THE INVISIBLE FINGER

NCTU KAPITAL KLASS 2015-2016
List of Miscontents

This zine is the work of the members of the class: Capitalism and Cultural Studies at National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan. The paper is a collection of essays (articles) inspired by Marx’s *Das Kapital* read as a radical critique of political economy’s fetishism of the market, not some invisible hand. All essays are built around the appearance of capital in contemporary society. However, through the variety of cultural backgrounds of the authors, the essays are distinctive in style and unpredictable in approach.

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[NCTU Social Research and Cultural Studies, Capitalism and Cultural Studies Course, 2015-2016 Printing by that shop on the hillock beside the scooter park area. Red Salute Kobe and John Hutnyk.]

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https://capitalnctu.wordpress.com/2016/01/13/the-invisible-finger-2015-2016/
Let’s imagine a simple, but very promising situation. You are a lucky guy, who is about to buy a factory in one of the post-USSR countries, and your main and most important task is to show all the people, who will surround you, what the word “capitalism” means. Don’t panic! Try to calm down and make a detailed plan for your future conversions. Remember – you are the face of the market and the whole capitalist system in general.

First part of your plan – find a good place to buy. You could be the owner of any factory. The type of production is not that important in our case. Well, it will be better for you if your new purchase could produce something really unique and best selling because it will make your future work much easier. For example, let’s imagine you have a factory which produces aluminum. But not just the usual boring aluminum; let it be a super rare kind of aluminum alloy that can be used in… Oh, of course, in aerospace field! Perfect. Time to move on.

The next step– staff reduction. Soviet style industry allowed such things as “monotowns,” where one company or industry dominated all of the city or town economy. You can imagine all the problems of such a production system— inflexibility, outdated ideas about production and industry… Let them know the time for this rudiment has passed! You cannot stimulate the city or regional labor market in any better way than with dismissals. All that free labor power will definitely make the economic system much more flexible, resourceful and will bring some elements of capitalism into people’s daily life. New forms of labour will appear, people will create some new working places and produce new things (For example, someone will definitely open a bakery. Every city has a bakery!), which means other people will buy it. Here you go – waking up the market and inspiring consumerism! Exactly the thing soviet economy didn’t have at all. Plus, those who will stay on the factory production will work much harder – you will let them know that no one can take their place for nothing, right? In case they do not get your main idea, there are always those who will be fired. Double profit!

Don’t forget about the fact that this step will help the people embrace capitalist values. Those free workers will definitely find (or at least try to find) some jobs and will create some products. And the others will start to buy them, and step-by-step consummation will progress. And who started that? Right, that was you!

Then the most important (and the most difficult) part begins. How to reorganize the production process in the right way? Don’t worry. We all know that soviet economy was working for a result, so you could get lucky enough to buy a fully equipped factory. With 90% probability, you will also buy this place at a pretty low price. You’ll probably need to refresh it a bit, but that’s not the worst of your worries. Remember– post-soviet countries have very unstable economic systems. Even if you are the one with the important mission of bringing a normal capitalist production system into this place, don’t get carried away with this. Do not forget why you came – you came here...
to make a profit! So focus on the technical part of the question.

As you should always remember, the best way to increase your profit is increasing surplus value. As we’ve already mentioned, you can imagine we have a fully equipped factory with machines from 60th or 70th modernization waves. So, as long as we remember that economics are unstable in this part of the world, you can leave it like that and not waste a lot of money for modernization. Look at all the pros and cons— and make the right choice! Machines are your best friends— they were created for producing surplus value, keep that in mind. If you were careful enough and didn’t skip the second step with staff reduction, you can enjoy the result. Less people work on the same amount of machines— looks like the perfect plan, doesn’t it? Also don’t hesitate to reduce the staff once more. Remember the theory of compensation that Marx was discussing? The one where workers were replaced by machines and supposed to find another job, in a non–machinery field? In reality this process of compensation just makes the labor power cheaper, and this is exactly what you need!

Now, when you put everything in order, it’s time to think about selling the product. Don’t think about it as the easiest and most boring part of the whole process. On the contrary, this could be the most exciting and profitable part.

As an owner of some kind of really unique production, you should understand that you will have customers all around the world. So use them! They need you— you need extra coins. What harm will come if you just increase the price of your production? Nothing at all, so go ahead. Even if you are disappointed with your factory efficiency and your workers’ efforts, try to avoid any deals between the factory itself and the customers. Create a company — or even a couple of them— especially for selling whatever you produce. The term “offshore company” is too rude and primitive. Call it a “mutual help company”— you are happy, customers are happy, and your subordinates are learning the main principles of the correct usage of capital. No one will ever create any more sufficient scheme than this, it existed before you stepped into the capitalist way and it will last even when you’ll decide to retire. You practically don’t need to do anything to get the profit— except, probably, being in a good relationships with those other companies managers. By the way, if you owe your father–in–law or your cousin, making them managers of such “mutual help” companies could be a good way to pay the debt. Don’t thank me.

Nicely done! Enjoy your perfect scheme. You showed them all what “capitalism” means and taught people to cherish and enjoy it. Now you are totally gorgeous. ✪
In 1880, Karl Marx made a list of workplace inquiries to try to reveal the exploitations of capitalism. After seeing the list, I decided to do my own inquiries (with some tweaks) about Taiwan’s major English cram school industry to see if we have made any progress in the last 135 years of capitalism. Through written and verbal interviews, follow-up questions, and my own five years’ experience in the field, what I found is that the exploitations of capitalism are more subtle, but still present. Instead of child labor, there is now cheap immigrant labor. Instead of pay according to sex, there is now pay according to nationality and skin color, with gender modifying these categories. The four main interviewees were white nationals of the U.S., Britain, Scotland, and Australia. There is not a readily apparent difference between the labor of the English speaking countries, although some cram schools will insist on the use of either American or British accents and grammar. Skin color, however, is a major factor in employment. The tricks of capitalism have become more insidious indeed, but the wealth of the workers is still extracted a dollar here and a dollar there through ingenious calculations based on time, legality, race, and gender.

**The Cram School System**

Cram schools in Taiwan are private educational institutions offered either as an alternative to public education or as an after-school program. The English institutions sometimes offer other subjects in English or Chinese (such as science and math). The schools can range from a single school owned by a single individual to the much more common group of several schools in a region to island-wide franchises or island-wide corporations. These schools are clearly lucrative based on their sheer number across the island. The Ministry of Education reported that there were 18,799 short-term cram schools in 2013; this equates to about one school for every 280 students, including university and supplementary education students.

**Division of Labor**

In all four of my case studies, the workers’ main jobs included only themselves and one or two other teachers as the main English teachers. In all cases, there were CT’s (Chinese teachers, or co-teachers) who divided the duty with the English teachers. The main focus for the English teachers is, of course, teaching. In these cases, homework grading is not often the responsibility of the English teacher and is the CT’s responsibility, although this responsibility can be divided, or, in the case of writing exercises or exams, given entirely to the English teacher. Discipline in the sense of classroom management tended to be taken over by the English teacher in these four cases, but there was also an undertone of somewhat physical discipline from some of the CT’s. With young children, the CT is responsible for feeding the children, changing their clothes, wiping them after the bathroom, cleaning up vomit, etc., although the English teacher can share some of these responsibilities in some cases.

Cleaning, maintenance, food preparation, and management are invariably performed by non-white employees. Cleaning is often performed in the classroom by the CT (although at one school there was a day set aside where the English teacher needed to help with a deep clean of the room twice a year). Outside of the classroom, cleaning and food preparation are performed either by an older Taiwanese woman or a Southeast Asian woman (called Auntie). Management is often an early–30’s Taiwanese person. English teachers are usually university graduates in their mid–20’s to mid–30’s. CT’s are quite often Taiwanese girls in their early to late 20’s.

**The Pay Discrepancy**

Per hour and per responsibilities, non-white workers often work more than English teachers, however despite this division of labor, when the interviewees were asked, “What is the highest wage in your workplace?” they invariably answered, “Probably mine.”

Taiwanese girls get about half of the wage that their white counterparts make in the same classroom. It is safe to say that non-Taiwanese, non-white custodial and cooking staff make even less. Even non-white native English speakers have been reported to struggle to find the same number of job offers or equal pay as their white counterparts. There is therefore a definite racial and national aspect to the cram school industry, where race, sex and nationality define job positions, responsibility, and pay. For instance, the gardener at one school was a male native of Latin America, while the cleaner at another school was a Filipino woman. Divides happen also among native–speaking English teachers. For example, this position was advertised in the Facebook group “Hsinchu English Teachers”:

“TLI is looking for a full–time female English teacher who can also help with
other projects, specifically social media, on a part-time basis.”
Notably, there is in this ad a connection between sex and social skills. This indicates a possible reason for labor division (other than the obvious explanation of perceived English language ability).

The more domestic and “motherly” duties such as cleaning and caring for students are left to female workers. Nutrition is often the responsibility of an older Taiwanese woman, while student hygiene is the duty of younger Taiwanese women. This appears to be both gendered and national. Perhaps domestic duties are not as valued as technical knowledge of English, however there may be other factors (see below). This domestic and emotional labor is also simply part of perception, as the male interviewees reported that part of their nervous strain came from emotional labor, which they gladly do out of love for the children (but are apparently not recognized as being capable of).

There is also a discrepancy between what the employer receives and what they pay. One worker reported that he did not need supplemental income because his in-laws own the apartment he stays in and his wife has an income (about half of his). However, later in the survey he wrote that he does private lessons at a much higher wage than his school pays. Another worker reported that one of his schools makes from one student in one month the same rate that they pay him in the same period. Multiply that rate by 15 or so students, and it becomes clear the school is making much more than they are paying in labor. The same interviewee also reported that he is working three jobs in a desperate bid to support his wife at the same time as trying to save for his future. It seems to be a common theme that these workers are living for the present, and saving nothing for the future.

**Work Environment**

There are not many reported hazards and threats in the workplace, but there are a couple of problems that were reported. First, of course, working around large groups of children, illness and hygiene are issues. Teachers report being exposed to bodily fluids, and “foot and mouth disease,” was an instant topic brought up by two of the teachers. The U.S. worker reported that in his former workplace, a foot and mouth disease outbreak in the classroom would cause the cancellation of class for one week. Since each teacher had a yearly (unpaid) one week vacation, if an outbreak happened, they would consider that the week of vacation and not allow the teachers to schedule another one at a chosen time. In this case, foot and mouth disease is a good way to make money since the teacher would not have to be paid, no substitute would need to be hired to take their place, and food, electricity, and property costs would be virtually nothing for that classroom for one week.

On the topic of electricity costs, the work environment was reported to be uncomfortable at times because of the heat.

“In the summertime, July, August, whatever, they start to get hot. The teachers...[in these schools, th]ey’re just pinching money [...] the problem with like, even they were doing this at Kornell kindly in the morning, where they’re making [...] well, twenty to thirty thousand U.S. dollars per classroom a month, in this school, in these beautiful facilities but then they try to sit there and explain that, ‘Oh we can’t turn on the air-con when it’s a hundred degrees at eight a.m. or nine a.m., we can’t turn it on until ten a.m., ‘cause that’s—that’s, you know, the okay time,’ because [...] they sit there, and they...I know that, you know, that they’ve done the math.”

He went on to explain that according to the number of kilowatt-hours of electricity consumed, the price per hour increases, so the schools have figured out how to stay under the threshold for the next level. He then continued to explain another aspect of the working environment at a different school:

“It’s just hot, and the kids are uncomfortable and I’m uncomfortable, and she’s—my co-teacher had me down to like the second, because we had video, you know, cameras in the classroom, which I never liked...and...they’ve got you up there on stage, because she felt like she was constantly being monitored...”

This monitoring is not for legal purposes, but for a Bentham-esque theory of increasing productivity. This is partially evidenced by the answers when asked if the government regulates health and safety. One interviewee answered that he simply did not know, and also did not know if there was fire safety equipment in his workplace. However, two others immediately answered yes, because, “The government comes, and we have to leave.” This highlights a common practice with several kindergarten cram schools, where it is actually illegal for foreign nationals to teach kindergarten, so when government inspectors visit, the foreign workers need to hide. Imagine the effect this has on the legal rights and contracts for kindergarten workers (who are not told their position is illegal before coming to the country). They are continually in a legal grey area, including the open question of what would happen in the case of an emergency.

**Unpaid Time**

National holidays are few, usually a handful of days throughout the year for which workers get one day off (and some workplaces make up for it by adding a Saturday makeup day), and Chinese New Year, which can be up to nine days. Some schools also have summer and winter breaks, or summer and winter school where hours are reduced. None of the workers
interviewed reported being paid for vacation. They can also take leave if they schedule it in advance and find a substitute teacher, often paid the same before-tax rate by the teacher, who has to pay taxes on this amount themselves.

Breaks are sometimes unpaid, or used as an opportunity to rapidly eat before the next class. Going to and from work is of course unpaid, but the longest commute reported was about fifteen minutes. Grading homework and planning lessons can be unpaid. In some kindergartens, workers are paid by the day, in others, hourly. In the daily kindergartens, the workers are offered a meal with the students, and allowed to leave while the children take a nap. This is calculated as time not at work, so instead of 2500nt (a common daily pay for kindergarten) for 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. being calculated as 357nt per hour for 7 hours, it is calculated as 500nt per hour for 5 hours, even though the lunch break is not quite 2 hours. To attract workers, schools will also sell the five to ten minute breaks between classes as time off as well as planning periods where English teachers are not teaching, but are making lesson plans or filling out parent-teacher communication books for their students.

For planning lessons, some schools provide curriculum, some do not. In the largest chain school, curriculum is written by staff in the central office. Other schools source their curriculum from local teachers for no extra pay. Still others purchase outside curriculum. Training is usually done by observing other teachers in the workplace, although the largest chain has a week of initial training (or four days of rush training), and one day every few months for the first year. None of this training is paid, and workers are required to skip work at their own cost to attend.

Finally, there is the issue that many workers are coming from overseas to teach, and returning home for their unpaid holidays. These flight tickets are at their own cost, as is everything else. Healthcare is provided by the employee and the government, there are virtually no retirement plans, no parental leave, or any other benefits. Workers are expected to pay their own way to Taiwan, sometimes by paying an agent, make a down payment to rent an apartment, acquire transportation, and begin working immediately.

Conclusions
The working conditions of Taiwan’s cram schools may not be as horrendous as the factories in Marx’s Capital, but capitalism is still alive and well here. The unpaid time adds up, the cutting of corners to save money does as well. When race, sex, nationality, and legal issues are added into the mix, the disgusting efforts for profit become clear. But why are English teachers paid double that of their Taiwanese counterparts? Is it because of their education, English abilities, a white face that is good for advertising, the fact that Taiwanese girls are expected to live with their parents until marriage, or the fact that English teachers have to travel and live in a foreign country? Clearly it is simpler than that. Everyone is paid the lowest possible rate, which will keep them willing to work for their company. Societal perceptions about race and gender simply serve to justify this method of capitalism to any of the too-curious who ask. Once justified, the curious have no reason not to get back to work. ✪
Did a new form of proletariat emerge during the twenty-first century? They have work related to the web and creativity, but their new jobs consist, for the most part, in the realization of alienating, tiring, and repetitive tasks in return for low wages.

Among this segment of the proletariat with their new jobs, we find graphic designers, content editors, community managers, video editors, audio editors, website designers, programmers, video game developers and more.

More and more schools of higher education open their doors to provide training to enable their students to work towards web occupations. These courses, which are often in private institutes, are developing more and more, and yet they are by no means competitively priced. Indeed, the fees for training can climb quite high, measured in terms of the institutions and their rankings. The language of these schools is one, which sells the “opportunity” to build strong professional futures by finding the “ideal job.” But in a lot of cases, the hint of a job is less than a promise. Perhaps, the students find a job, and maybe they receive a salary, of course, but the pay will be meagre, a low return for all of the work that they will have to do.

These new digital professions are attractive for several reasons: Because they give the feeling of innovation. Because people can be passionate about something and they think that if they work in this area they will be content; because the work seems easy; For example, all young people know how to perfectly use Facebook, Twitter or other social networks to keep in touch with their friends. So they say to themselves, “Why not make it a career?” This is how the “social media editors,” otherwise known as “community managers,” are born. Their job is to feed online discussions about a product or service with Internet users. But the competition is harsh.

There is also another example in video games, which is a huge industry, and without a doubt, benefitting from a positive image in the minds of many aspiring professionals. Combining the cool image of technology startups and the creative aspect inherent in the entertainment industries, gaming appears as an attractive sector for many students or young, passionate media literate types. However, degraded working conditions are often the norm for an industry that was originally built upon dedication and hard work. At first, the creation of video games was not a profession, but a hobby for insatiable players of video games. But year after year, the video game world underwent strong evolution. What was just a passion quickly became a vocation. The number of universities and schools offering degrees in order to conform to these aspirational professions is constantly increasing. Over the years, the professionalization of the sector has often been to the detriment of this passionate appearance. And this passion is now often used as a pretext to justify poor working conditions, low pay and certain insecurity.

Among these difficult working conditions, there is the famous “Crunch Time” known in the world of programming. This term describes the long hours (sometimes more than 70 hours per week) that accompany the extra work required to reach certain goals within the set deadlines. The practice is not in itself reprehensible. Originally,
the Crunch concerned only the last stages of a project. When the possible release date of a game approaches, developers push themselves to ensure that the product on which they worked for many months is of the highest possible quality. These long hours are sometimes moments of conviviality where team cohesion is strengthened around a common goal, or they can be hours of hard work that represent a lot of stress for workers. Unfortunately, we witness in many studios the multiplication of these periods of “Crunch Time” throughout the development of a video game, to provide promotional videos, technical demonstrations, or test versions within the time limit. Some cases have even been controversial due to the scale of the abuse. For example, the Australian studio, Team Bondi, developer of the game “LA Noire,” has been the subject of condemnation from within the industry and specialized media for imposing on these development teams periods of Crunch Time more than 110 hours per week during a part of the seven years of development of the game. More than one hundred employees who have not kept the pace over the years have seen their names removed from the credits of the game. Moreover, Bondi studio illustrates another danger for the workers in the sector: that of poverty. After the disappointing sales of LA Noire, released in April 2011, were unable to profit from the seven long years of development, the studio closed its doors on October 5th of that year.

THE WORKING CROWD

Today, the vanguard of the digital work goes much further. Now, when we talk about the working crowd it literally means crowd work; in other words, collaborative work. Which comprises of, for example, watching hundreds of videos to censor some images. Or comment on the web page of a politician or a celebrity. Or check full data sheets. All this, for payments that range from 50 cents to a few dollars per hour. Amazon is a pioneer in the sector with its “Mechanical Turk” [it’s a corporate website which offers micro-tasks to workers], but factories like this are numerous: there is also CrowdFlower, a competitor, which has five million registered workers in 280 countries.

There are also the latest innovations regarding money, which is virtualized, too. For example, Amazon workers are often paid not in dollars, but in dematerialized money to spend on the platform to buy books, shoes or DVDs.

So now we can ask the question, “Are the Web 2.0 Workers really exploited in the Marxist sense of the term?” The answer is yes, because, Web Workers provide a lot of work by performing alienating tasks, and their superiors realize much of the profit from their work.

SO, HOW COULD WE NOT THINK OF MARX AND HIS OPERATING CONCEPT?

For Marx, exploitation is the surplus value generated by the work of the employee by the owner of capital, insofar as the realized capital gain is disproportionate to the salary of the worker. So these web 2.0 workers are indeed exploited because they generally have little or no benefit from the work that they do, whereas the surplus value of their labor is realized in the profits of the owners of the companies, i.e., gaming companies, that own their work. The rhetoric of web 2.0 sells everyone on the “opportunity” to build their professional future, finding the ideal job, and making the future in this sector in terms of such new jobs. But it is an empty promise. The worker receives a wage, of course, but low pay, a meager return for all the value of their work. Is it impossible to live by making this work? This form of work is clearly a new form of exploitation. The worker has the impression of making money easily, doing what they enjoy, while the company makes a profit with costs much lower than if they had to create a more formal employment structures for this “dirty” work.
I. Art Museums In Relation to *Das Kapital*

Art can be interpreted as a commodity produced by means of human labor power in order to satisfy a variety of human wants, ranging from the desire to acquire such objects to the desire for creative expression. Additional understandings of art, including my own, suggest that art can be evaluated as a subjective experience rather than an objective entity. The production of art is an activity unique to human beings, as it is a result of advanced cognitive human evolution, distinctly separating us from other animal species. Although some animals may indirectly create objects that parallel art as a result of their instinctive behavior\(^1\), it is only humans who directly create such commodities for consumption and/or appreciation.

In *Das Kapital*, Marx argues that our social conditioning has directly affected our social relationship with art by relying on our perceptions to interpret value. Modern capitalist society evaluates art in terms of its exchange value (price) and surplus value, without ever actually defining the true labor value objectified within artwork. The exchange value of art, or its monetary value, fluctuates according to trends, cultures, and rarity. Exchange values in the art world are difficult to define because they are based on perception and subjectivity. According to Marx’s interpretation of labor theory of value, “nothing can have value without being an object of utility.”\(^2\) When the utility and perception embodied in art are stripped away, only labor resides. In Marxist terms, labor is defined as the source of true value, and is independent from exchange value and use value. The Marxist definition of value directly challenges conventional perceptions of monetary value in the art world.

The exchange value of art, or its monetary value, fluctuates according to trends, cultures, and rarity. Exchange values in the art world are difficult to define because they are based on perception and subjectivity. According to Marx’s interpretation of labor theory of value, “nothing can have value without being an object of utility.”\(^2\) When the utility and perception embodied in art are stripped away, only labor resides. In Marxist terms, labor is defined as the source of true value, and is independent from exchange value and use value. The Marxist definition of value directly challenges conventional perceptions of monetary value in the art world.

Any monetary excess on the valuation of an artwork compared to its true labor value is considered surplus value. Art museums breed collections under the assumption that a select group of work will yield future surplus value due to its rarity or perceived aura. Members of the art community capitalize on artwork through carefully orchestrated appraisal catalogues, auctions, and exhibitions that manipulate a surplus value, which benefits them. Art museums house these art commodities, or “congealed labor time,”\(^4\) within an institution that only further exacerbates these capitalist notions of exchange value and surplus value. The top–down power distribution led by museums directors, curators, and collectors perpetuate bourgeois, elitist valuations of art, which do not properly reflect ideologies that can truly educate and represent the working class. Contrary to many art museums’ mission statements, which are generally to encourage the development and study of fine arts, museum institutions perpetuate a cycle of capitalist economic behavior by fetishizing elite artwork, rarity, and (future) surplus value.

II. Marx Misunderstood

In *Das Kapital*, Marx never explicitly stated his stance on the arts, but he did distinguish between the communist notion of creation for use value, and the capitalist notion of creation for surplus value. Nevertheless, several of his supporters continued to force their own ideological interpretations as an extension to his original manifesto.

It is important not to confuse Stalinist views on art with Marxism. Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, and even Mao in his early years never advocated the use of socialist realism, or state interference in the arts. Under communism, art may be political, propagandistic, socially critical, highly experimental, and above all, diverse.

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1. Some animals instinctively create intricate forms of shelter as a means for survival. Weaver Birds, for example, meticulously weave small twigs and grass into nests that resemble carefully crafted baskets. In Chapter 7 of *Capital*, Marx differentiates human and animal labor in his analysis of “the worst architect vs. the best bee”.


3. The utility of art in this article, although trivial, is defined as decoration, pleasure, enjoyment, and appreciation.

Contemporary misinterpretations of communist artwork assume that the content in art must be censored, but this is untrue. Marx’s analysis on value and its relationship with the capitalist system prove that it is selfish intent and elitist attitude in art production that needs to be overthrown. Mao articulated this critique well in a Pre–Cultural Revolution speech called, “Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art,” on May 2, 1942:

“The purpose of our meeting today is precisely to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people ... with one heart and one mind. What are the problems that must be solved to achieve this objective? I think they are the problems of the class stand of the writers and artists, their attitude, their audience, their work and their study.”

In this speech, Mao expands on Marxism’s revolutionary break with traditional attitudes about art. This vision insists reformations on the exclusionary behaviors of art institutions and education channels would actually result in greater creativity, and a flourishing arts scene.

III. An Alternative Art Museum Ecosystem

This proposal may be what Marx had intended art institutions follow in order to truly realize their mission statements. The aforementioned laws of value would no longer function in this proposition for an alternative art museum ecosystem.

In her article, “The art museum ecosystem: a new alternative model,” Yuha Jung advocates for an ecosystem that is communal in its knowledge construction and “inclusive of diverse perspectives from museum staff members, visitors, other cultural institutions, and even the natural world.” She believes in this way museums are “part of a larger social, economic, and educational web, and cannot be isolated entities if they want to be part of the living community.” Jung’s proposal essentially calls for a complete overhaul on the hierarchical structure of museum institutions in order to more effectively include the wants of the masses. This alternative art museum ecosystem ensures inclusion of a communal whole and not an exclusive handful of operatives. This reorganization on class structure in art museums does not prohibit artistic content or free expression, and instead ensures further expansion of them.

Opening these dialogue channels would promote representation and would be a more accurate reflection of proletariat ideologies. Most importantly, a dynamic shift between exchange value and use value in social structure would occur, impeding elitist morale from interfering in museums’ true mission statements.


Every Morning We Wake Up On The Wrong Side Of Capitalism

Johanna Malanda

“Money absolves, money condemns.” This Old Danish adage, with its release and capture structure, seems to emphasize the frenzied contradiction of our contemporary societies. Maybe we should talk about a psychological dependence written into human history. Governments are now hunting credit like crazed drug addicts. The entire society refuses to admit its own addiction to money. But at the same time, it is oftentimes thought that money will set you free: money as a release from debt and pain. A down payment on pleasure, through access to tremendous products and exclusive experiences. Money gets you in the club, and nowadays, some club members are even making money while they are sleeping. Traders, CEOs, pop singers and many others. Our complex enslavement to the fictions of money is the result of a long process we call capitalist accumulation, recognized perhaps for the first time in 1753, “and we still call it capitalism.” In 1867, Karl Marx wrote Das Kapital, the first comprehensive radical dissent of the system and now in a certain manner, his critique has become a permanent part of any moral mechanics.

HELLO WORLD

Today, in our societies, the liberal perspective leads to overcoming capitalism. Although many people, political parties and organizations try to bring this system down. It is easy to understand how capitalism provides benefits to governments, multinationals and most widely, to wealthy people: money brings more money. But what about the others? Obviously, “the others” represent these 99% of people on Earth, as 1% of the richest people on Earth will soon hold fifty percent of the world’s wealth according to the Oxfam NGO. On the one hand, capitalism appears, or wants to appear as be a way to free the people from their troubles, help them to be educated, to live as fully and as comfortably as possible, for as long as possible, to secure them against life’s risks. This sounds like the seven letters everyone aspires to, something called... Liberty. At least, they/we are supposed to believe in this hypothesis. On the other hand, capitalism can be seen as the entire world’s jailer. Third world, the low-paid workers, unemployed people. It would be obscure or even obscene to consider them as the happy ones in this system. Also, let us consider collateral victims, subjected under governmental pressure to oil wars, natural disasters and much more. Notwithstanding these conditions, do such people have the choice to be a part of the capitalist system? As the other guy says, “First things first.” Eat, drink, and pee. But it is essential to understand that our primitive needs are, sometimes, or most of the time in Western countries, overcome by social needs. People need to move up the career ladder, so people need money.

Also, the increase of individualism in society since decades or even centuries, leads, once again to the increase of capitalism. For many people, the most important thing in life is to get money in a bank account. And of course, become one of the showpieces at work to avoid being left behind. What for? To consume and get the feeling of being free. It is also an important point to consider: the cost of getting money. For many, pressure and stress at work do not matter as long as there is money at the end of the month.

SWEET MONEY VS. VIOLENT DESIRES

Actually, money is a particularly useful tool. It is a very effective way to reward someone for work, service or any other occasion. When our granny gave us a coin and said, “Go buy candy,” she was operating the best practice version of the concept of money: we could indeed decide to buy some candy, toys or save the money for a new bike. In this vision, we were free, money is extremely liberating. But when there is no more granny to give money, everyone has to start the worker experience! Karl Marx in Das Kapital regretted the fact that the worker “is compelled by social conditions, to sell the whole of his active life, his very capacity for labour, in return for the price of his customary means of subsistence, to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage.”

So, shall we finish with money and eradicate the source of all our ills? The first thing is that, money is the externalised projection of human desires, but of course, in the form of a market desires. This is the human violent desire to get money that is also part of Money itself. Money is a concentration of needs, desires and violence. In 1844, Karl Marx said, “By possessing the property of buying everything, by possessing the property of appropriating all objects, money is thus the object of eminent possession. The universality of its property is the omnipotence of its being. It is therefore regarded as an omnipotent being. Money is the procurer.
between man’s need and the object, between his life and his means of life. But that which mediates my life for me, also mediates the existence of other people for me. For me it is the other person.”

A key point is that, due to the rise of individualism in our societies, it is easy to see that capitalism works thanks to its selfish virtue. It is actively involved in the impoverishment of societies because capitalism is the greatest generator of inequalities. To make the rich get richer, it must ensure that the poor get poorer.

DEAR WORKERS

“Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the labourer works, is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has purchased of him. If the labourer consumes his disposable time for himself, he robs the capitalist.” (Das Kapital, Marx, Volume I, Chapter 10, Section 1).

In Das Kapital, Volume I, Karl Marx clearly emphasizes that in our society (Marx’s reference is to those societies under capitalist mode of production that have fully embraced wage labour, usually US and Europe is implied here, but also Canada, Australia and more and more everywhere) we cannot live without money, besides that in capitalist society, the money provider is the employer for the average individual. The issue of workforce is strongly related to the centrality of money. But he suggests that if there is alienation to capitalism, it is not due to money itself.

The impenetrable necessity of reproducing our self in a biological and material existence is at work. In fact, Marx’s theoretical critique of money can be extended to the view that capitalism has organized a global money addiction. There is an historical evolution that brought structures of market economy through extreme division of labour in which the majority of the people have been completely deprived of all possibilities to provide themselves the means for their material reproduction and their needs. Therefore they are urged to work for an employer in order to survive. Indeed they are free in the double sense, free of all possessions, and free to sell themselves to the highest bidder.

GREEDY GOLD DIGGER

Moreover, the modification of capitalism through times leads us to ask ourselves some critical questions about what capitalism really is. Imagine a tobacconist, she owns her business, trying to maintain its finances as best she can, trying to be attractive to customers. Money is a drug, some sort of strange drug that only makes you feel like you might be high, but you are instead anxious and deeply competitive, addicted already.

One point cannot be avoided. The fact that capitalism organized a global money addiction, and money addiction led to work alienation. That point seems to be the darkest one, but it is fair to ask if the darkest part of capitalism is not that people are not aware that they are part of it. As with the biggest dictatorships, capitalism needs ignorance to survive. Capitalism needs blindness to impose its superiority complex, its power. Everyone should be asked to rethink their consumption, and perhaps admit that as long as money is an incentive to produce something useful to society. It is beneficial, but since nowadays it is no longer always possible to get rich by hard work, money becomes a drug. All the big fortunes are based on speculation, stock exchanges and all the financial tools to make money without having any relevance regarding society.

As can be seen everyday, there is justice, medicine, health, culture and ways of life that are fully determined by the specific amount of money involved by the protagonists. It would be easy to think that original sin consists in the evidence that owning money is to possess the world. As owning a lot of money means possession is a big power in the world. Even education is a part of this capitalist system. In 2013, in the United States of America, two-thirds of the students were indebted because of loans they made to have access to the university. In some part, it would be fair to admit that capitalism is totalitarian and selective. The system is imposing itself to a global scale. People cannot choose to be a part of it or not. They have to.

WHEN ILLUSION MERGES ALIENATION

2007, in France, Nicolas Sarkozy won the presidential campaign thanks to his famous slogan, "Work more, earn more". In France, it seems clear the majority of the population recognize themselves with this capitalist “catchy phrase.” In “The meaning of Sarkozy”, Alain Badiou describes Sarkozy as an obsessive man with a disorder that leads to a power complex akin to drug peddling. He is also addicted to media fame. Far away from purely social, environmental issues or even in time of war, what is the lesson drawn from this teaching? Do people feel like they were considered to be alienated to this system of production and work organization that almost deprive of freedom. It seems important to highlight the irrational and selfish nature of people, which, by the call money begins to dream of an illusory freedom.

Money itself overcomes as the absolute object, the universal object. To people, money is not enough to satisfy their basic needs, there is not even a way, it has become a real end in itself. Marx said, “The divine power of money is involved in its essence as generic essence alienated, alienating and alienating people.” As if there is a fruitful relationship between the essence of humankind and the emergence of money as value and unique purpose of human society.

“MONEY, A GOOD SERVANT, OR A BAD MASTER?”
Convict Labour and Capital in the Example of Russia

Aleksandr Galimov

It is common knowledge that people in general do not have a wide access to the information related to enduring the punishment and its conditions. In circumstances where this information vacuum exists, society cannot regulate this situation. Consequently, the only opportunity to shed light on such cases is through publicity from well-known individuals, such as Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, an active member of the scandalous Pussy Riot band. This vacuum oftentimes leads to the travesty of justice, as it occurs simultaneously with labour compensation in some Russian jails. It is this precise aspect that has drawn the author’s attention to choosing such an assignment topic.

The main objective of the present study is to examine the labour situation in prisons basing this research on Karl Marx’s Das Kapital terminology (i.e. the upkeep costs, labour costs, product costs etc.) in the prisons. Thus, wage is one of the sensitive issues for the prisoners. By law, they cannot receive less than the minimum wage, i.e. last year it was equal to 5554 RUR (ca 53.19£, as for Dec, 9th). What is more, the state may withhold up to 75% of this amount for the prisoner welfare, along with the actual damage compensation according to the execution writ. “In fact, it turns a strange situation: prisoners who do not work, live at the expense of the state – says one of the employees of the Federal Penitentiary Service [hereafter FPS]. And those who are working, are subtracted for the upkeep.” After deduction of the above-mentioned upkeep costs, the minimum wage that the prisoners may receive, equals to approximately 1.3 thousand RUR (ca 12.45£, as for Dec, 9th). The money they collect could be spent on purchases in a prison shop or sent to their families. What actually happens is that the prisoners’ wages may even amount to 29 RUR per month (ca 0.28£, as for Dec, 9th), as Nadezhda Tolokonnikova of Pussy Riot stated in her open letter.7 The prisoners’ relatives adduce the following vivid examples: 5–7 roubles per month at the average (ca 0.05–0.07£, as for Dec, 9th), to collect 200 roubles (ca 1.92£, as for Dec, 9th) per month is considered to be a great piece of luck. According to the online-newspaper Znak (Знак), the commodities which women’s prison IK-5 in Chelyabinsk (the Urals) off-loads, for instance, winter male suit (jacket and trousers) type B is purchased by a prison for 2500 RUR per set, by a dressmaker for 2540 roubles; the average wage of an imprisoned seamstress per month comes out from 400 to 1200 roubles (ca 3.83–11.49£, as for Dec, 9th), whilst seamstresses outside of the prison community earn, roughly said, from 16,000–18,000 roubles (ca 153.23–172.39£, as for Dec, 9th) per month. Seamstress’s labour time is specified by the Labour Code and is confined to 40 hours per week, 21 workday in a month, whereas seamstress in a prison may work 10–12 hours a day, 25–27 workdays in a month8. If deep inspections took place, the compliance monitoring authorities may raise a reasonable concern: “What is done with the rest of the money?”, though, the FPS system, in Chelyabinsk human rights activists’ opinion, is “corrupted from top to bottom”, they also add that “nothing can be done to change it in nowadays conditions”9. These violations happen even despite the fact that the present FPS considered to be the direct successor of the penitentiary system of the Soviet Union, in which, despite all the shortcomings, prisoners were paid for their work the same salary as on the outside. And since there was no chance to spend it, some prisoners could go at large with a worthy amount of money.

All in all, convict labour is an acute problem in today’s Russia. Many of those prisoners, once released from jail, do not have the will to fight for their human rights. The only way to improve the wage situation in the prisons, in my mind, is for ex-prisoners to continue mass reporting on such violations of labour laws and give further publicity to the real situation in penal institutions. As previously noted, such kind of information very seldom reaches the public. However, it is worth noting that Tolokonnikova’s letter “stirred up the swamp”10 and we can see that FPS officials have announced that they will raise prisoners’ wages and lower working hours. On the other hand, further changes would require reforms of Ministry of Internal Affairs and judicial system en bloc, which is unlikely to happen in the near future.

7 http://www.novayagazeta.ru/society/60545.html
9 Ibidem

References:

7 http://www.novayagazeta.ru/society/60545.html
9 Ibidem
Introduction:
At the beginning of the 1930s, the famous British economist John Maynard Keynes said that with rising productivity and technical innovations, people would be able to work only 15-hour weeks, and enjoy the rest of their time in other pursuits. It should not be a surprise to say that Keynes’ prophecy did not come true and instead we find ourselves working longer hours in a range of meaningless “bullshit jobs”.

David Graeber, an American anthropologist was the first one who introduced the notion of “bullshit jobs” in August 2013, and now it seems like everybody is using this term. But what does it really mean. How can you define a “bullshit job”? Graeber defines it as control jobs situated in “service” and the administrative sector, both of which have grown much during the last decades. We also saw the creation of new activities sectors, like digital works or human resources.

But how did we come to have this huge number of “bullshit jobs” when technology promised less working time than was necessary at the beginning of the industrial revolution? According to Graeber, it comes from the ruling class of the society. They do not want working people to have too much free time because free time means more time to think, and more time for studying, and it is bad for the rulers if the workers begin asking questions. Graeber’s suggestion is that the rationale for these jobs is not economical at all but a moral and political issue.

However, we should not put all workers together. There are two different kinds of “bullshit jobs”.

On the one hand, there are people who have such jobs like marketing directors, corporate layers, and people who manage each other’s affairs. On the other hand, we have people who are doing redundant and repetitive jobs like many office workers.

The difference between these two kinds of jobs comes down mainly to the salary and the privileges that are effectively granted to the first category of “bullshit jobs”. And if it makes sense, why the ruling class created alienating jobs that it should occupy itself? Despite these differences these jobs still have the same purpose: keeping people busy, but it makes them feel angry against people who have a job that brings real social and productive value.

These kinds of professions like computability office or management jobs are the cause of more and more problems in our society today. Firstly, an important part of this problem concerns all of the different types of “bullshit jobs”. The thing is people who are doing this job know that their work is useless, and they will be more useful working in a hospital or in a factory. The worst part is because they are aware what they are doing is useless they are unhappy in their working life.

One other part of the problem is about ruling people who are doing “bullshit jobs”. For the most part, these jobs are people management roles without real need; they are more about controlling workers. In our working society, there is a huge recrudescence of controlling jobs. Companies are now composed more of controlling jobs than productive jobs, and this
According to the anthropologist Graeber, it is a cause of unhappiness at work. One other side of the controlling jobs problem is that most of the time people who control are those who have never worked, for example, in the supply chain they are managing. On the top of that, these people are often earning more money than the people they control.

This problem is becoming heightened in our society. More and more workers begin to be fed up with this way of working. How can it be possible that people who do not have any real idea about how a factory works have the gall to try to manage it? More and more we attend to the multiplication of a hierarchy constitutive of “bullshit jobs” where it seems people have to control others so as to raise productivity, but of course what happens is the complete opposite. Indeed, because of this useless hierarchy, workers feel oppressed and produce less than if they were able to take their own decisions as to what will help them work better. It is unfortunately true that for working many years now in a company, it is hereafter objective as to which prevailing human being you are.

Is the situation irreversible? Is there no way to operate without “bullshit jobs” in a company today? Is it possible to bring happiness and productivity back in the companies? Even if it does not look obvious, some companies seem to manage something like worker loyalty. And it is not just small and unknown companies, but some huge corporations and even some public services manage to be popular brands in terms of workplace. Does this mean the model could be applied to the majority of the companies in the world?

An example of company which manages to deal with “bullshit jobs” to become a “free company”. SPF Mobilité et Transport is not really a company; it is the federal ministry of mobility and transports of Belgium. They raise the challenge of dealing with new methods of managing public services.

Here as well, the move came from a new director. Laurent Ledoux was hired in 2013 as president of the executive committee of SPF and planned several stages of transformation for the company. Firstly, he set up employee empowerment. That means deleting a useless hierarchy which was just there to help people talk to each other or to say to them they have to work more. These jobs are by definition “bullshit jobs”. They do not add any value to the company and they restrain value other people create.

In order to apply these changes they decided to redesign the workplace. They created a big open space where all the employees would be working together instead of in closed separate offices, where people could hide themselves. Even the director Laurent Ledoux would go to work with his employees in the open space. According to him, he wanted to create (with the employees) a company without privileges. To deal with that they have to create equality between everyone, and that means deleting controlling jobs called “bullshit jobs” by Graeber.

We can perhaps see that through the little revolutions in these two companies that “bullshit jobs” are not necessarily the future of all companies. But dealing with bullshit needs the contribution of everyone, including directors and employees. If one of them does not want to change or is too lazy to change because it may become more difficult or it will require more work, the plan fails. Today, a lot of companies try to be done with “bullshit jobs” and such work. The Federal Ministry of Mobility and Transport is just amongst many. We can also see that the production of these companies increased and that the employees are happier to work for those corporations. And all of these advantages came without any “bullshit jobs.”
The capitalistic system seems to be more all-encompassing than ever before. Our entire economic-political system is tailored to be as efficient as possible to ensure the constant growth of capital. There has always been a call to change the capitalistic character of the contemporary economic model. In light of recent events such as climate change, immigration and the financial crises, this call is increasingly urgent and is gaining in strength.

One particular element of this tailored system draws the interest when one thinks about changing the system, namely education. Education preserves and promotes the point of view of the most 'prominent' body of society. Vice-versa, education has, among others, the power to form a society's culture, economic position and political colour, thus influencing the point of view of the prominent body of society. Nowadays, governments manipulate and exploit this power as methods to increase the capital of a nation. One could almost say that it is in the full service of capital. Because of this exploitation, the educational system has acquired a capitalistic character that fosters and sustains the capitalistic system in return.

Without the division of classes there is not a group of people that has the ability to take advantage of another group of people. The capitalists are able to suppress the working class because the working class is unable to join the capitalistic class, i.e. bourgeoisie. Marx explained the separation of classes of his time through the distribution of economic and political power. Since the political power was largely determined by the power of production, the bourgeoisie used this power to protect their rights and remain the owners of their property. Although this theory is partially applicable to contemporary society, a shift has occurred to study achievements as separator of classes.

Since results of study are a main determinant for future job opportunities, one’s achievements in school are likely to affect the particular class to which someone will belong. Marx argues that employees are deliberately limited in their education to ensure their docile character. Nowadays, employees in certain areas of society are often required to have advanced skills in a particular field. However, in many cases, their education is still narrowed towards this one particular field, since the system does not require them to broaden their horizons.
When both classes are given equal opportunities in obtaining educational training, the two classes will be able to engage in exchange and cooperation. However, a separation of the bourgeoisie and proletariat is ensured through unequal access to study achievements, both on a national and international level. Various factors that cause this inequality include living environment, access to higher education and family background. These factors are very diverse, but tackling them would mean the classes could become less segregated. In future generations, some of these factors, for instance the living environment of both classes, will converge.

By creating equal opportunities, the integration between classes can become feasible. However, a less discussed topic in academia is the influence of the school system/curriculum that fosters the capitalistic system. The educational system is mainly focused to prepare the student for a job. Those who can afford to stay in the educational system the longest, i.e. perform best/conform to the system, will be rewarded in the job market. In essence, education is a competition, and as in all competitions, only the people that are best suited for the game win. The 'winners' will become part of the bourgeoisie, who have learned to believe in competition and in its beneficial character and will apply it to their future practices. The 'losers' are deemed to be part of the proletariat, who haven't acquired the right skills to obtain a more favourable position in the job market, but likewise haven't acquired alternative skills to abstain from entering the capitalistic system. On the one hand, the system creates the capitalists, trained to compete, and on the other hand the system delivers labourers to feed the capitalists, and who are not able to escape the system.

The unequal opportunities of the different classes and the competitive character of the educational system are two factors that foster capitalism. A method to counteract these phenomena is a system that focuses on intrinsic motivation. By targeting the intrinsic motivation of students, the emphasis on careers, money or winning will disappear. It is the personal joy in studying a specific topic that should drive the student to study. Moreover, class related expectations will matter less when the system does not accept the desired outcome of education from the class, but rather focuses on the desired growth of the individual.

Critics may say that only through extrinsic motivation or pressure can students yield high achievements. But are inventions, the highest achievements in science, ever created by people that were forced to make them?
I. What is Social Space?
- After the publishing of The Production of Space, Henri Lefebvre aroused a lot of curiosity about social space, especially among sociologists and philosophers. It became one of the most important themes in the past 40 years, and up until now the discussion of this topic has remained in the ascendant. • But what is social space on earth? Unfortunately, Lefebvre never gave one clear definition. His followers linked this concept to different subjects, but they did not reach an agreement about it. The uses of the term social space shares certain common features but equally reveals distinct emphases and conceptual content from author to author. Neil Smith once commented, just as mathematical space has come to represent the abstract field of natural events, social space is the humanly constituted abstracted field of societal events, and can be defined in any number of ways. In sum, social space can be understood from at least four aspects. First, geographical areas where different social groups live in; second, personal feeling of the space around or one’s social network; third, the position of individuals in the society, living areas created by human social activities. Subsequent discussion is still based on these factors.

II. The Relation Between Social Space & Capital
- First, capital turns “production in space” to “production of space”. Space is just a container, such as manual workshops or toy semi works. When people followed the production rules, it brought relative balance to market. Once businessmen found space could be used as a means of production, they changed the attribute of physical space. Space started to joined the competition, every businessmen tried their best to get the most market share. When money changed to capital and influenced the market competition, the essence of business turns to an endless war of space. • Second, capital created its own social space. When capital intruded into somewhere, the most important thing it needed to do was break the old order, and build a new one to follow its will. Capital means new factories, means a different mode of production, means civilians become workers, means traditional consumption habits are changed. This kind of coerciveness is special and unique, that is the charm of capital. • Third, social space could limit the efficacy of capital. As we all know, there is no one who will allow others to change their own living environment, especially for some this impacts upon them like the death penalty. Every social group has their own life style, when capital tries to challenge their beliefs and traditions, local people will fight back immediately, but most of the revolts were faced with repression.

III. Social Space Changed by Capital.
- To make my viewpoint clear, I will take McDonald’s as an example to explain the process. • First, geographical areas or physical space. Obviously, when capital enters some place, a new produce–transport–consume cycle–link chain will be established as soon as possible. A lot of new factories will be built, many roads are constructed, rooms are rented or bought at different corners of that place and so on. In the context of globalization, the number of foreign factories around us are growing quickly. Admit it or not, capital has changed the world, so did our life. • As the largest chain of hamburger fast food restaurants in the world, McDonald’s has at least 30,000 sub–branches spread in 119 countries all over the world, with 1.9 million employees. The symbol of McDonald’s can be found everywhere; at the same time, there are relevant integrated supply systems. Many attributes have changed. • Second, personal feeling of the space around or one’s social network. One may find everything around him changes all the time, new shops started, closure of factories, brands newborn, forgotten communication media. Social capital is a kind of capital, too and it influences personal social network more. Social capital is defined as a form of economic and cultural capital in which social networks are central, transactions are marked by reciprocity, trust, and cooperation, and market agents produce goods and services not mainly for themselves, but for a common good. In general, capital changes one’s feeling directly. • Third, the position of individuals in the society. Capital means potential and power when it came into play. One who works for McDonald’s as a cashier may identify himself differently from one who works for a local small convenience store as a cashier. Capital brings a superiority complex to everyone who works for it, you can find the wide difference between the place capital has changed and those which have not yet. • Fourth, living areas created by human social activities. This is much easier to understand. After the industrial revolution, capital sent new technologies into the world, it changed human life fundamentally. To those people, humans made a new world, and they are just in this world. • Then we can safely come to the conclusion that there is no denying that capital could change social space. And due to the greediness of capital, it will continue to change society deeper and deeper. ✪
A Worker’s Inquiry and a Tentative Analysis

Nga Khing Lim

He develops the potentialities slumbering within nature, and subjects the play of its forces to his own sovereign power. (Marx, Capital Volume 1 283)
16. Describe the hygienic conditions in the workshops; the size of the rooms, space allotted to every worker, ventilation, temperature, plastering, lavatories, general cleanliness, noise of machinery, metallic dust, dampness, etc.
Reply: The office room is about 20 square meters and used for rest and leisure of all workers. There is air conditioning throughout the year, so ventilation, temperature and plastering are good. There are no lavatories, but general cleanliness is good. The noise of machinery, metallic dust and dampness are well controlled.

17. Is there any municipal or government supervision of hygienic conditions in the workshops?
Reply: The Department of Health, Taichung City Government.

18. Are there in your industry particular effluvia, which are harmful for the health and produce specific diseases among the workers?
Reply: To carry heavy goods.

19. Is the shop overcrowded with machinery?
Reply: No, it is spacious and not overcrowded with machinery.

20. Are safety measures to prevent accidents applied to the engine, transmission and machinery?
Reply: Yes, workers are required to wear sneakers and aprons to protect their bodies.

21. What breaks are there during the working day?
Reply: For every four hours' work, there will be one hour's break.

22. Do you take meals at definite intervals, or irregularly? Do you eat in the workshop or outside?
Reply: Yes, I take meals at definite intervals and eat in the office.

23. Does work go on during meal times?
Reply: No.

24. Does work go on at night?
Reply: Yes, there are night shifts.

25. State the number of hours of work of children and young people under 16.
Reply: No.

26. Has the government or municipality applied the laws regulating child labor? Do the employers submit to these laws?
Reply: Yes, the government has and the employer does.

27. Do schools exist for children and young people employed in your trade? If they exist, in what hours do the lessons take place? Who manages the schools? What is taught in them?
Reply: No. Children go to district school run by the government.

28. If work takes place both night and day, what is the order of the shifts?
Reply: The day shift goes from 8:00 to 18:00. The night shift goes from 12:30 to 22:30.

29. What is the usual lengthening of the working day in times of good trade?
Reply: During Chinese New Year, the working day is lengthened to go from 07:30 to 22:30.

30. Are the machines cleaned by workers specially hired for that purpose, or do the workers employed on these machines clean them free, during their working day?
Reply: The first and second question are all yes.

31. What rules and fines exist for latecomers? When does the working day begin, when it is resumed after the dinner hour break?
Reply: If workers are late beyond one hour, the hour pay is deducted and the bonus pay for full attendance will be canceled.

32. What breaks are there during the working day?
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42. What rules and fines exist for latecomers? When does the working day begin, when it is resumed after the dinner hour break?
Reply: If workers are late beyond one hour, the hour pay is deducted and the bonus pay for full attendance will be canceled.

43. How much time do you lose in coming to the workshop and returning home?
Reply: It takes me 10 minutes to go to the shop and 10 minutes to leave.

44. What agreements have you with your employer? Are you engaged by the day, week, month, etc.?
Reply: There are no agreements or contracts between the employer and I. The employer just abides by Labor Standard Act.

45. What conditions are laid down regarding dismissals or leaving employment?
Reply: The part-time worker should inform the employer 10 days before leaving, and 15 days for the full-time workers. So far there are no dismissal cases taking place.

48. In the event of a breach of agreement, what penalty can be inflicted on the employer, if he is the cause of the breach?
Reply: So far there is no breach of agreement taking place. If it does, he will be penalized by Labor Standard Act.

What penalty can be inflicted on the worker if he is the cause of the breach?
Reply: No penalty is made on the worker if he is the cause of the breach.

49. If there are apprentices, what are their conditions of contract?
Reply: They are also regulated by Labor Standard Act but there is no contract.

50. Is your work permanent or casual?
Reply: I can work as long as I want to.

Analysis:
An essential difference between Marx’s analysis of labors and workers in Capital 1 and in this surveyed case appears as the inquiry is done. Marx’s analysis centers on the factory. But the case takes place in a shop where cooperation and mass production of merchandises hardly take place. Also, the working conditions are regulated by Labor Standard Act, the national bill which appears to have convinced the worker the working conditions are protected. It is indeed a fact that the working days, the lengthening of them, the labor-value and the wages are regulated in the Act, to a more or lesser degree that workers and their welfare are protected. This shows that in Taiwan, where consciousness of workers are not high, the intervention of state power to guard welfares and benefits of workers and the working conditions is so far the rather effective one.

There is a feature unique to the case when the worker is inquired of the working conditions and the relationship with the employer. When questioned the working conditions, the labor contract and the welfares, the worker is neither critical nor complaining, but grateful of being given the chance for the work. Throughout the survey, the worker shows understanding of the insufficiency of the labor conditions, and appears identified with the employer and the work. This feature connotes that the relationship between the employer/capitalist and the worker is neither hostile nor in opposition, which is against conventional interpretation of employer–worker relationship in the workers’ movements in the West. In the Taiwan case, the worker wants to keep the job, whereas the employer also needs the worker to run the shop to continue maximizing the surplus value and bringing in the monetary profits for him. If the workers want to better in benefits or have a raise in wages, the conventional measures to stage strikes and protests may not appear applicable to or more efficient in this case due to the “harmonious,” at least on the surface, rapport. Nor does Marx focus on apparent hostility between the capitalist and the workers in Volume 1 in Capital. Therefore, if the working conditions in Taiwan and the wages of workers need enhancement, the intervention of the state power is so far the most efficient and mighty. On the side of the employers or the capitalists, alternative strategic measures suitable to the social, cultural and moral circumstances of Taiwan in addition to references to the West may need to be sought or summoned so as to encourage or push them to improve working conditions and to increase workers’ wages.
Why Not... Procrastinate?

Feeza Vasudeva

Disclaimer: This article is – unedited – moderately revised – talks more about Foucault than Marx. This is because – I procrastinated (by doodling) – I am lazy – I like Foucault more than my professor does.

When Mr. Micawber proudly announced to David Copperfield (in the book of the same title), “Procrastination is the thief of time. Collar him!” he could have easily been echoing the sentiments of the entire capitalist class. For a class whose relations embody a definite organization of social time that obeys its own intrinsic criteria, a waste of a minute would be a sacrilege and should be treated as such. However, the contemporary capitalist cannot beat the laborers into submission for spending their labor time on watching Game of Thrones or accessing Facebook at work and not adding to the surplus value. How then does he deal with the problem of procrastination at the workplace? This is the theme that the article seeks to focus on. Within the clinical literature on procrastination, the phenomenon is defined in strictly utilitarian terms: “procrastination is most often considered to be the irrational delay of behavior”. It is associated with the function of temporality i.e. the organization of the time. Before proceeding it is important to ask why Procrastination? It is imperative to focus on the discourse of procrastination in the workplace because procrastination as a paradigm of study and intervention highlights the deployment of knowledge and power that modulate our subjectivities as model employees or citizens. Moreover, a specific focus on procrastination (as a psycho-temporal phenomenon) can help us in creating alternative modules for resistance vis-à-vis the practices of temporal counter conducts, thereby creating a possibility for positive change.

But why do I wish to talk about time, temporality and subjectivity for a class that focuses on Marx and his works. This is because Marx himself believed that any change that has to be successful needs to incorporate a temporal dimension. Marx might not have presented us with a specific theory of time, but he did contend that, “Time is everything, man is nothing; he is, at the most, time’s carcass.” Thus, Marx considers time to be alienating and a negative principle in capitalism that subordinates human beings under its laws, abstracting man from his generic ability and potentiality and if in capitalist societies it is the “economy of time” to which “all economy ultimately reduces itself,” any attempt to change the mode of production must also change the constitution and organization of time. Procrastination might be one of the ways to do so.

Power and Subjectivity

Let us begin by locating power as understood by Foucault within the context of contemporary capitalist society. For Foucault, power is not merely disciplinary but also normative, i.e. it is characterized by its ability to categorize, pathologize and detail life by establishment of set of rules and procedures that demarcates the what the problem is (here- procrastination) and what its solution is. Based on specific regimes of knowledge, power becomes an intersecting terrain of strategies that permeate through behavior, including all matters mundane. Rather than solely operating through refusals, negations OR beatings-power producers behaviors (say, time management), attitudes (self-motivation) and even the identities (the efficient employee). Within the particular discourse of professionalism, power-knowledge nexus undertakes the subjectivity of workers for the production of self-actualized, productive subject who adds to the labor by embodying the ‘ideal’ conduct of a successful employee. In other words, the rational is not to restrict the employees from watching Game of Thrones or using Instagram, but rather inducing self-responsible employees whose goals and identities are in accordance with organizational goals.

But what about procrastination and procrastinators who are not in alignment with the norms of productivity? How can they be subjected to normative change? The answer is found in deployment of various subjective variables (such as shame, fear and even anxiety) in order to yield docile and productive subjects. For instance, all the interviewees narrated feelings of experiencing shame for their bad behavior (for instance, missing a
procrastination. It is not the act of procrastination that is important but rather the function that it provides by giving opportunities to construct alternative spaces for negotiating workload and assertion of selfhood. For instance, one interviewee reported that procrastination helped him “reassert himself” in a (work) culture where everything was defined – from the way and dresses, speaks, behave etc. According to others, procrastination (by either playing video games at work, using work time for personal use etc.) was a way of negotiating norms in professional relationships. Another interviewee reported that the act of procrastination helped her reclaim the feeling of self-hood and self-respect. Thus, in way or the other tactical procrastination let the workers establish implicit boundaries to assert different levels of autonomy then what is allowed in hierarchical workplace setup.

Conclusion:
The relation of subject (here, employee) before the power cannot be relegated to the simple production or self-production of docile body. Sometimes, this self-production is liable to reversals and appropriations, to mis-productions as the subject may produces itself differently than intended by the power. Through the individual acts of resistance (via the means of procrastination), alternative spaces of temporal counter conduct must be constructed that compete with the residual docility of capitalist time imposed by various structures and practices, thereby inciting a change. So, Procrastinate! Don’t be an empty carcass, a slave to capitalistic production of time. Procrastinate! ✪

Locating procrastination
The discourse of procrastination is restricted in the sense that it does not consider that real problem of procrastination might not only be psychosomatic but rather structural or societal i.e. it is the product result of very system that seeks to correct it – capitalism. For instance, Sociologist Barbara Adam talks about directing imposition that capitalistic time has places upon temporalities of the body. For her, “the invariability of clock-time rhythms and the superimposition of alien rhythms stress our capacity to synchronize and calibrate the multitude of psychological and social rhythm.” In other words, the chronometric temporal dimension employed by the capitalism affect our wellbeing, leading to acts such as procrastination. Understanding this can help us in comprehending the rationality of procrastination, i.e. procrastination could be an effective way of proclaiming autonomy in temporal and subjective dimension in the everyday life of individuals. It should be noted that procrastination as an act does not necessarily have to yield something or have an explicit impact on the procrastinator.

deadline) and they attributed this badness to themselves (being someone who is bad and irresponsible), thereby bring a question of self in the equation. By highlighting procrastination as a problem and stipulating badness to the procrastinator, the discourse use guilt for preventing subject from participating in the bad action. In other words, the deployment of subjective variables seems to provide an exigency for the subjects to be self-responsible, manageable and productive employees.

Procrastination is the Thief of Time

[It took me a week to write this]
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