually start living, and it's only when we actually live that true personal value can exist. in other words: don't seek personal value in getting a wage, separate labour from your personal life.

my experience in free (as in freedom, and as in beer!) software development and community service exemplifies a form of value found in non-traditional unrewarded forms of labour. these activities, often overlooked in capitalist structures, often provide personal fulfillment and contribute significantly to societal well-being. what i mean to say here is that work can often be rewarding, but only when it comes from your own desire, not obligation (if this doubles down as your wage, lucky you!).

as hooks points out, society and people as a whole needs someone to do the work nobody wants to do. i strongly believe in technological automatization as a long-term goal. meanwhile, we should better reward those who do necessary, undesirable jobs. imagine a society where necessary work hours are minimized, evenly spread amongst all citizens, and equally paid, sufficient to fulfill all your basic needs. this would give everybody more leisure time, and less polarisation of social classes.

historically, we've seen that people who have extra time on their hands (like aristocrats) actually do contribute a fair bit to society as scientists, philosophers, artists. while it may be a bit hard to picture in the current state of society, i believe it's a direction we should take.

to conclude, yeah. the nature of work needs to be rethunk. that said, would a classless society still need feminism? i think so.