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Work, Value and Domination

On the Continuing Relevance of the Marxian Labor Theory of Value in the Crisis of the Keynesian Planner State

During the last decade or so, in the midst of a profound and lengthy international crisis of capitalist command, the Marxian labor theory of value has been subjected to severe critiques on both theoretical and historical grounds. The major theoretical critique—from Steedman and other Social Democrats—reformulated earlier attacks on the so-called metaphysical character of the theory and called for the abandonment of a value theory that was neither meaningful nor necessary. This attack, as others before it, has been rejected, more or less convincingly depending on the character of the arguments, by Marxists of all stripes. More serious than this rejection on abstract grounds, have been a series of arguments that the Marxian labor theory of value, while perhaps once pertinent for the understanding of the dynamics of capitalist development, has been rendered obsolete by the historical evolution of capital accumulation. In other words, new theory is needed to understand and fight new forms of domination which emerged out of the old dynamics of the class relationship itself. This paper analyses and responds to two of the more interesting formulations of this perspective: those of Claus Offe and Toni Negri.

Offe and the Displacement of Work

Offe's argument, similar to many associated with contemporary critical theory, implies that the labor theory of value has become obsolete because labor as such has ceased to be the most fundamental form of social organization in modern capitalism.¹ In his article "Work: The Key Sociological Category?" where he addresses this issue most directly, Offe argues his case at two levels: that of the objective centrality of work

in the structuring of life and, necessarily a subset of the first, that of the subjective role of work for those whose lives are being structured.²

At the level of the objective role of work in the structuring of life time, Offe argues first that an observable trend toward increasing differentiation and heterogeneity in work, especially the displacement of industrial labor by service labor, is making it impossible to talk about work as such. "One can no longer," he writes, "talk of a basically unified type of rationality."³ Service work, in particular, he argues, is fundamentally different from traditional kinds of "productive" labor in that it is "reflexive"—it "produces and maintains work itself."⁴ Such work, he claims, is not only heterogeneous but lacks any common measure of productivity or efficiency. Such differentiation renders any discussion of "work" in general, then, misleading. Second, he then goes on to argue that the power of work—however differentiated—to structure society has been declining not only because of the reduction in work time as a proportion of life time, but because non-work time has become less structured by work.⁵ Along with a growing divorce of such activities as education, family life, and leisure consumption from work, he includes the growing failure of unemployment to coerce employment—a result of the rise of welfare state.⁶

At the level of the subjective significance of work, he points to the decline in the centrality of the work ethic or of work related activities to people's sense of self-definition and purpose. To begin with, the increasing heterogeneity of work suggests that it is unlikely that work as such can provide "a precise and shared significance for the working population," i.e., the sense of being part of a working class becomes impossible.⁷ Moreover, he points to the voluminous evidence that people have become increasingly conscious of the "disutility" of work, indeed have come to struggle against work and have turned to non-work activities for life satisfaction.⁸ These changes which have undermined the central role of work in organizing society, both objectively and subjectively, Offe argues, not only have created a "crisis of the work society" but call for the replacement of all work-focused social theories—including those of Marx. Therefore, he concludes, recent trends in social theory toward the abandonment of class concepts and their replacement with new concepts appropriate to the analysis of such issues as gender, ethnicity, peace and disarmament, environmental protection and human rights is well conceived.⁹ Offe's theoretical contribution was clearly designed to provide support for replacing the analysis of class struggle with that of "new social movements"—a replacement which has accelerated in recent years and formed an essential bulwark to the rising edifice of an anti-Marxist social democracy in both Western Europe and the United States.¹⁰

If it is true that labor has been displaced by a structured and manipulated consumerism, whether of the modern or post-modern variety, if it is true that labor has ceased to be the central organizing social activity, if it is true that work no longer plays an essential role in structuring people's subjective evaluation of themselves and their place in society, then certainly Marx's labor theory of value, and everything it teaches about class struggle, needs to be replaced by some theory that speaks more directly to the new categories of domination and the struggles against them. If we can say farewell to the working class, then certainly we can say farewell to Marx. However, while we must certainly recognize that capitalist society as a work-centered social order is in "crisis," neither the objective nor the subjective displacement of labor has been such as to warrant the conclusion by Offe, and others who follow similar lines of thought, that either class struggle or Marxian theories of labor can be safely put behind us. On the contrary, we can argue, and demonstrate, that not only are most, if not all, of the mechanisms of cultural domination which preoccupy the post-Marxists, still intimately linked to and shaped for the reproduction of a labor based social order, but more importantly, a successful conclusion to the struggles which have thrown that social order into crisis demand not only a theorization of their new directions but also continued attention to the (capitalist) forces arrayed against them.

Let us examine Offe's arguments in the order presented above. First, he argues that work has become so differentiated as to make it uninformative to talk about work in general. Is service labor so fundamentally different from the kind of traditional productive labor we normally associate with commodity production as to exclude the use of the same theory to discuss both? Does either "the vast empirical heterogeneity" of work in general or the "reflexive" focus of service work on ordering and normalizing the reproduction of labor itself exclude the use of a generalized concept of labor? I think not. In the first place, the heterogeneity of useful work, irrespective of tendencies toward deskilling, has always been a characteristic of work under capitalism. Such heterogeneity has always been fundamental to the capitalist use of labor for social control. While such developments as the shift from manufacture to machinofacture and Taylorism have tended to deskill workers within affected labor processes, such movement toward homogeneity has always been complemented by a growing diversity of products and technologies which have provided the technical basis for the repeated decomposition of working class power through new divisions of labor. The existence of such phenomena as segmented labor markets, the diffusion of factory production into the home, and the differential distribution of managerial authority through the work force constitute historically specific aspects of such heterogeneity

rather than new “fractures” which make it impossible to understand the organization of work in terms of the class struggle over valorization. The challenge of understanding these developments in terms of the Marxian concepts of class has already been met by many researchers and activists.¹¹

In the second place, some kinds of service sector labor Offe discusses, such as those of teaching, curing, and counselling can all be understood quite well in terms of the reproduction of life as labor power—a kind of labor that has always been performed in capitalism. The rise of these aspects of the service sector has occurred as what was formally unwaged labor performed in the home or community was transformed into waged labor. Teaching, healing and counselling once performed by unwaged housewives or other family members became new domains of business activity where those providing the services were waged (from high paid “professionals” to low paid attendants) and a profit was earned on the sale of the service.¹² The commodity produced—labor power—has been the same in both cases, only the form of organization has changed. As for the other kinds of services he discusses—planning, organizing, negotiating, controlling, administering—these too have always been aspects of capitalist production and social reproduction, from the role of managers in production to that of the state in both production and reproduction. His description of both kinds of service activities as those of “preventing, absorbing and processing risks and deviations from normality” is apt enough—once we recognize that “normality” means “life as worker.” From the unwaged mother who is supposed to rear children to be obedient workers (which involves curbing any juvenile delinquency) through the factory managers who weed out high entropy workers, to the arbiters, police and military who are called in when the others fail, all such tasks can be understood as the work of reproducing life as labor power. The differentiation of tasks among such guarantors of order should not keep us from understanding their role in maintaining a work-based social order. The growth in their numbers is a reflection of the struggle against work rather than the sign of its disappearance from the social scene.

The difficulties in finding any direct quantitative measure of the productivity of such service labor—which has been much discussed by economists since the onset of the “productivity crisis” in the late 1960s—should obscure neither its qualitative role nor the very real quantitative options which are possible, and used, for such measurement. For example, Offe is correct that the outcome of education, for the capitalists who have overseen the construction and management of the educational system, is certainly not direct “monetary profit” (except in the case of private schools).

But the “concrete uses” he sees as the real outcome can all be understood in terms of the use-value of labor power. The work of teachers and administrators is primarily to produce labor power in general, i.e., the ability and willingness to work, and secondarily to produce particular skills and abilities. The productivity of such work is today measured at the individual level by grades on particular and standardized tests which measure primarily the ability and willingness to study, and thus to work. The productivity of such work is also measured at the social level by the adequacy with which it tracks students into the heterogeneous categories of work required by capital, from dropouts who will do unskilled unwaged or low-waged work to highly skilled professional labor. It is only because capital has such norms that today we can talk about a crisis in the work of education. From Reagan and Bush’s disinvestment in education to Thatcher’s attempts to impose more top-down control, what we are seeing are responses to a crisis in the productivity of the work of producing and reproducing life as labor power.¹³

Offe’s second argument about the declining objective role of work in structuring social life concerns the reduction in work time and the growing independence of non-work time from work time. On the one hand, he is certainly correct that there has been a long-term trend toward a reduction in the number of hours of waged labor. However, the rise of so-called “cultural mechanisms of domination” such as public education and consumerism which have colonized the associated expansion of “free time,” have been shown to involve precisely a continuing effort by capitalism to guarantee the predominance of labor—the keystone of its way of organizing society. The vast escape by children from the mines and mills and factories in the first decades of this century was met with a new form of incarceration: the public school. As argued above, and amply demonstrated in numerous studies, the key role of business in fashioning the system of public schooling was aimed at creating a new social institution that would guarantee that learning would be subordinated to the reproduction of labor power.¹⁴ If young people could not be put to work until they were 15 years old, then by God and Mammon, they would be kept occupied, ordered and disciplined to fit into the labor force once they came of age. Moreover, if their parents—and adult workers in general—were winning more and more time away from work and more money to spend in such time, then both that time away from work, the way the money would be spent and the attitudes of children toward it, would be shaped in ways compatible with the continued subordination of life to work. Thus consumerism which seeks to shape the transformation of the wage into use-values in ways compatible with capitalist growth and thus the content of education which seeks to channel young energy into job

training and home economics rather than into learning how to enjoy life or to struggle against domination. If it could be demonstrated that the role of education has changed, that it is no longer organized to shape people for a work-centered social existence, that it has become a form of domination unconnected with work, then we could accept Offe's assertion that these things are so. Unfortunately for his argument, not only have these things not been demonstrated, but there is plenty of evidence of the contrary: that the "service" work of education is work done in service to capital in the disciplining of its labor force.

What of consumerism which, according to so many—and apparently including Offe though he doesn't dwell on this—has displaced work as the central mechanism of domination? The first thing to note, and keep in mind, is that consumerism is a capitalist response to successful working class struggle for more income and less work, it is not just one more devious capitalist plot to expand its social control. Consumerism emerged out of the working class struggles of the 1930s which forced capital to shift from its traditional reliance on the business cycle to regulate wages to the plans of the Keynesian and welfare state.¹⁵ Consumerism is thus another mechanism, analogous to public schooling, of the capitalist colonization of the sphere of working class independence. Just as school subverts free time by making it into time for the production and reproduction of life as labor power, so consumerism seeks to subvert the autonomous power of the worker's wage by turning it into a vehicle of capitalist expansion and a tool of capitalist domination. The question then is not whether consumerism is a form of domination but rather whether it is something separate whose expansion has displaced work as domination. I think not.

The key issue concerning the relationship between consumerism and work is the same as that which concerns education and work. Does consumerism function in a manner analogous to education or not? Does it function to reproduce the consumer as worker or just as consumer. Certainly we know that a great deal of capitalist production and marketing is designed to reproduce the consumer as consumer. Planned obsolescence, model changes, fashion and so on, all are designed to get the consumer to keep buying —because previous purchases no longer work or to remain fashionable. But what is the substance of consumption? What do people consume for? We know that people consume to live and the subjective reasons for living are quite diverse. But beyond this subjectivity (to which I will return) what is the role of consumption in their lives. Given that the majority of most people's active life time continues to be taken up with work, it should not be surprising to discover that most consumption is related to work, whether that consumption be material or symbolic.¹⁶

When work took up all waking hours this was fairly obvious; there was no time for anything else. As the “working” class succeeded in forcing down the length of the working day, week, year and life cycle, and more time became available, at least potentially, for other activities this has become less obvious. Yet, when we examine any average slice of life time (day, week, etc) it becomes obvious that the bulk of that time is still shaped by and around work.

The day begins by getting ready for work and then by traveling to work—a matter of several hours for a great many. The work which follows takes up most of the daylight hours—not for nothing do we speak of Monday through Friday as “work days.” The period at work is followed by the trip home and partial recuperation from work—full recuperation will require most of the night’s sleep. Part of the evening will be taken up with housework required to be able to go back to work the next day (washing clothes, etc). Perhaps an hour or two will be left for some activities unrelated to work—assuming you didn’t bring any work home and don’t have night classes or social obligations to “get ahead” at work. Which part of daily consumption is geared to work and which to something else, even itself? If what we are interested in is the issue of domination—the way people’s lives are structured by external powers—the answer is given by the relative distribution of their time and energy. For the tired worker, the evening meal or the exhausted sprawl before the television are primarily acts of recuperation, of regaining energy stolen by capital on the job. The money spent on TV dinners or high cuisine, television sets, stereo equipment or novels under such conditions is money spent reproducing labor power.

The working week begins with “blue Monday,” is dominated at its beginning by psyching one’s self up for work, gets into average gear by Wednesday and terminates with “TGIF —Thank God It’s Friday.” Part of the weekend will be eaten up by recuperation—thus the Saturday morning TV cartoons to entertain the kids so parents can sleep in. Part will be consumed by necessary housework, work that could not be done during the previous five days: washing work clothes, grocery shopping, house or apartment repairs and so on. Part will be spent forgetting about work so it can be faced once again on Monday morning without suicide or murder. Depending upon circumstances a few hours or something over a day’s time may actually be “free” for the pursuit of non-work related activities. Which part of weekly consumption is independent of work? Again that depends on the relative distribution of time and energy.

Of the working month, year and life cycle we can observe much the same phenomena: whichever slice of life time we choose the vast majority of people find

their waking (and sleep) lives dominated by their work. They are either getting ready to work (from breakfast to 12-20 years of schooling), working (producing labor power or some other commodity) or recuperating from work (from exhausted weekends and too short vacations to retirement). Instead of the divorce of family life and leisure consumption from work we find that most such time is still shaped by work or geared to the reproduction of labor power.

Let us now examine the other side of Offe's argument: the assertion that people's attitudes towards work and the importance of work in their lives has changed, changes he discusses in a section of his article entitled "The Decline of the Work Ethic." To begin with there is little evidence that the "work ethic" —through which people embraced their work as the central activity which gave positive meaning to their lives — has ever played a major role in the history of capitalism, except for limited numbers of skilled craftspersons. The vast majority of those made "worker" in capital's social order have been semi-skilled or unskilled laborers for whom the experience of work was primarily an experience of coercion and domination. There have certainly been communities of skilled workers whose non-work lives were directly shaped by their occupations, whose leisure time associations and activities involved not only their families but also co-workers and their families, from taverns to lodges to community celebrations.¹⁷ But this kind of shaping, albeit more diffuse and less community creating as a function the hegemony of work time, has not only effected all workers but has never resulted in a replacement of the struggle against work with a struggle for work. Even the skilled craftspersons, who controlled their tools and rhythms of work and who conceived of revolution in terms of taking complete control of the means of production, fought against the subordination of their lives to work.¹⁸ Their partial identification with their work may have led them to form workers councils rather than to burn their factories during periods of revolutionary upheaval, but there is no evidence that I know of to suggest they held any kind a "work ethic" which they accepted as an expression of their desire to shape all their existence around their jobs.

While it is undoubtedly true that the implementation of Taylorism and Fordism managed to create a labor force of "mass workers" who wanted less to take over their factories than to escape them, those workers were not the first to discover the "disutility of work." Herbert Gutman has shown how generation after generation of immigrant workers had to be socialized by capital into accepting the rhythms of American industrial labor.¹⁹ From the struggles against primitive accumulation that required "bloody legislation" and colonial violence to overcome, to the long struggle over the length of the working day that achieved the five day week and the weekend,

working class history shows just how strongly people fought against working for capital long before Taylorism and Fordism.²⁰ Offe's suggestion that the working class only came to be "sensitized to (and critical of) the physical and psychological stresses of work and its associated health hazards and risks of deskilling" in the 1970s bespeaks a vast lack of familiarity with the history of working class struggle. What is new in the recent period is not the rejection of the work ethic but the power of workers to implement that rejection.

It is precisely the power of workers in recent years to resist the subordination of their lives to labor and to elaborate alternative, autonomous projects that underlies and gives credence to Offe's arguments. It is not that capital has ceased to impose work or that some other social power of domination has arisen to replace capital and its work ordered society. The question of the centrality of work in society is being raised by intellectuals because that centrality has been challenged by people who have achieved the power to refuse, to some degree, to be defined as workers. This is a refusal we can find among all sorts of people. From the so-called skilled service "professionals," whom Offe joins with others in calling a "new class," to so-called unskilled blue collar industrial workers, whether mass workers or "social" workers, we can observe such a spreading refusal of work that the few enthusiastic workers are now pejoratively labeled "workaholics" and considered by their peers to be pathological cases, needful of therapy. What Offe calls the "implosion" in the power of work to determine social life, is really the explosion in the power of people to refuse that determination. Offe and other anti-Marxists who would "go beyond" Marxist categories merely express the struggles of people to cease being workers and to become something else.

Can the Marxian categories of class and labor value be set aside as outdated vestiges of a bygone era? Not yet. Not only are most people's lives still dominated by work, despite their struggles against it, but capital still constitutes the most coherent and powerful obstacle to the escape from work, to the creation of a new social order in which work can be transformed from a mechanism of domination to one creative social activity among others. As long as capital is able to impose work on us we cannot escape having our lives, at least partially, defined in class terms. As long as this situation endures, Marx's labor theory of value still provides us with an irreplaceable theoretical framework for understanding the kind of social order we are attempting to escape and capital is attempting to maintain. To set aside that framework in a period of crisis would be to willfully blind ourselves to a crucial aspect of current conflicts — capital's projects and strategies.

At the same time, the nature of current struggles, especially that part of their content which we can characterize in terms of autonomous self-valorization, demands theoretical efforts to grasp emerging realities that constitute real alternatives to capital.²¹ Few are the Marxian categories which evoke such alternatives. Most Marxian concepts were developed for the comprehension of capital's strategies and mechanisms of domination—and they continue to be indispensable for that purpose. Some point beyond capital, especially those which contribute to our understanding of the insurmountable class antagonism posed by workers. Living labor, the collective worker, the working class for-itself, the working class as revolutionary subject, these are all concepts which emphasize a fighting alternative to the subordination of life to capital. But when Marx cogitates on the moment of revolutionary rupture and subsequent becoming he is intentionally vague with a vagueness that is the hallmark of his refusal of utopianism. Beyond capital's work centered social order where labor is the measure of value, in a beyond created through the revolutionary rupture of capital, Marx saw open potentiality. Beyond labor value he saw disposable time as a measure of value.²² But that "disposable time" was clearly time for an open ended self-valorization that could grow in many directions. Unlike capital, which imposes work as an end in itself, as the meaning of its social order, Marx's post-capitalist society has no telos, no pre-determined end, but is both a refusal of any one telos and an openness to a multiplicity of simultaneous futures. To talk concretely about movement in such directions, to understand such movements, will require the elaboration not just of one discourse but of many. Nor are such alternative discourses sometime future events. They are being elaborated now amongst the participants in such self-constituting communities of struggle as the women's and gay movements or the environmentalist movement. Many are those who are striving to invent new and more adequate ways to both create and talk about such phenomena as androgyny or biocentrism which they desire to be part of a post-capitalist world. There will be no adequate way of understanding their creations in terms of old categories and frameworks, including those of Marxism. But, to repeat, there will be no achieving the continued elaboration of such projects of self-valorization without clear understanding of the enemy constantly trying to divert or subvert or harness those projects in order to reduce them to mere moments of itself. Organization without such understanding is doomed to being outflanked or reduced to reformism. Marxism remains the clearest, most powerful framework for grasping the mechanisms of control we wish to avoid. As long as we must struggle against the efforts of capital to bind us within its world of work, new vocabularies and new theories must deal with the class nature of our efforts. Today, as in the past, all struggles are class struggles. They will continue to be until

capital is destroyed. Only then will be be able to do without Marx and his theories of work-centered capitalist society.

Negri and the Crisis of the Law of Value

Negri's argument takes exactly the opposite view of the contemporary role of labor within capitalism but comes to similar results with respect to value. Instead of labor being displaced as a major mechanism of domination, in Negri's view it has been transformed from the hidden secret of commodity fetishism and market relations whose workings could be understood through Marx's labor theory, to an unmediated vehicle of capitalist command. In his theoretical formulation this is understood in terms of a crisis in the law of value brought on by class struggle, a rise in the organic composition of capital and the displacement of labor in the production process. The crisis of labor value, he argues, has given way to the attempt by capital to impose labor not to produce wealth but as pure domination.

One of Negri's first formulations of his thesis of the crisis of the law of value appeared in "Crisis of the Planner-State: Communism and Revolutionary Organization," which was written as a discussion paper for the 1971 conference of Potere Operaio, one of the most important organizations of the extra-parliamentary Left in Italy.²³ In that paper, Negri elaborated an analysis of the crisis of class relations brought on by the international cycle of working class struggles in the late 1960s—a cycle to which the struggles of Italian workers and students had contributed on a large scale. He argued that those struggles—not only of the waged but also of the unwaged (e.g., students, housewives)—had ruptured the ability of the Keynesian state to plan capitalist development (thus the "planner state") by harnessing workers struggles (e.g., through wage-productivity deals) to become the motor of capitalist growth within the social factory. This crisis included the defeat of the Keynesian efforts to use money to mediate and manage the class relations, especially the dynamic proportionality between (social) wages and (social) productivity.²⁴ While the wage-productivity relations was ruptured in many countries, this defeat received its clearest expression in Italy in overt demands for "equal wage increases regardless of productivity" and direct struggle against work.²⁵ For Negri this rupture amounted to a crisis of the law of value understood as "the law governing the social recomposition of labour."²⁶ Taking as his theoretical point of reference the discussion in the Grundrisse of the evolving role of labor in capitalism, Negri argues that Marx's projection of crisis as a result of the rise in the organic composition of capital (in response to workers struggles) was realized through the Keynesian state. The continuing displacement of labor from

production through replacement by fixed capital, Marx argued, would produce a crisis in the role of labor and thus in the law of value. As immediate labor as such ceased to be the basis of production of wealth, labor value ceases to be a relevant category.²⁷

At this point, one might imagine Negri's argument to parallel those who would say goodbye to the working class because of the supposed dramatic drop in the numbers of workers involved in commodity production. But this is not the case. Despite the reduction in the contribution of labor to production, Negri argues that money and work both persist and remain central to capitalist command. "Money," he writes, "still remains to enforce the capitalist appropriation of commodities."²⁸ "Money no longer represents a moment in the class relation, merely mediating exchange between labour and capital. It now comes to embody the one-sidedness of the relation, the unilateral, irresolvable, antagonistic, capitalistic will to domination."²⁹ At this point the law of value "exercizes its sway entirely at this level of arbitrariness and force."³⁰ In other words, the capitalist imposition of work is now separated from wealth creation; it is purely a repressive mechanism of social control. Capital "becomes more and more dissociated from a purely value definition and operates more and more in a context of relations of force."³¹

This line of argument not only provided a theoretical understanding of the effectiveness of the struggles of Italian workers for wage equalization but also provided a theoretical justification for the other side of their struggles: the refusal of work. A year before Negri's discussion paper, the militants of Potere Operaio had written: "First comes the working class hatred for work, and then the discovery that at this stage of development of the productive forces mass industrial production is essentially makework."³² What Negri has done is to show how Marx's theory of capitalist development in the Grundrisse provides an explanation for this phenomenon; for what is "makework" if not work for work's sake as pure domination? Thus, not surprisingly, Negri reaffirms Potere Operaio's political strategy of the refusal of such makework.

But he also went beyond this; while rejecting both reformism and revolutionary terrorism, he embraced a parallel strategy of mass working class direct appropriation of wealth—one being practiced in the streets of Italy during the early 1970s in the form of proletarian shopping, the self-reduction of prices, the use of public transportation without paying and the take-over of empty houses.³³ If wealth is no longer produced primarily by direct labor, but by a "social labor" embodied in fixed capital, then "the mass content of any working-class revolutionary organizational project today . . . can only, under these conditions, be based on a programme of direct

social appropriation of the wealth that is socially produced.”³⁴ “The mass organization of an attack on social wealth as something that should be regarded as our own. Through this programme, the social individual, in the present given conditions of production, can recognize the present mode of production as a straitjacket constraining his own possibilities, and communism as the only reality which is adequate to his emergence as a new social subject of production.”³⁵

In his subsequent writings, Negri has continued to view the continuing crisis of class relations in capitalism in terms of the crisis of the law of value. In his lectures presented at *L’Ecole Normale* in Paris in 1978 and collected in his *Marx Oltre Marx*, he expanded upon his reading of the *Grundrisse* to further develop his arguments.³⁶

The problem with this view, however, is that it artificially separates the concepts of labor as producer of wealth and labor as means of domination, associating only the former with value. Marx’s concept of value, I argue, has always designated primarily the role of labor as undifferentiated capitalist command rather than its role as producer of wealth. Indeed, the very distinction between use value and value is that between wealth understood as that which labor produces of use to the working class and that which labor produces of use to capital, i.e., command. From this point of view the crisis of value which Negri sees at the heart of the crisis of the Keynesian state must be understood essentially as a crisis of command, and the various ad-hoc strategies capital has tried to use to restore its command as means to the restoration of a dynamically stable labor-based social order. Thus I can agree with Negri’s conclusions concerning the centrality of the struggle against work and the potentialities of self-valorization to create a new social order, while disagreeing with his view of the obsolescence of value, and hence of the labor theory of value.

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Notes

1. The original Frankfurt School theorists extended the analysis of domination to the sphere of culture —largely taking the vision of capitalist despotism over work for granted (Pollock’s work being the obvious exception). It has been their followers who have downplayed the centrality of work, arguing that the cultural mechanisms of domination have replaced work as the major vehicles of social control. Among those who began to spell out this argument, besides Offe, have been the currently fashionable Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975

- (originally published in French in 1973) and John Alt, "Beyond Class: The Decline of Labor and Leisure," *Telos*, Number 28, Summer 1976, pp. 55-80,
2. Claus Offe, "Work: The Key Sociological Category?" in Claus Offe, *Disorganized Capitalism*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1985, pp. 129-150.
 3. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
 4. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
 5. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
 6. *Ibid.*, p. 145-146.
 7. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
 8. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
 9. *Ibid.*, p.148-150.
 10. Among other contributions to this new anti-Marxist wave of social democracy we should mention: Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London: Verso, 1985, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Democracy and Capitalism*, New York: Basic Books, 1986,
 11. On understanding the segmentation of labor markets in terms of class decomposition see Yann Moulier, "Les théories américaines de la 'segmentation du marché du travail' et italiennes de la 'composition de classe' à travers le prisme des lectures françaises," *Babylone*, no. 0, Hiver 1981-1982, pp. 175-214. On the diffusion of the factory as both capitalist strategy and response to workers struggles see the various early issues of *Quaderni di Territorio* (Milano), English Phil Mattera, "Small is Not Beautiful: Decentralized Production and the Underground Economy in Italy," *Radical America*, Vol. 14, No. 5, September-October 1980 and Jean-Paul de Guademar, "L'usine éclatée: les stratégies d'emploi à distance face à la crise du travail," *Le Mouvement Social*, Nol. 125, Octobre-Décembre 1983, pp. 113-124. On the class struggles of those "diffused workers" see Sergio Bologna, "The Tribe of Moles: Class Composition and the Party System in Italy," in Red Notes and CSE, *Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis*, London, 1979. The hierarchical distribution of imposed work and managerial responsibility for imposing work has developed apace with the heterogeneity required for control over work. This development poses a problem only for "sociological" theories of class of the sort critiqued by Richard Gunn in "Notes on 'Class,'" *Common Sense*, No. 2, July 1987, pp. 15-25.

12. While it is undoubtedly true, as he says, that such work “in both private and public enterprises” is “overwhelmingly wage-dependent,” he ignores both the way this work has always been done, and the tremendous amount still being done, by unwaged housewives. On the takeover of women’s work and their very bodies by capitalism, see Silvia Federici and Leopoldina Fortunati, *Il Grande Calibano: Storia del corpo sociale ribelle nella prima fase del capitale*, Milano: Franco Angeli Editore, 1984 and Silvia Federici, “The Great Witch Hunt,” *The Maine Scholar*, Vol.1, No. 1, Autumn 1988, pp. 31-52. On the class struggles in these areas of the “service sector” see such works as: *Dietro La Normalità del Parto: lotta all’ospedale di Ferrara*, Venezia: Marsilio, 1978 and the section on nursing in Wendy Edmond and Suzie Fleming, *All Work and No Pay*, Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1975.
13. For an early analysis of the crisis in education in class terms which is still methodologically useful, see George Caffentzis, “Throwing Away the Ladder: the Universities in the Crisis,” *Zerowork* #1, December 1975, also see Bologna, op. cit..
14. Among such studies see Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, New York: Vintage, 1964, Joel Spring, *Education and the Rise of the Corporate State*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1972, Martin Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism*, New York: David McKay, 1974, and Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*, New York: Basic, 1976.
15. A seminal article on the rise of the Keynesian state which is the political framework for the management of consumerism is Antonio Negri, “Keynes and Capitalist Theories of the State Post-1929,” in Toni Negri, *Revolution Retrieved: Selected Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis & New Social Subjects*, 1967-1983, London: Red Notes, 1989, pp. 9-42.
16. Baudrillard’s work on consumption of symbols in *Pour une critique de l’économie politique du signe* (1972) emphasizes an interesting side to the class politics of consumption but in no way undermines the argument that most consumption is still geared to the reproduction of life around work. Indeed much of the consumption of symbols has to do with the social reproduction of the wage hierarchy.
17. See John Alt, op.cit. who summarizes the literature on “occupational communities.”
18. See Sergio Bologna, “Class Composition and the Theory of the Party at the Origin of the German Workers’ Council Movement,” *Telos* #13, Fall 1972, pp. 4-27. (Originally published in *Operai e Stato*, Milano: Feltrinelli 1972)

19. Herbert Gutman, "Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3, June 1973, pp. 531-588.
20. Marx's sketchy treatment in *Capital* of the resistance to induction into capital's labor force and the subsequent struggle to limit then reduce the time costs of that induction has been followed by considerable labor history which has documented, even if in passing, those struggles against the subordination of life to work. We should take that history seriously and recognize how the struggle over work has always been at the heart of the class struggles of capitalism.
21. On the concept of self-valorization see Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, South Hadley: Bergin & Garvey, 1984, especially Lesson Eight on Communism & Transition, Harry Cleaver, "Marxian Theory and the Inversion of Class Perspective in its Concepts: Two Case Studies" (typescript) 1989 and Ann Lucas de Rouffignac and Harry Cleaver, "Self-Valorization and the Mexican Peasantry," (typescript) 1989.
22. The key discussion of this concept is in the "Fragment on Machines" in Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1973, pp. 699-711.
23. Toni Negri, "Crisis of the Planner-State: Communism and Revolutionary Organization," in Negri, *Revolution Retrieved*, op. cit., p. 101.
24. That is to say the management of the more or less equal growth of working class income (necessary labor) and its productivity both in the production of surplus value bearing commodities and in the production of labor power.
25. "The Italian workers have now proposed the total rejection of work and the rejection of the idea that wages must be rewards for work. We are asking for equal pay for everyone, a demand which renounces the division of skilled and unskilled workers, unemployed and employed, developed areas and , employed and pre-employed (students and youth), employed and post-employed (the aged). The workers ask that wages no longer be geared to productivity. . ." *Potere Operaio*, "Italy 1969-1970: A Wave of Struggles," a supplement to *Potere Operaio*, no. 27, June 27-July 3, 1970.
26. Toni Negri,
27. "As soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value." *Grundrisse*, p. 705.
28. Negri, *Revolution Retrieved*, op. cit., p. 101.

29.*Ibid.*, p. 102.

30.*Ibid.*, p. 101.

31.*Ibid.*, p. 127. In Negri's view at that time, the major vehicle for the imposition of work as domination was the multinational corporation which had eclipsed the nationstate to form an "Enterprise State," *Ibid.*, pp. 118-124.

32.Potere Operaio, "Italy 1969-1970: A Wave of Struggles," op. cit..

33.See for example, Bruno Ramirez, "Working Class Struggle Against the Crisis: Self-Reduction in Italy," *Zerowork* #1, December 1975, pp. 143-150.

34.Negri, *Revolution Retrieved*, op. cit., p. 118.

35.*Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

36.Antonio Negri, *Marx Oltre Marx*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1979. Available in English as *Marx Beyond Marx*, op. cit.