

LEISURE, LOAFING, AND LIFE AS WORK: DISCOURSES ON NON-WORK AND A NEW WORKING CLASS

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Although leisure and idleness are promoted as a panacea for the problems of postmodern man, everyday logic of postindustrial societies is still subjected to the logic of “total work”. Throughout modernism, the discourse of leisure allowed for a certain separation of the worker from the work regime. However, this discourse lost its function in postmodernism due to the contemporary erasure of boundaries between life, work, and the self. The disappearance of these boundaries, due to technological development and newer forms of work organization, is an important element on the basis of which the contemporary middle class gradually assumes the position of the former working class within the system. Thus, it can be concluded that the fundamental way in which the avoidance of the world of total work is possible today is not leisure, free, fulfilled, and meaningful time, but shallow loafing, a stolen free moment otherwise scheduled for work.

Keywords: working class, middle class, leisure, loafing, total work

INTRODUCTION

Along with changes in the academic world that occurred in the second half of the 20th century and led to the critique of modernism and revision of modern “truths”, such as the rational subject and history as a continuous progress, profound changes took place in the world of work as well.¹ While the working class in the West, including the Europe-

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an countries that were still socialist at the time, experienced historical satisfaction and enjoyed the protection of labor laws that prevented exploitation, there was a simultaneous intensification of the processes that would result in challenging the established class and social relations.

As early as the 1960s, it became clear that the contemporary approaches to business and work process organization undermine the inherited relations that defined the nature of capital and class.² In the same decade, Kenneth Galbraith published his seminal work *The New Industrial State* (1978 [1967]) in which he described how the power within corporations is passed from the shareholders to the interconnected managerial stratum that he calls *technostructure*. The change in the positions of power and decision-making in Western corporations coincided with increased availability of goods, which led many theoreticians to proclaim the end of class conflict in addition to the end of ideology³ (see Lipset 1964: 271). Availability of goods, changes in work organization, and technological progress facilitated the abandonment of traditional goals of labor movement; thus, by the end of the 1980s, the labor movement's traditional demands for control over work processes and limited working hours had been abandoned in both capitalist and socialist countries in favor of the possibility of higher profits (Aronowitz 1985). Work and workplace were replaced with leisure and consumption as the foundation of socialization (*ibid.*). The relationships between work, life, and the self and their inherent meanings changed and generated new structures.

However, these structures still did not lead to the complete abolishment of the old structures and, even though “postmodern work ethics are basically some kind of tolerated

² Class is one of the basic tools used in the analysis of social stratification. Social classes are usually divided into upper, middle, and lower, the latter also being called working class. The Marxist tradition distinguished between the classes on the basis of ownership of the means of production, whereas the Weberian tradition also took political power and status into account. The role of a class and its individuals was evaluated differently depending on the intellectual tradition. For the Marxist tradition, classes were a symptom of unfreedom, which had to end in a classless society in which an individual would not be permanently defined by a single form of work.

On the other hand, Durkheim, who is generally considered a conservative thinker, claims that individuals are included in the community precisely for specialized and permanent work forms and that without such type of participation, individuals become psychologically distressed. Yet another way to determine a class is the type of work performed by an individual. In the Anarchist tradition, it is the difference between “mental work” and “manual work”. A similar classification, but from a different position and with different goals, is used by Antun Radić (2010 [1897]) who distinguishes between two basic social strata – the gentry and the folk. Additionally, there were attempts to determine a class on the basis of availability of basic necessities of life and spending power. Contemporary globalized and digitalized capitalism represent a new challenge when it comes to determining upper and lower classes. Since class categories are fixed concepts, each of the listed approaches was subject to criticism on the basis of data indicating the porosity between the classes and their ephemerality. Therefore, Stanley Aronowitz (2003) did not see a class as an unchangeable given, but as social dynamics that results in particular power of individuals to control their work and life environment. This view is largely shared by the author of this text.

³ The shift from modernism to postmodernism in the academia was marked by a series of proclaimed endings. Thus, “the end of ideology” and “the end of history” were joined by “the end of class”, “the end of politics”, and “the end of manufacture” (cf. Kellner 1999).

guided laziness” (Kunst 2013: 123),⁴ work is still present as a total social fact although it no longer guarantees a stable place in the world and historical progress, as it was the case in modernity. Instead, work becomes a dispersive phenomenon that pervades selfhood and all aspects of life.

This text relies on the results of field research conducted within the TRANSWORK project and on the analysis of discourse on various forms of non-work, leisure, and loafing. Its aim is to offer a better understanding of the changes in the work-life relationship that occurred with the transition from industrial to postindustrial society. By highlighting class dispositions of the discourse on non-work, I try to address different symbolic economies⁵ of life, work, and selfhood offered to the members of the middle and working classes in modernity, and the change that occurred in these economies with postmodernity.

I put forward the view that the currently prevailing discourses of leisure are an inherited elitist construct originally reserved for upper classes. These discourses were originally rooted in modernist imagery, which provided the upper classes with the space for leisure the dynamics of which was protected from the predominant discursive processes that shaped the *homo faber*. The members of non-working classes were expected to have lives and personalities the function of which would not be exhausted in carrying out work tasks. They were expected to demonstrate certain virtues and manners that signified civility or refinement. Their place in the system ensured them a portion of existence that was not subjected to the logic of total work. This enabled them to articulate value systems that were directly opposed to the idea of work as a fundamental way of being in the world.

With changes in basic social and personal structures⁶ that followed the transition from modernism to postmodernism, the inherited discourses of leisure became part of the mainstream discursive dynamics, no longer ensuring, either as an idea or social practice, the disengagement from the world of work, because the time reserved for leisure was subjected to the same discursive mechanisms as the time reserved for productive work.

Loafing, on the other hand, albeit having lower subversive potential,⁷ offers a way to disengage oneself from the predominant discourses of work and life. Although the subver-

⁴ Since expressions such as *postmodernity*, *postindustrial society*, *consumer society* have similar meanings and all indicate, like symptoms, the systemic rearrangement of capitalism (cf. Jameson 1991: xi), in this text, they will not be strictly distinguished but used depending on the need and context.

⁵ Although economies are symbolic, they have real consequences because they represent a sort of “knowledge” that is socially established as “reality” (cf. Berger and Luckman 1991: 15).

⁶ Such as the disappearance of consolidating social projects; decreased social role of the state; weakening of fixed social relationships and family ties; changes in expectations imposed on individuals – from responsibility toward an abstract social order to the requirement to demonstrate individualism and self-centeredness.

⁷ Although loafing in the humanities has acquired a connotation of subversiveness (see de Certeau 1988, Scott 1985), we should take into account Dipankar Gupta’s (2001) important criticism of such a concept. Namely, Gupta (ibid.) claims that data on the importance of individual acts of loafing and problems it causes to the employers are mostly the fantasy of the upper classes and managerial structures who use them to justify the established hierarchies and acts of subjugation and supervision.

sive potential of what Roland Paulsen calls “empty labor” (Paulsen 2013) is questionable, since the employees who loaf on the job are forced to use mimicry and participate in the theater of “productivity and efficiency” (Paulsen 2013: 14), I believe that loafing still allows for some detachment from the predominant paradigm of life and work. Namely, the issue here is survival and buying time until the opportunity for something better comes along or the system is transformed by its own logic. Unlike the actions that have political potential but require public action, organization, and program (cf. Gupta 2001), shallow loafing is leeching off the system.⁸ At best, it demonstrates loyalty to individual and ephemeral existence at the expense of greater good and collectivism, which are generally formed in line with the superordinate cultural, economic, and political structures.

LEISURE, POSTMODERNITY, AND NEW EVERYDAY LIFE

In 1948, German philosopher Josef Pieper argued that a period of *total work* is under way and that all aspects of human existence would soon be reduced to work (Pieper 1998 [1948]). He based his conclusions on the analysis of cultural archetype that he believed represented the predominant way of organizing not only cultural meanings, but also individual emotional and mental life. Pieper believed that the archetype of the worker manifests three fundamental characteristics in its social actualization: “an outwardly directed, active power; an aimless readiness to suffer pain; an untiring insertion into the rationalized program of useful social organization” (Pieper 1998 [1948]: 47). In today’s world, 70 years later, there is a sufficient amount of indicators showing that the world of total work has been successfully accomplished. However, that world also reveals cracks pointing to its systemic imperfections. Namely, as the process that turned the West into the world of total work evolved, a discourse emerged that questioned such a world and its meaning. At the end of the 19th century, Nietzsche (2007 [1881]) in his *The Dawn of Day* rejects the modern man’s constant obsession with work and activity. Around the same time, French revolutionary Paul Lafargue (1907) in his manifesto *The Right To Be Lazy* rejects the values of progress and instead argues for commitment to play, pleasure, and disavowal of work ethics. At the beginning of the 20th century, Bertrand Russell (2004 [1932]) writes the essay *In Praise of Idleness*, and the previously mentioned Pieper (1998 [1948]) insists on leisure as the basis of cultural development.

⁸ Unlike leisure, genuine loafing may occur only within the context of “honest work”. This was claimed by Canadian classicist Edward Wilber Nichols at the beginning of the 20th century: “It must not at any time be forgotten that genuine loafing is possible only against a background of solid work; and censorious critics may say that there is in college no such background against which the loafer may display his activities. This is mere spite. [...] There are glorious opportunities at college for the artist in loafing. In fact, even a man without much talent may make a respectable start. One may go to sleep in lectures – much the best thing to be done with most lectures anywhere; one may judiciously cut lectures; one may refrain from study and develop the highest degree of ignorance that even college can foster” (Nichols 1933: 521).

These works base their critique of work on traditionally established differences in defining basic human nature. Thus, *homo faber*, the worker for whom idleness represents ontological and moral deviation,⁹ is juxtaposed against *homo adorans* and *homo ludens*. Pieper, a Catholic philosopher, criticizes the rationality of total work, based on the idea of human life that should strive for a higher purpose. Russell, in turn, believes that rationality of work suppresses the fundamental ability to play and engage in pastime, which has, he claims, delivered humanity from its barbaric state.

The modernist critique of work as a virtue in itself and work as the fundamental way to achieve meaning and purpose in life continues in postindustrial society. Thus, although postindustrial society implements the logic of total work in everyday life, it simultaneously discovers leisure and idleness as a panacea for the problems that torment the modern man and as recipes that make the modern fetishes of creativity,¹⁰ intelligence, and professional success easier to reach.¹¹ Russell's and Pieper's views on non-work and inactivity are being rediscovered, and critique of the rationality of work is being complemented by studies and essays by contemporary authors, such as Al Gini, an American professor of business ethics, who advocates the thesis that to do nothing is a basic human need (Gini 2003); Tom Hodgkinson, the editor-in-chief of *Idler Magazine*,¹² who – in his book *How To Be Idle* (2005) – provides an exhaustive defense of leisurely life and specific *know-how* to achieve the state of leisure in everyday life; and Robert Dessaix who, in his book *The Pleasure of Leisure* (2017), recommends small acts of idleness in everyday life as a means of escape from the shackles of consumerist existence.

The postindustrial questioning of labor and its purpose and arguments for abandoning the concept of work in postindustrial society rest on the perception of routinized, object-directed work for a paycheck as a needless remnant of the past. Due to the technological progress and due to the social system that ensured, at least in the West, mass access to basic life conveniences, a logical question arises: is there any “real” work left to do and, accordingly, is it necessary to maintain the forms of employment inherited from the times when mass labor was the main mode of ensuring the access to basic life resources.

⁹ Laziness and industriousness in such a perspective become, among other things, tools for understanding emotional and intellectual life. Australian philosopher Kathie Jenni (2016), for example, analyzes the lack of empathy in terms of moral laziness – a sort of unwillingness of the mind to venture into intentional empathizing with the circumstances of other existences.

¹⁰ Relying on *In Praise of Laziness* by Mladen Stilinović, Bojana Kunst argues that only laziness provides the artists with the ironical distance from reality and ability to reflect, like mirrors, the *genuine* laziness that resides in the center of capitalist ideology of work (Kunst 2013: 122).

¹¹ Titles of essays like the one by Lisa Şonora “Laziness is Key to Creativity” (<https://lisasonora.com/laziness-is-key-to-creativity/>; accessed: 12 December 2019), or by Zetlin Minda “Being lazy is the Key to Success, According to the Best-Selling Author of ‘Moneyball’” (<https://www.inc.com/minda-zetlin/why-being-lazy-makes-you-successful-according-to-the-bestselling-author-of-money.html>; accessed: 12 December 2019), or by unknown author “Being Lazy Actually Means You’re An Intelligent Person, Study Finds” (<https://www.unilad.co.uk/life/being-lazy-actually-means-youre-an-intelligent-person-study-finds/>; accessed: 5 December 2019), are only a few examples of the copious amount of texts generated by what we can call by now the postindustrial laziness industry.

¹² <https://www.idler.co.uk/> (accessed 15 March 2019).

Furthermore, if we take technological progress into account, is there enough work for everyone anyway (see Aronowitz and DiFazio 1994)? Although currently causing a rise in the unemployment rate, technological progress in post-work utopianism is understood as an element that will eventually lead to change in the entire social paradigm due to accelerated automatization of jobs heretofore reserved for human beings.¹³ Due to the fact that most jobs would be taken over by machines, in the post-work world, new models of distribution of goods would be introduced because a job could no longer serve as the basis for the right to participate in the distribution. In this situation, people would dedicate themselves to searching for meaning through creative and social work. Swedish sociologist Roland Paulsen (2015) takes a similar perspective, emphasizing that work as a social need is outdated and criticizing it as something that invalidates the meaning in individual existence. He also believes that, due to technological and organizational progress, the time has come to systematically abolish work. However, Paulsen's perspective, which juxtaposes life to work, is challenged by the fact that those same technological and organizational processes resulting in decreased demand for actual work create new forms of everyday life and modes of perception, which govern the world of life and the world of work.

PLAY AS THE FUTURE OF WORK AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SELFHOOD

In addition to making new forms of organization possible and supporting the predominant ideology of self-actualization through paid work, accelerated technological progress is blurring the boundary between life and work. Therefore, to understand this process, we need to introduce concepts such as *playbor*, *gamification*, and *weisure*.¹⁴ These concepts have similar meanings and are used in an attempt to describe the erased distinction between work and leisure – work and non-work. *Playbor* signifies leisure time spent in a form of activity perceived as fun, but which, in its consequence, has the form of free labor. Examples of this are everyday activities on social networks that provide the network owners with personal information, which can be traded, and thus serve as something that generates profit. The concept of *weisure* is used in a similar way, but with a different focus. The term was coined by Dalton Conley (2009) to indicate the instrumentalization of leisure for the purpose of generating social capital.¹⁵ *Gamification* is a relatively new

¹³ In his article "A World Without Work" published in *The Atlantic* in August 2015, Derek Thompson estimated that most jobs performed by people would disappear due to technological progress, which would lead to the crisis of meaning. Fortunately, Thompson believes that jobs that are going to be left for humans exclusively, are those regarding community life. We would still have a usable sphere of activities in the community, as there would be work for humans (Thompson 2015).

¹⁴ *Playbor* is a word coined from *play* and *labor*, *weisure* is coined from *work* and *leisure*, and *gamification* is derived from *game*.

¹⁵ One of the examples of *weisure* are activities on social networks that seem like having fun, but whose final goal is to accumulate as large a number as possible of contacts that can be used for business.

approach to managing work and leisure activities. The goal of *gamification* at the workplace is to make the employees feel like they are playing a game. It introduces the elements of videogames into everyday activities, such as dieting or exercising, so that the users can receive virtual badges and acknowledgements via mobile applications as a reward for their achievements.¹⁶ *Gamification* is, according to Chris Till, experienced as “a panacea for the problems faced in the contemporary workplace” or, in the words of a senior Microsoft manager, “play is the future of work”, and gamification will turn work into a liberating and creative process (Till 2014: 454). Work and play have fused, offering access to a wider spectrum of meanings that only seemingly escape the logic of monetary relations: “Superficially, this seems like the logic of the gift economy. You do something for nothing because you want to do it, not as labor grudgingly offered in exchange for wages or other incentives but for fun, as “playbor”. The difference is that the gift is not to another, and not via another to the commons in general, and the reward is not recognition by others making the same gifts” (Wark 2013: 73). Turning work into play cancels out the traditional meaning of work as a necessity and allows for the new meanings to become anchored in that space, such as the meanings of pleasure, fun, adventure, and self-realization.

The place occupied by the subject for whom the work is a painful necessity, a sort of a lesser evil required to meet the need for belonging, or an unavoidable phase that leads to liberation, in this new constellation is taken by the subject whose basic need is precisely work as such. This subject is defined by an ideology founded on the categories of self-fulfillment and self-realization that are used exclusively for paid and billable work (cf. du Gay 1996: 65). The basic questions of meaning and purpose are thus refocused from the sphere of life (understood as the existence that rests on the logic separate from the logic of work) to the sphere of work, which gives rise to a critical perspective formulated as the following question: is (specific) work (job) meaningful (see Yeoman 2014)? The solution to work without meaning is, naturally, the search for meaningful work. New discursive practices aspire to blend life, work, and selfhood into a single flow that uses the idea of the *entrepreneurial self*¹⁷ as an ideological framework. The entrepreneurial self is a form of subjectivation that was introduced as a concept in the academia in the late 1970s. Since then, it has assumed a somewhat hegemonic status because of its dominant position in different contexts (Bühmann 2005). Although the factuality of the entrepreneurial self remains questionable, because it is difficult to confirm this self as an empirical given through field research and interviews (cf. *ibid.*), the question arises whether such field research is needed for its confirmation at all. Although field work has not produced empirical evidence for ESE (entrepreneurial self-efficacy), ESE has already become a part of governance. Namely, it has become a constituent part of organizational

¹⁶ Ian Bogost (2014) claims that gamification is a *bullshit concept* – an ideologeme that hides the true nature of the process indicated by that word. Instead, he offers a more accurate expression: *exploitation-ware* – the word coined from *exploitation* and *software*, by which he tries to highlight digital solutions that aim at creating a better impression of a job or workplace, a sort of “false consciousness” that forms one’s understanding to perceive one’s own position in much lighter colors than what it is in reality.

¹⁷ For further information on entrepreneurial selfhood, see Bühmann 2005.

and human resources policies and, as such, is the subject of research, measurements, and tests aimed at finding the most appropriate worker for modern organizations (see Newman et al. 2018).

The entrepreneurial self is the *sine qua non* for unimpeded circling between life and work and, as such, it is the axis of ethical, personal, professional, and ideological formations that blur the boundaries between work, selfhood, and life.¹⁸ It allows one to approach work and career as the pursuit of happiness and self-realization and, on the other hand, it encourages subjugation of life and self to the principle of ongoing development in the form of a carefully built career. In the words of Christopher Grey:

This self-discipline, this regulation of behavior through the discourse of career, has the effect of transforming those instances of disciplinary power which might normally be thought of as regulative. For, again and again, the techniques of disciplinary power become constructed as benevolent aids to career development. [...] The successful development of an accountancy career entails, that the individual's whole life, including relations with friends and family, becomes an instrumental project which is to be managed and achieved. (Grey 1994: 494)¹⁹

Since life becomes work, and vice versa, the entrepreneurial self is forced to demonstrate responsibility in each and every aspect of life, which gives rise to a peculiar relationship with oneself that takes the form of the idiosyncratic awareness of time. The entrepreneurial self must not waste time. It is not the classical liberal stinginess with time which rests on the idea that time is money. The loss of time is potentially the loss of money, but it is not limited only to that – the loss of time is the loss of life and of oneself. Continuous efforts invested in advancing one's career, life, and self, and effort invested into playing the game of everyday life to the best of one's abilities, leads to results perceived as an emanation of internal – moral merits.

¹⁸ The absence of the boundary between the world of life and the world of work is not a novelty of postindustrial societies. For example, E. P. Thompson (1967) described how social life, work, and leisure intertwined in the countryside. A similar observation, that people living in the countryside have no separate awareness of leisure time, was also made by Stipe Šuvar (2005). However, it is worth noting that the nature of this intertwining depends on the organization of work, the logic of economic relationships, and the degree of technological mediation. The fact remains that, in the situation where the countryside has not yet been subjected to contemporary economic and work processes, there is no need for a separate awareness of leisure time because leisure/work schedule and work rhythm depend primarily on the nature and abilities of the body (*ibid.*). However, as soon as work processes in the countryside are subjected to the rhythm of a machine and the logic of maximum profit, the lack of awareness about leisure time starts to take its toll. Here follows the description of threshing in the German countryside at the end of the 19th century: "The more hours a day, the sooner the farmer ceases to need the machine, the fewer meals he has to give to the people. The more hours a day for the owner of the machine, the greater amount of grain he takes for threshing, the greater his profit. The more hours people work, the higher their weekly wages. The work starts at four in the morning, often even at three, and then continues throughout the day. [...] A man must compete against the machine, he becomes its slave, becomes a part of the machine. [...] If you manage to endure it for 15, 16 or 18 hours, then you are truly dead-tired" (Rehbein as cited in Flemming 1987: 204).

¹⁹ A selfhood structured in this way is subject to strategies such as playbor, which ensure that work performance is extracted without appropriate compensation (cf. Till 2014: 446).

Taking what has been said into account, the meaning of non-work should be elaborated and significantly expanded upon. The meaning of loafing, for example, becomes applicable not only to the sphere of the workplace, but also to the sphere of selfhood – one's mental and emotional processes.

CLASS, LEISURE, AND PASSIVE WAITING

The discourse of leisure and idleness inherited from modernist times has distinctive class features. Thus, Paulsen's proposal to reduce working hours, similar to Bertrand Russell's earlier praise of idleness, or even, if we are willing to go that far, Friedrich Nietzsche's rejection of constant self-entertained engagement of the modern man, is an expression of life that has succeeded not only in becoming good enough, but also in having that surplus that makes it a "good life". What is rejected in this discourse is the nature of work that is specific to the working class and predicated on necessity and coercion. Instead, the ideals of upper class existence have been embraced. The issue at hand is not only the one of leisure, but also the issue of nature and form of work. As early as the 19th century, Bakunin [1867] claimed that the upper classes stopped being non-working classes long ago, but their work was still, according to him, systemically "superordinate" to the work performed by the working and peasant classes:

[T]he civilization of the few is still founded, though not as completely as in the days of antiquity, upon the forced labor and the comparative barbarism of the many. It would be unjust to say that: his privileged class is a stranger to labor. On the contrary, in our time they work hard and the number of idle people is diminishing appreciably. They are beginning to hold work in honor; those who are most fortunate realize today that one must work hard in order to remain at the summit of the present civilization and even in order to know how to profit by one's privileges and retain them. But there is this difference between the work done by the comfortable classes and that done by the laboring classes: the former is rewarded in an incomparably greater proportion and affords the privileged the opportunity for leisure, that, supreme condition for all human development, both intellectual and moral – a condition never attained by the working classes. Also, the work done in the world of the privileged is almost: exclusively mental work – the work involving imagination, memory, the thinking process. The work done by millions of proletarians, on the other hand, is manual work [...] and this labor is generally performed under conditions harmful to his health and to his harmonious development. (Bakunin [1867])

The subordinate and subordinating, exhausting, and repetitive type of work, which implied the exchange of pure working energy for monetary compensation, was reserved for the members of the working class – subjects of mass industrialization. In such a constellation, the allure of getting an education and joining the middle class was based primarily on the fact that it ensured access to jobs requiring abstract knowledge and talent. By entering

the white collar sphere of office clerks, experts, intellectuals, and artists, one could avoid the threat of doing mind-numbing and exhausting jobs reserved for the working class.²⁰

The symbolic and cultural capital that secured their position in the society enabled the white collar workers to get jobs that were not exposed to the requirements of external criteria to the same degree as general labor jobs. Such a position helped the middle class to develop and adopt professional values. The ideal of professionalism, an exercise in futile self-indulgence where certain professions were concerned, found its full expression in the traditional academic and artistic areas where no clear boundaries existed between working hours and leisure time, where work was often equated with passion, and where the final results of leisurely contemplations in the form of published concepts, ideas, and insights were acknowledged as work performance.²¹ While leisure in the middle class could produce effects acknowledged as work thanks to the symbolic capital ensuring monetary compensation for the individual and his or her talent and dedication, members of the working class did not have that option.

Leisure discourse cannot be applied to the working class in the same way.²² Working class is a traditional subject of general labor, in continual contact with entropy that poses a risk not only to the preservation of energy in the labor system, but also to the biological survival of the members of the working class.

Thus, non-work of the working class is not as much related to idleness as it is to entropic and threatening waiting. Or, in the words of Harold Schweizer:

Waiting is generally thought to be unproductive. He who waits wants, falls short, has not, lacks. The less someone is made to wait, the more he has and holds, and vice-versa. Waiting is a marker of inferior economic and social status, which is why

²⁰ There are other interpretations when it comes to systemic deprivation of the working classes. From Paul Willis's illustration of the working-class situation in Great Britain in the 1970s, for example, we can see how young men choose a working-class existence because they find it more exciting than having to painstakingly and gradually move up in the system (Willis 1981). However, as shown by Didier Eribon in his autobiographical work *Returning to Reims*, the main question is whether this process can be tied to choice. A member of the working class who tries to change his place in the system and move to a better one faces numerous obstacles, with a specific economy of emotions and inherited habits and preferences being among greater ones (Eribon 2019).

²¹ In his text *Lies We Live By: Some Academic Myths and Their Functions*, Reece McGee (1985) describes the ultimate consequences of such ideal as a belief that academic work cannot be evaluated by standardized criteria.

²² It is more difficult to take a scientific approach to the working class logic of loafing than to the phenomena of leisure and free time. *Leisure studies* have already been established as a discipline, and there is a journal of the same name, but this has not happened with the potential *loafing studies*. Loafing, as defined in this text, is more difficult to observe because – given that it does not have its own symbolic system that would provide the loafers with access to desirable attributes of ethics, rationality, and power – it does not possess adequate elaborations that could serve as the basis for analysis. This is the main reason why worker's loafing in this text is analyzed on the basis of meaning that is inscribed into the phenomenon and the reconstruction of its internal logic. Leisure, as a phenomenon with the pronounced subject and ideology, is more clearly delineated and, therefore, can be treated as a separate entity. Loafing, on the other hand, could not be elaborated in the same way. Instead, this concept was used as a perspective that offers a clear view of the neuralgic points in the life-work dynamics.

Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon are tramps not CEOs. [...] Today as then, waiting is used as an instrument of class, race, rank, and gender distinctions; it is attributed, applied, apportioned to solidify hierarchies and prejudices, and most fundamentally, to signal an individual's or a group's existential expendability. (Schweizer 2017: 80–81)

Media coverage of the situation in “Uljanik”, a shipbuilding company and shipyard in Pula that has faced serious business problems for over a year,²³ uses the trope of waiting in two ways. One concerns the workers forced to wait for their salaries, relief packages, and the political solution to shipyard problems. The other concerns passive workers who waited for an outside solution for too long, while problems in the company kept piling up.²⁴ The image of the worker is, thus, split in half. One half is the image of a disoriented and essentially powerless figure, lacking necessary abilities and subject to humanitarian and social intervention. The other is one of a morally dubious person, who consciously avoids his or her responsibility.

NO LEISURE FOR WORKERS

My encounter with a deliberate avoidance of responsibility rooted in work ethics occurred in Dalmatia in 2017,²⁵ when I interviewed several entrepreneurs and former industrial workers. In these interviews the entrepreneurs expressed strong attitudes toward the

²³ “Uljanik” is a shipyard in Pula under combined ownership of the state, corporations, various foundations, and workers – small shareholders. In the last few years, “Uljanik” has continually generated losses, which led to the freezing of its bank accounts and a months-long crisis, which culminated in bankruptcy of the shipyard and resulted in laying off more than a thousand workers by the time this article was written.

²⁴ For example: “Workers waited in line to receive Red Cross parcels” (Verković, Antonela. 20 December 2018, <https://rijekaonline.hr/bez-pomaka-oko-plana-restrukturiranja-uljanika-radnici-cekali-u-redu-za-paket-crvenog-kriza/>; accessed 09 January 2019), “[...] obviously, they are not interested in taking control over their own company, so they ask the government to give money and take responsibility” (Repecki, Marko. 9 September 2018, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/gube-milijarde-a-vi-im-to-placate-pogledajte-prosjecnu-placu-u-uljaniku/2022603.aspx>; accessed 03 January 2019), “Workers of “Uljanik” are, then, to be blamed for everything because they did not take care of their ownership interests,” (Kuljiš, Denis. 28 August 2018, <https://www.dnevno.hr/kolumnisti/denis-kuljis/svaki-radnik-uljanika-duzan-je-drzavi-100-000-eura-garancija-i-jos-50-000-kuna-radnicima-3-maja-1213871/>; accessed 2 March 2019), “While workers of “Uljanik” have waited for months to receive their meager salaries” (Marušić, Duško. 2 April 2019, <http://www.poslovni.hr/domace-kompanije/foto-radnici-bez-place-a-bivsi-gazde-uljanika-kupili-luksuzne-jahte-351721>; accessed 5 May 2019).

²⁵ I carried out the field research on unemployment, corruption, and working class in postindustrial Croatia in the town of Imotski and the cities of Zadar and Dubrovnik from 2017 to 2019, within the project “Transformation of Work in Post-Transitional Croatia” (IP-2016-06-7388). Although my initial intention was to investigate non-work, it was impossible to perform a qualitatively-based research of idleness partly because of the recession, which only ended in Croatia in 2014 and which was marked by massive unemployment and increased the perceived value of employment and paid work. But even in that situation, various patterns emerged: while entrepreneurs were more likely to insist on individual responsibility when they talked about the unemployed, civil servants tended to look for the guilty party in the system and management. Since it is difficult to get anyone to talk openly about their own loafing, even in more relaxed circumstances, I had to make do with occasional outpouring of honesty from my collocutors while we talked about other topics (corruption, collapse of industry, etc.).

unemployed beneficiaries of social welfare. The unemployed were described either as lazy parasites who were abusing the system or as the victims of the former, socialist system, infected with a certain mentality that expects the system to solve their problems and provide a job. For these entrepreneurs, the lack of available jobs on the market was not a valid explanation of high numbers of unemployed, because, as our informants told us, there is enough work, especially in tourism and particularly during the season.

A middle-aged informant from the working class, an unemployed social welfare user, confirmed that he actively avoided getting a job and explained that “no one is crazy enough” (M.S. 30 June 2017) to work for such wages. He continued to elaborate, quite convincingly, that in a situation in which he would work for less than the cashier at the shopping mall – about 3000 HRK a month (~400 EUR) – the only rational choice was to actively avoid employment and occasionally work informally, while continuing to receive welfare. During our conversation, he expressed no remorse for his attitude.

Within the discourse of entrepreneurial selfhood, such a habitus may only elicit contempt. His lack of remorse and his refusal to engage in building a distinctive life project worthy of an entrepreneurial subject may only be explained as the symptom of moral corruption. The informant’s frivolous waiting is expected to elicit contempt within the dominant discourse because, from the ideological perspective where life and work intertwine, this is not a simple example of avoiding employment it is also an example of life itself that is on hold.²⁶

However, to understand the position in which loafing takes the form of passive waiting, we should recall that the place of the work performed by the working class in the modernist imaginary was marked by a threatening contact with life entropy. This work implied the investment of crude working energy and consumed mental and physical resources. Such a position left no room for the type of consciousness able to perceive work as something compatible with the self. Instead, the relation to labor remained one of a redemption. It is a process of constant redemption in which a part of the self is repeatedly given away in order to procure life. Work remains separate from the self, and parts of the self that are surrendered to work are lost.²⁷ The main quality that work could possess is to secure a

²⁶ What is important to take into account in this example is that my collocutor was actually refusing to work and he made no effort to justify himself within the framework of the accepted work ethic. It is a kind of “I won’t work” stance, which does not even try to legitimize itself. Or, to use the words of a retired policeman who I first met in 2007 while he worked as a movie extra: “I told my wife I won’t do construction jobs anymore. I don’t give a rat’s ass. We won’t have any money, but I’m not doing it anymore.” (personal communication, 2007). In these examples, the form of rationalizing one’s own position is substantially different from the one identified by Leo Howe in his research among unemployed married men in Belfast (Howe 1998). Howe found that the unemployed workers tried to justify themselves against the accepted work ethic and ascribe their situation exclusively to the lack of available jobs (ibid.). This allows for speculation about Croatia as a country of young and still “weak” capitalism, where the appropriate ethic has still not taken root.

²⁷ Inability to identify with one’s work may represent a problem for the working class children. They may find it more difficult to try and change their class disposition through education. The issue here is that the children from working families cannot look at the long way through the institutions, which entails self-discipline and delayed gratification, as a search for vocation, i.e., a search for themselves. The path of investing their own self in job has already been blocked by the habitus and ethics they inherited. “Basically

living and still leave enough room to actually live. Abstract morality, which implies acting for the sake of pure virtue, is not an integral part of such a relationship. Here is what a former worker replied when asked to compare his present situation to his life in socialism: “Then [in socialism] I could work, I could live, and I could steal.” (P.H. 30 June 2017). Job satisfaction expressed by this collocutor was primarily related to the life he could lead rather than to the implied professional fulfillment and his achievements. On the contrary, “I could steal” indicates that his life and personality were not subject to fulfillment through work. He is a man who, even today in his retirement, engages in informal labor, and who spent his entire active life – working. His attitude toward work is definitely not anti-work – on the contrary. However, it is absolutely clear that work in his life is a necessity, the necessity with which one simply reconciles. As such, work is not subject to examination that questions its justifiability. Although unpleasant, work is actually a desirable necessity because life without the possibility to work and earn an income would be a substantially bleaker scenario. A leisure discourse that rejects work in the name of loftier aspirations is not something that members of the working class can afford. Moreover, such a discourse was not originally intended for them. In the first half of the 20th century, when the option of leisure became available to an ever expanding number of people, the ability of certain classes to appropriately access this civilizational good was considered a serious problem. Rationality of working-class members was looked upon with suspicion. It was thought that they lacked the ability to practice leisure properly and that they would fall easy victims to shallow loafing instead of abandoning themselves to sophisticated pastimes (cf. Frykman and Löfgren 1987: 40).

Ideology is not a requirement for the subjugation of the members of the working class. Their subordination and privation – the fact that they NEED a job and that not having one would be a bad thing – ensures their reluctant participation in the system and relinquishment of some of their energy to that system.²⁸ Since their personality is not crucial for the maintenance of the system, the system neither supports it nor invests in it.²⁹ They may eventually be the object of external interpretation and expected to match the basic types, such as good worker/farmer or lazy worker/farmer. The purpose of these interpretations is to legitimize and thus justify and explain the current system in a desirable way. Subjugating the consciousness of the members of the lower class is not a priority and primarily occurs

this concerns an experiential separation of the inner self from work. Labour power is a kind of barrier to, not an inner connection with the demands of the world. Satisfaction is nor expected in work.” (Willis 1981: 102).

²⁸ Something similar could be said of the members of the middle class caught in the process of pauperization, many of whom possess symbolic but not family capital. This symbolic capital is precisely what acts as the dividing line that traditionally prevented reducing the members of the middle class to a workforce. Only in postindustrial society, where new work procedures and new solutions for technological mediation are developed, does symbolic capital lose its protective function and permits the inclusion of its carriers into unified circulation of the workforce. In other words, only in postindustrial society do they acquire the character of a *resource*.

²⁹ The opposite is also true: “The working class does not have to believe the dominant ideology. [...] The working class is the only group in capitalism that does not have to believe in capitalist legitimations as a condition of its own survival” (Willis 1981: 123).

as the result of subjugating bodies, since the working class is actually reduced to a body through social and cultural dispositions:

[T]here is a wonderful explanation in one of Pierre Bourdieu's books where he says that, in fact, we appropriate everything from the working class. We take over their approach to money, education, culture and the only thing in this distribution that they have left is the body. [...] Your body is the only thing you have when you are nothing more than working class and even that won't be yours for long because it will soon be destroyed by overwork, poverty, and what are basically anti-living conditions. (Luis and Eribon as cited in Sandić 2019: 58)

CLASS AND ENTERING THE MACHINE

Reinforcement of the leisure discourse, rooted in self-indulgent professional and class values, occurs in postindustrial society in parallel with the transformation of living and working conditions of the middle class. The changes affect the modes of class reproduction; some classes seem to disappear and new ones seem to appear.³⁰ Therefore, significant theoretical efforts have been invested into defining and re-defining the mechanisms of class reproduction and new models for class analysis. However, even the most successful models, such as Bourdieu's, come under critical fire relatively quickly due to their limited ability to explain the current social reality.³¹ According to Stanley Aronowitz (2003), the use of the concept of "class" as an analytical tool is problematic because, at least in the USA, its use has been significantly decreased on account of proclaimed classless society accomplished through the strengthening of the middle class,³² and the fact that social status is no longer defined by the ownership of the means of production, but by the accessibility of goods and services.

However, Aronowitz is cautious when it comes to accepting the consumerist criterion as the basic indicator of class and social status because, as the availability of goods and services after World War II has been increasing, the number of members of the working and middle classes who managed to establish basic control over their working and living environment has been decreasing, and the lack of this control is, according to Aronowitz,

³⁰ As early as the 1950s, G. D. H. Cole concluded that class, at least the middle class, cannot be observed as a fixed phenomenon, because it becomes fluid and changeable and because the family in class reproduction plays an increasingly smaller role (Cole 1950).

³¹ In addition to economic capital, Bourdieu highlights the importance of social, symbolic, and cultural capital, which all determine an individual's class. The key role in acquiring different types of capital is played by the family background, which ensures a relatively stable reproduction of class dispositions through generations. However, Margaret Archer convincingly demonstrates the limitations in applying Bourdieu's concept of habitus in postindustrial society and shows that changes in the labor market make class reproduction difficult – especially in the case of the middle class, with all its emphasis on symbolic and cultural capital (Archer 2010).

³² On consumerism and the middle class as a political tool for the realization of a classless society in socialist Croatia, see Škokić and Potkonjak 2016.

traditionally typical of the working class (Aronowitz 2003: 26). In his opinion, the American dogma about the general shift of working class to the middle class is shattered by the fact that there is no autonomous capitalist subject (Aronowitz 2003: 2–3). Highly qualified workers (managers included) have little to no autonomy within the system or corporations (moreover, they are mostly objects of powerful subjugation), and farmers are generally engaged in some type of monoculture production for external employers (ibid.). The Western middle class data indicate that EU fares better than the States, although the middle class is shrinking in Europe too, except in Ireland and the Netherlands (Kochhar 2017).³³

The position of the middle class in relation to the system and a situation in which they were taking positions in the society on the basis of inherited and earned symbolic capital has been gradually falling apart. Members of professions (education, science, medicine, law etc.) traditionally monopolized by the middle class today have to invest their crude working energy and their time, just like members of the working class. But they do it for self-actualization, to increase visibility, or to build an appropriate reputation, which should eventually provide them with better chances in their race after money.³⁴ Their time and energy are related to the implied knowledge and expertise, but – if we look at it from the perspective of control over life and work – middle-class professionals are in the same position as working-class members. Their work compromises their physical and psychological capacities. While the modern system traditionally protected the middle class from entropy, today the members of the middle class are forced to face entropy and deterioration directly, largely due to advanced digitalization.

The traditional relation of the middle class towards work relied on their identification with their profession and their sense of value of their positions. Their bodies were bearers of knowledge and beliefs. However, with the development of technology and organizational techniques, the middle class suffers the same fate that had already befallen the working class: the reduction of bodies to containers, not for knowledge and skills, but as fuel for the machine.

Technological and organizational upgrade of factories in the 19th century was the main turning point for the working class. That was the point when their work started to be transformed into crude energy, whereupon workers lost their individual features and turned into a faceless mass.³⁵ Today's development of digital technology, which permeates all aspects of everyday life and accelerates communication and problem solving, also facilitates the transition of intellectual and managerial work from the sphere of the symbolic into the sphere of energy circulation: “[W]hat is offered is a bit of cognitive energy

³³ Further information on the systemic crisis of the middle class in the EU, see Vaughan-Whitehead 2016.

³⁴ Today, it is important that the entire person is involved in the work process, i.e. for “the worker’s soul to become part of the factory” (Lazzarato 1996: 133).

³⁵ Those same processes have also had some emancipatory effects in terms of labor movement and emancipation of women who achieved material independence from men by working in the factories and thus ensured a more equal status in their relationships (Wendling 2009: 158).

that performs a task” (Wark 2013: 73). Digital technologies and new organizational paradigms ensure the fragmentation of mental processes, their linking to the movement and organization of the machine, and the reduction of the intellectual body – “a person” – to an energy container.³⁶

The possibilities of profiting from intellectual property and monetizing selfhood through quick snapshots of one’s existence for social network presence, close the circle in which every aspect of real-time existence becomes useable matter for productive work, thus creating results typical of industrial production: surplus, loss, entropy, and waste. Selfhood and leisure have become *resources* for productive work, which essentially entails consumption of physical matter:

[T]he contemporary subject consumes itself because it lives flexibly, precariously, and lacks (or doesn’t want) a coherent, stable life narrative that develops predictably and progressively. [...] In the 1990s, the role of the artist was attempted to be translated into a paradigm of individualized entrepreneurship. [...] In other words, one’s own subjectivity becomes a product one consumes, by being provided with opportunities to consume one’s own time and attention through emotive and cognitive responses to objects and situations. (Larsen 2017: 163–165)

Taking the aforementioned into account, we may conclude that leisure values no longer serve the enriching function for the simple reason that the sphere of leisure and private life are now subjected to the same mechanisms as productive labor. Non-work that is needed today is not exalting or ennobling in nature. Instead, a discourse to be aspired to is the one serving the selfhood that consciously nurtures the values of survival and preserving life in its most elementary sense. Because, although working and living conditions of the working class are expanding upwards and slowly engulfing the middle class,³⁷ this process is not being accompanied by appropriate awareness. Quite the opposite, the ideology of entrepreneurial selfhood, which promotes self-fulfillment as the ultimate goal that should be achieved by subjecting life to the logic of project-based organization and professional success, masks the perilous nature of the predominant life/work formation. The moment when running a workflow based on machine-mediated work ensured more successful management of work by turning it into a flow of impersonal energy,³⁸ which in turn ensured more successful handling of the tools of control, awards, punishments, and time

³⁶ We should not neglect the accelerated development of artificial intelligence that threatens to take over some intellectual jobs such as translation, abstract writing (see Starčić, Biljana. 19 April 2019, <https://www.tportal.hr/tehno/clanak/hrvatski-znanstvenik-predvida-umjetna-inteligencija-moci-ce-pisati-sazetke-znanstvenih-radova-20190419>, accessed 1 May 2018) or searching through legal documents (see Getten 2018).

³⁷ Due to changes in living and work dispositions of the middle class, the inherited terminology that we use to label classes is brought into question. Maurizio Lazzarato, for example, believes that the application of one’s own person in the working relationship today constitutes the work of the new working class – the intellectual proletariat (Lazzarato 1996: 135).

³⁸ The need to abstract the work in the context of machine mediation encouraged Karl Marx to accept the thermodynamic models of analysis from hard sciences, which made it possible to observe people, nature, and machines in a single continuity (Wendling 2009: 59).

management, was also the moment when shallow loafing, hiding, and disengaging from self-fulfillment through work became the basic tools to preserve the life and selfhood of workers.

In a digital environment, this control of processes aspires to encompass the deeper layers, transforming every physical and intellectual activity into a single energy flow with potentially remunerative results (cf. Till 2014).

Leisure discourse was once a part of the game used to preserve and build the body that had a chance to charge a price for its personality. Today, this game is dangerous because it is directly linked to the system, there is no guarantee that the results of the game will be monetized, and selfhood is not capable of controlling the transactions with the environment. Leisure discourse, formerly a luxury and manifestation of personality that cannot be reduced to its workplace and position within the system, today is a function of the system that maintains and advances labor processes. The need for rational subjectness that was cultivated in the middle class during modernism has been abolished and a new central subject has been introduced instead – an entrepreneurial selfhood, designed to use various forms of working on oneself and living the life as if managing a career to maintain and develop the work capacity in a person who, even during the periods of longer unemployment, thus remains able to join the system as soon as the need arises. Accordingly, we may conclude that idle waiting, which sabotages projects of ever-improving selfhood and life as a career, is the only form of non-work that, in such a constellation, represents the disengagement from the dominant paradigm and work ethics.

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DOKOLICA, ZABUŠAVANJE I ŽIVOT KAO RAD: DISKURSI O NERADU I NOVA RADNIČKA KLASA

Iako na razini svakodnevnice ostvaruje logiku totalnog rada, postindustrijsko društvo promiče dokolicu i lijenost kao panaceu za probleme koji muče suvremenog čovjeka. No, za razliku od moderne, kad je putem dokolice određen odmak od svijeta rada bio moguć, dokoličarski diskurs u postmoderni ne ispunjava tu funkciju budući da nestaju granice između života, rada i sebstva. Nestanak tih granica, uslijed razvoja tehnološkog okružja i novih organizacija rada, važan je element na temelju kojeg nekadašnja srednja klasa postupno preuzima poziciju radničke klase unutar sustava. Budući da je tako, može se zaključiti da je temeljni način na osnovi kojeg se danas može ostvariti odmak u odnosu na svijet rada, ne dokolica, slobodno ali racionalno ispunjeno vrijeme, nego isprazno zabušavanje – prisvojeno slobodno vrijeme ostvareno u trenucima predviđenima za rad.

Ključne riječi: radnička klasa, srednja klasa, dokolica, zabušavanje, totalni rad