Mainstream political theory has been experiencing an identity crisis for as long as I can remember. From even a cursory glance at the major journals, it still seems preoccupied either with textual exegesis of a conservatively construed canon, fashionable postmodern forms of deconstruction, or the reduction of ideas to the context in which they were formulated and the prejudices of the author. Usually written in esoteric style and intended only for disciplinary experts, political theory has lost both its critical character and its concern for political practice. Behaviorist and positivist political “scientists” tend to view it as a branch of philosophical metaphysics or as akin to literary criticism. They are not completely wrong. There is currently no venue that highlights the practical implications of theory or its connections with the larger world. I was subsequently delighted when Palgrave Macmillan offered me the opportunity of editing Critical Political Theory and Radical Practice.

When I was a graduate student at the University of California: Berkeley during the 1970s, critical theory was virtually unknown in the United States. The academic mainstream was late in catching up and, when it finally did during the late 1980s, it predictably embraced the more metaphysical and subjectivist trends of critical theory. Traditionalists had little use for an approach in which critique of a position or analysis of an event was predicated on positive ideals and practical political aims. In this vein, like liberalism, socialism was a dirty word and knowledge of its various tendencies and traditions was virtually non-existent. Today, however, the situation is somewhat different. Strident right-wing politicians have openly condemned “critical thinking” particularly as it pertains to cultural pluralism and American history. Such parochial validations of tradition have implications for practical politics. And, if only for this reason, it is necessary to confront them. A new generation of academics is becoming engaged with immanent critique, interdisciplinary work, actual political problems, and more broadly the link between theory and practice. Critical Political Theory and Radical Practice offers them a new home for their intellectual labors.

The series introduces new authors, unorthodox themes, critical interpretations of the classics and salient works by older and more established thinkers. Each after his or her fashion will explore the ways in which political theory can enrich our understanding of the arts and social sciences. Criminal justice, psychology, sociology, theatre, and a host of other disciplines come into play for a critical political theory. The series also opens new avenues by engaging alternative traditions, animal rights, Islamic politics, mass movements, sovereignty, and the institutional problems of power. Critical Political Theory and Radical Practice thus fills an important niche. Innovatively blending tradition and experimentation, this intellectual enterprise with a political intent will, I hope, help reinvigorate what is fast becoming a petrified field of study and perhaps provide a bit of inspiration for future scholars and activists.

Stephen Eric Bronner

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Decolonizing Time
Work, Leisure, and Freedom

Nichole Marie Shippen
Dedicated to my parents, Roscoe Martin Shippen and Elizabeth Margaret Shippen
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The original impetus for this project came from reflections on growing up in a working-class family, with parents who worked constantly in physically demanding jobs to make ends meet. Their work ethic made a deep impression on me that I did not question until a paid fellowship in graduate school gave me the time and resources to reflect on what I had experienced growing up. My working-class experience was refracted through political theory, but my reading of political theory was also informed by this experience. My father has worked on oil rigs most of his adult life. Being a “rough neck” and later a driller allowed him to make a considerable amount of money without a college degree, in comparison to other employment options in Wyoming. My mother worked as a house painter and roofer, a nontraditional job for a woman, but again with better pay without a college education. Given my parents’ traditional marriage, my mother’s Mexican-American background and my father’s patriarchal ways, my mother assumed primary responsibility for the domestic and reproductive labor in addition to her full time-employment outside of the home. My parents’ situation is not unique. It is historically an instance of the working-class experience to the extent that their lives have been governed largely by political-economic forces that they, at least as isolated individuals, have little to no control over.

Until relatively recently, my father commuted from Wyoming to the Williston Basin in North Dakota to work in the booming oil fields that have increasingly gained public attention, as we, as a nation, seek
to reduce our dependency on outside sources of oil.\textsuperscript{1} My father’s commute consisted of an eight to nine-hour drive for which he was not compensated despite the use of his own vehicle for means of transportation to and from the work site. Once he arrived at one of the “man camps,” he worked 14 days outdoors, often in extreme weather conditions. To make working conditions more difficult, his hours shifted alternatively from days to nights every other work period. At the end of 14 days, he drove eight to nine hours back to Wyoming and did not work for 12 days. Upon arriving home, he usually spent the first three to four days sleeping to recover from complete exhaustion after working 14 days straight. Often he was recovering from illness.

These biographical details are political insofar as they describe the unjust conditions of working-class people who toil without any viable means of bettering their condition.\textsuperscript{2} My parents are not politically active, but it is not without reason. Growing up in Wyoming, I was never made aware of the existence of labor unions let alone the history of labor struggles or working-class culture that continue to give workers a sense of dignity, self-worth, and class solidarity. When I was introduced to labor history in college, I was nothing short of amazed that such traditions existed, and I wished these traditions had been made more readily available for my parents. For the first time in my life, I understood not only class, but race and gender as political categories that offered alternative explanations for my family’s lot in life that went beyond their individual choices to the political-economic forces that shaped their lives.

To know of a violation of the basic rights to human dignity and self-development is a grave injustice. Injustice is personal when those we know and love perform manual labor so strenuous that their lives are often shortened by the physical damage done to their bodies combined with the lack of health care, preventative or otherwise. Manual labor is dangerous and dirty work, but much more is at stake. What is at stake is nothing less than the development of humanity itself—not a one-sided humanity that is deformed by the working conditions of advanced capitalism, but a development of the uniqueness that each person embodies as their own seed of unrealized potential.
What a teleological understanding of humanity offers is an unfolding of human potential toward an undefined self-realization. When my father is not working, he reads literature and poetry, plays the guitar, writes songs, draws, works on building his garage, fishes, hunts, occasionally cooks, and spends time with family. In short, he most develops his unique human capabilities outside of work. When my mother is not working, she still takes responsibility for the domestic and reproductive labor that in part makes my father’s discretionary time possible, but in her downtime she watches movies or reads magazines.3

When I learned about the history of the labor movement’s fight to limit the workday, I thought of my parents and began to think deeply about the politics of time. I was struck by Karl Marx’s insight, that under capitalism, people spend the majority of their time not participating in political activity, but working. Despite this fact, much of political theory does not treat work or time as politically significant categories. I was further persuaded by Marx’s argument that democracy must be extended to the economic realm in order for freedom and equality to be meaningfully extended to all aspects of life. While the political nature of time under capitalism is readily apparent in the encapsulated phrase, “time is money,” time is seldom recognized or treated as political. People may complain about their overall lack of time, but they do not necessarily recognize the political-economic factors that most contribute to this lack. Instead, as with capitalism in general, people tend to accept and negotiate the constraints as simply part of life without recognizing the structural and ideological root causes of these constraints. In this way, the politics of time is rendered largely invisible. This book seeks to demonstrate the various ways that time is already political, how it was depoliticized, and considers how to develop a politics of time by way of political theory.

We know time is political because labor movements have historically included the fight for time as a central part of their political agenda of extending democracy to the economy. Understanding why the fight for time was so central to the labor movement is not only of historical significance, but also, much more importantly, of political
significance for developing a radical politics today. At the most basic level, the initial fight for time institutionalized a way for people to gain a greater degree of control over their time by limiting the length of the workday through legislative reform. This legislation was meant to prevent individuals from selling themselves into slavery, but it also created an important and necessary distinction between their time and the time they sold to their employer: “In place of the pompous catalogue of the ‘inalienable rights of man’ comes the modest Magna Charta of a legally limited working-day, which shall make clear ‘when the time which the worker sells is ended, and when his own begins.’” What the fight for time established were the necessary, but not sufficient institutional preconditions for developing the possibility for a more humane existence, one not overly determined by the production and circulation of capital, or the mere necessities of life.

The fight for time was no small feat. Marx informs us that the fight for the 10-hour workday took no less than 30 years to win in England, and with good reason. The functioning and profitability of capitalism continue to this day to depend on the ability to define and structure the overall meaning and general experience of time. The fight for time gave birth to what we casually refer to as free time, but free time was not the ultimate goal as much as self-directed time, or temporal autonomy, the ideal form being leisure. At present, free time, a contested concept, which uncritically assumes time left over after wage labor is free, and leisure, “a state of being free from the necessity to labor,” are used interchangeably to the detriment of the radical potential of leisure as a regulative ideal to resist the colonization of time by capital.

Unfortunately, the struggle for time is framed today not as a collective political struggle against the dictates of the capitalist system, but as an individual and ostensibly private struggle to balance the time constraints of both work and life, popularly referred to as the “work-life balance.” Yet, work-life balance is a misnomer and a means of mystification that keeps individuals negotiating time constraints from recognizing the political nature of time under capitalism that is largely beyond the control of isolated and unorganized individuals. Not only are severe time constraints normalized, but technology,
which once was sought to reduce the overall amount of time spent working in order to increase leisure, is now used to encourage individuals to work without limit, as work is integrated seamlessly with life, which is now referred to as “work-life integration.” Seldom do people make a political connection between their individual negotiations of time constraints, and the labor movement’s collective struggle to limit the length of the workday through legislative reform. The depoliticization of time is a result of the colonization of time by capital that determines the individual and collective experience of time to such an extent that severe time constraints are often experienced as normal, if not inevitable, rather than political, which is to say, a situation that can be questioned, challenged, and transformed. The depoliticization of time is reinforced by the political tradition of liberalism that frames time solely as an individual’s possession, rather than a collective and social resource. Further, liberalism suggests that time belongs to individuals who make rational decisions about how to allocate their time without taking into consideration the political-economic context they must negotiate out of necessity.

A theory of time in capitalist modernity is extremely useful because it demonstrates the political nature of time under capital, which may help people make sense of what might otherwise feel like an individual plight. To develop a radical politics, time must be re-politicized through a careful analysis of the historical practices and discourses associated with it. By developing a politics of time, I mean to address the political, economic, and social conditions that either enhance or hinder the ability to control our time in a meaningful way. The commodification of time severely limits the realization that there is a choice to be made between time and money, and that they are not one and the same. Yet, this choice is denied by the daily reality that time is severely constrained by the necessity to labor as enforced by dependency on the market for the majority of goods and services combined with the almost nonexistence social safety net in the context of the United States.

Although subjective understandings of time are not reducible to a single experience, there remains an overarching framework and logic to time under capitalism that all individuals must negotiate regardless
of their employment status. A struggle over alternative understandings of time recently took place between elderly Koreans and a local McDonald’s restaurant located in Flushing, Queens.\textsuperscript{8} The juxtaposition between the presumably retired Korean patrons’ desire to sit for hours on end enjoying their coffee and the fast food industry’s desire to make a profit could not be more illustrative of this point. Native Americans, among other historically oppressed groups in the United States, have also resisted standardized clock time by referring to their purposeful lateness as running on “Indian time.” Despite these individual or even group acts of resistance, the overarching framework and logic to time under capitalism that individuals must negotiate is the subject of this book in its entirety, but I focus primarily on “able-bodied, prime-aged people who are not involuntary unemployed.”\textsuperscript{9} As Goodin notes, “Others such as the young, the old and the involuntary unemployed might suffer the opposite problem—too much time and too little to do... and the currency of time might not be the most relevant way of specifying what, in justice, they most need.”\textsuperscript{10} In 2007, for example, a public library in Maplewood, New Jersey, made the decision to close down from 2:45 to 5 p.m. to keep middle-school students with no place else to be and nothing else to do from going to the library after school let out. The board wrote, “Having as many as 50 young people with nothing to do creates an untenable situation... point[ing] out that many students did not use library resources but simply socialized in the building.”\textsuperscript{11} In each of these cases, discretionary time was available, but was not considered acceptable to either McDonald’s or a public library.

In brief, the colonization of time for working people is related to the experience of time as loss or the feeling of not having enough time to be and do what we want in our lifetime. In the context of the United States, individual negotiations of time constraints are shaped by a range of factors related to the intersections of class, race, and gender relations. The service industry is evidence enough that some people are able to pay for personal services provided by others usually less privileged in order to “save time.” In fact, the more recent history of capitalism might be read as the ever-increasing commodification of previously
uncommodified household activities including childcare, laundry, food preparation, elder care, etc. Despite the disparity between those with gainful full-time employment and those who serve them, usually in the context of part-time work devoid of health benefits, the fight for time appeals to people across a wide range of differences from the overworked to the unemployed as well as those in between, making it a potentially salient political issue. The ability to control one’s time is very attractive to a wide spectrum of people for a variety of reasons, but the overall understanding of the politics of time is very weak. For this reason, I bring together a range of political theorists who have thought about time in a deeper and more meaningful way by connecting it to qualitative considerations of the human condition.

As this manuscript is going to print, the implementation of President Obama’s Affordable Care Act has created some alarm that people might actually be able to choose to work less as a result: “The Congressional Budget Office originally predicted that the availability of subsidies for low-income Americans to buy health insurance would result in about 800,000 people leaving full-time work by 2023. The revised estimate increases that number to about 2.5 million.” Although this is an estimate, the reactions reported in this blog post do provide some indication of just how threatening the reality of reducing the necessity to labor is to business as usual:

Texas Republican John Cornyn took to the Senate floor with the same message. “The president’s own health care policy... is killing full-time work, and putting people in part-time work,” he said.

Obama’s White House wasted little time responding, sending Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason Furman to the daily press briefing. There, Furman turned Cornyn’s charge on its head, arguing that if some people are able to work part time and spend more time with their children, or if others can leave a job to start a business of their own without fear of losing health insurance, then these are good things happening because of the Affordable Care Act.
“This is a choice on the part of workers,” Furman said. “I have no doubt that if, for example, we got rid of Social Security and Medicare, there are many 95-year-olds that would choose to work more. I don’t think anyone would say that was a compelling argument to eliminate Social Security and Medicare,” Furman said.

Perhaps the Affordable Care Act indicates a possible way forward by creating less dependency on employment at least in terms of health care, which may enable people to work less if they choose to do so.
If there is one individual who has been there from the inception of this project to its completion, and I do mean (nearly) every single step of the way, it has been my long-time mentor and dear friend, Michael Forman. He has both challenged and encouraged me in equal measure with his insightful comments and consistently good politics. Whatever I miss, he catches. His support over the course of my intellectual development has been a lesson in the meaning and practice of solidarity.

There were two scholars and friends who read my final chapters in a timely and generous manner despite their own demanding schedules: special thanks to Carolyn Craig and Alex Welcome. Craig has been an enormous source of help in making my work more accessible by pretending she knows little about political theory. She has been a very important source of support throughout the project’s many stages. Welcome and I share an appreciation of Hegel, but disagree in our interpretations, which made his insights particularly useful. I very much look forward to reading his future work.

In terms of scholarship, I would like to thank the following friends and established colleagues for their incisive feedback: Judith Grant, Steve Bronner, and Dennis Bathory. Their comments haunted my writing in a way that forced me to further develop my ideas.

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A special thanks to the community that keeps the ideas and ideals of the democratic socialist tradition alive, including the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and the Young Democratic Socialists (YDS) that allowed me the privilege of presenting my ideas at their annual winter conferences where I met other like-minded folks from across the country and abroad. Thank you to Maria Svart, the National Director of DSA, Joseph M. Schwartz, Jason Schulman, Michael Hirsch, and Cornel West for continuing to make democratic socialism relevant to contemporary politics. Thanks to Heidi Chua Schwa at the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, New York, for being an excellent resource for the Left. Thanks also to Bhaskar Sunkara for establishing the online journal, Jacobin, which often provides lively debates about the politics of time. Finally, thanks to John de Graaf, the executive director of Take Back Your Time for bringing a variety of people together to fight for the qualitative aspects of life.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of presenting chapters of this work in various stages on New Political Science Panels at the American Political Science Association and the Western Political Science Association. I would like to thank some of my fellow panel participants—Douglas Kellner, Katherine Young, Bradley Macdonald, Michael Forman, and William Neimi—whose comments and questions helped me to strengthen my ideas in ways I would not have done otherwise.

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My family—Roscoe Martin Shippen, Elizabeth Margaret Shippen, Rachael Shippen, and Colton Shippen—and Shay Leseberg and Kaia Leseberg—have been extremely supportive, patient, and unconditional in their love. Thank you for reminding me of where I come from and how far I have traveled to arrive here. Finally, I am grateful to my younger brother, Roscoe Anthony Shippen, whose untimely death taught me that life is short, grief is long, but love is longer.
Where the original fight for time was to control the time spent in production by limiting the length of the workday, today’s fight for time must address not only the extension of the workday, but also the colonization of free time and leisure. Commonly or uncritically assumed to be time free from employment/work, with the exception of feminists’ analyses of the sexual, racial, and global divisions of domestic and reproductive labor, and critical theorists’ criticisms of the culture industry, free time and leisure have increasingly become integral parts of the accumulation process through the combined structural and ideological imperatives not only to work, but also to spend and relax under conditions overdetermined by the profit-driven market. In this manner, capitalism has come to dominate the social meaning, value, and organization of time well beyond the realm of production. As a consequence, it is difficult for people to recognize alternative understandings of time as legitimate or possible, which in turn makes alternative organizations of time seem utopian rather than a political goal to be achieved, especially given the general attack against and subsequent political decline of a “labor-left alliance” starting in the 1980s.

Since the colonization of time by capital extends beyond the realm of production to consumption, the decolonization of time must necessarily involve developing a politics of time that extends the modern fight for time beyond concerns with production. This is not to say that
the fight for time should do away with its institutional goal of reducing the workday. On the contrary, the fight to reduce the workday remains as politically relevant and radically anticapitalist as ever, but the fight for time should broaden its goals to encompass and expand public policies such as guaranteed paid parental leave, sick leave, and vacation, universal health care, and basic income that reduce the overall amount of time spent at work by acknowledging the human needs that are not recognized by the logic of capital informed by what André Gorz refers to as “economic rationality.” In other words, the fight for time needs to develop into a more general politics of time. Pushing for more qualitative understandings of time related to human needs beyond work is useful for resisting the dictates of economic rationality to be productive and efficient in the name of profit.

Although the human experience is under considerable time constraint given the inevitability of death, this project considers the structural factors that most contribute to the shared experience of time as loss or the feeling that there is simply not enough time in the day to accomplish all we need and want to do. The scarcity of time is exacerbated by the historical economic and social processes of capital accumulation, which dispossess people of control over the use and meaning of their time to the political and economic advantage of capital. In particular, the domination of necessity by capital, defined by the time and labor that must be sold in order to survive in a market society, generates profit and ensures economic growth, rather than addressing human need or scarcity. Regardless of other contributing factors, the poverty of time corresponds to the organizational needs that most benefit capitalism. Moreover, capitalism benefits from the very time constraints it imposes since individuals tend to purchase services and technology to help them manage their overall lack of time, rather than organizing for alternative political-economic arrangements.

By the “colonization of time,” I mean that the social use, meaning, organization, and experience of time are dominated by the needs of capital, rather than the needs of human beings. Developing a political consciousness about time that is able to identify how the colonization of time functions is more complicated than simply convincing individuals to value their time differently. Alternative valuations of
time already exist, but their actualization depends upon transforming the political, economic, and ideological conditions that presently constrain them. The politics of time under capitalism needs to be rendered visible by those who seek to transform the way we value time. Time is the very substance of freedom; it is in and through time that we develop our capabilities for exercising critical thought and meaningful action. For this reason, I argue that “discretionary time” and “temporal autonomy” should be considered central aspects of freedom. In general, people want more control over their time, but they cannot fathom how that might be possible given the need to work long hours or multiple jobs to make ends meet.

The ideas behind the fight for time are revived by the Left whenever an economic crisis makes the stability of capitalism questionable, but a relatively similar political formula is usually presented as reducing the workday without a decline in wages, providing a basic income, and improving the welfare state—all of which seem improbable given the current policies of austerity and the lack of a viable labor movement. The dilemma faced by thinkers interested in reviving the fight for time from the clutches of political irrelevance is the plausibility factor. When unemployment is high, desperation for work is the result. Therefore the “right to work” takes precedence over other political alternatives to employment policy such as reducing the workday so that the available work might be shared. As Peter Frase argues, “When work is scarce, political horizons tend to narrow, as critiques of the quality of work give way to the desperate search for work of any kind.” What Frase is referring to is the call for “job creation” as a response to high unemployment from both sides of the political spectrum, rather than a more critical interrogation of what Kathi Weeks refers to as the “ideology of the work ethic” and the “glorification of work,” which no longer make sense given the current realities of the job market that leave workers to bear the brunt of “capital under financialization.” Desperation of this kind is neither radical, nor imaginative. It is a condition of being without hope. So how do we go about imagining a radical politics that is not severely limited by the current precarious situation? I propose a radical politics around time. The fight for time is a set of practical demands that fundamentally
reshapes our ability to control our lives, and there are good reasons that a politics of time potentially will have mass appeal if developed in a manner that does not pit one set of workers against another, but gives them a common purpose. A radical politics of time is a possible response to Adolph Reed Jr.’s recent argument that “the left has no particular place it wants to go.” The Left has many places it wants to go, but Reed is correct in arguing that it lacks the “politically effective force” to go there:

The crucial tasks for a committed left in the United States now are to admit that no politically effective force exists and to begin trying to create one. This is a long-term effort, and one that requires grounding in a vibrant labor movement. Labor may be weak or in decline, but that means aiding in its rebuilding is the most serious task for the American left. Pretending some other option exists is worse than useless. There are no magical interventions, shortcuts, or technical fixes. We need to reject the fantasy that some spark will ignite the People to move as a mass. We must create a constituency for a left program—and that cannot occur via MSNBC or blog posts or the New York Times. It requires painstaking organization and building relationships with people outside the Beltway and comfortable leftist groves. Finally, admitting our absolute impotence can be politically liberating; acknowledging that as a left we have no influence on who gets nominated or elected, or what they do in office, should reduce the frenzied self-delusion that rivets attention to the quadrennial, biennial, and now seemingly permanent horse races. It is long past time for us to begin again to approach leftist critique and strategy by determining what our social and governmental priorities should be and focusing our attention on building the kind of popular movement capable of realizing that vision.

Developing a politics of time that privileges the qualitative aspects of the good life including leisure is arguably a good place to start.

From the point of view of teaching at community college, which is where I currently teach, developing a politics of time could not
be more relevant or concrete. The majority of my students are first-
generation, working-class, full-time students, very often with close to
full-time employment. They frequently have to make decisions about
whether to privilege “work” or “school”—and school usually loses out.
To receive federal aid, students must take a full course load amount-
ing to 12 credits per semester. Full-time school and full-time work do
not leave students with much discretionary time. As a result, many
students do not have time to participate in student life as their time
is severely constrained by financial necessity. Their practical mind-set
largely determines what they study in college. As one might imagine,
community colleges and associate degrees are determined by intro-
ductive requirements for transferring to four-year universities and
therefore do not leave much room open for electives, which means the
students do not necessarily have access to meaningful choices as the
choices are already predetermined by the needs of the economy or so
they hope since no one can predict with 100 percent accuracy what
jobs will be available by the time they graduate. The student popula-
tion at LaGuardia Community College located in New York City is
particularly conscious of the precarious situation that defines their
immediate future.

This is why we must make the radical practical. For this new “pre-
cariat,” the radical is practical. Ernst Bloch refers to such a phenom-
enon as “concrete utopia.” Kathi Weeks responds to criticisms of her
proposal of anti-work politics and post-work imaginaries as utopian
by making a distinction between the abstract utopian genre of litera-
ture and the concrete utopian thought of Ernst Bloch. She responds by
arguing that such criticisms are shaped by the very conditions of expe-
rience at this historical juncture, which is to say the limitations of our
imagination are shaped by the limitations of our existing system. As
Marx did, Weeks seeks to evoke a vision of possibilities, in which the
reduction of work hours combined with a basic or guaranteed income
would open up. In effect, she invokes Bloch’s notion of “militant opti-
mism” as a defense against the claim that utopian thought is idealistic,
rather than practical. The fight for time is a fundamentally practical
and economically sound alternative to the status quo. Further, it has a
political history in the United States that should be reclaimed.
The General Appeal of the Fight for Time

My central argument is that the fight for time has existed under capitalism in different forms with different political actors, but there has never been a unified politics of time that brings these seemingly disparate groups together in the context of the United States. In particular, I am thinking along the lines of class, gender, and race guided by the theoretical and political insights of Marxism (the fight to reduce the workday), critical theory (the fight to reclaim the good life), and Feminism (to address the sexual, racial, and global divisions of domestic and reproductive labor). As I was finishing my doctoral research that later developed into this book, two theorists helped deepen my understanding of the sexual and racial division of domestic and reproductive labor. Kathi Weeks’s article, “Hours for What We Will” emphasizes the fact that a reduction in work should not be made “in the name of the family, but in the name of freedom and autonomy.” Given the gendered nature of time, the reduction in work does not necessarily or automatically mean increased discretionary time for all women. Shatema Threadcraft’s doctoral research offered up the concept of “intimate inequality” to describe the historical denial of intimate equality to Black women since they were responsible for the domestic and reproductive labor in white households. These insights are extremely useful in the fight for time because reducing hours will not automatically evenly redistribute domestic and reproductive labor in the context of the private household. Unfortunately, owing to the structural constraints of patriarchy and the resultant sexual, racial, and global divisions of labor, some privileged couples can avoid fighting about the politics of housework by hiring less fortunate women to do the cleaning for them.

The goal of this project is not to provide an exhaustive account of how the fight for time might be implemented today, but instead is meant to help us to start thinking critically about time as already political. Situated primarily within the tradition of political theory, Decolonizing Time uses the theoretical and political insights of thinkers that I argue best bring together the ethical and philosophical, or qualitative, considerations of time to bear on the political way to bring these concerns to realization by institutional, legislative reforms.
Although the terms colonization and decolonization unavoidably invoke postcolonial scholarship, this work is informed by the earlier insights of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx that later come to influence postcolonial scholarship. My primary goal is to develop a collective or political consciousness about time, or what I refer to as “time consciousness,” that seeks to resist, challenge, and transform the colonization of time. Time consciousness seeks knowledge of the myriad of ways that time is already political under capitalism, which is to say that the collective or social meaning, experience, and organization of time are dominated by capital to the extent that our ability to think critically about time is mystified. Decolonizing time means demystifying how the colonization of time by capital functions. Most immediately, the relatively recent “work-life balance” public conversations perpetuate the mystification of the colonization of time by focusing on the actions of isolated individuals, rather than situating the individual in the structural, or political-economic reality that most constrains their ability to achieve such a balance. The idea of “work-life balance” is reinforced by liberalism and its parallel rendering of individuals as isolated, atomized rather than relational beings, and abstracted from their political-economic realities. In reality, capital creates the very time constraints it promises to alleviate by means of time management and time-saving technology, but the question is never asked: why do we need to “save” time in the first place? This is not so much a sleight of hand as much as it is how capital functions with regard to time as money.

**Time as a Matter of Justice**

If time is the ultimate scarce resource, then the distribution of time is a matter of justice. The fight for time as a political response to the logic of capital accumulation remains an indispensable project that needs to be rethought in light of new conditions of accumulation. At stake in the fight for time is autonomy and creating the conditions that contribute to its reflexivity. The ability of individuals to make meaningful choices with regard to their time is greatly hampered by the colonization of time. How people “spend” their time at present is usually considered off-limits from criticism since it is assumed to be
freely chosen activity and thus self-determined. Yet, this assumption precludes any consideration of the political-economic context that determines choice in the first place.\textsuperscript{16} A meaningful choice is after all contingent upon an awareness of the ideological and material forces that constrain or undermine the ability to make autonomous decisions with regard to time. The fight for time is a struggle that involves both time consciousness and the political-economic conditions that would expand the realm of discretionary time and temporal autonomy.

The control of one’s time is relative to the degree to which forces beyond the individual’s control constrain time. Outside of death, the primary constraint on time is necessity. Necessity is a historical and thus a relative category. Necessity is markedly different for Aristotle than it is for Karl Marx, who uses the same category under different historical conditions. Nonetheless, Marx applies Aristotle’s theoretical framework to his critical analysis of capitalism. In brief, the juxtaposition of necessity to freedom assumes a reduction in time spent satisfying basic needs as a precondition of freedom. Unlike Aristotle, Marx is concerned with eliminating the constraints of necessity for all and not simply the privileged few. Marx criticized the parasitic nature of the kind of freedom that existed in Aristotle’s society, one enabled by the labor and time of slaves, servants, and women. Remnants of this unburdening of one’s self from necessity remain possible given the inequality built into the system of capitalism, which tends to institutionalize the sexual, racial, and global divisions of labor. In contrast, Marx sought to establish the material conditions that would reduce necessity for all, a theme that resonates with later theorists who focus on issues of domination and exploitation in human social relations. For Marx, automation by way of technology and the vast productivity it enables substitutes for slaves in the provision of the material base for life.

What Marx offers is a detailed analysis of how the historical development of industrial capitalism came to dominate necessity through the manipulation of “socially necessary” labor-time in order to extract “surplus” labor-time.\textsuperscript{17} The manipulation of “socially necessary” labor-time appears to the workers not as exploitation, but as a determined relationship between work and need, which continues to deny what I
refer to as “time consciousness,” or an understanding of how the system of capitalism colonizes time and restricts temporal autonomy. The rise of timed wage labor under capitalism transformed the collective understanding of the relationship between time, work, and necessity so that “time becomes necessity,” that is, necessity overburdens time to such an extent that its connection to freedom is severely limited. The system of capitalism succeeds in colonizing necessity because “one [is] compelled to produce and exchange commodities in order to survive” under the “abstract time” of capitalism. “Abstract time” refers to the fact that production and need are abstracted from each other so that time becomes an independent rather than a dependent variable of human activities. The transformation from “concrete” to “abstract time” allows the dominating logic of capitalism to control the meaning and use of time. As a consequence, time is mistakenly understood as objective or neutral when it is informed structurally and ideologically by capitalism to the extent that time as money becomes common sense. The transformation from concrete to abstract time dissolves the consciousness of time as historically constructed to the advantage of the accumulation of capital. This lack of time-consciousness, however, has not always been the case, that is, work time was once part of the political agenda as formulated through the labor movement’s fight for time.

The extent to which capitalism has been able to colonize time is related to the overall strength or weakness of the left’s ability to regulate the economic mandates of capitalism through democratic reform, which historically has included the length of the workday. What the fight for time demonstrates is that the colonization of time is neither automatic nor unavoidable, but contestable and political. In response to the unregulated working conditions of early industrial capitalism, the fight for time originally sought to institutionalize constraints on capitalism’s domination by setting limits on work time. This would allow for (if not guarantee) the possibility of self-determined time. The fight for time was a political struggle framed in terms of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of time that parallel negative and positive understandings of freedom. Forever critical of the abstract nature of political rights, Marx nevertheless recognized the usefulness
of democratic reform for protecting workers from overwork. Negative freedom was marked by the institutionalization of the 10-Hour Bill, which distinguished “when the time which the worker sells is ended, and when his own begins.” Positive freedom, as articulated by Marx, followed the Aristotelian vision of time as teleologically related to the development of human potential. The labor slogan “Bread and roses!” captures the necessity/freedom framework well since it demonstrates workers made demands not only for the basic necessities, but for the finer things in life as well including leisure.

The colonization of time today takes place in ways both similar to and different from the original colonization of time as shaped by the needs and conditions of early industrial capitalism. The relationship between capitalism and time is fluid, and should not be assumed beforehand. Different phases of capitalism ranging from Fordism to Post-Fordism have contributed to the gradual transformations of time as determined by the changing needs of the economy. Equally important are the various forms of resistance against the colonization of time including the fight for time. The fight for time is arguably gendered since women have long supported working less to be able to address their “duties” at home, but for the sake of coherence, I have limited this work primarily to thinking about the colonization of time through the Marxist and Critical theory traditions. However, one cannot discuss temporal autonomy without acknowledging the work of feminists who have criticized the sexual division of labor as decreasing women’s temporal autonomy. The history of socialist feminist thought remains fertile ground toward rethinking the sexual division of labor through the lens of time, but it often focuses on gender at the expense of race. Patriarchy and white supremacy certainly intersect with capitalism’s organization of time and contribute to the unequal distribution of discretionary time.

The fight for the reduced workday remains central to the struggle for autonomy, but transforming the political-economic conditions so as to decrease the overall reliance on the market for all goods and services is just as necessary for developing a politics of time today. If capitalism’s ability to colonize time rests in its domination of necessity, as I argue, then creating alternatives should decrease its power to
control others’ time through the need to work and spend as circumscribed by a market society. Alternatives might include a combination of welfare provisions, a basic or guaranteed wage, or increased self-provision at the local level. In this regard, it is useful to reconsider the relationship between necessity and freedom as situated in the Aristotelian-Marxist tradition. The necessity/freedom framework helps us not only to consider how the value of time has been shaped by the historical development of global capitalism, but how the parallel development of the fight for time sought to resist the colonization of time on humanistic grounds. Perhaps more importantly, the fight for time was never simply a fight for time away from production, but a fight for self-determined time inside and outside of production in order to increase autonomy.

Although this is project is primarily based on political theory, it is worth mentioning two of the empirical resources informing this book. The primary resource is Robert E. Goodin, James Mahmud Rice, Antti Parpo, and Lina Eriksson’s *Discretionary Time: A New Measure of Freedom*. I am indebted to this research for the terms, “discretionary time” and “temporal autonomy,” but the research also combines individual choices and structural or political-economic policies that influence the choices available with regard to time use. Second, the US Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, specifically the relatively new (to the United States) American Time Use Survey of 2012 is useful both for how the researches categorized “leisure,” and for the general statistics of how people in the United States spend their time.

**Overview of Chapters**

Chapter 1 focuses on Aristotle’s understanding of leisure as the ideal form of temporal autonomy, or the ability to control one’s time in a meaningful and self-directed way. In the context of Athens, discretionary time for the exercise of temporal autonomy was made possible for male citizens by assigning necessity (biological, financial, and household) to women, servants, and slaves in the context of the private household. This division of labor allowed male citizens time for active and sustained participation in politics, and
leisure as contemplation, at the expense of the respective development of these particular human beings. Despite Aristotle’s acceptance of this unequal division of labor, his analysis of the distribution of time across necessity and freedom revealed time to be a collective or social resource shaped by specific political-economic constraints, and not simply an individual’s property abstracted from his or her social position, as liberalism is wont to frame it today. Aristotle’s analysis revealed the interdependent relationship between necessity and freedom, which anticipated the seemingly problematic issue of necessity for modern concerns with equality because it begs the question of how necessity will be addressed without resorting to delegating necessity based on existing forms of inequality. What this means is that the relationship between the state and the economy, and in particular the strength of the welfare state combined with a commitment to equality or lack thereof, is central to the overall availability of discretionary time and temporal autonomy for all.26

Chapter 2 focuses on Marx’s theoretical and political development of Aristotle’s basic insight that the reduction of necessity is a necessary precondition of freedom, through the concepts of labor and time, and more specifically the exploitation of labor through the commodification and manipulation of time by capital. What Marx adds to Aristotle’s analysis, and what remains useful to developing a politics of time today, is a historical and political understanding of the concept of necessity, which means that the determination of necessity, as well as the overall distribution of time that must be devoted to necessity, can be questioned, challenged, and transformed at a collective and political level. For this reason, Marx is able to argue against the unjust working conditions of early industrial capitalism that reduce the working-class existence entirely to necessity as determined by capital and the profit motive. He attempts to overcome this unjust division of labor by theorizing alternative political-economic conditions that would reduce necessity by other means than reducing the majority of the working class to necessity and increase leisure for all. In his analysis, Marx not only demonstrates the specific ways time is political under capitalism, namely the commodification and manipulation of time almost entirely in service to the profit motive,
but he also identifies the political actors, the working class, that are most likely to take up the fight for time not only because it is in their immediate economic interest to do so, but it is also the only conceivable way they might regain their humanity by way of legislative reform, short of revolution. Reconciling the relationship between necessity and freedom through the concept of labor, Marx helps us to recognize the full implications of the colonization of time by capital as a loss of time for the development of human potential. Given this loss, Marx recognizes the significance in transforming leisure from a regulative ideal to a political fight for time. He does so through a teleological understanding of history as related to the expansion of freedom. Taking Hegel’s “insight into necessity” as a precondition of freedom, Marx is able to demonstrate the link between capitalism’s manipulation of “necessary” labor-time and overwork.

Chapter 3 uses Georg Lukács to develop a theory of time-consciousness in response to the reification of time or the acceptance of time as socially constructed under capitalism as permanent, rather than as historical and political. Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness* is particularly helpful in reestablishing a dialectical link between the philosophical and political aspects of time in relationship to history, as established by Karl Marx, as a way to contest the reification of time-consciousness. The fight for time reconsidered must address all elements of the colonization of time, including and perhaps most of all the reification of time-consciousness, which denies individuals the ability to understand reality in terms of fluid historical processes. In contrast, time-consciousness enables individuals to make connections between their immediate reality and the totality of social relations. In this way, individuals not only come to understand how capitalism colonizes time, but also recognize the objective possibilities of contesting the colonization of time without retreating into subjectivity or romantic anti-capitalism.

Chapter 4 provides analysis of several historical developments in the context of the United States that significantly hindered the ability to think critically about the political-economic factors that frame, structure, and limit “choice” around questions of leisure. The colonization of time entailed a systematic reconceptualization of leisure by business
in the early twentieth century that resulted in the reconstruction of the social understanding of time to better fit the needs of the accumulation process, including the debasement of the classical or humanist rendition of leisure to the modern notion of free time for consumption. This debasement signaled a significant defeat for the working classes’ fight for time because it replaced an earlier understanding of progress linked to the democratic ideal of using technology to reduce the need to work and increase leisure for all. The related conceptions of time—progress, leisure, and free time—were historically linked and politically contested by different social and political actors. A historical approach is useful for developing a politics of time because it acknowledges the political struggles over leisure, including what values, capitalist or noncapitalist, ultimately came to define leisure and why.

Chapter 5 considers the dialectical relationship between production and consumption identified by Marx, whereby production shapes not only the objects for consumption, but also the subjects who ultimately complete the consumption process. I argue the time spent in production shapes time outside of production in form and content, meaning the colonization of time by capital constrains not only the time available for the possibility of leisure, but also our imagination of alternative understandings of what we might want to do with and be in our leisure. The choice of leisure activities matters for the overall development of subjectivity and critical consciousness, but the content, or qualitative aspects of leisure, is largely determined by the form, or quantitative aspects it is forced to take because of the colonization of time, including the conflation of leisure with free time. Since leisure is largely mediated through culture, I reconsider Theodor Adorno’s and Max Horkheimer’s primary criticisms of the culture industry specifically as they relate to the development of subjectivity and critical consciousness in order to reassess the usefulness, as well as the limitations of their critique for developing a radical politics of time in comparison to the more practical-political developments of critical theory proposed by Herbert Marcuse and André Gorz for theories of social change.

Chapter 6 ends with reflections on the work of André Gorz and considers the development of a politics of time for today. Following
Gorz’s lead, I re-examine the potential of the fight for time given the economy as it exists today. As the need to work intensifies given the economic recession, the overall lack of full-time employment renders the contradictions of the neoliberal economic mandate to work and spend visible. It is the contradictions in the current modes of production and consumption that make it possible and necessary to reconsider the primary categories of capitalism, including labor, time, and value. Importantly, Gorz confronts the prevalent “ideology of work,” which he argues contributes to the extension of “economic rationality” by reinforcing the idea that work is the answer to all societal ills despite the disappearance of work as we know it, which has given rise to what Gorz refers to as the “dual economy.” In the same vein, Gorz engages the domestic labor debates of feminists from the 1970s by arguing against the “housework for wages” campaigns because he argues this extends economic rationality to the private household. Ultimately, I argue that the respective theoretical frameworks of Marxism and feminism might be strengthened by informing each other.
The origin of the modern fight for time is based on an earlier, broader, and more radical conception of time grounded in the Aristotelian-Marxist tradition. This tradition includes a classical republican understanding of freedom based on non-domination that remains useful for developing a politics of time because it places structural forms of domination and the possibilities for “structural freedom as non-domination” at the forefront of its analysis. 1 Politics is, after all, not only about raising awareness or developing critical thinking about the structural relationships of power, which remains crucial, but also about collectively organizing for political-economic transformation to improve the condition of people’s lives in concrete ways. The fight for time lends itself to both through the institutional reduction of the length of the workday, while simultaneously bringing ethical and philosophical considerations of time to bear on the political relevance of the fight for time for questions of social justice.

Aristotle is the central figure in this tradition since he anticipates two of the defining elements of the modern fight for time, namely the recognition that leisure is a central aspect of the good life, and the structural, or political-economic conditions that make leisure possible by preventing human existence from being overdetermined by necessity. 2 Necessity is defined by varying social and historical standards, but as a starting point we shall assume it is the minimum amount of time that must be spent on the basic biological, household, and financial needs. 3
There are, of course, political reasons as to why particular individuals spend more or less time on necessity that are related to the intersectionality of various structural forms of oppression further mediated by the colonization of time by capital. Applying a general theory of distributive justice with regard to the overall distribution of social time, I argue that no individual’s life should be overdetermined by necessity. Importantly, necessity is not the problem as much as the unequal distribution of necessity. Time not determined by necessity, I henceforth refer to as “discretionary time,” instead of “free time,” which is rendered meaningless as license, rather than as something that is much more substantially related to freedom. In contrast to free time, discretionary time helps highlight the relevance of individuals having control over their time for developing and exercising autonomy, or more specifically “temporal autonomy.”

While the desire to have more control over our time already exists, as made apparent in the recent attention paid to the public conversations around the “work-life balance,” the way toward politically achieving that goal is not immediately obvious since struggles around the issue of time are more often than not framed as an individual plight requiring individual solutions in the form of time management and the utilization of time-saving technology. Framing work-life balance in this way mystifies the colonization of time by capital whereas capital creates the experience of time as loss that it then profits from in a variety of ways. The tradition of liberalism only serves to reinforce this idea with its notion of individuals abstracted from the concrete realities of their political-economic circumstances, which insinuates people have much more control over their time than they actually do. For these reasons, leisure is seldom recognized as political, let alone a salient political issue around which people might organize and make demands around. Perhaps the closest we come to discussing leisure involves a consideration of the overall lack of vacation days in comparison to other advanced economies, but the combined public issues necessitating guaranteed paid time off from work to address human needs are never put together under a more general fight for time. The rare exception is Take Back Your Time, which does attempt to make leisure a political demand by raising awareness, creating a Take Back
Your Time Day, and supporting public policies that increase discretionary time.\(^6\) It is only since 2003 that the US Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics even started to measure time use.

Reclaiming Aristotle’s understanding of leisure is an important part of renewing the fight for time as a social critique and a political demand because leisure represents the ideal form of temporal autonomy, or the ability to control one’s time in a meaningful and self-directed way. Therefore, leisure is the “regulative ideal” that should guide the fight for increasing discretionary time and potentially temporal autonomy since time alone does not in itself guarantee the development or exercise of autonomy. Using leisure as a regulative ideal simply means using an ideal (leisure) for practical/political purposes. Generally speaking, a regulative ideal functions in at least two ways: first, by allowing for a critique of that which exists by comparison to the ideal, and, second, by continually striving toward the ideal by making improvements in the status quo.\(^7\) The ideal may never be reached, but it nevertheless continues to serve a practical/political purpose.

Leisure as a regulative ideal provides a social critique of the contemporary understanding of leisure, and a foundation for an alternative and more meaningful understanding of what I refer to as “time consciousness” with which to politically contest the severely limited understanding of time we experience on a daily basis under capitalism. Reclaiming leisure is an important part of developing a collective critical awareness about time as already a political issue, and seeks to resist, confront, challenge, and ultimately transform the colonization of time by capital. At the conceptual level, leisure as a regulative ideal allows for critical distinctions to be made between the classical understanding of leisure and the common sense and the often conflated notions of leisure and free time that are largely defined in relationship to production (work) and consumption (consumerism). In addition, leisure as a regulative ideal allows for critical judgment of contemporary leisure activities, which works against the somewhat formidable idea that leisure represents the ultimate freedom of individual choice when in reality “choice” is overly determined by the system and logic capitalism. Thus we can begin to make judgments between
better and worse leisure activities as is done with the quality of food in food politics today. If our overall goal is health, for example, some foods are better than others, and we might begin to think about leisure in a similar fashion, with our goal being more civically oriented toward well-being, quality of life, or happiness. This goal rests upon Aristotle’s (and later Hegel’s and Marx’s) assertion that humans are political, or relational, animals.

Expanding discretionary time and enlarging temporal autonomy might begin by focusing on enlarging, extending, or creating public policies (and honoring more holidays) that would increase discretionary time for all to the extent that people could actually make a choice to work less. Some examples might include making Election Day a national holiday, decreasing the workweek to 30 hours a week without a significant decrease in pay in order to share the available work, providing a basic income and a living wage, expanding paid parental and sick leave, and increasing paid vacation time. In more general terms, using leisure as a regulative ideal helps to argue for leisure and leisure activities that are better for developing personal autonomy and facilitating greater conditions of freedom, equality, and democracy for all.

Taking my cue from Aristotle’s advice that each citizen should know how to rule and be ruled, I argue that leisure activities that actively ask something of participants in terms of developing critical reflection, thought, or action are necessary for making choice more meaningful and expanding the realm of choices beyond some of the more passive activities that are offered in direct service to the profit motive. The purpose of the Greeks’ emphasis on active citizen participation, which was only made possible by the existence of leisure, was to “enable people to develop their distinctive human capacities and virtues—to deliberate about the common good, to acquire practical judgment, to share in self-government, to care for the fate of the community as a whole.” As Michael J. Sandel explains, “Moral virtue therefore requires judgment, a kind of knowledge Aristotle calls ‘practical wisdom’ … The life of the citizen enables us to exercise capacities for deliberation and practical wisdom that would otherwise lie dormant. This is not the kind of thing we can
We become good at deliberating only by entering the arena, weighing the alternatives, arguing our case, ruling and being ruled—in short, by being citizens.” While Sandel notes that the primary distinction between ancient and modern political thinkers is their respective emphasis on virtue or freedom, I argue virtue and freedom are only at cross-purposes when freedom is defined by the liberal tradition solely in terms of negative freedom, or the freedom from arbitrary interference by individuals, groups, and institutions (namely the state). John Dewey later extends liberalism’s argument to include freedom from the arbitrary interference of corporations since he argues they have become more of a danger to individual freedom than the state.

In terms of negative freedom, the fight for time takes the form of reducing the workday in order to increase discretionary time, or the area of noninterference, while positive freedom is more interested in the content or value that discretionary time takes on. If the goal of increasing discretionary time is guided by the development and exercise of temporal autonomy that is civically and democratically oriented, it is not without good reason. Active civic engagement not only creates healthier individuals and stronger communities, but is also a possible source of happiness and freedom. People are relational beings who develop their unique capabilities through their interactions with others, but when people’s lives are overdetermined by necessity, they are prevented from developing their unique potential as human beings. If Hegel is correct, what people want most of all from other people is reciprocity, or the mutual recognition of their humanity. Under capitalism it remains unclear whether reciprocity is possible, but the fight for time gives one possible way to reduce the inequality that prevents us from recognizing each other’s humanity by giving us more discretionary time with which to build community and sustain relationships.

**Work, Leisure, and Free Time**

The conditions of capitalism have reduced the classical understanding of leisure as a good in itself to an instrumental, disciplined, and
commodified understanding of leisure and free time defined primarily in relation to production (work) and consumption (consumerism). Conceptually, creating a distinction between the classical ideal of leisure, and the common sense, or uncritical understanding of leisure and free time, is central to enabling people to begin to expand their imaginations about what they might want to do with and be in their leisure beyond this more limited understanding. Sebastian de Grazia argues that we do not have leisure at all, but free time, which is qualitatively different than the classical ideal of leisure: “We can note to start that free time accentuates time; it sets aside a unit of time free from the job. In Aristotle’s short definition time has no role. Leisure is a condition or a state—the state of being free from the necessity to labor.” In the Greek context, leisure was made possible by the political-economic conditions that prevented male citizens from being enslaved to necessity so that they could have time to participate in politics and experience leisure. By comparison, free time is a truncated version of leisure that is greatly constrained by the necessity to work under the terms and conditions set by capitalism. Owing to the problem of overwork, for example, free time is often desired for rest and relaxation in order to recuperate one’s strengths in order to be able to return to work: “‘Time off’ for the workers is simply to rest them up to re-enter the workforce. No other activity can be of open-ended duration, all is confined by work-time.” Even in those moments designated “free,” we remain aware of the unavoidable return to work: “Free time for the worker is always for limited periods of time, within or away from work; there is no way to forget the limits of measured time, no possibility of unlimited entry into any activity but work. Most of non-work time is spent in recuperative and diversionary activity whose purpose is to prepare for the return to work.” Thus the form and content of free time are a direct reflection of a workdriven society since free time is greatly restricted by work time.

Kathi Weeks provides a succinct description of what she refers to as “the problem with work” in the context of the United States: “Those problems include the low wages in most sectors of the economy; the unemployment, underemployment, and precarious employment suffered by many workers; and the overwork that often characterizes
even the most privileged forms of employment—after all, even the best job is a problem when it monopolizes so much of life.” It is important to note that time spent away from work does not in itself create leisure. As Weeks argues, “The amount of time alone that the average citizen is expected to devote to work—particularly when we include the time spent training, searching, and preparing for work, not to mention recovering from it—would suggest that the experience warrants more consideration [by the discipline of political science].”

Given this reality, it is not terribly surprising that a very common response to inquiries about how people spend their leisure is met with an incredulous, “What leisure?!” Weeks’s major contribution to political theory is her challenge to our lack of resistance to what is by now a secularized work ethic.

If Weeks’s general assessment of the all time-consuming nature of work is correct, we could argue that we are slaves to necessity defined not by ourselves, but by the terms and conditions of capitalism. As a result, we often experience time as loss or not having enough time to accomplish the basic necessities outside of work related to the household, personal care, and care for others, let alone experience leisure. The experience of not having enough time is a historically specific condition of late capitalism that is both created and simultaneously “solved” by capitalism through time management schemes, labor or time-saving technologies, and the commodification of services (food preparation, childcare, elder care, etc.) that were once provided in the household, but can now be purchased to save time by those who can afford them. Yet, the underlying structural reasons as to why we need to manage or save time are not part of the public conversations around public policy issue of time (work-life balance, vacation time, parental leave, paid sick leave, retirement), nor to what end(s) we are managing or saving our time toward. By way of contrast, before the 1930s a shared understanding across labor and business was an idea of “progress,” which was guided by the vision of an overall reduction of the need to work, made possible by automation and a corresponding increase in leisure, an idea that dates back to Aristotle’s own idea that self-operating instruments would end the need for slaves.
The Politics of Necessity

For Aristotle, humans are political or relational animals that develop their unique potential in the context of the polis. It is the division of labor in the context of the Greek city-state, which makes it possible to address the material necessities that allows for the citizenry to be free for active and sustained participation in politics and leisure. For Aristotle, necessity is determined by nature or the subordination to another person owing to conditions of poverty. Thus defined, necessity refers primarily to a combination of biological needs and economic constraints. Biological necessity is the time one must devote to basic survival and upkeep. Although biological necessity might be universalized as the very basic animal need to eat, drink, and sleep, the fulfillment of biological necessity is historically specific to the political and economic conditions one encounters, including the general distribution of necessity through the division of labor in a given society. Although Aristotle accepts the subordination of women, servants, and slaves to lives of necessity in service to the male citizenry, he nevertheless demonstrates that the delegation of necessity is a political question related to the organization of the state, and the household economy.

Aristotle operates under the formula that a reduction in time spent satisfying basic needs is an essential precondition of freedom, while slavery to necessity defines a condition of unfreedom. From the Greek standpoint, “the freedom of some could not be imagined without the servitude of others and the two extremes were not thought of as contradictory, but as complementary and interdependent.” Slavery was justified on the grounds that it was the only conceivable way to reduce necessity in order to allow for the time necessary for the extensive set of political commitments for the male citizenry in the Greek city-state. For Aristotle, the reduction of necessity is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition of human self-development as related to telos-realization.

The reason Aristotle regards necessity and freedom as irreconcilable is because of his ontological conception of humans as contemplative, rather than laboring beings, and the condition that lends itself
most to contemplation is leisure, not labor. By contrast, the modern understanding of labor as something intrinsically valuable did not exist in the Greek world. Labor was related to necessity, or the need to labor in order to procure that which was necessary for sustaining life and the possibility of attaining the good life, but it was considered akin to slavery since it did not allow for autonomous thought or activity. Leisure, not labor was considered the defining condition of human flourishing. The reduction of labor constrained by necessity as determined by nature or the subordination to another person owing to conditions of poverty was considered to be a precondition of leisure, and the measure of freedom was based on the degree one was not subjected to either: “The free man, if he had to work, wanted therefore to work for himself, not someone else.”

In contrast, the modern understanding of labor is alienable and therefore saleable, without necessarily inferring subjugation on the part of the laborer. The political aspects of economic relations in the ancient world were rendered visible by the social relations of domination and subordination in the context of the household economy. The visibility aspect needs highlighting because today domination and subordination, or the unequal distribution of power between employers and employees, is not recognized as such because of liberalism’s insistence that individuals make rational choices devoid of structural factors.

Generally speaking, necessity might never be eliminated, but the significant reduction of necessity can be accomplished in several ways that are already in place. The primary method is to create a political community that delegates necessity through a social division of labor. Securing time to cultivate one’s individuality is made possible through the cooperation of individuals in a given society since each individual does not have to procure for himself all the necessary provisions:

Without political society no individual could develop his or her unique talents. In the family or the village, it is impossible to specialize very much. In fact, it is impossible to get very far beyond a concern for survival. Hawthorne discovered that in a small, utopian community like Brooke Farm, one does not write much poetry. Planting potatoes takes up too much of one’s time and
energy. And it is because someone plants the potatoes that others can cultivate the fine arts. Individuality is a product, not an antecedent, of political society and is always dependent on the order of political life.  

Unfortunately, the division of labor under capitalism has a tendency to reinforce existing patterns of inequality, which determine who will “plant the potatoes” and who will “cultivate the fine arts.” Lacking the modern idea of equality, Aristotle fails to recognize this division of labor as problematic.

As mentioned previously, Aristotle regards necessity and freedom as irreconcilable owing to an ontological conception of man as a contemplative being. He could not see another way of affording leisure to some unless others were assigned to the realm of necessity. Consequently, he accepts the assignment of necessity to slaves, servants, and women in the household insofar as it affords male citizens time to participate in politics and experience leisure as contemplation: “Hence those who are in a position which places them above toil have stewards who attend to their households while they occupy themselves with philosophy or with politics.” Beyond simply accepting the existing division of labor, Aristotle reinforces it by arguing that individuals cannot be slaves to necessity and be free since they do not make autonomous decisions with regard to their own lives. They do not have access to temporal autonomy since their time is overdetermined by necessity, and moreover necessity not defined by their needs, but by the needs of their masters. Aristotle’s argument relates to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s master/slave dialectic. Read through the lens of time, this argument means how we spend our time matters for questions of consciousness, especially if we spend the majority of our time being ruled with no possibility for ruling. Discretionary time makes political participation and the experience of leisure possible, but it is made possible in Greek society through the disproportionate designation of necessity to women, servants, and slaves in the private household.

Aristotle does note that the difference between those who participate in the realm of necessity and those who do not is determined
by convention and not by nature. Thus the assignment of roles is contestable and seems quite arbitrary other than the criteria of citizenship, which he defines as “belonging…only to those who have been relieved of necessary sorts of work. Those who perform necessary services for one person are slaves; those who do so for the partnership are vulgar persons and laborers.” Expressing a general disdain for those regimes that allowed vulgar persons, laborers, and foreigners to become citizens, Aristotle argues, “It is impossible to pursue the things of virtue when one lives the life of a vulgar person or a laborer.” Aristotle’s conception of citizenship is based on exclusions justified and reinforced by the existing division of labor. Instead of challenging the existing division of labor, Aristotle accepts it. He does, however, allow for the possibility of self-operating technology to free the need for slaves as the primary means of reducing time constrained by necessity.

Despite these more problematic aspects of Aristotle’s necessity/freedom framework, his ideas remain useful for the purpose of developing a politics of time since it forces us to rethink the allocation of necessity through the lens of temporal autonomy. Doing so offers a way to think about time in terms of distributive justice as related to the human development of potentialities and the unequal distribution of this opportunity. Thus how time is distributed across necessary activities is an inherently political question related to the distribution of power. For Aristotle, the public sphere, “where free and equal citizens engage together in striving for some common good,” depended upon the converse “relationships of inequality and dependence” in the private sphere. Remnants of this unburdening of one’s self from necessity remain possible given the inequality built into the system of capitalism, whereby those with the means are able to purchase labor-time from those without at a cheaper cost than it would cost to do the work in terms of time themselves. However, Aristotle’s argument that humans overdetermined by necessity are not capable of exercising freedom and thus not eligible for citizenship remains useful for making ethical and political arguments in support of a reduced workday and week so as to allow all individuals to participate in politics and experience leisure as a human right.
Reflections on an Ancient Ideal: The Content of Leisure

The common sense or uncritical understanding of leisure as license today is not particularly helpful in disrupting the colonization of time by capital and may in fact reinforce the mistaken idea that leisure is somehow immune from the dictates of capitalism. This uncritical understanding of leisure is informed by liberalism’s privileging of the individual and individual choice abstracted from the reality of the economic, political, and social constraints that inform and shape “choice.” However, leisure today is not self-directed as much as it is directed by the choices provided under capitalism, the main reason being that we simply do not have the “discretionary time” necessary to cultivate meaningful leisure for ourselves and with others because it is always bound to “necessity” as defined by conditions of capitalism. Further, how we spend our time matters because it is the very substance of being and becoming, which is fundamentally related to what a “person [is] able to do and to be.” Just as we are what we eat, we are how we spend our time. If we spend the majority of our time working, often under undemocratic conditions, it makes sense that in our leisure we will not only accept, but often desire more passive leisure activities because we are not used to exercising our ability to rule, but only be ruled. William Greider considers these same sets of questions, not with regard to leisure, but with regard to work today:

Where did citizens learn the resignation and cynicism that leads them to withdraw as active citizens? They learned it at the office; they learned it on the shop floor. This real-life education in who has power and who doesn’t creates a formidable barrier to ever establishing an authentic democracy in which Americans are genuinely represented and engaged. The socialization of powerlessness is probably far more damaging to politics than the special interest campaign money or the emptiness of television advertising.

Rather than create and criticize a list of contemporary leisure activities, which would be highly subjective, what I aim to provide instead is a careful consideration of the classical ideal of leisure as developed by Aristotle as a way to render leisure meaningful beyond its more
limited contemporary understanding as license by relating it to human flourishing.

The classical ideal of leisure is informed by an open-ended teleological understanding of time in relationship to the development of human potential and actualization. Importantly, time alone does not guarantee leisure. For Aristotle, content matters: “If some shame must always attach to any failure to use aright the goods of life, a special measure of shame must attach to a failure to use them aright in times of leisure.” For Aristotle, what one does with their leisure matters insofar as it contributes to or inhibits the development of human potential as guided by the good life. The failure to use leisure rightly is shameful because it is so closely aligned with freedom itself. For Aristotle, freedom must be carefully qualified. For example, Aristotle is careful to distinguish leisure from pleasure and amusement. Instead, leisure is active contemplation of the lived experience. These distinctions are crucial because they qualify leisure as something beyond mere animal existence, and instead something worthy of humanity. Martha Nussbaum describes the line of thought that informs the Aristotelian-Marxist tradition: “The core idea seems to be that of the human being as a dignified free being who shapes his/her own life, rather than being passively shaped or pushed around by the world in a manner of a flock or herd animal.”

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle presents the relationship between time and freedom as related to human potential and actualization. This potential is not predefined, but something that might be developed given favorable political-economic conditions, which frees people from the necessity to labor constantly. Aristotle does not explicitly define human potential but he links it generally to the achievement of the good life. Not all people will realize their potential by the end of their lifetimes, but this does not negate the reality that every single person has the potential to develop his or her capacities or what Nussbaum refers to as “capabilities,” which she defines as “not just abilities residing inside the person but also the freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social, and economic environment.” Whether this potential is partially or completely realized depends upon the limitations placed by the political-economic
conditions, but it also depends in part upon whether a person is able to discern the sources of happiness—a capacity that arguably entails a certain degree of critical or political consciousness of the external influences shaping desire.\textsuperscript{40}

Aristotle’s conception of time as the substance of human development allows him to identify obstacles to self-actualization. He recognizes, for example, that people often mistake pleasure or enjoyment for happiness: “To judge by their lives, the masses and the most vulgar seem—not unreasonably—to believe the Good or happiness is pleasure. Accordingly they ask for nothing better than a life of enjoyment.”\textsuperscript{41} Aristotle carefully qualifies happiness as activity and not simply a state of being: “We said, then, that happiness is not a state, since if it were it might belong even to a man who slept all through his life, passing a vegetable existence.”\textsuperscript{42} The teleological understanding of being in ancient Greek philosophy endows human life with purpose and an end. Time, as the means through which a person achieves his or her telos, is thus intimately linked to an understanding of being in terms of the good that Aristotle describes as happiness: As Aristotle states, “Our task is to become good men, or to achieve the highest human good. That good is happiness; and happiness is an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.”\textsuperscript{43} The connection between happiness and leisure for Aristotle is contemplation.\textsuperscript{44} Demarcating leisure from contemplation in Aristotle is no easy task: “Contemplation, like leisure, or being itself leisure, brings felicity.”\textsuperscript{45} Similar to happiness, leisure can be neither license nor mere idleness precisely because it ends at some good.\textsuperscript{46} In the case of leisure, however, the good is a good in itself. Carefully qualifying leisure as an activity that is done for its own sake, Aristotle argues that contemplation fits this description: “Again, contemplation would seem to be the only activity that is appreciated for its own sake; because nothing is gained from it except the act of contemplation, whereby from practical activities we expect to gain something more or less over and above the action.”\textsuperscript{47} Leisure is noninstrumental for Aristotle.

At the same time, Aristotle admits that contemplation is never simply for the sake of contemplation. As he states, “The end consists not in gaining theoretical knowledge of the several points at issue, but rather
in putting our knowledge into practice. In that case it is not enough to know about goodness; we must endeavour [sic] to possess and use it, or adopt any other means to become good ourselves.” Aristotle recognizes a relationship between the contemplative and the practical life since happiness is contemplation of virtuous conduct: “We conclude, then, that the happy man will have the required quality, and in fact will be happy throughout his life; because he will spend all of his time, or the most time of any man, in virtuous conduct and contemplation.” This, however, can only come about as Aristotle argues, “in a complete lifetime. One swallow does not make a summer; neither does one day. Similarly neither can one day, or a brief space of time, make a man blessed and happy.” Thus it seems that leisure is required to be able to contemplate and strive toward the good life, which makes sense given the reality that self-reflection takes time. The measurement of the good life is based on the quality of a human life as differentiated from other animals: “This is indicated, too, by the fact that the other animals have no share in happiness, being completely activity. For while the whole life of the gods is blessed, and that of men too in so far as some likeness to them, none of the other animals is happy, since they in no way share in contemplation.” Aristotle seems to share the Socratic idea that the unexamined life is not worth living. Today the Nicomachean Ethics might be read as an ethical guidebook for time use insofar as it guides people to attain general knowledge of the good life and then apply it to their own lives in order to achieve happiness. The Nicomachean Ethics guides individuals to virtuous activities that shape self-development, rather than dictating what individuals must do with their leisure, which would remove the self-directive aspect of purposive activity. At the same time, it provides meaningful ways to evaluate leisure activities.

In the Politics, Aristotle describes the role of the state to provide not only the bare material necessities, but also the good life. Thus he makes a distinction between “living” and “living well.” Leisure is not possible without the state. Aristotle considers the happiness of the individual and of the city: “Whether happiness must be asserted to be the same both for a single individual human being and for a city or not the same, however, remains to be spoken of. But this too
is evident: all would agree it is the same.” Thus we see a complementary and balanced relationship between self-regarding and other-regarding behavior in Aristotle’s recognition that citizens must rule and be ruled in turn. This aspect of Aristotle’s argument is important in making a case against a system in which some people never have the opportunity to rule, but are only ruled. However, it is important to note that political activity in Athens was considerably more time-consuming than it is under representative democracy:

The virtue of a citizen, consisting in the excellence with which he performs these activities, can be fully achieved only under such regimes as equip him with sufficient leisure to attend to public affairs which, in a nonrepresentative system of rule, means literally to attend the public deliberative body.

It makes sense that Aristotle argued against leisure being compatible with political activity since political activity is a part of necessity under nonrepresentative systems of rule. Leisure should not be sacrificed to politics, but politics should be more broadly understood as civic engagement that includes many more leisure activities that actively ask something of its participants. Leisure sacrificed to politics is no different than leisure sacrificed to capitalism—both in their respective ways limit temporal autonomy. Temporal autonomy can only be realized when no one aspect of society determines and overrides the other aspects. In other words, there must be an actual ability to balance work and life.

**Leisure as a Regulative Ideal**

Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics* are useful for developing a critique of the colonization of time by capital, because while the *Nicomachean Ethics* provides guidelines that make leisure meaningful, the *Politics* explains the political-economic conditions that make leisure possible. The current economic crisis presents us with an opportunity to rethink the relationship between time and work, but as Marx warns, “Liberation is a historical and not a mental act.” In terms of this particular project, this is difficult to accept since
the actual existing conditions seem to make the future of leisure unlikely. However, to use leisure in such a way that people can reimagine another way of thinking about time in connection to a political struggle over the meaning and use of time, then it is extremely useful since it may serve as a way to transform consciousness of time in order to politicize it as “time consciousness.” Today leisure has either been forgotten or, worse, people have learned to accept leisure as defined by the leisure industry. If it is simply forgotten, then its history might be reclaimed. If it is no longer desired, it is because people no longer have the ability to imagine time outside the context of commodified time due to the reification of time-consciousness. This also might be contested.

The political nature of leisure is rarely examined or explained, but leisure is the very antithesis of the logic of capitalism because it rejects the very ideas and values that sustain capitalism, that is, constant productivity and efficiency in the name of profit. Leisure is fundamentally anti-capital to the extent to which it cannot exist under the current conditions. To make leisure possible would mean to not only restrain, restrict, and censor the incursions of capitalism, but also cultivate an understanding that leisure makes many things possible that capital makes impossible by granting time for living the examined life and for self-development, not in isolation, but in a relational manner.59

For the ancients time is valued not in terms of productivity or efficiency but with respect to the quality of a human life. As a consequence, time cannot be separated from being and becoming as the meaning and value of time come from its intimate relationship to life. Indeed, time is largely abstract outside of the meaning and value assigned to it by humans in any given historical context. Put another way, humans have a unique relationship to time insofar as it weighs heavier for those who carry the burden of consciousness, especially given the knowledge of their own mortality.60 Mortality is the great equalizer of life time insofar as no one knows the exact length of his or her life and yet, the actual quality of lived time has been a source of inequality created through the reduction of life time to labor time. Time is a resource that is both individual and social. So-called free time is largely made possible because we live in a society whereby we
do not have to do every single thing for ourselves because of the division of labor.

What Aristotle provides is the basic framework for thinking about time in relationship to freedom as defined by a qualified understanding of leisure. To recap leisure is not idleness or amusement. Leisure is moderation and self-rule. Leisure is related to freedom as time not overly burdened by necessity, and is made possible through the social division of labor. Leisure allows for autonomy and self-rule. Leisure is about cultivating what is unique to our individuality, with the recognition that our individuality is not possible outside of a political society. Obligations are not simply defined by economic necessity, but by familial and community responsibilities. Leisure is defined by its non-instrumentality for it is a good in itself. Rather than offering a precise answer as to the content of leisure, Aristotle instead presents some general guidelines, which I argue remain useful for reconceptualizing the classical ideal of leisure as a regulative ideal,61 or a standpoint for critique of the processes of capital accumulation that dispossess people of time, and an alternative means for thinking about time independent of capital’s cycles of production and consumption, which I argue ultimately structure the collective experience and understanding of time today.

To the commonsense understanding of freedom as license, the classical ideal of leisure might not seem terribly appealing. However, an unqualified understanding of leisure is not useful to developing critical consciousness of the lived experience as shaped by capitalism. It might be better to think of Aristotle as offering advice to those who want to attain the greatest human good, which is happiness, and criticism to that which distracts people from genuine happiness. Aristotle provides a qualified understanding of leisure that is quite radical in comparison to our contemporary understanding of free time. We have little time that is unstructured. We have little direction for our free time that is not informed by the cycles of production and consumption. Leisure is the foundation of political communities that are the foundation of individualism and culture. Contemplative leisure might be understood for our purposes as time for reflection or it might be time that is not mentally preoccupied with worry. Aristotle’s
emphasis on quality over quantity of leisure time rejects the idea that leisure is defined by a period of time designated as “free” since leisure is only possible through economic security. If an individual does not have economic security, he or she is consistently occupied by worries of how to make ends meet, which can lead to anxiety and depression. Financial stability goes a long way toward mental health.

**Concluding Remarks**

Several ideas gleaned from Aristotle’s analysis of leisure bear repeating. As mentioned, Aristotle’s treatment of leisure is unique insofar as it offers not only the normative justifications for leisure as related to a teleological realization of human potential, but also a careful consideration of what makes leisure possible in the first place. Leisure is defined as time not overly determined by necessity, which is increasingly being considered as a “new” measure of freedom. Necessity is a historical concept informed by capitalism’s colonization of necessity through the manipulation of “necessary” labor-time. How much we work is determined by how much we need to work in order to make ends meet and, of course, the availability of gainful employment. How much we need to work is determined by the level of wages against the cost of living standards. A structural political-economic analysis reveals that the relationship between business and government largely determines how much we must work. Work is largely compulsory lacking a social safety net.

If, for the sake of argument, we were able to reduce necessity through a number of political reforms that might include a reduction in the workweek without a reduction in pay, a guaranteed or basic wage, and universal health care, that is, all the benefits currently tied up with full-time employment, the question of what to do with our leisure follows. However, as I suggest, leisure has historically been used as a regulative ideal related to an alternative vision of what constitutes progress, namely the enlargement of human freedom, but should be related to a concrete political program that works toward creating the political-economic conditions that make leisure possible. The fight for time not only sets limits on capital’s colonization of time, but has
also historically been informed by an understanding of progress as related to a reduction in work and an increase in leisure. Finally, the content of leisure is useful in combating capitalism’s colonization of time through the leisure industry. As I have argued, an unqualified understanding of leisure under the conditions of advanced capitalism is susceptible to the leisure industry or pre-packaged experiences driven by the profit motive, which are arguably well received precisely because people do not have enough discretionary time to be able to make alternative choices.

Leisure is central to freedom because the very basis of freedom addresses the realm of necessity in a more equally distributive manner. Necessity is a complicated, ambiguous, and historical concept. Along the same lines, I argue that in order for meaningful time to exist there must be a balance between the time spent in necessity and freedom. With regard to the division of labor, there must be a balance between self-regarding and other-regarding time. For questions of freedom, it matters how people spend their time because it influences both how they experience and understand time meaning and use as a reflection of their self-worth.

The differentiation between the private household and the public political realm, between the household inmate who was a slave and the household head who was a citizen, between the activities which should be hidden in privacy and those which were worth being seen, heard, and remembered, overshadowed and predetermined all other distinctions until only one criterion was left: is the greater amount of time and effort spent in the private or in public? The actual possibility of leisure is thought to be the realization of that balance. Leisure is that time that makes self-development possible. Self-development arises from Aristotle’s understanding of time as that existing between human potential and actualization. Within this understanding of time, individuals matter in a substantive way that they do not in liberalism, because liberalism tends to abstracts individuals from their concrete lived experience. This understanding of time is derived from the combination of the Aristotelian-Marxist tradition and an existential element that emphasizes the quality of each life. As
Arendt states, “Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives or will live.”65 The quality of a life is political insofar as it represents what is lacking in a given political and economic system. The most downtrodden of any given population is a reflection of how our society has ultimately failed humanity. Arendt describes “the burden of laboring and the bondage to necessity” as mankind’s “oldest and most natural burden.”66 The inequalities I describe are not new. What is new is examining this inequality through the lens of temporal autonomy. Returning to Aristotle’s concept of leisure we can begin to think about the ways in which particular contributions to necessity are devalued and how human potential is stymied and foreclosed. What human beings might be and do remains an open question. What is possible is an understanding of the ways that capitalism shapes the lived experience to the detriment of human potential by limiting autonomy so severely through the commodity form.
Chapter 1 focused on Aristotle’s understanding of leisure as the ideal form of temporal autonomy, or the ability to control one’s time in a meaningful and self-directed way. In the context of Athens, discretionary time for the exercise of temporal autonomy was made possible for male citizens by assigning necessity (biological, financial, and household) to women, servants, and slaves in the context of the private household. This division of labor allowed male citizens time for active and sustained participation in politics, and leisure as contemplation, at the expense of the respective development of these particular human beings. Despite Aristotle’s acceptance of this unequal division of labor, his analysis of the distribution of time across necessity and freedom revealed time to be a collective or social resource shaped by specific political-economic constraints, and not simply an individual’s property abstracted from his or her social position, as liberalism is wont to frame it today. What this means is that the relationship between the state and the economy, and in particular the strength of the welfare state combined with a commitment to equality or lack thereof, is central to the overall availability of discretionary time and temporal autonomy for all. In other words, the aphorism that in the United States we “live to work,” rather than
“work to live” is more compulsory than it is a genuine “choice.” For work to be an actual choice there would need to be a stronger public welfare state combined with public policies that allowed individuals to spend more time not working if they chose to do so.

Our collective experience of time as loss, or the feeling of not having enough time, is not only historically, but also politically specific to the distinct aspects of the political economy of the United States. The United States, for example, tends to privilege private forms of welfare that are connected to employment rather than public forms of welfare that are not, thus ensuring a greater dependency on the job market, and further, an identification of our well-being with the state of the economy. This means that existing forms of inequality are reinforced by the lack of public welfare since full-time employment with generous benefits tends to go to people already possessing class, race, and gender privilege. As a consequence, the employment that is left over, which is largely service sector work, serves those with access to full-time employment. In the United States, almost all people are forced to work out of necessity, but some are rewarded, be it financially, temporally, or both, more than others. What tends to be sacrificed above all else in saving time is any substantial concerns with equality. Saving time under capitalism more often than not comes at the expense of service sector and other low-wage workers’ human development because they are forced to take on multiple part-time and temporary jobs lacking benefits to make ends meet. Service sector workers serve the more privileged classes by providing services at low costs that save the privileged workers’ time by allowing them to delegate time-consuming responsibilities to others since their time is worth more in the market. This does not necessarily mean that these more privileged workers gain leisure because often they need to work as well. However unequal this may be, the reality is that without the existence of public policies that allow for individuals to take care of their own children or sick relatives, people with the available resources will continue to rely on low-wage workers’ time in service to them in order to meet these needs. Under capitalism, inequality is as convenient as it is entrenched, and individual solutions offered by mainstream liberalism only tend to reinforce the problem by dismissing
economic and political realities that are at the root of the colonization of time.

Counter to Aristotle’s analysis of time as a collective or social resource shaped by specific political-economic constraints, liberalism tends to approach time as something that belongs to individuals, who then decide for themselves how best to distribute their time across work and life. This “work-life balance” approach elides the reality of the political-economic constraints, which are the overarching factors determining necessity and therefore the individual level of temporal autonomy. Aristotle’s analysis revealed the interdependent relationship between necessity and freedom, which anticipated the seemingly problematic issue of necessity for modern concerns with equality because it begs the question of how necessity will be addressed without resorting to delegating necessity based on existing forms of inequality.

In contrast to Aristotle’s acceptance of the unequal division of labor as inevitable, Marx recognizes that both the determination of necessity and the distribution of time devoted to necessity are fundamentally political questions related to the organization of the political economy. The power of capital rests in its ability to completely define necessity on terms that are profitable. Marx’s criticism of liberalism is that political rights are not sufficient to guaranteeing people rights since people spend the most of their time working, not participating in politics. The overall lack of a welfare state contributes to the power of capital to define necessity since an individual is hard-pressed to survive without the help of the state.

This chapter focuses on Marx’s theoretical and political development of Aristotle’s basic insight that the reduction of necessity is a necessary precondition of freedom, through the concepts of labor and time, and more specifically the exploitation of labor through the commodification and manipulation of time by capital. What Marx adds to Aristotle’s analysis, and what remains useful to developing a politics of time today, is a historical and political understanding of the concept of necessity, which means that the determination of necessity, as well as the overall distribution of time that must be devoted to necessity, can be questioned, challenged, and transformed at a collective and political level. This marks a useful distinction between
simply negotiating time constraints, which many people attempt to do today, and developing a political consciousness around the issue of time, or what I refer to as time consciousness. For this reason, Marx is able to argue against the unjust working conditions of early industrial capitalism that reduce the working-class existence entirely to necessity as determined by capital and the profit motive. He attempts to overcome this unjust division of labor by theorizing alternative political-economic conditions that would reduce necessity by other means than reducing the majority of the working class to necessity and increase leisure for all. In his analysis, Marx not only demonstrates the specific ways time is political under capitalism, namely the commodification and manipulation of time almost entirely in service to the profit motive, but also identifies the political actors, the working class, who are most likely to take up the fight for time not only because it is in their immediate economic interest to do so, but also because it is the only conceivable way they might regain their humanity by way of legislative reform, short of revolution.

The purpose of reviewing the original terms and conditions of the fight for time as developed by Marx is to analyze the strengths, as well as the limitations, theoretically and politically speaking, for developing a broader politics of time to address the colonization of time by capital today. The strengths of Marx’s analysis include his ability to debunk mainstream liberal renderings of individuals as isolated beings, rather than as relational beings, and abstracted from, rather than deeply shaped by their political-economic realities. What this means is that Marx’s analysis remains politically relevant today insofar as the colonization of time by capital is systematically presented as an individual, rather than a collective, problem, which only serves to reinforce it. Therefore, the politics of time must begin with the development of a collective time consciousness of how the colonization of time creates the very experience of time as loss, or not having enough time, for “able-bodied, prime-aged people who are not involuntarily unemployed.”3 That capital then benefits from by creating a dual economy that pits workers against one another thus limiting unified resistance, and marketing time management seminars and time/labor-saving technology, which only further extends the colonization
of time. Instead of recognizing the political-economic reasons why time is limited, time as loss is posited in such a way that individual solutions are offered or must be found in the form of “work-life balance” and “time-management.” Rejecting the idea that “work-life balance” is actually possible under the existing regime is key to developing a politics of time, and is equivalent to the workers of today not destroying the machines (in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx describes the early industrial workers mistakenly identifying and thus destroying the machines as the cause of their misery), but recognizing the root cause of their oppression in the colonization of time by capital. There is no work-life balance and there cannot be under the current conditions—at least not for the majority. Further, Marx highlights the overall inequality of human development denied to so many people that must out of financial necessity spend the majority of their time working, usually in service to others.

In brief, the fight for time is based around several criteria developed by Marx. First, workers are living beings and thus should not work beyond the general “physical limitations” of any particular animal used for purposes of work. Marx points out that capital does not even respect this minimum standard when it comes to the length of the working day. Second, and perhaps more to the point, workers are human beyond their very basic animal subsistence, which means that the length of the working day should not deny them time for self-development as human beings. Third, workers do not receive the full value of their labor-power because they are exploited through the commodification and manipulation of necessary labor-time by capital, and they can collectively use this information to demand the full value of their labor. Importantly, Marx’s theoretical development of the fight for time, as a legitimate response to the colonization of time by capital, brings together seemingly disparate elements of time, the ethical, philosophical, and political, which deepens the significance of the fight for time for the purpose of thinking about time as related to the development of human potential—a potential that is undefined, but simultaneously stunted by overwork and wage slavery.

Similar to Aristotle, Marx recognizes time as fundamentally related to the development of human potential in the context of a political
community, meaning that the development of individuality itself is only made possible in the context of a society. However, he spends far less time articulating the ideal of temporal autonomy, leisure, as a form of abstract freedom, and more time identifying the obstacles capitalism poses to the realization of this aspect of freedom. He sees the means for making leisure a reality, namely the introduction of the democratic state and with it the institutional means of extending political democracy to the masses. This political development means the working class can use the state to fight for legislative reforms that can force capitalists to treat the workers humanely, including the fight to shorten the working day. The fight to shorten the working day is a political demand of the working class for the recognition of their humanity beyond mere survival, which is far more radical than the right to work, which is appropriately criticized by Marx’s son-in-law Paul LaFargue’s essay, “The Right to Be Lazy.” Further, Marx sees the potential of technology and automation to improve the human condition by addressing the problem of scarcity, while at the same time reducing the time that needs to be devoted to necessity as defined by capitalism. Nevertheless, he recognizes this potential will never be realized given the contradiction within capitalism whereas even if labor-time is reduced by means of automation and outsourcing, it is for the purpose of increasing profit, not for the purpose of freeing humanity from the necessity to work defined by capital because the colonization of time reduces all time to money.

In contrast to Aristotle’s inability to reconcile necessity and freedom owing to his emphasis on humans as contemplative beings, Marx reconciled them through the concept of labor. For Hegel and Marx, labor is the human activity that makes time, reconceived as human-made history, and space, reconceived as nature, knowable to humans through their labor, or self-conscious interaction with nature. Prior to Marx, Kant conceived of time and space as categories of apperception that were unknowable to humans, but which made all comprehension possible since they served as mental organizing frameworks for the lived experience. Following Hegel’s lead, Marx argues time and space are knowable through human self-conscious interactions with nature as historical producers. Marx’s goal was for humans to recognize
themselves as historical producers, not simply passive recipients of historical developments. The significance of historical materialism for developing a politics of time cannot be overstated since it loosens the hold of reified thought that accepts that status quo as permanent, rather than historical and political.

Breaking with Aristotle and following Hegel’s lead, Marx develops an ontology based on labor, or self-conscious interaction with nature, rather than contemplation. Labor allows Marx to reconcile necessity and freedom because self-consciousness and practical activity are dialectically related to freedom. In other words, when I self-consciously create an object in the world without being alienated from or exploited through my process of labor, I am better able to contemplate my humanity in that object. Marx’s critique of capitalism is based on the limitations it places on this dialectical relationship by alienating people from and exploiting them through their labor, thus denying them a meaningful connection between their self-consciousness and labor. The socialist vision of the good life sought not simply a reduction of work time through democratic reform, but a complete reorganization of the economy so that under socialism everyone contributes to necessity so that no one is forced to live a life entirely reduced to necessity. Marx succinctly states this sentiment in the Critique of the Gotha Programme, “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!” What this means in practice is that no human being’s potential is stymied by the realities of inequality. Importantly, the humanist elements found in Marx treat each human being ethically as an end, rather than as a means. This ethical point is derived from Kant as much as it is developed by Hegel’s understanding of reciprocity, which is arguably not possible under capitalism. What this means is that people cannot use other people as a means for saving time by taking advantage of the existing inequalities that subordinate the majority in the service sector.

Marx is particularly useful in developing a broader contemporary politics of time because he critiques the language and concepts of political economy, which he recognizes as the dominant ideology supporting and justifying capitalism. Crucially, he proposes that all of the categories of political economy are historical and therefore political. By contrast, political economists naturalize these categories by treating
them as a much of a necessary reality as say gravity. Political economy accepts private property as fact rather than analyzing the root of private property, which Marx argues is labor. In doing so, he is able to provide the working class with the language and logic of political economy with which to fight against the colonization of time by capital in the form of an immanent critique. This approach remains far more politically effective than making basic appeals to morality when it comes to the force of capital. Marx’s approach is similar to progressive economists among others today that challenge economics on its own terms, but through qualitative considerations of human development, rather than simply quantitative (GDP and life expectancy) measures.\footnote{Marx’s claim about the political nature of time under capitalism is radical since time understood this way is inseparable from the development of human potentiality. In other words, what gives time meaning is humanity, not money, which is a rejection of the overly simplistic time is money formula prevalent under capitalism.} Marx confronts the conditions of early industrial capitalism. Marx identifies another contradiction within capitalism, but this time between capitalism’s logic that all time is money and people’s need for time outside of and beyond work for nonpecuniary activities otherwise referred to as the “life” aspect of the so-called work-life balance. Under unregulated capitalism, the bourgeoisie compel the working class through the force of necessity defined by capitalism to sell their labor and time:

Up until the start of welfare provision late in the second half of the nineteenth century workers received no guaranteed public means of subsistence. They therefore had to work in order to feed, clothe and house themselves. When they became ill, unemployed or too old to work they were forced to appeal to private charity or else to reconcile themselves to destitution and homelessness.\footnote{Given the lack of government regulation and welfare provisions, the working conditions of early industrial capitalism reduced nearly all time to financial necessity. It was not uncommon to find 14–18, or even 19–20-hour workdays.}
conditions of this time period that largely defined the working class experience: “Not only [did] they have less leisure time at their disposal, but the effects of their work and conditions of life upon their bodies and minds impose[d] strict limits upon the development of their faculties and interests.”¹⁰ This was not life as it should be, but life constrained and overcome by necessity as determined by capitalism.

The struggle for ten-hour day legislation was meant as a preventive measure to keep workers from selling themselves into slavery since as Marx notes the logic of capitalism reduces all “disposable time” to “labour-time, to be devoted to the self-expansion of capital.”¹¹ Time thus becomes a force and a relation of production under capitalism through the manipulation of “necessary” labor-time. The initial fight for time (or the fight to reduce the length of the workday) sought freedom from the colonization of time by capital in the realm of production through the reduction of labor-time. Temporal autonomy was also sought within the workplace by extending democratic control over the production process with regard to the speed of production. Although the fight for time remains incredibly radical since Marx correctly indentified “moments are the element of profit,” today a broader politics of time must recognize the colonization of time by capital in all areas of life, not only production. Since the realm of production remains the primary place where time discipline is the most obvious, it is worth understanding how it functions. In fact, sweatshop labor today continues to operate very much along similar lines as early industrial capitalism. The fight for time must contain several strategic approaches, but the radical legacy behind the fight to shorten the workday is worth revisiting in order to harvest what remains useful for developing a broader politics of time today. What appears below is a rendering of early Marx’s more philosophical critique of capitalism’s impact on human development that informs his later more political approach to organized resistance of the working class to capitalism to regain their humanity.

**Early Marx**

What has come to be known as the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* includes one of Marx’s most famous essays now
titled, “Estranged Labor,” which contests the logic of political econ-
omy by challenging its assertion of private property as the starting
point of analysis, rather than labor and the laborer as human. The
positive articulation of temporal autonomy in early Marx is perhaps
the most memorable because certain passages evoke a memorable
vision of emancipation under communism in direct contrast to the
severe reality of the working-class existence under capitalism. One
cannot read Friedrich Engels’s descriptions of the horrendous working
conditions described in The Condition of the Working Class in England
without wanting some sort of reprieve for the workers. Marx also
decries the situation of the working class, which he argues reduces the
working class to an existence that ultimately denies their humanity:
“Political economy knows the worker only as a working animal—as a
beast reduced to the strictest bodily needs”.12

As a result, therefore, man (the worker) only feels himself freely
active in his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating, or
at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human
functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an ani-
mal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes
animal.13

Much as Aristotle, Marx considers a life reduced to necessity as some-
how not fully human. Marx quotes, Wilhelm Schulz, a radical demo-

crat and his contemporary:

To develop in greater spiritual freedom, a people must break their
bondage to their bodily needs—they must cease to be the slaves
of the body. They must, therefore, above all, have time at their dis-
posal for spiritual creative activity and spiritual enjoyment… If the
satisfaction of a given amount of material needs formerly required a
certain expenditure of time and human effort which has later been
reduced by half, then without any loss of material comfort the scope
for spiritual activity and enjoyment has been simultaneously extended
by as much… But again the way in which the booty, that we win
from old Kronos himself in his most private domain, is shared out
is still decided by the dice-throw of blind, unjust Chance. In France
it has been calculated that at the present stage in the development of production an average working period of five hours a day be every person capable of work would suffice for the satisfaction of all the material interests of society.14

Remarkably, the idea of reducing the workday to five hours a day remains a conceivable, and simultaneously a radical notion despite the historical developments of capitalism that have taken place since Marx. Even the idea of taking back the Sabbath as a day of rest is radical in this moment of economic crisis. Pope Francis recently made an appeal for individuals to take back their Sundays as a day of rest and leisure:

Responding to the question, “Do we need to rediscover the meaning of leisure?” Pope Francis replies: “Together with a culture of work, there must be a culture of leisure as gratification. To put it another way: people who work must take the time to relax, to be with their families, to enjoy themselves, read, listen to music, play a sport. But this is being destroyed, in large part, by the elimination of the Sabbath rest day. More and more people work on Sundays as a consequence of the competitiveness imposed by a consumer society.” In such cases, he concludes, “work ends up dehumanizing people.”15

Unfortunately, he cites the cause of overwork as related to “competitiveness imposed by a consumer society,” which fails to identify the root cause of overwork, which is not that people are consuming more and more, but that people have to work more than they used to given the reality of political-economic developments that have resulted in increased inequality since the 1970s, including stagnant wages resulting in increased personal debt to be able to make ends meet, to changes in the structure of employment including an overall increase in service sector jobs that are part-time or temporary, pay minimum wage, and lack health benefits, and of course, the political attack from the right on organized labor and the decline of the labor-Left alliance.
The reason overwork is so egregious to Marx is that he understands what it means to be fully human as intimately related to the self-determination of one’s time, and the extension of the workday increases the rate of exploitation. Time is the substance of human development, but the possibilities for temporal autonomy depend on the overall distribution of social time with regard to the determination and fulfillment of necessity. Marx correctly identifies the contradiction under capitalism whereby labor-time can never be reduced to “the material interests of society” precisely because capitalism is about profit, which can only be had by adding surplus time to necessary labor-time. This means that even if technology has “reduced by half” the “time and human effort” necessary for the same overall level of “material comfort,” the logic of capitalism with regard to labor-time will not allow it. Time consciousness, or an awareness of how time is commodified is necessary in order for humans to recognize themselves as historical producers, including producers of the meaning and use of time itself, so that rather than capitalism distributing time, the rational organization of society might distribute time more fairly across necessity and freedom.

Martha Nussbaum’s development of Amartya Sen’s human development approach into a theory of justice is a contemporary example of what young Marx is arguing at the level of normative political theory. Rather than focusing on economic development simply from quantitative measures such as GDP or life expectancy, Nussbaum builds on Sen’s contribution to the human development approach based on capabilities:

The Capabilities Approach can be provisionally defined as an approach to comparative quality-of-life assessment and to theorizing about basic social justice. It holds the key question to ask, when comparing societies and assessing them for their basic decency or justice, is, “What is each person able to do and be?” In other words, the approach takes each person as an end, asking not just about the total or average well-being but about the opportunities available to each person. It is focused on choice or freedom, holding that the crucial good societies should be promoting for their people is a set of opportunities, or substantial freedoms,
which people then may or may not exercise in action: the choice is theirs. It thus commits itself to respect for people’s powers of self-definition. This approach is pluralist about value: it holds that the capability achievements that are central for people are different in quality, not just in quantity; that they cannot without distortion be reduced to a single numerical scale; and that a fundamental part of understanding and producing them is understanding the specific nature of each.16

The primary difference between Nussbaum’s and Marx’s approach to quality of life is that Nussbaum remains decidedly within a liberal framework because she agrees with liberalism’s concern with diminishing individual’s freedom of choice by telling people what to do, which in this case would be what to do with their time. This is a result of liberalism focusing primarily on negative freedom, freedom from external constraints, rather than positive freedom, freedom to develop one’s unique potential. Marx’s criticisms of capitalism in *The Communist Manifesto*, for example, include a criticism of liberalism’s problematic rendering of individual “choice,” which is all too often abstracted from the political-economic constraints that shape and limit “choice.” Nussbaum acknowledges the reality of political-economic constraints, but she remains wary of recommending specific guidance/values beyond the ten capabilities, one of which includes play and recreation because she argues capabilities must be contextualized. She does, however, argue, “[The capabilities approach] ascribes an urgent task to government and public policy—namely, to improve the quality of life for all people, as defined by their capabilities.”17 In other words, there is no specific political program in place to transform the status quo unless the formal political actors in place choose to pick up the capabilities approach as a way to measure quality of life, which happened under Nicolas Sarkozi in France. Similar to the early Marx, Nussbaum does not identify the need for political actors, a social movement, and an institutional referent. My approach to developing a politics of time differs insofar as I take seriously the severe limitations on the meaning and experience of time under capitalism to the extent that even our imagination of considering the possibilities of what might be are hindered by these limitations.
The Division of Labor

Marx’s analysis of alienation in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* is an examination of the ways in which humans are denied their humanity or self-development because of the alienation of individuals from their labor under capitalism. To overcome this alienation means to reclaim and redefine the relationship between labor and time. Readers get a sense of the importance of temporal autonomy in direct opposition to the unequal distribution of time found under the particular division of labor described by Marx as existing between the working class and the capitalist class:

The contradiction between the personality of each separate proletarian and labor, the condition of life forced upon him, is very evident to him, for he is sacrificed from his youth on and within his class has no chance of arriving at conditions which would place him in another class.18

Under the conditions of early industrial capitalism, the working-class existence is reduced entirely to necessity, with no possibility of class mobility. Marx describes this condition as “forced upon him” and describes the worker as “sacrificed from his youth on.” There is arguably a connection between self-development and temporal autonomy, especially if “the division of labor implies the possibility, indeed the necessity, that intellectual and material activity—enjoyment and labor, production and consumption—are given to different individuals.”19

The consequences are clear:

Individuals have always started with themselves though within their given historical conditions and relationships, not with the “pure” individual in the sense of the ideologists. But in the course of historical development and precisely through the inevitable fact that in the division of labor social relationships assume an independent existence, there occurs a division in the life of each individual, insofar as it is personal and determined by some branch of labor and by the conditions pertaining to it. (This does not mean that, for example, the rentier, the capitalist, etc., cease to be persons; but
their personality is conditioned and determined by very definite class relationships.) . . . In reality they are less free, because they are more subjected to the domination of things.  

Marx criticizes the bourgeois notion of individuals as “pure”—which is to say abstracted from political-economic reality that determines their personality. Marx argues that this particular division of labor between the working class and the capitalist class is at the very root of alienation: “Finally, the division of labor offers us the first example for the fact that man’s own act becomes an alien power opposed to him and enslaving him instead of being controlled by him.” Most readers of Marx are familiar with the oft-used quotation from *The German Ideology*: 

In communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic. This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now.  

A tension exists in Marx concerning the division of labor. Ali Rattansi argues that there exists a division between the early and late Marx’s view on the division of labor. Rattansi argues the early Marx wants to abolish the division of labor, whereby the late Marx sees the division of labor as necessary. However, Rattansi seems to conflate the social division of labor and the detailed division of labor whereas Marx does not. The social division of labor places people in different categories in terms of both class and occupation. The social division of labor is about who does what. The detailed division of labor breaks down production in tasks in order to increase efficiency, which means less
work. The division of labor is necessary because no one individual is self-sufficient. If individuals were self-sufficient, society would not be necessary and all individuals would be reduced to necessity. The modern convenience of indoor plumbing, for example, prevents individuals from spending their entire day collecting firewood to boil water to make it consumable.

Early Marx states, “Communism… is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man—the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species.” In contrast to Aristotle, Marx desires reconciliation between the two for the benefit of humanity through communism. The need for leisure from the point of view of capitalism is frivolous, “To him [the capitalist], therefore, every luxury of the worker seems to be reprehensible, and everything that goes beyond the most abstract need—be it in the realm of passive enjoyment, or a manifestation of activity—seems to him a luxury.” Marx provides a glimpse of the positive articulation of temporal autonomy. Implicit in this statement is a refutation of the division of labor that reduces individuals and the development of their faculties to their occupation, but it also ends with an understanding that things are about to change and that change is predicated upon the collective recognition of humans as self-conscious historical producers. In other words, time consciousness is necessary in order to reveal the historical nature of all things, which means political-economic conditions can be questioned, challenged, and ultimately transformed. The division of labor makes discretionary time possible for expanding the exercise of temporal autonomy, but inequality largely determines which people must sacrifice their lives to the service of necessity, largely to others.

**Late Marx**

Marx recovers and transforms Aristotle’s conception of leisure as a way of establishing a philosophical-anthropological relationship between time and freedom so that the right to meaningful time might be extended to all. The time needed for being and becoming, for the
development of human potential and the distribution of social time are at odds with one another. The realization of this relationship was contingent on the reduction of time spent in the realm of necessity by means of technology and the development of a more equal division of labor, that is, a transformation of the existing political-economic conditions. The next section examines the development of capital accumulation by means of a more general dispossession of time. The preexisting inequality in the distribution of social time became much more defined and, at the same time, elusive under the system of capitalism. The bourgeoisie gained control over the proletarians’ time through the exploitation of their labor-power in the realm of production. Marx spends significantly more time criticizing the prevailing logic of political economy that justifies and sustains the system of capitalism. In his treatment of time, for example, Marx demonstrates the ways in which capital manipulates necessity. He demonstrates how, as a consequence of the malleability of necessity, the value of time comes to be entirely defined by the terms of capitalism: efficiency, productivity, commodification, and discipline.

Historically, the colonization of time by capital began with time discipline in factories during early industrial capitalism, made possible by the combination of mechanical clocks and capitalism’s need for organized and disciplined labor-time, which individuals were forced to contend more and more out of necessity as the transition to early industrial capital took place. Thus the potential connections between time and freedom that improvements in technology and the overcoming of scarcity promise becomes less plausible given the combined processes of the objectification, commodification, alienation, and reification of time that begin to be solidified in the realm of production.

**Primitive Accumulation**

The social and technological requisites of the colonization of time by capital formed alongside the development of industrial capitalism. According to Marx, the accumulation of capital by the dispossession of workers’ time took various historical forms. Capitalism did
not invent surplus labor; it merely unfettered it from the limitations inherent to previous economic systems:

Wherever a part of society possesses the monopoly of the means of production, the labourer, free or not free, must add to the working-time necessary for his own maintenance an extra working-time in order to produce the means of subsistence for the owners of the means of production, whether this proprietor be the Athenian caloς cagaqoς [well-to-do man], Etruscan theocrat, civis Romanus [Roman citizen], Norman baron, American slave-owner, Wallachian Boyard, modern landlord or capitalist. It is, however, clear that in any given economic formation of society, where not the exchange-value but the use-value of the product predominates, surplus-labour will be limited by a given set of wants which may be greater or less, and that here no boundless thirst for surplus-labour arises from the nature of the production itself.26

Marx’s analysis of the transformation of time focuses on the historical transition from feudalism to capitalism.27 With the near completion of the enclosure movement at the close of the nineteenth century and the dominance of the private over the collective form of property, the peasant population was forced off the land and into the cities where they become wage-laborers under the conditions defined by the capitalist class. Thus the conditions were set for capital’s original accumulation by dispossession of time. This transformation included increasing demands on the former peasants’ “extra working-time,” which Marx designates as “surplus working-time.”

Capital’s original accumulation by dispossession established time as divided unequally between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, to the distinct economic advantage of the bourgeoisie.28 For this inequality of time to be institutionalized, the proletariat had to first be put into a situation where they had little choice but to sell their labor-time in order to survive. Thus a complete separation between the worker and the means of production first had to be established:

The process, therefore, that clears the way for the capitalist system, can be none other than the process which takes away from the
labourer the possession of his means of production; a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital, on the other, the immediate producers into wage-labourers. The so-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production. It appears as primitive, because it forms the pre-historic stage of capital and of the mode of production corresponding with it.29

Wage-labor became an act of necessity under capitalism, but the number of hours devoted to this necessity is never fixed because, as Marx reveals, the working day is never solely determined by necessity. The workday is split into “necessary working-time” and “surplus working-time,”30 but capital attempts to extract as much surplus working-time as possible. This means that not all working days are equal since capital may extract varying amounts of surplus working-time. If the worker needed only to work the amount of hours necessary to sustain himself, then he would be paid the full value of his labor, but the extraction of surplus working-time results in exploitation since the capitalist pays the worker for one workday, but profits from three days of work through the extension of the workday. In other words, if the worker only labored enough to secure his own reproduction, there would be no surplus and thus no profit. Importantly, this process is by no means apparent to the worker since under capitalism “surplus-labour and necessary labour glide one into the other.”31 Whereby under the conditions of feudalism, time devoted to self-maintenance versus time devoted to the lord of the estate were distinct from each other and thus apparent to the peasants. To counter the imbalance between necessary and surplus time under capitalism would mean to shorten the workday and increase the hourly wage so that the worker benefits more from the surplus that his labor and time alone creates.

Taking his cue from Hegel, Marx recognizes that the “insight into necessity” means the recognition or consciousness of the slave with regard to his actual position vis-à-vis the master or, in this case, the capitalist. Thus Marx gives the worker insight into the logic of capitalism, specifically exchange value, necessary to demand the value of his labor-power: “You pay me for one day’s labour-power, whilst you
use that of 3 days.” Time becomes a contested struggle between the capitalists and the workers because given the law of exchange each party has an equal right to their demands:

We see then, that, apart from extremely elastic bounds, the nature of the exchange of commodities itself imposes no limit to the working-day, no limit to surplus-labour. The capitalist maintains his rights as a purchaser when he tries to make the working-day as long as possible, and to make, whenever possible, two working-days out of one. On the other hand, the peculiar nature of the commodity sold implies a limit to its consumption by the purchaser, and the labourer maintains his right as seller when he wishes to reduce the working-day to one of definite normal duration. There is here, therefore, an antinomy, right against right, both equally bearing the seal of the law of exchanges. Between equal rights force decides. Hence is it that in the history of capitalist production, the determination of what is a working-day, presents itself as the result of a struggle, a struggle between collective capital, i.e., the class of capitalists, and collective labour, i.e., the working-class.

The inequality of time thus becomes a domain of political contestation that takes a largely defensive form in response to capital’s monopoly on the collective meaning and experience of time. It is telling that Marx states, “Between equal rights force decides.” It is the force of capital’s colonization of time in the realm of production that makes it difficult to “fight for time” outside the parameters set by the system of capital. This is why Marx uses the language of political economy, specifically, exchange value, to argue that the worker is not paid what he is worth. However, a valid question remains whether Marx’s own analysis falls into the reification of the category of time by accepting these terms.

Additionaly, the “peculiar nature of the commodity” of human labor that Marx reflects seems to indicate a desire to emphasize the humanity of the worker as additional grounds on which to contest the extension of the workday and define a “normal work day”:

On the basis of capitalist production, however, this necessary labour can form a part only of the working-day; the working-day itself
can never be reduced to this minimum. On the other hand, the working-day has a maximum limit. It cannot be prolonged beyond a certain point. This maximum limit is conditioned by two things. First, by the physical bounds of labour-power. Within the 24 hours of the natural day a man can expend only a definite quantity of his vital force. A horse, in like manner, can only work from day to day, 8 hours. During part of the day this force must rest, sleep; during another part the man has to satisfy other physical needs, to feed, wash, and clothe himself. Besides these purely physical limitations, the extension of the working-day encounters moral ones. The labourer needs time for satisfying his intellectual and social wants, the extent and number of which are conditioned by the general state of social advancement. The variation of the working-day fluctuates, therefore, within physical and social bounds. But both these limiting conditions are of a very elastic nature, and allow the greatest latitude. So we find working-days of 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 hours, i.e., of the most different lengths.34

Marx points out that “the working-day itself can never be reduced to...necessary labour” since the capitalist would make no profit without the extraction of surplus labor-time beyond necessary labor. However, he maintains that there should be limitations to the working day, and these are based on basic biological needs such as sleeping and eating and moral appeals to the more qualitative aspects of time such as “satisfying...intellectual and social wants.”

In terms of the distribution of time between necessity and freedom, the transition from feudalism to capitalism establishes the original accumulation by dispossession of time whereby wage-labor becomes the primary means to sustain oneself as a member of the newly established working class. However, the length of the workday can never be reduced to necessary work time since capital in its search for profit extracts as much surplus working-time as possible through the extension of the workday. Since necessary and surplus working-time both happen within the context of the workday, the worker may not realize the extent of his exploitation. Finally, the wage earned is simply a way to be able to purchase the necessities in life. As Marx states, “No sooner is the exploitation of the labourer by the manufacturer, so far,
at an end, that he receives his wages in cash, than he is set upon by
the other portions of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the
pawnbroker, etc., and these necessities must be attended to after the
finish of the workday, which, again, has no limits from the perspective
of capital and thus is limited only to the extent that the working class
is organized.

The Working Day

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 con-
sumes the labour-power he has purchased of him.

If the labourer consumes his disposable time for himself, he robs the
capitalist.

From the original accumulation by dispossession, capital has main-
tained a monopoly on the control over time. In fact, Capital might be
read as a detailed examination of the transformation of the social use,
meaning, and value of time and the ways in which capitalism came
to colonize even the parameters of the fight for time starting with the
original accumulation by dispossession. From the standpoint of capi-
tal, there exists no limits to the length of the workday except for the
death of the worker, but even this is of little concern to the capitalist
since workers are easily replaceable:

Capital cares nothing for the length of life of labour-power. All
that concerns it is simply and solely the maximum of labour-
power, that can be rendered fluent in a working-day. It attains
this end by shortening the extent of the labourer’s life, as a greedy
farmer snatches increased produce from the soil by robbing it of
its fertility.

This is not to say that the individual capitalist is not capable of exer-
cising morality, but morality holds little weight when it comes to
the logic of the system of capitalism. Marx reminds us more than
once that appeals to morality simply will not do. Further, because
of capital’s relentless and limitless “greed for surplus labour,” which turns the workers into nothing more than “personified labour-time,” Marx argues that there must in the very least be limits to the length of the workday set by legislation and enforced by the state. 39 The fight for the ten-hour day is fundamental to keep workers from selling themselves into slavery. Otherwise, the logic of capital transforms all available life time into working-time: “Hence it is self-evident that the worker is nothing other than labour-power for the duration of his whole life, and that therefore all his disposable time is by nature and by right labour time, to be devoted to the self-valorization of capital.”40 For capital, time exists solely for the creation of surplus value. The only limits to production are sleeping and eating, but even these natural limits are not honored without legislation limiting the hours a person can work. This is more than evident in Marx’s descriptions of the conditions of labor without limits in sections 3 and 4 of the “Working Day,” and in Friedrich Engel’s The Condition of the Working Class. Before the 10-hour bill, time was controlled by the productive sphere in ways that had never previously before been possible. As Marx reveals, without institutional limits, capital colonizes all available life time because, “Moments are the elements of profit.”41 Recently, a pregnant woman working for T-Mobile was forced to clock out every time she had to use the bathroom. Today Google is developing specific apps for the time people spend in the bathroom. Capital constantly seeks for new ways to turn moments into elements of profit.

Marx ends “The Working Day” by disputing the liberal notion that a fair bargain was ever possible between the worker and the capitalist:

It must be acknowledged that our labourer comes out of the process of production other than he entered. In the market he stood as owner of the commodity “labour-power” face to face with other owners of commodities, dealer against dealer. The contract by which he sold to the capitalist his labour-power proved, so to say, in black and white that he disposed of himself freely. The bargain concluded, it is discovered that he was no “free agent,” that the time for which he is free to sell his labour-power is the time for
which he is forced to sell it, that in fact the vampire will not lose its hold on him “so long as there is a muscle, a nerve, a drop of blood to be exploited.”

The bargain between the worker and the capitalist is not one based on the free will of the worker, but one based on necessity. Only the abstract individualism of liberalism can abstract the individual from the specific constraints that capitalism imposes on him. In other words, the individual does not make choices in a vacuum, but in a specific historical context in which capitalism is the dominant structuring force. The workers have no choice but to find power in their strength in numbers as the working class that upholds the system of capitalism to fight for time away from the clutches of production.

Finally, Marx introduces what will come to be referred to as the division between work time and free time that later comes to be disputed by feminists and critical theorists alike:

For “protection” against “the serpent of their agonies,” the labourers must put their heads together, and, as a class, compel the passing of a law, an all-powerful social barrier that shall prevent the very workers from selling by voluntary contract with capital, themselves and their families into slavery and death. In place of the pompous catalogue of the “inalienable rights of man” comes the modest Magna Charta of a legally limited working-day, which shall make clear “when the time which the worker sells is ended, and when his own begins.”

It is not that Marx designates this time as “free” since that time, even with the limits to the length of the workday, is barely enough to fulfill the very basic physical demands of any living being. Freedom for Marx, as discussed in the previous section, is the development of the self that builds upon, but is not a slave to, necessity. Indeed, it is a wretched existence to exist only as “personified labour time” as every writer critical of the impact of unfettered capitalism has demonstrated, from Charles Dickens to Upton Sinclair. At the end of the day, Marx argues that it makes a significant difference to the individual workers’ lives whether there is a law that limits the length of the workday or
Subsequently, employers have found ways to go around the law, including the incentives of overtime pay.

**Time Discipline**

The colonization of time would not be possible without the workers’ participation and acceptance, however reluctant, of the parameters set by capitalism. It does not follow, however, that those same participants are necessarily conscious of the extent to which capital colonizes time or the processes by which it does so. Time discipline in the realm of production, or that which most impacts the workers most directly, then, is central to understanding the ways that capital’s accumulation by dispossession is reproduced and maintained, and becomes a form of social control and domination that is caught up in the production and circulation of commodities.

Arguably one of the most influential historical pieces on the early processes of time discipline, E. P. Thompson’s “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism” captures the developing relationships among the external forces of time discipline, namely industrial capitalism and the mechanical clock, and the impact of these combined forces on the collective consciousness of time. Thompson’s central question revolves around the extent to which work discipline was internalized by the workers and seems to suggest that a sort of slow forgetting of time as not disciplined by capitalism took place as the habituation to capital’s control of time occurs over several generations:

The onslaught, from so many directions, upon the people’s old working habits was not, of course, uncontested. In the first stage, we find simple resistance. But, in the next stage, as the new time-discipline is imposed, so the workers begin to fight, not against time, but about it.

It seems that the terms of the debate about time were already largely determined by capitalism as the transition to time as defined by capitalism takes place:

The first generation of factory workers were taught by their masters the importance of time; the second generation formed their
short time committees in the ten-hour movement; the third generation struck for overtime or time-and-a-half. They had accepted the categories of their employers and learned to fight back with them. They had learned their lessons, that time is money, only too well.\footnote{48}

If Thompson is correct that the workers accepted commodified clock time as time itself, then the workers conceded too much to capitalism from the get go, but then again it seems they had little choice in the matter. Unlike Marx, Thompson stops short of fully analyzing the political implications of workers fighting for time within the “accepted...categories of their employers.” Again, the colonization of time is not possible unless the workers concede to time as determined by capitalism, and while critics of Thompson have pointed to the multiplicity of time experiences that may occur within or alongside capital’s domination of time, these experiences are certainly not given institutional grounding and thus are often powerless in the face of capital.

In contrast to Thompson, Moishe Postone takes a decidedly historically materialist approach to the commodification of time, whereby he considers the transformation of time leading up to industrial capitalism. In doing so, he contextualizes commodified clock time within the prehistory of capitalism proper, but maintains that “the emergence of such a new form of time was related to the development of the commodity form of social relations...rooted not only in the sphere of commodity production but in that of commodity circulation as well.”\footnote{49} In doing so, he places the need for disciplined and coordinated labor in the medieval cloth-making industry in the fourteenth century, whereby the length of the workday became a contested issue between the merchants and the workers since the length of the workday determined the amount of pay the worker received.\footnote{50} At this point in time, work bells were used rather than mechanical clocks to “coordinate the working time of large numbers of workers” in pre-factory-like settings.\footnote{51} As he understands it, “Marx’s analysis of the commodity form...as an analysis of structured forms of everyday practice that involve an ongoing process of abstraction from the concrete specificity of objects, activities, and persons, and their reduction
to a general ‘essential’ common denominator,” namely money. With regard to time, he states:

Temporality as a measure of activity is different from temporality measured by events. It implicitly is a uniform sort of time. The system of work bells, as we have seen, developed within the context of large-scale production for exchange, based on wage labor. It expressed the historical emergence of a de facto social relationship between the level of wages and labor output as a measured temporally—which, in turn, implied the notion of productivity, of labor output per unit time. In other words, with the rise of early capitalist forms of social relations in the cloth-producing urban communes of Western Europe, a form of time emerged that was a measure of, and eventually a compelling norm for, activity. Such a time is divisible into constant units; and within a social framework constituted by the emerging commodity form, such units also are socially meaningful.

Postone is primarily interested in the transformation of time from a dependent to an independent variable, meaning that time becomes independent of human events:

The conception of abstract time, which became increasingly dominant in Western Europe between the 14th and 17th centuries, was expressed most emphatically in Newton’s formulation of “absolute, true and mathematical time [which] flows equably w/out relation to anything external.” Abstract time is an independent variable; it constitutes an independent framework within which motion, events, and action occur. Such time is divisible into equal, constant, nonqualitative units.

The political relevance of such a transformation from concrete to abstract time allows the dominating logic of capitalism to inform the abstract nature of time. As a consequence, time is treated as neutral when in reality it is informed ideologically by capitalism to the extent that “time is money” becomes naturalized, which means it is not questioned or challenged but accepted as common sense. The transformation from
concrete to abstract time dissolves the consciousness of time as determined primarily by capitalism.

The clock is the concrete objectification of abstract time, but Postone repeatedly stresses that the invention of clocks alone do not account for the rise of abstract time. Instead he argues that “the origin of abstract time . . . seems to be related to the organization of social time. Abstract time, apparently, cannot be understood solely in terms of invariable time units anymore than its origins can be attributed to technical devices.”\(^55\) However, it is important to think about clock time as a force of resistance as much as a force of domination since abstract time means the abstraction might be filled with varying degrees of logic, and is not exclusive to the logic of political economy as the fight for time in its various forms has shown. An hour is only an hour because we have socially and collectively agreed on that measurement as 60 minutes.\(^56\) It is a quantified measurement of time, but not a qualitative understanding of time. Time is money is a qualified measurement of time as defined by capital, but quality time is made meaningful in many other ways.

**Objectification**

To fully understand the political implications of capital’s colonization of time on human consciousness within the context of the Marxist tradition, it is important to understand the process as related by German Idealism, specifically Hegel, and the process of objectification as the externalization of an abstract idea into a concrete object, given this is where the roots of the Marxist tradition lie. Objectification is important for political theory, in general, to the extent that it becomes necessary for an abstract concept such as freedom to be realized or guaranteed in a concrete manner—for example, freedom as guaranteed by the state. It was Hegel who recognized the necessary dialectic between the subjective and objective realms that ultimately overcame the subject-object divide as posited by Kant. The move from Kant to Hegel was central to transforming time and space from categories of apperception to categories of consciousness. As against Kant, Hegel argues that we can know the objective world to the extent that we shape it through our labor, that is, our conscious interaction with nature.
The dialectic as conceived by Hegel between subject and object is important in the development of consciousness, but only if individuals are ever conscious of the human element that creates objects, especially those not created by themselves or created by previous generations. Time as objectified by the clock has a longer history than the history of capitalism. It is not objectification alone that brings about the lack of consciousness with regard to time. Yet, it cannot be denied that time as objectified in the clock comes to be understood as a force of nature, rather than a historically specific construction of time. The subjective must play a much larger role since it is precisely from the subjective point of view that may arise at the point of frustration of a contradiction between the dictates of the clock and the realities of life that the possibilities of resisting clock time become visible.

**Commodifying Time**

The commodification of time means simply that time becomes objectified through the commodity form, that is, something that can be bought and sold. The commodification of time differs from the objectification of time. While the objectification of time is the form time takes, that is, clock time—the commodification of time is the content of time, that is, the money value form:

The common expression ‘time is money’ is a colloquial example of the rule of this money value system. As it relates to human lifetime, the money value system computes as valuable only those forms of human activity that produce commodities or services for sale, or that aid in the realization of profit through the purchase of those same commodities or services. It thus forms a general social value matrix linking work life and leisure within which people come to experience their life activity as valuable or worthless to the extent that it serves this money value system as its instrument. 57

As Marx states, “A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they
spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference.” In “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof,” Marx introduces the commodity form in terms of its use-value and exchange value. Use-value is simply that which transforms nature into something useful to humans: and as Marx states, “The mystical character of commodities does not originate, therefore, in their use value.” Marx compares the fetishism of commodities with religion:

In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men’s hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.

Commodity fetishism is the transformative mechanism that turns that which is qualitative into a calculable quantity, or in the words of Marx, it is that which replaces use-value with exchange value. Exchange value equalizes distinct (and thus unequal) objects by creating a uniform money standard that is not related to the object’s natural properties. As Marx argues, value is social, not natural. This point is important considering that certain uses of time, namely those that benefit the market, are privileged, while others are not. Commodity fetishism is transferable to time because capital reduces time to exchange value, thus commodifying time. The fetishism aspect of the commodification of time is such that it mystifies the reality that clock time is the conscious creation of humans and not a natural force acting upon them and over which they have no control. In Lukács’s words:

The essence of commodity structure has often been pointed out. Its basis is that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a ‘phantom objectivity,’ an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people.
As capitalism “create[d] a world after its own image,” across the last two centuries, the creation of clock time to measure labor was slowly transformed from an experience of social constraint to an experience of inevitability through an ever-increasing internalized sense of time as commodified. This feeling of inevitability arose from the lived experience of time ever more in service to capital and the economic rational that informed this experience as necessary to maintain progress, defined as continual economic growth. In later chapters, we shall see that “progress,” itself a form of understanding the passage of time, is political.

Capitalism reduces everything to a commodity. In other words, everything has a price tag, which means that everything is reduced to a quantified value through its determined exchange value (quantified), not its use-value (qualitative). As a consequence, the human experience of time is largely commodified, most obviously in the productive sphere where individuals are coerced to sell their time in the market for a wage. Marx aptly describes this coercion:

> It must be acknowledged that our worker emerges from the process of production looking different from when he entered it. In the market—contract seemed equal, but when the transaction was concluded, it was discovered that he was no ‘free agent,’ that the period of time for which he is free to sell his labour power is the period of time for which he is forced to sell it, that in fact the vampire will not let go ‘while there remains a single muscle, sinew or drop of blood to be exploited.’

The idea behind commodity fetishism appears to be a very basic one, but this does not mean that once individuals are made aware of the process of commodity fetishism that they are then able to see their way out of its structure. Conscious resistance through critical thought and action remains a constant struggle, because the commodity form’s reach is so extensive and so intrusive that it reifies our understanding of time, a category that informs much of our lived experience.

**Concluding Thoughts**

The fight for time sought to limit the reach of capital though production (work time), but the processes of production are only the
most obvious manifestation of capital’s more general dispossession of time by means of commodification. Capital colonizes time through the linked processes of production and consumption. The historical developments of global capitalism have only increased its ability to colonize more and more aspects of the lived experience through the commodification of time. Thus the fight for time must move beyond production. Leisure is politically significant in a way that the fight for time alone is not. Leisure provides not only an alternative understanding of time that delinks and contests the “time is money” formulation, but also a major structural critique of a system that denies leisure altogether by colonizing the meaning and distribution of our time. The way it does so is the dispossession of time through the ever-increasing commodification of time not only in production as the original fight for time was against, but also in consumption and leisure. This makes sense given Marx’s analysis of the commodity cycle. Unfortunately, production is often delinked from consumption in thinking about time. Thus it makes little sense to enter into an argument over whether people are working more or less because the ever-increasing commodification of all time means people are essentially always working if work is defined by necessity as defined by capitalism.

Work time greatly constrains discretionary time, and severs the link between freedom and time every time people are forced to choose money over time. Consequently, increasing discretionary time is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for increasing temporal autonomy. Still, unstructured time has the potential to force people to confront their individual freedom in ways that they are able to currently avoid because of the burden of overwork, but there is a problem. Owing to overwork, free time is frequently spent recovering from work so as to be able to return again. This means that free time is often viewed as the occasion to either catch up on the basic household chores, spend time with the family, run errands, or if one is very lucky, to do absolutely nothing at all beyond participating in some form of passive leisure provided by yet another technological device, leisure machines, which are not time-saving, but all time-consuming.

The take-away message from Marx’s theoretical development of the fight for time is that alternative understandings of time cannot
be abstract, but must be rooted in political institutions. Without the strength of a vibrant labor movement in the United States, the channels through which discretionary time might realistically be expanded (albeit in a limited way) today include legislation around paid family leave, paid sick leave, paid vacation, basic income, and living wage campaigns. The first two are obvious, but a basic income and living wage would allow workers to work less part-time jobs. A genuine refusal of our current harried lifestyles will not come about simply by raising individual consciousness one by one. It will only come about by creating the institutional conditions necessary to enable a different approach to time than currently exists.
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CHAPTER 3

The Reification of Time-Consciousness and the Fight for Time Reconsidered

Although under-theorized, Marxist and critical social theory have laid the groundwork for theorizing a relationship between time and consciousness as situated under the historical developments of global capitalism. Georg Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness* is particularly helpful in reestablishing a dialectical link between the philosophical and political aspects of time in relationship to history, as established by Marx, as a way to contest what I refer to as the reification of time-consciousness. As mentioned previously, individuals already have a certain shared consciousness about time as loss, or not having enough time, which is largely a historical and political condition of advanced capitalism reinforced by liberalism and a culture informed by a secularized work ethic. This is why the fight for time reconsidered must address all elements of the colonization of time by capital, including and perhaps most of all the reification of time-consciousness, which denies individuals the ability to understand reality in terms of fluid historical and political processes. By contrast, a non-reified time-consciousness better enables individuals to make connections between their immediate reality, negotiating time constraints, and the totality of social relations, the reality of the colonization of time by capital.¹ In this way, individuals develop a collective political understanding not only about how time is colonized by capital, but are also able to identify the objective possibilities of
Lukács uses the category of reification to describe the extension of the Marxian concept of commodity fetishism and the Weberian concept of rationalization to all aspects of life under modern capitalism. He is particularly interested in the reification of consciousness that he links to the historical transformation of labor-time as shaped by scientific management or Taylorism. Frederick Taylor sought to extend the scientific method to the management of the production process primarily by means of the division of labor, and especially time and motion studies in order to increase efficiency and productivity through the rationalization and standardization of the production process. This transition from capital’s generation of absolute surplus value by lengthening the working day to the generation of relative surplus value by the application of scientific management and technology to reduce necessary labor-time in direct proportion to the surplus labor-time extracted, identified by Lukács, is presumably somewhat reflective of the success of the labor movement in establishing limits to the working day. If limits are set to the length of the workday, other ways must be found to extract surplus. The concept of reification thus reflects the transformation of the experience not only of labor, but also of time-consciousness.

Although Lukács’s central category is labor, his analysis of the transformation of labor-time lends itself to rethinking time in a critical fashion since the reification of time-consciousness determines what people come to believe is objectively possible:

Man’s liberty is limited, but not only by external conditions... men are limited just as much by their mental structures which result from those conditions and are to be found in them. Nevertheless, these conditions and mental structures do not merely place limits on men; they also create for them a field of possibilities within which they act and modify reality while modifying themselves.

This means that the fight for time must include a careful analysis of the colonization of time by capital including the reification of time-consciousness, which ultimately limits the realm of what is
considered politically possible. At the same time, the fight for time must avoid the “false duality” of “the field of the possible created from without and the field of the possible created from within,” since for Lukács, “possible consciousness and objective possibility are inextricably linked.”7 The fight for time must begin with the historical reality of the colonization of time by capital and the corresponding reified time-consciousness, but it must not be entirely limited by it:

On the one hand, the external situation of the group and of individuals determines them and makes certain things impossible; but, on the other hand, the mental structure of the group determines its actions and acts in such a manner that certain things, certain projects, are not thinkable.8

The strength of reification as a critical category of analysis lies in Lukács’s dialectical approach to time or what I refer to as “time-consciousness.” Time-consciousness is a theoretical category of analysis that aims to render the dialectical relationship between the objective and subjective aspects of time as shaped by capital’s colonization of time visible in order to contest the reification of time-consciousness or the experience of commodified labor-time as a “fixed and established reality,” which confronts individuals as immutable.9 The domination of social time by capital functions by masquerading as absolute time: “The social is therefore colonized by positivist logics that empty the social of social characteristics.”10 In other words, the same way that liberalism abstracts individuals from their social realities, so does the colonization of time function by abstracting the social aspects of time that are not conducive to the logic of capital. Thus time is rarely regarded as legitimate grounds for political contestation since it is experienced as “obeying law-like regularities that cannot be overturned without violating that which is natural and just.”11 Lukács’s dialectical analysis of reification thus continues to offer a unique opportunity to rethink time in a manner that disrupts this sleight-of-hand maneuver. The answer to the “riddle of commodity-structure”12 or economic fetishism lies in solving the reification of time-consciousness by reestablishing a philosophical and political relationship between time and
freedom in order to contest advanced capital’s colonization of time and the reification of time-consciousness.

Considered Lukács’s seminal contribution to Western Marxism, *History and Class Consciousness* sought to reestablish a meaningful relationship between time and freedom by reconsidering the dialectical relationship between history and consciousness as juxtaposed between the philosophies of Hegel and Marx. In doing so, Lukács recovers the transformation of the concept of time from an idealist to a materialist understanding of history. Marx’s development of history from an unconscious to a potentially self-conscious status opens up the possibilities of individuals to see beyond the immediacy of clock time as necessity so as to think of time in relation to freedom as creating the conditions most conducive to the development of human capabilities. To think of time in this manner rejects the conditions under capitalism that deny a meaningful relationship between time and freedom. The human embodiment of time remains central to establishing a meaningful relationship between time and freedom precisely because it serves as a constant reminder that that which makes time meaningful is not money even if we are often forced to reduce time to this singular understanding, but the quality of life that is dependent on the political economy of a given society. An already scarce good because of mortality, time becomes the ultimate scarce good because of the logic of capitalism, which understands all disposable to time as rightfully belonging to capitalism. The difficulty Lukács confronts with the reification of consciousness is the collective understanding of historical conditions as a permanent and necessary reality.

In his “Preface to the New Edition (1967),” Lukács describes the book as an attempt to reconnect Marxism and philosophy by way of Hegel: “*History and Class Consciousness* represents what was perhaps the most radical attempt to restore the revolutionary nature of Marx’s theories by renovating and extending Hegel’s dialectics and methods.” The dialectical method is ultimately Lukács’s solution to the problem of the reification of consciousness. As he states, “We need the dialectical method to puncture the social illusion so produced and help us glimpse the reality underlying it.” Taking his cue from Hegel, Lukács recognizes that freedom is the insight into necessity, or, in the case of capitalism, it is the insight into the economic determination of
necessity (and thus of freedom) itself. He thus begins his analysis of reification by rendering the manner by which capital comes to dominate labor-time visible in “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat,” the central essay of *History and Class Consciousness*.

**Time and Capitalism**

Capitalism’s colonization of time was neither automatic nor inevitable, but the end result of a political struggle between labor’s fight for self-determined time and capitalism’s domination and manipulation of necessary labor-time. In contrast to feudal conditions where peasants were conscious of a distinction between necessary and surplus labor-time, capitalism blurs the distinction so that workers come to understand all labor-time as necessary.\(^{16}\) This is why Marx argued that workers demand the actual value of their labor-power. Capitalism’s historical advantage rests in the workers’ acceptance, however reluctant or unconscious, of this commodified understanding of time informed and reinforced by the categories of political economy.\(^ {17}\) Additionally, workers’ dependence on the market for wages increased as households ceased to be spaces of production for family needs. As Lukács states, “Reification requires that a society should learn to satisfy all of its needs in terms of commodity exchange.”\(^ {18}\) For this reason, it is central to understand Lukács’s analysis of commodity fetishism with respect to capital’s commodification of time. In the opening lines of “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat,” Lukács makes a rather bold statement that at “This stage in the history of mankind there is no problem that does not ultimately lead back to that question and there is no solution that could not be found in the solution to the riddle of the commodity-structure.”\(^ {19}\) Lukács argues that the commodity reflects the structure of capitalism in its totality when it becomes “the universal structuring principle”\(^ {20}\) of modern capitalism:

The commodity can only be understood in its undistorted essence when it becomes the universal category of society as a whole. Only in this context does the reification produced by commodity relations assume decisive importance both for the objective evolution of society and for the stance adopted by men towards it.\(^ {21}\)
To understand the essence of the commodity means to understand the commodity through the human relations that produced it: “Its basis is that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a ‘phantom objectivity,’ an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people.”22 The centrality of understanding the commodity form as the embodiment of human relationships is the recognition or consciousness of the human element concealed in all commodities including time as a way to combat the reification of consciousness. In this way, time comes to be understood not as an autonomous force of economic determination, but as a historical product of social relations and therefore politically contestable.

Lukács quotes at length Marx’s account of commodity fetishism to describe “the basic phenomenon of reification”:

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men’s labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses…It is only a definite social relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things.23

By way of Marx, Lukács presents a rather complex understanding of consciousness, whereby the commodity form’s appearance under capitalism is simultaneously the concealment of the human element. Lukács relates this concealment to reification,24 which he describes as a “situation [where]…man’s own activity, his own labour becomes something objective and independent of him, something that controls him by virtue of an autonomy alien to man.”25 Reification for Lukács refers to an unconsciousness of the essence of what he refers to as “second nature”26 or the “self-created material circumstances.”27
Philosophically speaking, Lukács’s concept of “second nature” resolves the Kantian duality between subject and object by referring only to that “nature” that is a direct product of human interaction with unadulterated nature. Consciousness for Lukács means a self-awareness of the world as a historical product as opposed to an ahistorical product, of which Marx referred to as dead labor: “[Reification] meant the petrification of living processes into dead things, which appeared as an alien ‘second nature.’”28 Thus consciousness goes beyond the recognition of commodities as the embodiment of human relations to a self-awareness of human beings as historical producers of material goods, social relations, and ideas: “The historical knowledge of the proletariat begins with knowledge of the present, with the self-knowledge of its own social situation and with the elucidation of its necessity (i.e., its genesis).”29 Following Marx, Lukács reconceptualizes history in philosophical-anthropological, rather than purely empirical, terms to return time to its rightful place, the substance of humans’ being and becoming. As Andrew Feenberg argues, Marx and Lukács establish a “philosophy of praxis,” whereby “history is ontology, the becoming of the human species is the privileged domain within which the problems of the theory of being can finally be resolved.”30 History as ontology is not however Lukács’s starting point, but his final destination. His starting point is labor-time as it appears to the working class under modern capitalism in the processes of production.

Lukács demonstrates that the colonization of time is not simply an ideological constraint determined by the needs of capital accumulation, but a structural reality:

On the one hand, the process of labour is progressively broken down into abstract, rational, specialized operations so that the worker loses contact with the finished product and his work is reduced to the mechanical repetition of a specialized set of actions. On the other hand, the period of time necessary for work to be accomplished (which forms the basis of rational calculation) is converted, as mechanization and rationalization are intensified, from a merely empirical average figure to an objectively calculable work-stint that confronts the worker as a fixed and established reality.31
In applying Weber’s concept of rationalization to Marx’s analysis of commodity fetishism, Lukács argues that the increasing rationalization of the processes of production through scientific management intensifies the experience of reification by replacing every aspect of self-determined time with an abstract understanding of labor-time directly informed by the instrumental rationality of the production process:

[The] … fragmentation of the object of production necessarily entails the fragmentation of its subject. In consequence of the rationalization of the work-process the human qualities and idiosyncrasies of the worker appear increasingly as mere sources of error when contrasted with these abstract special laws functioning according to rational predictions. Neither objectively nor in his relation to his work does man appear as the authentic master of the process; on the contrary, he is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system. He finds it already pre-existing and self-sufficient, it functions independently of him and he has to conform to its laws whether he likes it or not. As labour is progressively rationalized and mechanized his lack of will is reinforced by the way in which his activity becomes less and less active and more and more contemplative. The contemplative stance adopted towards a process mechanically conforming to fixed laws and enacted independently of man’s consciousness and impervious to human intervention, i.e., a perfectly closed system, must likewise transform the basic categories of man’s immediate attitude to the world: it reduces space and time to a common denominator and degrades time to the dimension of space.

The “transformation” of the basic categories of man’s immediate attitude to the world means that neither politics nor philosophy is immune from the reification of time-consciousness, as Lukács demonstrates in his discussion of “the antinomies of bourgeois thought.” However, his initial understanding of reification as a totalizing and “perfectly closed system” comes about because he failed to distinguish between categories. The sections that follow break down time in terms of objectification, commodification, alienation, and reification
in light of Lukács’s later reflections on *History and Class Consciousness* in order to examine the political consequences of conflating these categories for the fight for time.

**Objectification**

Given Lukács’s admitted conflation of objectification (*vergegenständlichung*) and alienation (*entfremdung*), it is important to clarify the differences between these concepts in relationship to time in order to demonstrate why it matters politically to the fight for time. Herbert Marcuse interprets Hegel’s understanding of objectification (*vergegenständlichung*) as the externalization of humanity via labor: “In labor something happens with the man and with the objectification in such a manner that the ‘result’ is an essential unity of man and the objectification: man ‘objectifies’ himself and the object becomes ‘his,’ it becomes a human object.” *Vergegenständlichung* is “the process of becoming an object,” and labor is that which is the doing of the process: “And it is precisely in this doing of human beings as the mode of one’s being in the world: it is that through which one first becomes ‘for itself’ what one is, comes to one’s self, acquires the form of one’s being-there [Da-seins], winning one’s ‘permanence’ and at the same time making the world ‘one’s own.’” In contrast to Hegel’s understanding of objectification, Lukács argues that Marx “distinguishes sharply between objectification in work in general and the alienation of subject and object in the capitalist form of work.” In the same manner, a distinction should be made between the objectification of time as clock time in general and the commodification of time under capitalism. Not only is the history of the clock longer than the history of capitalism, but making this distinction also provides a clearer picture of how commodification distorts the objectification of time and thus the relationship between labor and consciousness.

Reflecting on objectification in general, Lukács states that it is indeed a phenomenon that cannot be eliminated from human life in society. If we bear in mind that every externalization of an object in practice (and hence, too, in work) is an objectification, that every human expression including speech objectifies human
thoughts and feelings, then it is clear that we are dealing with a universal mode of commerce between men. And in so far as this is the case, objectification is a neutral phenomenon; the true is as much an objectification as the false, liberation as much as enslavement.

In conflating objectification and alienation under the category of reification, Lukács confused that which is a universal human condition, objectification, with that which is a historical condition, alienation. The political significance for the purposes at hand is that the clock may be used in service to capitalism as well as in contestation of the time constraints produced by capitalism. At the same time, it is evident that capitalism let alone capital’s colonization of time would not have been possible without the precision of the mechanical clock. This seems to suggest that the objectification of time in the form of the mechanical clock is significant insofar as there is a relationship between form and content. The historical transformation of the meaning of time, following the Newtonian influence, from a concrete (time as a dependent variable) to an abstract (time as an independent variable) understanding of time, arguably renders time more susceptible to capital’s colonization of time by making it possible for capital to replace social or relational time with absolute or reified time.

**Commodification**

Lukács argues that objectivity is “distorted... by its commodity character,” which is why he reasons that reflection does not reflect essence, but appearance:

The commodity character of the commodity, the abstract, quantitative mode of calculability shows itself here in its purest form: the reified mind necessarily sees it as the form in which its own authentic immediacy becomes manifest and—as reified consciousness—does not even attempt to transcend it.

As with objectification in general, the objectification of time is increasingly mediated by the commodity form: “As the quantification and measurement of time has become more precise, so we have become less...
the agents who embody time and more the subjects that commodified
time embodies." The value of time comes to be defined predomi-
nately by exchange rather than use-value, or in the words of Benjamin
Franklin, “Time is money.” Commodified labor-time employed by
capital takes on a new meaning that stands in direct opposition to the
expansion of free time. Lukács, quoting Marx:

Machinery considered alone shortens the hours of labour, but,
when in service of capital, lengthens them; since it in itself light-
ens labour, but when employed by capital heightens the intensity
of labour; since it in itself is a victory of man over the forces of
Nature, but in the hands of capital, makes them paupers.

A paradox thus arises. Reflecting on technology and the potential
of technology to decrease the time spent in the realm of necessity in
order to expand the time for self-development as originally formu-
lated by Marx, Lukács states:

Now there is today such a thing as scientific management and a
way of dealing psychologically with the workers, but this is simply
directed towards creating a technology which could make labour a
valued occupation for the workers. A firmly fixed prejudice of ours
that I have already mentioned holds that, since capitalism is as it is,
since every technological innovation is directed towards increasing
profit, and everything else is a side-effect, it is therefore part of the
ontological nature of technological developments to stand uncon-
ditionally in the service of capitalism.

Again Lukács recognizes that technology is potentially as much lib-
eration as it is enslavement. Henry Pachter reflects on this paradox
with regard to the liberatory potential of technology:

Now here is the paradox: as a human being, the worker should be
glad that machinery is being invented to relieve him of (at least
some of) the drudgery; as an employee he has to fight hard not to
be relieved entirely by the machine…Under capitalist conditions
he has to fight on two fronts—on the one hand for his “right to
work,” on the other hand for his “right to leisure.”
Workers want to be relieved of the unnecessary burden of labor, but not entirely because of the condition that they must work to be able to fulfill their very basic human needs through the market. The fight for time must address this paradox by making visible the manipulation of necessary and surplus labor-time through absolute and relative surplus value.

**Alienation**

Walter Kaufmann describes alienation as an inevitable condition of human existence necessary for self-consciousness, “To speak of alienation without making clear who is held to be alienated from whom or from what is hardly fruitful, and talk of the ‘total’ alienation of modern man is as nonsensical as talk of the total absence of alienation.” What does it mean to speak of people being alienated from time? The question makes sense only if time is understood as linking the processes of labor, objectification, and self-consciousness. Marx describes the relationship between objectification and labor under the conditions of industrial capitalism:

> Labor’s realization is its objectification. In the sphere of political economy this realization of labor appears as loss of realization for the workers; objectification as loss of the object and bondage to it: appropriation as estrangement, as alienation… The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien.54

In Marx’s understanding labor is the activity that defines life and it is labor that is being alienated under the conditions of capitalism, but it is the time discipline and constraints through absolute surplus value that distort the ontological relationship between labor and consciousness by denying a meaningful relationship between time and freedom, whereby necessity might be reduced to enlarge the time for
human development. Marx’s understanding of time is not reducible to labor-time as it appears under capitalism, but is teleologically related to human potential and actualization. Time is necessary for human development and human development is being denied by the needs of capitalism taking precedence over the development and enlargement of conditions that might contribute rather than hinder individual and collective freedom.

Lukács’s brilliance is often attributed to his discovery of Marx’s concept of alienation (entfremdung) prior to the release of the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts that confirmed the idealist, that is, Heglian roots of Marx’s critique of political economy—despite the fact that Marx relied heavily on the language of political economy to make his case. As a point of clarification, Lukács’s concept of reification should not be confused with Marx’s concept of alienation. In the “Preface to the New Edition (1967),” Lukács explains that although he used alienation and reification synonymously, they are not identical concepts. For this reason, I focus primarily on Lukács’s later reflections on History and Class Consciousness where Lukács attempts to address his mistake in conflating objectification and alienation as reification. The political significance of distinguishing between objectification, alienation, and reification is central to maintaining an analysis of time that is critical of capitalism and is not itself susceptible to reification.

In his “Preface to the New Edition (1967)” of History and Class Consciousness, Lukács is careful to distinguish between objectification and alienation in order to reveal how individuals become alienated from human objectifications or what Lukács refers to as “second nature”:

Only when the objectified forms in society acquire functions that bring the essence of man into conflict with his existence, only when man’s nature is subjugated, deformed and crippled can we speak of an objective societal condition of alienation and, as an inexorable consequence, of all the subjective marks of an internal alienation.

Lukács admits that his original conflation of objectification and alienation “convert[ed] an essentially social alienation into an eternal
‘condition humain’, which only served to reify time in his very analysis of reification. It is clear that alienation is a historical product and being a historical product it is not universal or immutable as a law of nature. Lukács is careful to identify the historical differences between Marx and himself in regard to the fight for time as a political strategy against alienation, which he identifies as “class conflict shifting from absolute to relative surplus value”.

At the time that Marx wrote the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, the alienation of the working class directly involved a labour that drove the workers down to an almost animal level; alienation was in a certain sense dialectical with de-humanization, and consequently the class struggle was oriented for decades towards securing a human life for the workers by means of appropriate demands regarding wages and working hours. The celebrated ‘three eights’ of the Second International were symptomatic of this class struggle. Today this problem has in a certain sense been displaced, only in a certain sense, of course.

By the three eights, the authors presumably mean the labor slogan, “eight hours labor, eight hours rest, and eight hours for what we will.” Whereas Marx’s analysis of alienation reflects capital’s inhumane use of labor-time, Lukács’s analysis of alienation confronts the increasing encroachment of capital on consciousness through capitalism’s creation of a consumer ethos to be fulfilled during free time:

It follows that a new problem is visible on the working-class horizon, that is the problem of a meaningful life. The class struggle in the era of surplus value was directed towards creating the objective conditions for a meaningful life. Today, with the five-day a week and a wage corresponding to this, the first conditions for a meaningful life can already emerge, and as a result the problem has arisen that the manipulation which extends from the purchase of cigarettes through to presidential elections divides human beings from meaningful life by a mental barrier. For manipulation is not, as the official doctrine has it, the desire to inform the consumer what the best refrigerator or the best razor blade is, but a question of the control of consciousness.
The barrier to a meaningful life is for Lukács a “mental barrier” caused by manipulation by means of advertisements and distraction:

As a result of this manipulation, the worker, the working person, is forcibly distracted from considering how he could transform his free time into genuine leisure, and it is insinuated that consumption is his own life-fulfilling purpose, exactly as, in the era of the twelve hour working day, labour itself dominated life in a dictatorially intrusive way.63

The fight for time thus must take into consideration the manipulation of free time:

Earlier struggles over free time only went as far as to campaign for working hours that permitted the workers some kind of human existence. Today there is much more involved. In fact through the shortening of working hours a space arises in which free time can be turned into real leisure. But present-day capitalism does everything to prevent this.64

The transition from absolute to relative surplus value makes a significant difference to class consciousness since it is no longer as easy to identify “working-class interest” with “the struggle against capitalism and for its transformation into a new society” because “the manipulation of free time, the consumer goods industry, constantly reduces the mental abilities of the great majority of the population” because the profit motive necessarily reduces culture to the “lowest possible level.”65 The argument still relates back to the major time constraints since the attractiveness of the culture industry may reside in the overall lack of self-determined time. Lukács lays the groundwork for critical theory’s later criticisms of the culture and leisure industry as destroying the possibilities of freedom in so-called free time. His analysis of alienation as related to consciousness thus makes it possible to argue that the fight for time under advanced capitalism must take into consideration not only the realm of production, but also consumption and leisure: “No trade-union struggle is possible which is not also a cultural struggle and occasionally also a political struggle for the maintenance of cultural freedom.”66
Importantly, Lukács’s analysis of time is not the leap into freedom found in romantic anti-capitalism, but a dialectical analysis of how time-consciousness comes to be alienated not only objectively, but also subjectively. This means that alienation can only be overcome by transforming the actual existing conditions that contribute to it. The difference between the “experience” of “everyday life as a teleology directed independently” of humans under capitalism must under socialism “subordinate the whole of economy to the teleological projects of human consciousness.” At the end of the day, the fight for genuine leisure is a necessary but not sufficient criterion for class consciousness because the colonization of time is derived largely from its manipulation of necessary labor-time.

Reification

As mentioned previously, Lukács (unlike Marx) collapses objectification and alienation into the single concept of reification, a term that Marx himself did not use. In contrast to Marx’s concept of alienation, Lukács’s concept of reification enlists the Weberian notion of rationalization. As Lukács states, “We are concerned above all with the principle at work here: the principle of rationalization based on what is and can be calculated.” His criticism is that capitalism operates under the assumption that everything can be calculated: “There arises a rational systematization of all statutes regulating life, which represents, or at least tends toward a closed system applicable to all possible imaginable cases” without regard for the “violation of man’s humanity.” The principle of rationalization does not stay within the confines of production, but inundates the entire society, thus strengthening reification.

The process of rationalization of the workplace and thus of the worker is not possible without the precision of the clock. Yet, rationalization simultaneously transforms the meaning and experience of time itself by denying any meaning beyond quantification, control, prediction, and efficiency meant to ensure profit:

Thus time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature; it freezes into an exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with
quantifiable “things” (the reified, mechanically objectified “performance” of the worker, wholly separated from his total human personality): in short, it becomes space.\textsuperscript{72}

The rationalization of time contributes to the reification of time-consciousness because it forces workers to deny almost every aspect of their humanity while at work:

The quantification of objects, their subordination to abstract mental categories makes its appearance in the life of the worker immediately as a process of abstraction of which he is a victim, and which cuts him off from his labour-power, forcing him to sell it on the market as a commodity, belonging to him. And by selling this, his only commodity, he integrates it (and himself: for his commodity is inseparable from his physical existence) into a specialized process that has been rationalized and mechanized, a process that he discovers already existing, complete and able to function without him and in which he is no more than a cipher reduced to an abstract quantity, a mechanized and rationalized tool.\textsuperscript{73}

However, it is precisely this condition that Lukács argues is the reason that the standpoint of the proletariat is in a position to fight reification because unlike the bourgeoisie, the proletariat does not seek to preserve itself as a class, but seeks to abolish itself.\textsuperscript{74} Unfortunately, history has proven Lukács wrong and Lenin’s idea of the necessity of a vanguard party to infuse the proletariat with a revolutionary consciousness right:

No proletarian revolution has occurred anywhere, no section of the proletariat has spontaneously oriented itself toward the conflict with all the other social groups which it should have wanted to eliminate from power in order to create a classless society in which it itself would disappear, and no section of the proletariat’s evolution has been spontaneously revolutionary.\textsuperscript{75}

However, Lukács’s basic reasoning seems to stand that the working class should not be as invested in the status quo as the middle
class because of its “essential different…structuration of class and consciousness.” The starting point of any analysis of time should be who benefits and who is disadvantaged by capital’s colonization of time.

Time-Consciousness

Although Lukács never develops a theory of “time-consciousness,” he does develop a theory of history in relation to class consciousness:

The real subject of all historical action for Lukács (inspired by Marx), the subject of all human action, is a plural subject; the subject which at the same time is an object, since it is itself that it understands, and since it acts upon society of which it forms a part. At the essential level of decisive historical action, of philosophy and of culture, this plural subject is a privileged group, a class, which is oriented toward the global organization of re-organization of society, hence the terms history and class consciousness.

Historical action includes the self-consciousness of the proletariat as able to penetrate the “inert immediacy of facts” by “mediating them through a dynamic understanding of the whole.” Arguing that the proletariat is in a better position for penetrating the veil of reification than the bourgeoisie “enmeshed in its immediacy by virtue of its class role,” Lukács points in the general direction of the importance of time-consciousness. The peculiarity of the commodification of labor-time is that the qualitative elements of humanity continue to coexist alongside commodification despite capitalism’s attempt to deny the qualitative aspects of humanity by trying to make the worker as efficient as the machine. The proletariat has the quality of being the only commodity that has the possibility of becoming self-aware. Lukács argues that the standpoint of the proletariat is capable of seeing beyond its immediacy because of the concreteness of their experience and the denial of their humanity beyond necessity. Further, the duality or antinomies of thought (necessity and freedom, theory and practice) found in classical philosophy and replicated in bourgeois economic thought is overcome through the proletarians’ collective
self-conscious practical activity. Lukács provides the foundation for time-consciousness by revealing the connections between labor-time and consciousness:

Of course, all of this is only contained implicitly in the dialectical antithesis of quantity and quality as we meet it in the question of labour-time. That is to say, this antithesis with all its implications is only the beginning of the complex process of mediation whose goal is the knowledge of society as a historical totality. The dialectical method is distinguished from bourgeois thought not only by the fact that it alone can lead to a knowledge of totality; it is also significant that such knowledge is only attainable because the relationship between the parts and the whole has become fundamentally different from what it is in thought based on the categories of reflection. In brief, from this point of view, the essence of the dialectical method lies in the fact that in every aspect correctly grasped by the dialectic the whole totality is comprehended and that the whole method can be unraveled from every single aspect.80

Given his analysis, Lukács suggests that labor-time is the opening toward understanding time as history and history as universal history. Universal history is to be understood as the “totality of history,” a “real historical power—even though one that has not hitherto become conscious and has therefore gone unrecognized—a power which is not to be separated from the reality (and hence the knowledge) of the individual facts without at the same time annulling their reality and their factual existence. It is the real, ultimate ground of their reality and their factual existence and hence also of this knowability even as individual facts.”81 Time-consciousness is only the beginning of a larger process meant to grasp the totality. The proletariat is able to grasp that which the bourgeoisie cannot, precisely because they are connected to labor, the real basis of history:

Whereby for the proletariat the way is opened to a complete penetration of the forms of reification. It achieves this by starting with what is dialectically the clearest form (the immediate relation of
capital and labour). It then relates this to those forms that are more remote from the production processes and so includes and comprehends them, too, in the dialectical totality.82

To reconnect time as self-conscious history means to understand history not as something to which “men and things are subjected,” but as a series of processes rather than absolutes. Embodied time thus becomes self-conscious and in becoming self-conscious begins the de-reification of all reality so that connections are able to be made between the past, the present, and the future in a dialectical understanding of history.

The Fight for Time

Lukács’s early analysis of reification and later analysis of the manipulation of free time brings to light many of the elements necessary for rethinking the fight for time as a fight that must confront the realities of capital’s colonization of time. In particular, he considers reification of consciousness as directly related to the commodification and rationalization of time. As damning as his critique may be, Lukács allows for the possibility of fighting reification in general:

Reification is, then, the necessary, immediate reality of every person living in capitalist society. It can be overcome only by constant and constantly renewed efforts to disrupt the reified structure of existence by concretely relating to the concretely manifested contradictions of the total developments, by becoming conscious of the immanent meanings of these contradictions for the total development.83

Given Lukács’s insight that alienation and reification are reflective of historical specificity and are themselves historical concepts, it makes sense to argue that the fight for time must fundamentally reconceptualize alienation and reification to account for the historical specificity of time under advanced capitalism. As Lukács states, “What we need . . . is a major, fundamental portrayal of alienation at its present-day level.”84 An analysis of alienation and reification today would reflect all the ways in which people are dispossessed of their time and time-consciousness.
Lukács speaks directly to the fight for time by arguing alongside Marx that production must be made more meaningful so as to be less alienating, but he also emphasizes the “transformation of free time into leisure, which [he argues] can only be achieved by ideological work, by an ideological enlightenment which explains ever more fully how contemporary manipulation runs contrary to the true interests of humanity.”

Lukács’s analysis of reification has immediate relevance for the fight for time even if the fight could conceivably lead to the proletariat “adapt[ing] itself ideologically to conform to . . . the emptiest and most decadent forms of bourgeois culture.” Lukács demonstrates that the fight for time is crucial to political consciousness because the fight for time is a practical activity that seeks to establish a meaningful relationship between time and freedom by reconnecting the qualitative or subjective dimensions of time with the quantitative or objective dimensions of time. In the concept of labor-time, Lukács demonstrates that the duality between subjective and objective aspects of time is an illusion since the worker can never be separated from his humanity or qualitative attributes. They may be suppressed or denied, but they continue to exist.

Given his analysis of reification as all encompassing, Lukács demonstrates the ways that reification permeates even the organized resistance to capital’s colonization of time. The fight for time as understood through the categories of political economy can never be sufficient since it leads directly back to reification. In other words, the fight for time must be conscious of the various ways that capitalism fills time with positivistic logic by reducing time to economic laws. Social or relational time must “substitute its own positive contents for the emptied and bursting husks” that Lukács uses to describe the “decline of bourgeois society.” The fight for time must thus take into consideration not only the form (quantitative), but also the content (qualitative) of time. Marx’s own strategic analysis of suggesting workers demand the actual value of their labor-time must also include a discussion of the content of time for the purposes of human development.

It is clear from Lukács that the objective existing conditions under which labor-time operates must be the starting point. Thus a careful analysis of the various ways in which capital colonized time
historically and colonizes time currently is of utmost importance. The problem with bourgeois philosophy and economics is that it takes economic categories as given, or fails to comprehend the economic base of the concepts and categories they use to make sense of reality. In other words, is it possible to make demands for time using the logic of capitalism without accepting the logic as autonomous and thus uncontestable?

Importantly, Lukács’s dialectical understanding of time is resistant to the temptation of retreating into subjectivity by demanding the transformation of the material conditions that lead to alienation and reification. Under bourgeois economics, time is understood as individually possessed and not something that is only possible because of the collective efforts of everyone involved. In other words, the solution to the time constraints posed by capitalism cannot be addressed at the individual level, but must be addressed collectively. It is not so useful when it comes to thinking about time not as individually possessed but as something collectively possible through the division of labor. Lukács was always concerned with the dialectic between objective reality and subjective consciousness. Lukács’s complicated analysis of reification reveals that what is at stake in the fight for time is much more than free time. Time-consciousness shakes the foundations of capitalism by contesting the reified acceptance of commodified clock time as time itself. Time as a category of thought informs whether individuals see the world as a product of humanity. Lukács considers the extent to which reification disrupts our ability to grasp the whole.

**Concluding Remarks**

Lukács’s reading of Marx through Hegelian categories is useful in reestablishing a meaningful relationship between time and freedom through a dialectical understanding of history in relation to self-consciousness. The analytical power of the dialectical method lies in distinguishing between that which is universal (objectification) and that which results from specific historical conditions (alienation and reification). Alienation is related but not reducible to the objectification of time as clock time. Alienation occurs when time is no longer
recognized as a human creation and clocks are no longer understood as a human tool to measure the passage of time. Lukács's analysis logically extends to considering the conditions under advanced capitalism, which include the colonization of time not only through the processes of production, but also through consumption and the leisure industry that provides entertainment that the masses have no way of rejecting given the severe constraints placed upon their time. However, Lukács is unique insofar as he never privileges subjectivity or consciousness to the exclusion of objective reality and the possibilities of transforming that reality through political praxis. In other words, he never forecloses the possibility of transforming the conditions that contribute most to reification. His later reflections reflect the fundamental historicity of the concepts of alienation and reification.
In the previous chapter, Lukács’s concept of reification was used to analyze the consciousness of time. More precisely, in modern capitalist society, time (a category of the mind) is treated as an autonomous force in its own right, thereby concealing its true nature as a category of political economy. This process greatly restricts the opportunity for developing deeper and alternative understandings of time beyond that readily provided by the consumer ethos and the culture industry. As a consequence of several historical developments, our ability to think critically about the political-economic factors that frame, structure, and limit “choice” around questions of leisure is significantly hindered if not stymied altogether. The assumption of leisure as freedom needs to be rethought in light of the dialectical relationship between production and consumption identified by Marx, whereby production shapes not only the objects for consumption, but also the subjects who ultimately complete the consumption process. Similarly, time spent in production shapes time outside of production in form and content, which is to say, the colonization of time by capital constrains not only the time available for the possibility of leisure, but also our imagination of alternative understandings of what we might want to do with and be in our leisure.

Leisure is central to the development of subjectivity, but only if meaningful choices exist. Meaningfulness, however, depends on the expansion of choices, which in turn depends on the expansion of ideas.
about leisure. To create the conditions of autonomy by which individuals can make meaningful decisions about leisure, it is necessary to include an institutional referent that makes leisure possible in the first place. Public policies are that institutional referent. For leisure, required paid vacation is only the most obvious public policy, but even this is severely lacking in the United States compared to other advanced economies, and is not evenly distributed. As Kathi Weeks asks, “Why do we work so long and so hard? The mystery here is not that we are required to work or that we are expected to devote so much time and energy to its pursuit, but rather that there is not more active resistance to this state of affairs.” Weeks provides a thorough answer to her question, but in this chapter, I revisit leisure from a modern point of view to ask a few related questions, “Why is leisure not considered a serious political demand; why are more people not willing to fight for leisure, and what would make leisure worth fighting for?” The short answer is that leisure has been depoliticized, but this was not always the case.

The colonization of time entailed a systematic reorganization and reconceptualization of leisure by business in the early twentieth century that resulted in the reconstruction of the social understanding of time to better fit the needs and logic of the accumulation process, including the debasement of the classical or humanist rendition of leisure to the modern notion of free time for consumption. This debasement signaled a significant defeat for the working classes’ fight for time because it replaced an earlier understanding of progress linked to the democratic ideal of using technology to reduce the need to work and increase leisure for all. The related conceptions of time—progress, leisure, and free time—have been historically linked and politically contested by different social and political actors. With this in mind, a historical approach is useful for developing a politics of time because it acknowledges the political struggles over the form and content of leisure, including what values, capitalist or noncapitalist, ultimately came to define leisure and why. There are several historical developments in the context of the United States that demonstrate why a politics of time needs to extend beyond production to considerations of consumption. They include the historical and conscious
linkage of leisure to free time for consumption by business in the early twentieth century and the subsequent loss of a collective understanding of progress guided by the democratic ideal of reducing work and increasing leisure for all; the movement of time discipline and management into the household and the introduction of labor and time-saving devices as the household became less a site of production and more a site of consumption; and the rise of modern advertising and the culture industry.

The Commodification of Leisure Time

The commodification of leisure was a conscious project of business to deal with the threat of overproduction because of “improved productivity and economic abundance” in the 1930s. Their worry was fueled by the notion that consumption based on necessity alone could be fulfilled easily enough that people might start to work less as a result:

Responding to the threats of chronic overproduction and the decline of the need to work, business began to concentrate on consumption and conclude that demand could be stimulated. If traditional markets were being ‘saturated,’ then the reasonable response would be to find new markets and increase consumption, not to reduce working hours. Business became increasingly convinced that Americans could be persuaded to need things produced by industry which they had never needed before and consume goods and services, not in response to some out-of-date set of economic motives, but according to a standard of living that constantly improved. With this concern with consumption, the business community broke its long concentration on production, introduced the age of mass consumption, founded a new view of progress in an abundant society, and gave life to the advertising industry.

What this history reveals is that there was a political choice to be made between reducing work hours and increasing consumption. The promotion of consumption took several forms, including the linkage of leisure and consumption: “Even though ‘luxuries or leisure’ was a
theoretical ‘free consumer choice,’ optimistic business were confident that they could successfully compete with leisure by linking it to consumption and promoting their new products.” Stuart Ewen argues that capitalists sought to make a direct connection between leisure and consumerism: “As modern industry . . . [was] geared to mass production, time out for mass consumption became as much a necessity as time in for production.” It is clear that time outside of production was of as much interest to capitalists as time spent directly in production.

Businesses worried that a reduction in working hours would lead to a drop in production, which they continued to view as the lifeblood of economic growth. Thus “they . . . characterized labor’s position on this issue as ‘unAmerican’ since they felt that labor’s bid for the 40 hour week was basically an attempt to limit production.” Thus consumption became part of a new vision of progress as much as it became a new way to be a good citizen and to exercise individual freedom: “Progress had been redefined by business and economists as chasing after the ‘phantom of insatiable desires.’” This new understanding of progress propagated by business began to change from “dreams of both . . . the growth of wages which would improve material welfare and of the steady increase of leisure which would free individuals from material concerns for other, finer things” to the loss of leisure and the destruction of time devoted to the development of “nonpecuniary values, motives, and activities.” The new consumption was defined as an “alternative to increased leisure such as an improved standard of living, consumerism, and steady work.” New consumption was purposely designed to meet the need of capital to generate profit.

This is not to say that citizens were oblivious or fully accepting of the processes underway. “Labor spokesmen, religious leaders, reformers, intellectuals, educators, and social critics” all offered up competing discourses as to what exactly constituted “genuine progress” in their challenge to capital’s linkage of consumption and leisure:

By producing new goods and new demands for these goods, industry was keeping the common man at work longer than necessary. He was working more to serve the interests of the capitalist profit system and less to take care of his real material necessities or meet his own individually felt needs. They questioned perpetual
industrial growth, believing that it would continue to exploit workers by convincing them to produce unnecessary “luxuries.” The worker had lost control of production. Now he was losing control of consumption and the ability to shape his future and culture.\textsuperscript{15}

The collective resistance maintained a distinction between “real” needs and the “interests of the capitalist profit system.” A similar distinction is made by critical theorists in the 1950s and 1960s. What is at stake in making this distinction is the development of subjectivity, or individuality. As Simon Critchley argues, “Marx enables us to distinguish between individuality on the one hand as the full realization of human powers and individualism on the other as egoistic, monadic and as making the individual ‘the plaything of alien powers.’”\textsuperscript{16} For Marx, individuality, or the ability to differentiate ourselves from others, is not possible outside of civil society, which is to say that civil society makes individuality possible:

Only in the eighteenth century, in civil society, do the various forms of social connectedness confront the individual as a mere means towards his private purposes, as external necessity, But the epoch which produces this standpoint, that of the isolated individual, is also precisely that of the hitherto most developed social (from this standpoint, general) relations. The human being is in the most literal sense a zoon politikon, not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society.\textsuperscript{17}

Further, Marx made a distinction between the more limited understanding of liberal or bourgeoisie freedom defined by “free trade, free selling and buying,” and freedom with an emphasis on the development of individuality:

In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality.

And the abolition of this state of things is called by the bourgeois, abolition of individuality and freedom! And rightly so. The abolition of bourgeois individuality, bourgeois independence, and bourgeois freedom is undoubtedly aimed at.\textsuperscript{18}
Marx’s point in *The Communist Manifesto* is that this type of freedom is not only a limited understanding, but only applies to the bourgeois:

You must, therefore, confess that by “individual” you mean no other person than the bourgeois, than the middle-class owner of property. This person must, indeed, be swept out of the way, and made impossible.

Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labour of others by means of such appropriations.\(^{19}\)

Finally, Marx responds to criticisms of “the abolition of private property, [in which] all work will cease, and universal laziness will overtake us,” which is somewhat reminiscent of Republican’s criticisms against the Affordable Care Act in that it may allow people to work less as a result.\(^{20}\)

In the early 1930s, the collective resistance offered shorter work hours as an alternative to the “new economic gospel of consumption”: “Shorter hours could decrease work, raise wages, spread employment, reduce unnecessary production and surpluses, and insure a minimum standard of life for everyone. Therefore, leisure was as practical in ‘New Economic Era’ as new markets and was preferable.”\(^{21}\) Benjamin Hunnicutt’s research on the fight for shorter hours focuses on W. K. Kellogg’s reduction of the workday to six hours in an attempt to create more jobs during the depression: “W. K. Kellogg replaced the traditional three daily, eight-hour shifts in the Battle Creek, Michigan, cereal plant with four six-hour shifts.”\(^{22}\) What is revealing about Hunnicutt’s research is the transformation of people’s consciousness with regard to time during this experiment:

In 1932, the Women’s Bureau of the US Department of Labor sent a research team to Battle Creek to interview Kellogg’s women workers. The team found nearly 85 percent preferred the six-hour shift, primarily because it provided “more time for family activities and home duties and leisure” and because it helped some of the unemployed find work.
The great majority of the Kellogg women used “freedom” or closely related words when the agents asked them to compare the eight-hour and six-hour shifts.

The second most commonly used pattern of words had to do with control and possession; the women spoke about “my work,” “my own time,” “time to myself,” or “enables.” Several women told the agents that the balance of their life seemed to be shifting from constraint/servitude toward freedom/control.

This is an example of how people’s consciousness around the question of time was enhanced simply by reducing the workday from eight to six hours, giving them more control over their time even if this meant some of the time went to home duties. Nevertheless, this quantitative reduction allowed for qualitative reconsiderations of the meaning and experience of time for these women in relation to freedom. What is particularly interesting about Hunnicutt’s research is that leisure increasingly became feminized in its association with women: “It was no accident that women were the strongest and most persistent of the six-hour advocates, doggedly criticizing the work-centered life and promoting alternative social structures, activities, and values,” which demonstrates a reversal of the gendered nature of time from Aristotle where leisure was the privilege of male citizens.

Unfortunately, the romanticization of work that continues to this day took over:

Embracing the new “Human Relations” techniques of business management, Kellogg’s management tried to convince employees that work was the center of life, important for its own sake. Echoing management’s rhetoric, senior male workers joined management in supporting work as an ideal, affirming work as life’s center and organizing principle. A few workers and union leaders even joined the more loquacious managers in romanticizing “The Job” and raising work to heroic and mythic proportions.

This did not mean, however, that capital’s colonization of time through consumption was by any means complete, but the transformation of leisure to free time for consumption marks the beginning
of the conditions that make it possible for leisure to become largely mediated by the consumer ethos and the culture industry. Those resisting the encroaching colonization of time by capital fought for leisure in the form of a democratic distribution of “the growing social surplus of time,” rather than a democratic ability to participate in consumption that would eventually come to define the New Deal.

Importantly, they argued that the democratic distribution of time might also serve to offset the inherent alienation experienced at work:

Leisure could be used to revive the benefits and values that work had lost to the machine. Things such as craftsmanship, creativity, worker control, and initiatives could take place during sports, hobbies, volunteer projects and other constructive recreation. Leisure was preferable also because it would help keep other institutions and traditions alive which were threatened by mass society, standardization, and mass consumption. Individualism, the community of workers, the family and the church would be strengthened and would grow as people had more time to devote to these things. In addition, increased leisure would keep open the possibility of what Edwin Sapir called “genuine progress.” The dreams of utopian writers, socialists, and reformers which had been around for over a century—dreams of a democratic culture, worker education, the universal pursuit of happiness, and “humane and moral freedom”—were reasonable possibilities given increased leisure. Lastly, shorter hours would counter the new “economic gospel of consumption” which had begun to define progress solely in terms of economic growth and abandoned the other, more humane kinds of progress.

Thus a fully developed sense of leisure in the service of self and community sought to balance the time devoted to production, with the development of a democratic culture based on alternative values to those determined by the market. This was leisure with purpose, not license. Unfortunately, with the loss of Senator Hugo Black’s 30 hours a week bill “and the advent of governmentally managed capitalism, the shorter hour movement lost its short-lived political
momentum,”27 the linkage between leisure and “optional consumption” was cemented, and the fight for time, at least in regard to shorter hours as an economic and political solution to unemployment was lost. However, this political solution is revived by democratic socialists and other progressives whenever high levels of unemployment seem to indicate that working less could be a possibility if only the work available were shared.28 What is usually missing from this political solution is the political actors who might make shorter hours come to fruition.29 What I have tried to offer in this book is an understanding of politics that pays attention to the question of developing a politics of time related to ideology, materiality, and discourse.30 This means identifying the political actors who might conceivably take up the fight for time, as well as the possibilities of institutional guarantees to make discretionary time a reality and temporal autonomy a genuine possibility.

**Gendering Time: Time Management in the Household and the Creation of the Time-“Saving” Consumer**

The move from an economy based on production to an economy based on consumption in the early twentieth century is the historical juncture key to examining the rise of the “new consumption” based not on the needs of human beings, but on profit. Central to this transformation was the parallel transformation of the household from a primary site of production to a primary site of consumption,31 which included the formation of the nuclear household and with it a redefined sexual division of labor inside the white middle-class household that would ultimately gender time use to the disadvantage of women in relation to discretionary time.32 The transformation of the household involved moving production schemes and economic rationale, including time discipline, from the factory floor into the household. Thus we see the beginnings of the material conditions that would come to inform household efficiency based on time-motion studies—a process propagated by Christine Frederick by way of scientific management, or Taylorism, and facilitated by the consumption of time-saving technology in the household. These facts are relevant because of the often mistaken notion that the household was somehow immune to the
rationale of the market despite Marx’s identification of the dialectical relationship between production and consumption.33

Women’s roles were influenced in several ways by the industrialization of the household. Household work that once involved all family members now became the sole responsibility of women, as men and children were largely relieved from their former duties. For example:

The switch from home-grown to ‘store-bought’ grains relieved men and boys of one of the most time-consuming of the household chores for which they had been responsible. At the very same time, the switch may well have increased the time and energy that women had to spend in their tasks, particularly cooking and baking.34

The introduction of time-saving devices only seemed to increase the amount of housework designated as “women’s work.” As Ruth Schwartz Cowan states, “Labor-saving devices were invented and diffused throughout the country during those hundred years that witnessed the first stages of industrialization, but they reorganized the work processes of housework in ways that did not save the labor of the average housewife.”35 In part, this was a result of the newly defined sexual division of labor with the ideal of a stay-at-home mother based on “the notion that a woman’s place is in the home.”36 The “drudgery of housework” did not escape women who continued to spend a considerable amount of time on housework and childcare. As Cowan states, “As industrialization took some forms of productive work out of homes, it left other forms of work behind. That work, which we now call ‘housework’, has been transformed with which it is done; this is the process that I have chosen to call the ‘industrialization of the home.’”37 Cowan demonstrates the fact that technology is not neutral and does not by itself alleviate inequality.

The illusion of independence in the case of the middle-class white women in the nuclear household was maintained through the introduction of time-saving devices as a replacement for domestic help, which was not always economically feasible. The illusion of complete independence was central to the marketing of time-saving devices. As Marx states, “If it is clear that production offers consumption its external object, it is therefore equally clear that consumption ideally
posits the object of production as an internal image, as a need, as drive, as a purpose.” Not only does capital create the material conditions under which people experience time as loss because of the forced time spent in production, it also profits by creating consumers wary of time loss who then seek ways to “save time.” The experience of time as loss creates anxiety about time, but saving time is never fully realized because time-saving technology does not in itself automatically decrease time spent on household necessity.

The change of the household from a site of production and consumption to a site primarily defined by consumption opened the floodgates for increased consumption as households slowly became dependent on the market for previously home-produced goods as well as on wages needed to purchase those goods. Ewen offers a telling description of this immense transformation of the household:

Where the farmer of the nineteenth century could account for a ten-dollar expenditure per annum to supplement what was overwhelming a subsistence living, two-thirds of the national income was now spent on the following: staple foods, canned and prepared foods, fresh fruit and vegetables (the marketing of these was made possible through improvements in refrigeration techniques), confections, family clothing, furniture, as well as many goods which transcended the needs and realms of traditional home production (synthetic cloth, electric household equipment, radio, and so on). The wage had emerged, in its exchange capacity, as the dominant conduit to survival.

Time previously spent in productive, but non-market time was now spent increasingly in consumption as defined by the market. As Ewen states:

What occurred in those early days of industry, and what has marked its history since, has been the steady displacement of home production by social production, with the lore and custom of production formalized and separated out of the home as planning and engineering. Thus the authority of industry encroached on the authority of the home whose productive capacity was becoming outmoded.
The move from active production in the household to passive consumption included the introduction of time-saving technology and household efficiency experts as the new form of authority in the household. Passive consumption is defined by its apolitical manner and choices defined a priori by the market. This does not mean, however, that consumption cannot be political. Passivity may not seem like the most appropriate word to use here as passivity connotes something being done to people, and it is true that people actively participated in the new consumption described above, but actions overly informed by historical factors and the market, both forces seemingly out of an individual’s control, are to a certain extent coerced actions especially when alternatives are rendered invisible.

Common sense would seem to indicate that as the household became less focused on production that housework would take less time, but Cowan offers additional reasons as to why this was not the case. Though she describes in great detail the processes through which the production of “food, clothing, and health-care” were moved from the household to centralized institutions outside the household, she argues that the “conventional wisdom” of the move from production to consumption in the household did not hold true for transportation:

The household transportation system has developed in a pattern that is precisely the opposite of the food, clothing, and health-care systems: households have moved from the net consumption to the net production of transportation services—and housewives have moved from being the receivers of purchased goods to being the transporters of them.

Whereby capital once took responsibility for the time and costs of distribution, with the mass production of the automobile by the 1930s, there was a significant move away from mail-order catalogues and door-to-door salesmen. These changes made all the difference in terms of women’s time use. As Cowan states:

By midcentury the time that housewives had once spent in preserving strawberries and stitching petticoats was being spent in driving to stores, shopping, and waiting in lines; and the energy that had
once gone into bedside care of the sick was now diverted into driving a feverish child to the doctor, or racing to the railroad station to pick up a relative, or taking the baseball team to the next town for a game. The automobile had become, to the American housewife of the middle classes, what the cast iron stove in the kitchen would have been to her counterpart of 1850—the vehicle through which she did much of her most significant work, and the work locale where she could most often be found.

Today transportation seems to be changing once again with the advent of online shopping. Time use in household is not only gendered, but classed insofar as those who can afford to pay for services such as home grocery delivery are able to save time at least from the physical realm of consumption in comparison to those who must spend significant amounts of time shopping offline whereby they must drive or take public transportation to the physical locations of the stores. Randy Albelda and Chris Tilly argue that time is not money, but “money equals time.” They demonstrate this fact by creating a chart comparing a well-off family and a financially pinched family in terms of the time spent fulfilling the needs of clothing, meals, laundry, transportation, and budgeting. The financially pinched family spends much more time meeting their needs than the well-off family.

Time Management

Further innovations in mass consumption and advertising combined forces with the social sciences to increase the amount of time spent on consumption, primarily through time management, which eventually moved beyond the realm of production and into the household:

The move in industrial thought was in the direction of “human management”—a more affirmative approach to discipline…The implementation of the time-motion studies of Frederick W. Taylor and others attested to the new interaction of business and the social sciences in confronting the problem of making an often antagonistic work force behave stably and predictably.
As Ewen argues, “The studies of early twentieth-century social scientists and ‘progressive’ social critics began to create a general understanding that the social control of workers must stretch beyond the realm of the factor and into the very communities and structures within which they lived.” Thus the creation of a “cultural apparatus aimed at defusing and neutralizing potential unrest” was established. A large part of this cultural apparatus involved the family, the household, and the regimentation of time according to production schemes within the household.

Under the direction of Christine Frederick, the tenets of Taylorism were translated for the purposes of household efficiency. Taylorism, created by Frederick Winslow Taylor, the “Father of Scientific Management,” sought to manage the future and rid the workforce of “wasted effort” through time-motion studies. As Janice Williams Rutherford states, “Scientific management was a response to the desire for increased production.” One of the main principles of Taylorism included the “development of the ‘science of the task’ through careful timing and analysis of required motion.” It was a system bent on transforming the worker into the epitome of the machine, akin to Charlie Chaplin in Modern Times in 1936. Chaplin's character works on the assembly line and since “moments are the element of profit,” the capitalist boss wants to introduce time-saving technology that will feed workers over the assembly line so as to eliminate the need for lunch breaks or work stoppages for any reason. Time saving in the realm of consumption is illustrated by an earlier film, “One Week” (1920), starring Buster Keaton. Martha Banta offers a good description of the film:

As a wedding present, Buster and his bride receive a house lot and a set of crates containing ready-made parts manufactured by the Portable House Company…The ready-made house was one of the prizes scientifically managed production systems offered to the general public in the first decades of the twentieth century. Families were meant to be masters of their own do-it-yourself fate. Mail-in order catalogues promised dream houses that could be assembled in record time and for a fraction of the cost of a custom-built home.
Through the latter film, we get some insight into how workers are not only sold a product, but also importantly sold a product that manages to retain the original idea of self-creativity through a do-it-yourself project. Since modern work had replaced the creative self-development of labor as described by Marx, the do-it-yourself projects were meant to capture some of the lost creative art of laboring. Workers did not want to be entirely relieved of work, not only because they were now entirely dependent on the wage system, but also because labor itself as a category remained meaningful even if industrialization-standardized work made work less so. Business found new ways to capture this lost art in ways that proved profitable. Do-it-yourself projects turn the consumer into the worker. Now the consumer put forth the labor to build the house, and not only does he do it for free, but he has paid for the pleasure of it! If this sounds familiar, it should as it remains true today of self-checkout at grocery stores and “building” your own IKEA furniture. Today this phenomenon continues to thrive under the presumption that it saves the customer money by reducing the cost of goods, but this idea fails to address the ways in which labor costs are cut and workers lose their jobs.

At this point, we should entertain the question: time saving for whom and for what? The answer from the point of view of capital is clearly for profit. Thus anytime the words “time saving” are used we are right to be suspicious even when outside the context of production. Still, time saving is not completely an illusion. Obviously, a washing machine run by electric energy saves enormous amounts of time over the scrub board, but then again the amount of clothing has largely increased as have the standards of cleanliness in general. As Cowan states, “‘Increased standards of cleanliness,’ when translated into the language of production and consumption, essentially means ‘increased productivity.’” The question that should continue to haunt our analysis is what were people saving time for once the idea of increased leisure was discarded from the notion of progress? The answer is that much of what passes for leisure today is actually the extension of work, and more precisely the completion of the commodity cycle. However, this analysis seeks to challenge the notion that time-saving technology actually saves time as compared to serving the needs of consumption in the both the physical and psychological creation of the time-wary
consumer. Women are especially targeted in this regard since they continue to deal with the burden of the “the second shift.”53

**Home Economics**

The movement of Taylorism into the household presents the most obvious moment of time management moving from production to consumption. Indeed, the very term “home economics” seems to bring market rationality into the household. Home efficiency was a logical offshoot of scientific management. Frederick was one of the leader figures in the movement who was pro-business and sought to promote time-saving machines. However, at this time we also find a competing discourse. Charlotte Gilman Perkins offered an alternative in *The Home* (1903), “a scathing critique of the single-family dwelling as archaic and wasteful.”54 Importantly, Perkins retained the idea of self-development: “To Gilman, the domestic ideology of the nineteenth century had damaged woman’s evolutionary progress and inhibited her ability to achieve full personhood . . . The home, she wrote, was neither private nor sanctified. Furthermore, it did not promote economy. It was wasteful of time, energy, and woman’s talent.”55 Like, Frederick, she also “proposed that advances in science and management be utilized,” but she had in mind relieving women of the burden of solitary housework and childcare by collectivism: “Advanced expertise, efficient production, and wider distribution of goods might mean that innovations like commercial laundries, bakeries, and food processors would take over the tasks that had traditionally fallen to the housewife. Women, then, would be free to pursue other interests and talents.”56

Through Perkins we see the continuation and permanence of the idea originally developed by Aristotle that technology will free us all from the burden of work in the realm of necessity. Perkins sought a collective solution to a collective problem that was otherwise framed as an individual problem. In contrast, Frederick wanted to utilize technology in order to displace the need for servants:

When the American homemaker, because of economy and scarcity, is forced to dispense with service, and do the work herself, she
turns to the mechanical servant which every manufacturer is urging her to buy, and which Yankee ingenuity has perfected in a high degree. The question before the homemaker is not whether she shall use tools, but what tools are most efficient for her particular household needs.\textsuperscript{57}

It would take second-wave feminism to politicize housework and challenge the unequal sexual division of labor embedded within it. However, it is central to note that technology has historically been viewed as a way to change social relations without fully addressing the ways in which technology serves to reconstitute social hierarchies, as noted by André Gorz.

\textbf{Citizen Consumer to Purchaser Consumer}

As the household changed from a site of production to a site of consumption, the consumer identity was born. The historical conditions that made this identity possible are listed above, but the consumer identity was further reinforced in the name of patriotism and citizenship. Lizabeth Cohen describes the transition from “citizen consumer” to “purchaser consumer” in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{58} The citizen consumer played an active political role in consumerism, while the purchaser consumer played a passive nonpolitical role that maintained legitimacy through the promotion of the economy especially during times of war: Citizen consumers were regarded as responsible for safeguarding the general good of the nation, in particular for prodding government to protect the rights, safety, and fair treatment of individual consumers in the private marketplace... purchaser consumers were viewed as contributing to the larger society more by exercising purchasing power than through asserting themselves politically.\textsuperscript{59}

Cohen goes on to describe the conscious creation of the “consumer’s republic”: “Faith in a mass consumption postwar economy hence came to mean much more than the ready availability of goods to buy. Rather, it stood for an elaborate, integrated ideal of economic abundance and democratic political freedom, both equitably distributed, that became almost a national civil religion from the late 1940s into the 1970s.”\textsuperscript{60} Cohen describes the politics of mass consumption in
postwar America: “In the postwar Consumers’ Republic, a new ideal emerged—the purchaser as citizen—as an alluring compromise. Now the consumer satisfying personal material wants actually served the national interest, since economic recovery after a decade and a half of depression and war depended on a dynamic mass consumption economy.”

The colonization of time by way of consumption depended on several factors including capital’s successful linkage of free time with consumption, which worked to delink increased leisure from the idea of progress. Henceforth progress was framed as economic growth for the sake of economic growth. The loss of increased leisure and the acceptance of “steady work” ensured that people worried about unemployment would accept the terms of labor and the manipulation of needs so as to facilitate optional consumption further guaranteed by trends, planned obsolescence, and, perhaps most importantly, the conflation of consumption with patriotism and citizenship. In other words, capital sought to replace any nonmarket time with activities specifically tied to the market. Any project seeking to fight for time from the realm of consumption must then first work to disconnect free time from consumption.
CHAPTER 5

The Culture Industry: The Extension of Work, Disciplined Leisure, and the Deterioration of Culture

As established in previous chapters, the political-economic conditions that make the good life possible include the guarantee of leisure. It is leisure that provides time for reflection on the lived experience. The depth and complexity of that reflection is related in part to what individuals are able to do with and be in leisure, but as Theodor Adorno notes, “the very possibility of choosing depends on what can be chosen.”1 The choice of leisure activities matters for the overall development of subjectivity and critical consciousness, but the content, or qualitative aspects of leisure, is largely determined by the form, or quantitative aspects, it is forced to take because of the colonization of time, including the conflation of leisure with free time. Since leisure is largely mediated through culture, it is necessary to reconsider Theodor Adorno’s and Max Horkheimer’s primary criticisms of the culture industry specifically as they relate to the development of subjectivity and critical consciousness in order to reassess the usefulness, as well as the limitations of their critique, for developing a radical politics of time in comparison to that of Herbert Marcuse and André Gorz.

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Decolonizing Time

The Culture Industry

Adorno and Horkheimer took issue with the assumed relationship between autonomy and leisure through their critical assessment of mass culture, which they designated the “culture industry.” The culture industry is a form of mass manipulation in the guise of “entertainment” to sugar-coat the ideological content of oppression while eroding cultural standards in order to quell any forms of expression, which might contest the given order to the detriment of subjectivity and critical consciousness. Building on Marx’s identification of the dialectical relationship between production and consumption, the Weberian notion of rationalization, and the Freudian notion of the unconscious, Adorno and Horkheimer make an important distinction between mass culture and the culture industry: “Thus, although the culture industry undeniably speculates on the conscious and unconscious state of the millions towards which it is directed, the masses are not primary, but secondary; they are an object of calculation, an appendage of the machinery. The customer is not king, as the culture industry would like to have us believe, not its subject but its object.” The myth of the ethical consumer loses some sway if we accept this critique, which is useful because too often individuals identify more as consumers than as citizens. According to André Gorz this is no accident: “The consumer, who is individual by definition, was thus conceived from the outset as the opposite of the citizen, as the antidote, so to speak, to the collective expression of collective needs, the desire for social change and the concern for the common good.” It is also interesting to consider what Adorno and Horkheimer might think about the influx of “pop culture” into the course content of college classes today. At least those integrating popular culture into their classes (hopefully) give students the tools to be able to think critically about the culture industry, but I do not think this strategy is as useful in developing subjectivity and critical consciousness as exposing students to the history and culture of radical political traditions that contest the most dehumanizing characteristics of capitalism. Literature of this sort might include the likes of Émile Zola’s Germinal, Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle, and John Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath.

Although Adorno and Horkheimer seemed to be more concerned with the content of leisure, it is the form constrained by the historical
The Culture Industry and political-economic factors mentioned in the last chapter that make what the culture industry has to offer appropriate to people since they simply do not have the time-consciousness or discretionary time to demand more from leisure. For those who do manage to secure some amount of discretionary time, they most likely experience it as largely mediated through the culture industry in the form of mass-produced entertainment. As Adorno and Horkheimer argue, “The man with leisure has to accept what the culture manufacturers offer him.”⁶ In their mutual condemnation of the culture industry, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that capitalism’s monopolization of culture limits the range of choices open to people:

Under monopoly all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin to show through. The people at the top are no longer so interested in concealing monopoly: as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows. Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce.⁷

Although the choices appear to be endless to consumers, the culture industry is simply made up of variations of the same choices. This uniformity is made possible by means of standardization. Adorno argues that the culture industry asks little from the individual in terms of active engagement or critical thought. In fact, he suggests that individuality or personality may no longer be possible since there is no real way to differentiate oneself:

Culture as a common denominator already contains in embryo that schematization and process of cataloging and classification which brings culture within the sphere of administration. And it is precisely the industrialized, the consequent, subsumption which entirely accords with this notion of culture by subordinating in the same way and to the same end all areas of intellectual creation, by occupying men’s senses from the time they leave the factory in the evening to the time they clock in again the next morning with matter that bears the impress of the labor process they themselves have to
sustain throughout the day, this subsumption mockingly satisfies the concept of a unified culture which the philosophers of personality contrasted with mass culture.\textsuperscript{8}

Instead of responding to the demands of the people, the culture industry shapes the demands of the people.

As noted previously, the colonization of time is not an inevitable result of the historical development of capitalism, but is related to the loss of political struggles that were “grounded in the belief that unrestrained capitalism generated unacceptable social costs.”\textsuperscript{9} The difference between the United States’s lack of vacation and France’s roughly four weeks of mandatory paid vacation, for example, lies not only in the logic of capital, but also in the political struggles through which this logic plays out. Whatever the specific differences in political systems, strength of the labor movement, and ideology between the United States and other advanced economies in Europe, it should be noted that the 35-hour workweek in France is under constant assault, as is Spain’s siestas, which are now blamed for lower levels of productivity:

Spain still operates on its own clock and rhythms. But now that it is trying to recover from a devastating economic crisis—in the absence of easy solutions—a pro-efficiency movement contends that the country can become more productive, more in sync with the rest of Europe, if it adopts a more regular schedule.\textsuperscript{10}

The more necessity is determined by the accumulation process, the more alternative experiences of time are rendered impossible. As one Spaniard commented, “‘Reduce lunchtime?’ he said. ‘No, I’m completely against that. It is one thing to eat. It is another thing to nourish oneself. Our culture and customs are our way of living.’”\textsuperscript{11} In everyday language, this man makes a distinction between life and the good life, and demonstrates how the qualitative factors are destroyed by what André Gorz referred to as “economic rationality,” or time understood through the lens of rationalization, efficiency, and productivity in the name of continual economic growth and profit. By comparison, other advanced economies have required paid vacation times, bonus pay
for vacation time to encourage workers to take their vacation time, and recourse to other types of paid leave for “community work” and “fulfilling union duties.” It seems that in other advanced economies there is greater institutional recognition of the human needs that must be met outside of the market, but again this is not because of cultural difference as much as it is the result of political struggles for a better life including leisure.

**Leisure as the Extension of Work**

Adorno and Horkheimer offer a critique of the culture industry so damning and all encompassing as to render political consciousness or redemption seemingly implausible especially in leisure since leisure itself, in their estimation, had become the extension of work. Benjamin Barber points out the contradiction under capitalism, “In the postmodern capitalist economy, it is hard work creating the easy life. A full-service shopping society needs consumers with a lot of leisure, but in fact leaves them little time for anything but consumption and the hard work that pays for consumption, so that they rarely feel leisurely or free.” To say that leisure is simply an extension of work means that exchange value has taken over use-value in the realm of leisure as much as in work. Barber gives a contemporary description of leisure as the extension of work:

The consumer of the cornucopia of spectator commodities available from a hardworking, overproducing entertainment industry must work even harder than the producers to take it all in. Can any consumer keep up with the movies, television programs, internet offerings, video games, music downloads, and athletic competitions that constitute the modern marketplace’s new bread and circuses? It makes for disciplined work for an individual to stay abreast with any one of these sectors. Yet unless she does, the market economy falters. No wonder leisure, squeezed between the extended hours of work, often feels like a full-time job.

The conditions under which “leisure” exists determine its vacuous quality. This is not to say that everything that comes out of the
The culture industry is vacuous as people manage to make meaning out of it, however limited, but it does often simplify the lived experience more than it complicates it if it forced individuals to develop critical consciousness by not giving them all the answers ahead of time.

The culture industry turns citizens into consumers and consumers into unpaid laborers:

The ruthless unity in the culture industry is evidence of what will happen in politics. Marked differentiations such as those of A and B films, or of stories in magazines in different price ranges, depend not so much on subject matter as on classifying, organizing, and labeling customers. Something is provided for all so that none may escape; the distinctions are emphasized and extended. The public is catered for with a hierarchical range of mass-produced products of varying quality, thus advancing the rule of complete quantification.16

The recent *Wages for Facebook Manifesto* is a contemporary example of resistance to this “classifying, organizing, and labeling customers,” described by Adorno and Horkheimer. Laurel Ptak makes the argument that people should be paid for doing this work for the advertisers on Facebook:

Laurel Ptak, a curator and professor at the New School, recently published a manifesto, “Wages for Facebook.” Written in all-caps and with theatrical swagger (‘OUR FINGERTIPS HAVE BECOME DISTORTED FROM SO MUCH LIKING, OUR FEELINGS HAVE GOTTEN LOST FROM SO MANY FRIENDSHIPS’), Ptak insists that Facebook’s “content generators” ought—MUST!—be paid for what they bring to the site. The text of the manifesto scrolls automatically so it can be read on a mobile device with both hands at ease. Ptak appears to want clearer lines between participation and consumption, and scrolling—one of many gestures that have been patented by technology companies—turns the reader’s body into a kind of “on” switch.17

This distinction between “consumption” and “participation” is an important one related to the development of subjectivity and critical
consciousness in our leisure, but it also makes users of Facebook more critically aware of the reality of their unpaid labor, whereas labor costs are reduced by making consumers work unwittingly for free. A seemingly related political campaign, “Pay Me Facebook,” functions along the same logic:

We have a plan to make Facebook pay up for all of the unpaid labor we do each day for it. We collectively spend 700 billion minutes on Facebook each month, generating valuable content that drives advertising revenue and helps Facebook and other companies target us better with goods and services.18

Wages for Facebook may seem outlandish, but companies increasingly reduce labor costs by transferring the labor costs to consumers in self-checkout grocery lines, as well as in the building of IKEA furniture, whereas the consumer does the work for free. The rational given by companies and often accepted by consumers is that this behavior keeps prices affordable for the consumer so it is ultimately in their collective self-interest to go along with it.

The Question of Consciousness

Adorno and Horkheimer vacillate on the question of whether individuals can be conscious of the extent to which their consciousness is reified by the culture industry, and they never resolve it perhaps because the tension between negative and positive freedom is important to maintain for fear of “forcing people to be free” in some totalitarian fashion. In terms of time, negative freedom might be achieved by limiting the length of workday, but it leaves the question of what opportunities, choices, and experiences are open in terms of leisure given capitalism’s restrictions of discretionary time and its monopoly of culture. The tension between positive and negative freedom can take many forms, but within the Hegelian-Marxist tradition the tension revolves around the question of consciousness, whereby people become aware of the conditions that constrain their freedom. This tension is all the more complicated by the insight of critical theory that people may willingly participate in their own oppression. Suddenly,
forms of domination, oppression, and exploitation are capable of being experienced as freedom, but it is a freedom narrowly defined by the choices provided within capitalism. This insight is not so different from Marx’s own insight in the *Communist Manifesto* that liberal or bourgeoisie freedom is a limited understanding of freedom.

Given the insights of psychology into the advertisement industry, it is not surprising that the masses not only are deceived, but also internalize the messages as their own truth:

The way in which a girl accepts and keeps the obligatory date, the inflection on the telephone or in the most intimate situation, the choice of words in conversation, and the whole inner life as classified by the now somewhat devalued depth of psychology, bear witness to man’s attempt to make himself a proficient apparatus, similar (even in emotions) to the model served up by the culture industry. The most intimate reactions of human beings have been so thoroughly reified that the idea of anything specific to themselves now persists only as an utterly abstract notion: personality scarcely signifies anything more than shining white teeth and freedom from body odor and emotions. The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through it.19

Consumers may even recognize that they are being manipulated to a certain extent, but this is all part of the enjoyment. The idea of the fad demonstrates the phenomenon whereby I buy something because everyone else owns it, not because I need it. Though Adorno does not make this point explicit, it goes without saying that a person’s self-worth as well as their judgment of others peoples’ worth is shaped by these messages. If we only consider the very basic standards any given person has to meet in order to be treated with respect and dignity, it becomes obvious what role the market plays in reproducing class inequalities. J. M. Bernstein succinctly summarizes Horkheimer and Adorno’s central argument:

The culture industry, which involves the production of works for reproduction and consumption, thereby organizing free time, the
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remnant domain of freedom under capitalism in accordance with the same principles of exchange and equivalence that reign in the sphere of production outside leisure, present culture as the realization of the rights of all to the gratification of desire while in reality continuing the negative integration of society.\textsuperscript{20}

Thus even that which people find most pleasurable in their free time is in fact a form of unfreedom, not only because free time is severely limited by the need to work, but also because the experiences possible within the limited time that is designated “free” is no longer (if it ever was is debatable) “a sanctuary of immediate life within a completely mediated total system,”\textsuperscript{21} but commodified time that contributes to a reified understanding of time. It is the subjective element of time that critical theory seeks to reclaim. This does not negate the need for objective protections such as reducing the workday, guaranteed paid parental and sick leave, and mandatory paid vacation, but it is the foundation and justification for these very institutional protections.

Mass culture is often defended as democratic insofar as it made art accessible to the masses, but Adorno and Horkheimer argue the culture industry creates a much more passive role to the audience. The laugh track, for example, alerts the audience that something is funny, rather than allowing them to decide for themselves. Adorno’s point is that the culture industry gives all the answers and thus asks for little that might conceivably develop critical faculties or meaningful experiences. Take, for example, Adorno and Horkheimer’s indictment of films:

The whole word is made to pass through the filter of the culture industry. The old experience of the movie-goer, who sees the world outside as an extension of the film he has just left (because the latter is intent upon reproducing the world of everyday perceptions), is now the producer’s guideline. The more intensely and flawlessly his techniques duplicate empirical objects, the easier it is today for the illusion to prevail that the outside world is the straightforward continuation of that presented on the screen . . . real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies. The sound film, far surpassing the theater of illusion, leaves no room for imagination or reflection.
on the part of the audience, who is unable to respond from within the structure of the film, yet deviate from its precise detail without losing the thread of the story; hence the film forces its victims to equate it directly with reality.  

Films manipulate our sense of time insofar as a whole lifetime might transpire before our very eyes, but in “real” time only two hours have passed. Perhaps a film gives individuals the illusion of escape from the constraints of the colonization of time by providing the illusion of a different experience of time, if only temporarily.

The Question of Subjectivity

One of the primary questions considered for critical theory was the relationship between culture and consciousness in relation to subjectivity. In *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, Adorno and Horkheimer view the culture industry as a political force that acts upon people’s consciousness rather than allowing for any substantive interaction with culture on the part of the subject. As a consequence, subjectivity is left underdeveloped and is thus highly susceptible to manipulation by the culture industry. Adorno and Horkheimer sought to recover subjectivity as a form of resistance to the monopoly and unification of culture under capitalism. They saw similarities between the culture industry and political propaganda as equally violent forces on the people’s consciousness. This is problematic because mass culture purports to be democratic. This Adorno and Horkheimer argue changes the emancipatory potential that art once played. The culture industry is precisely that: an industry that does not claim to be art, but business:

Under monopoly all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin to show through. The people at the top are no longer so interested in concealing monopoly: as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows. Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce.
Ben Barber points out the contradictions with regard to leisure:

It demands leisure for consumerism (shopping malls as surrogates for town centers) but turns leisure into a kind of work (the imperative to shop) since the ascetic ethos is conserved not in an obligation to produce, but in a new obligation to shop and consume. Greed becomes a form of altruism, indulged not out of love of self but out of love of capitalist productivity. When President Bush wanted to find a metaphor for normalcy in helping Americans find their way back from the nightmare of 9/11, he seized on shopping—imploring Americans to show Al Qaeda its patriotic backbone by going to the mall and getting on with the business of consuming.24

Like Cohen in the previous chapter, Barber underlines the co-option of active citizenship with passive consumption:

The malls and virtual markets are not prisons; but nor can they be said to offer human beings anything resembling public or civic or moral freedom. This is not an argument about “false consciousness” but about “limited consciousness”: how consumers are persuaded to embrace a notion of freedom that allows them real personal choice but at the price of subverting their civic liberty.

If leisure is the realm of developing our subjectivity, our personality, then it must be reclaimed. This is not to say that individual forms of resistance to the colonization of leisure do not occur, but they are not organized into a unified political fight for time. They remain at the level of individuals negotiating, resisting, or trying to escape the severe time constraints, rather than organizing to make sure leisure is both possible and more meaningfully related to freedom for everyone.

As Jennifer Einspahr argues, agency does not equal resistance, and resistance does not equal freedom: “‘Resistance’ is a particularly seductive yet limited way to understand freedom. Since it induces the feeling that one is ‘doing something’ but it is always exercised in reaction to whatever already exists, it seldom takes the form of collective action or deep structural change.”25 Creative types may, for example, be more sensitive to the colonization of time’s impact on their ability...
to create, but they do not always link this experience to the underlying political-economic cause: “Nonetheless, no half-way sensitive person can overcome the discomfort conditioned by his consciousness of a culture which is indeed administrated.”

Subjective Idealism to Dialectical Thought

The idea of the subject can be traced back to Kant’s “subjective idealism” through Hegel and Marx. The idea of subjectivity is based on the conscious or knowing subject, but “freedom alone, for Kant, differentiates a subject from an object” and freedom is the ability to give and follow a law one has set for oneself. The problem with Kant is the false subject/object dichotomy, which is later fundamentally transformed by Hegel’s master/slave dialectic and by Marx’s historical materialism in which it is recognized that man is “matter that thinks” or in other words man is part of nature, not distinct. Nevertheless, the question of consciousness remains situated in the subject to a lesser or greater extent depending on the particular thinker at hand.

For the purposes of critical theory, one of Kant’s most significant insights was his recognition that “instrumental calculation cannot solve normative conflicts.” With critical theory’s criticism of the dominance of instrumental or technological rationality, normative claims become undermined in terms of their given weight of significance. Thus Kant “introduce[es] a critical method intent upon confronting reality with the ideals it sets for itself, contesting attempts to identify freedom with the status quo, understanding the multi-dimensional character of reality, exploring the manner in which the arbitrary restriction of freedom takes place, and articulating new possibility for its expression.” As Stephen Bronner notes, “The progress of consciousness is therefore actually nothing more than humanity’s awareness of what should have been evident from the beginning: freedom is the purpose of reason.” How one’s time is experienced is intimately related to consciousness. The brilliance of, and no doubt the attraction to, critical theory is its politicization of culture or that which most people participate in largely through the culture industry, but do not necessarily experience as explicitly political.
In “Free Time,” Adorno confronts the reality of free time in the 1960s. He begins by making a distinction between free time and leisure:

The expression “free time,” incidentally of recent origin—formerly one said “leisure,” and it was a privilege of an unconstrained life and hence surely also something qualitatively different, more auspicious—refers to a specific difference, that of unfree time, time occupied by labor and, one should add, time that is determined heteronomously.32

Heteronomous time means time subject to external constraints not of one’s making. He argues, “Free time is shackled to its contrary.”33 His aim in the piece is to consider the liberatory potential of free time in light of the criticisms of the culture industry that define critical theory. His primary question is whether individuals can indeed experience free time as a form of freedom or whether individuals are “functionally [over]determined.”34 The question of agency is an interesting one from the perspective of critical theory since it maintains such a damning critique of an all-encompassing manufactured culture. Similar to Georg Lukács, there seems little possibility for the conscious penetrating of reification.35

The key question for Adorno is, “What will become of free time in the context of the increasing productivity of labor, yet under persisting conditions of unfreedom, that is, under relations of production that people are born into and that prescribe for them the rules of their existence nowadays just as much as they ever did?”36 Adorno argues, “Unfreedom is expanding within free time, and most of the unfree people are as unconscious of the process as they are of their own unfreedom.”37 “A parody of itself” is an apt description of free time that is not free, but unfree. How is it unfree? Adorno is disgusted with hobbies, which he defines as “activities I’m mindlessly infatuated with only in order to kill time.”38 He denies the contrast made between work and free time precisely because he finds his work meaningful. He recognizes that he is privileged insofar as he may order his day as he wishes. Autonomy begins with self-determination over one’s time.
In contrast, culture once played a crucial role in stimulating critical consciousness because it forced individuals to consider ethical and political dilemmas without giving them explicit answers as to how those dilemmas might be resolved. The development of multiple characters introduced by Sophocles’s *Antigone*, for example, was so that the audience can identify with multiple points of view related to deeper questions of ethical and political significance as a form of required political education for all citizens. By contrast, the culture industry is highly formulaic and therefore predictable. Unfortunately, today people mistake critical thinking for extreme pessimism in a culture that sees happiness and positive thinking as the highest ideal. This is apparent in the mass appeal of the self-help genre and overprescribed antidepressants. There are very real, that is to say political-economic, reasons for unhappiness, dissatisfaction, anger, and feelings of helplessness, but they are not necessarily unique to the individual suffering them. The culture industry is the new opiate of the masses. Adorno and Horkheimer are often received as the worst-case example of academic snobbery or elitism or condemnation of the culture industry as the epitome of idiocy, but claims of elitism are problematic to the extent that the label too easily dismisses Adorno and Horkheimer’s valid criticisms of the culture industry, but perhaps more importantly it cheats working-class people the ability to understand their personal experiences in a political way that might help them move away from the self-blame that results from the internalization of class shame. Class consciousness gives individuals empowerment to the extent that it illuminates the larger economic, political, and social forces at work that are simply beyond the individual’s control.

**The Gramsci Monument: Aesthetics and Philosophy**

Thomas Hirschhorn’s *Gramsci Monument*, established and maintained during the summer of 2013, is worth mentioning with regard to an attempt to reclaim the relationship between leisure and culture in the name of developing subjectivity and critical consciousness. This public performance space is described as Hirschhorn’s “will to establish a definition of monument, to provoke encounters, to create an event, and to think Gramsci today.” This monument was built
in Forest Houses, a New York City Housing Authority development in the Bronx, New York, and appeared to be deeply embedded in the existing community by the end of the summer (I visited in September the day before it was to be dismantled). A description of the space helps to illustrate what could really only be experienced firsthand:

Constructed by residents of Forest Houses, the artwork takes the form of an outdoor structure comprised of numerous pavilions. The pavilions include an exhibition space with historical photographs from the Fondazione Istituto Gramsci in Rome, personal objects that belonged to the philosopher from Casa Museo di Antonio Gramsci in Ghilarza, Italy, and an adjoining library holding 500 books by (and about) Gramsci loaned by the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute in New York. Other pavilions include a stage platform, a workshop area, an Internet corner, a lounge, and the Gramsci Bar—all of which are overseen by local residents.42

From the list of scheduled activities, one may notice that each day was filled with speakers including a resident German theorist, Marcus Steinweg.43 As described from the Gramsci Monument’s (now) archived web page: “The aim of the Daily Philosophy Lecture by Marcus Steinweg is to introduce philosophy in everyday life and to confront a philosophical question every day.”44 Well-known theorists and scholars, including Frank B. Wilderson III (on the day I visited), were invited to do evening lectures. The space was filled with children from the surrounding neighborhood, and was watched over by the paid staff from the community hired for the duration of the exhibit. What was particularly interesting during the talks was that people from outside of the community who probably had no other reason for coming to this part of the Bronx found themselves there. Public art is interesting because it attempts to democratize culture—in this particular case, philosophy—in an accessible manner even if in the Gramsci Monument, this only translated into posting signs of various Gramsci quotations including, “Every human being is an intellectual.” The philosophers’ talks, on the other hand, did not seem to be as accessible to a general (nonacademic) audience.
What might Adorno make of the *Gramsci Monument*? In his essay, “Commitment,” Adorno argues against Jean-Paul Sartre’s preference for commitment literature (as in committed to a political cause) versus autonomous literature (presumably refusing to be socially useful and therefore incapable of being co-opted by the commodity form), but compares it to art in general. Adorno’s disagreement stems from what he sees as the paradox between politics and aesthetics since Auschwitz:

The abundance of real suffering tolerates no forgetting; Pascal’s theological saying, *On ne doit plus dormir*, must be secularized. Yet this suffering, what Hegel called consciousness of adversity, also demands the continued existence of art while it prohibits it; it is now virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it.\(^45\)

He also points out the irony of art that tells us never to forget:

It is rather the way in which, by turning suffering into images, despite all their hard implacability, they wound our shame before the victims. For these are used to create something, works of art, that are thrown to the consumption of a world which destroyed them. The so-called artistic representation of the sheer physical pain of people beaten to the ground by rifle-butts contains, however remotely, the power to elicit enjoyment out of it. The moral of this art, not to forget for a single instant, slithers into the abyss of its opposite.

Compare Adorno’s words to a description of Hirschhorn’s monuments in regard to the precarious population:

Soon enough...the precarious came to figure less as a characteristic of his work than as a predicament of the people addressed by précaire, with ramifications both ethical and political. “Is there a way to cross from our stable, secure, and safe space in order to join in the space of the precarious? Is it possible, by voluntarily crossing the border of this protected space, to establish new values,
real values, the values of the precarious—uncertainty, instability, and self-authorization?” This is the question that Hirschorn has probed in all three of his “monuments” to date, which take the form of makeshift centers of homage, assembled with the help of local inhabitants, where discussions, readings, performances, and more casual encounters can occur.46

Adorno’s argument rests on the reality that the very conditions that make the monument possible, including the colonization of time by capital, involves one group of people who have the funding to make art and philosophize depending on another group of people who get paid in a sense to serve the needs of these artists and philosophers. In other words, creating a monument that brings different communities together does little to alleviate the inequality keeping them apart in the first place.

Nevertheless, the interactions between the audience members, ranging from members in the community to outsiders, was interesting, especially given Wilderson’s discussion of the relationships between blacks and whites through Hegel’s master/slave dialectic. Wilderson seemed to be arguing that reciprocity was not possible, a rather depressing proposition. The point is that the people in this community may never have heard of Gramsci if not for this project. Is this significant? I think so. However, art historians more critical than myself may take issue with this sort of project on the grounds that it is exploitative to the people of this community, especially once the monument is dismantled. (The few residents I spoke with seemed very saddened that the Gramsci Monument would be dismantled the next day.) Public performance pieces that ask something of the audience by not giving them the answers are the sort of culture that most provokes critical reflection of the lived experience. Although we can and should critically interrogate them, this does not mean that artists and philosophers should not experiment.

Marcuse and Dialectical Thought

In contrast to Adorno and Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse maintained hope that “dialectical philosophy could promote critical
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thinking” beyond one-dimensional thought informed by technological rationality. According to Douglas Kellner, Marcuse’s concept of one-dimensionality is not as totalizing a concept as Horkheimer and Adorno’s “culture industry.” Douglas Kellner explains the difference between two distinct trends within critical theory in the 1940s, the first being “the philosophical-cultural analysis of the trends of western civilization being developed by Horkheimer and Adorno,” and “the more practical-political development of critical theory as a theory of social change proposed by Marcuse,” and I would add André Gorz. The main point of contention between these two camps revolves around whether reification might be penetrated and to what extent critical consciousness makes this possible. Marcuse argues that society becomes administered to the point that people no longer recognize true needs from “false” or generated needs. The very trick, according to Marcuse, is that capitalism mimics the real human needs to such an extent that it is able to capitalize on them through commodification.

To what extent has capitalism successfully manipulated the “needs” of individuals so that they experience the false needs as of their own volition? Marcuse states:

In exchange for the commodities that enrich their life, the individuals sell not only their labor but also their free time… They have innumerable choices, innumerable gadgets which are all of the same sort and keep them occupied and divert their attention from the real issue— which is the awareness that they could both work less and determine their own needs and satisfaction.

If the overall goal of the Aristotelian-Marxist tradition was to reduce the amount of time spent in the realm of “necessity,” Marcuse’s One-Dimensional Man addresses the realm of necessity through a consideration of capitalism’s manipulation of “needs”:

We may distinguish both true and false needs. “False” are those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice. Their satisfaction might be most
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gratifying to the individual, but this happiness is not a condition which has to be maintained and protected if it serves to arrest the development of the ability (his own and others) to recognize the disease of the whole and grasp the chances of curing the disease. The result then is euphoria in unhappiness. Most of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate, belong to this category of false needs.51

Modernity does create new needs, but this in itself is not oppressive. The key is whether these needs enrich life or simply perpetuate the social relations of production. Of course, they may do both in a dialectical fashion, which is what Marcuse has to offer in his own consideration of technology. Marcuse considers the question of choice: “Under the rule of a repressive whole, liberty can be made into a powerful instrument of domination. The range of choice open to the individual is not the decisive factor in determining the degree of human freedom, but what can be chosen and what is chosen by the individual.”52 For Marcuse, “grasping potentialities for freedom and happiness would make possible the negation of conditions that inhibited individuals’ full development and realization.”53

Barber offers an updated version of the culture industry in relation to time and technology or what he refers to as the “perceived victory over time”:

Seen from the perspective of adulthood, speed has become the paramount modern form of youthful vanity: time whipped, time mastered, time accelerated, time overcome...we are now hurried time travelers as malcontent with the idea that “now” can contain our anarchic temporality as we are with the idea that a particular space can contain our spastic bodies (as our gadgets liberate us from fixed spaces).54 What is the message of instant messaging with its abbreviated happy/-sad-face emoticons, its inventive contractions, and its furious pace, other than the message of being in a hurry? Kids will instant message for hours as if they have but seconds; the mad seconds accumulate, leaving them plenty of time to compose sonnets: but they contend themselves with sentence fragments.
Here Marcuse is more useful than Adorno and Horkheimer because he argues:

I have stressed that this does not mean the revival of “values,” spiritual or other, which are to supplement the scientific and technological transformation of man and nature. On the contrary, the historical achievement of science and technology has rendered possible the translation of values into technical tasks—the materialization of values.55

Whereas I have argued that “time-saving” technology is only necessary given the overall acceleration of the accumulation process in general,56 Marcuse’s point still stands if “the new ends, as technical ends, would then operate in the project and in the construction of the machinery, and not only in its utilization.”57 With this idea in mind, we must shape technology by asking the critical question, “Saving time for what?” The answer to this question is the way toward developing a radical politics of time to contest the colonization of time by capital, for it is qualitative considerations of the good life that have always informed the reason(s) for the fight for time.

Concluding Remarks

Critical theory was on the mark to examine the culture industry as a dominant factor shaping the way people spend their time. As Aristotle realized, it matters a great deal how people spend their time. Do they spend it equally being ruled and ruling? Are they passive or active participants in their world? Do they spend time in critical reflection in connection to meaningful action? Or do they passively accept what the culture industry provides? William Greider considers these same sets of questions with regard to work and autonomy, but his analysis still remains useful for thinking about leisure, especially if leisure is the extension of work:

Elaine Bernard of Harvard’s trade union program explained the connection: “As power is presently distributed, workplaces are factories of authoritarianism polluting our democracy. Citizens
cannot spend eight hours a day obeying orders and being shut out of important decisions affecting them, and then be expected to engage in robust, critical dialogue about the structure of our society. Indeed, in the latter part of this [past] century, instead of the workplace becoming more democratic, the hierarchical corporate workplace model [came] to dominate the rest of society.”

The master-servant legacy embedded in modern enterprise poses a fundamental question:

How can genuine individual freedom ever flourish except for a privileged few—or democracy ever be reconciled with capitalism—so long as the economic system functions along opposite principles, depriving people of rights and responsibilities, even denying their uniqueness as human beings? … The fact that some people prefer mindless subservience to responsibility and self-realization does not confer legitimacy on their masters.58

Given the relationship between time and consciousness, it makes sense to argue that it matters a great deal how individuals spend their time. As much as what people eat matters to their health, what people do with their time matters to their ability to reflect on the lived experience beyond the confines provided by the culture industry, which if punctured is ultimately dissatisfying. If exercise is now considered a necessity for general health, why not consider intellectual effort a necessity for mental health?

Adorno’s analysis of culture might benefit from a reevaluation of the working class and the continued need for class consciousness. The working class might prove to be ultimately more receptive to criticisms of the culture industry since they can never fully participate in all that it has to offer. The cultivation of working-class culture remains a powerful force of resistance to capital since it reclaims the history of working-class struggles including the fight for time. Politicizing one’s consciousness is a painful process, especially if only a few individuals are able to think beyond the dominant ideology. This is, of course, best illustrated by Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,” whereby the individual with political consciousness who reenters the
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A cave is found so threatening to the people in the cave’s way of understanding themselves that they kill him. As Adorno states, “It suffices to remember how many sorrows he is spared who no longer thinks too many thoughts.”

Adorno and Horkheimer made three primary claims with regard to the culture industry. First and foremost, it is detrimental to the exercise of subjectivity. Second, it is detrimental to subjectivity because the culture industry holds a monopoly on culture to such an extent that any deviation from the known profit-making strategies is rejected. This means that all of culture becomes uniform regardless of the form it takes. A good example is the reproduction of books as film and film into books. Thus even though consumers experience choice, their choices are greatly limited by the culture industry that classifies and organizes products to appeal to certain target audiences. The uniformity of culture makes it impossible for individuality to exist: “The sacrifice of individuality, which accommodates itself to the regularity of the successful, the doing what everybody does, follows from the basic fact that in broad areas the same thing is offered to everybody by the standardized production of consumption goods.”

Adorno spends a good deal of time examining the transformation of culture under capitalism. Aesthetics no longer calls for active reflection on the part of the subject; instead, the culture industry provides all the answers since the mass-produced films, books, and music are formulaic and thus are largely predictable. Thus there is little need for reflection on the part of the individual. The political manipulation of totalitarianism is clearly not far from Adorno’s mind. The insidious nature of the culture industry’s mass manipulation is that it is experienced as pleasurable. Perhaps our senses are dulled to the extent that art does not play such a fundamental role as it does under a repressive regime. For example, art is necessarily subversive when it is constrained by political forces, whereby it must present communism in a favorable light. Bronner argues that Adorno and Horkheimer left “little room for categories capable of differentiating between works: Is Charlie Chaplin really no different from the Three Stooges?”

To which Adorno might reply: “The Great Dictator loses all satirical force, and becomes obscene, when a Jewish
girl can bash a line of storm-troopers on the head with a pan without being torn to pieces. For the sake of political commitment, political reality is trivialized: which then reduces the political effect.”

However, Bronner makes a valid point related to Hegel’s insight of avoiding the night when all the cows are black, meaning that if we are not able to make categories and distinctions then we are unable to make sense of a complicated reality. Literary sources that address the externalization of internalized oppression are particularly useful in terms of examining the colonization of time. Frederick Douglass, for example, once wrote, “I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out.”

Douglass’s words are as beautiful as they are tragic in terms of illuminating the relationship between the consciousness of our “wretched condition” and the possibilities (and lack of possibilities) of transforming those very conditions. The experience Douglass describes is precisely what Hegel termed “the unhappy consciousness.” The unhappy consciousness today must confront a culture of positive thinking that overemphasizes the individual as if the individual were not part of a collective. Bronner points out how Adorno and Horkheimer miss the obvious in their critique of the culture industry: “It was not instrumental reason that brought about fascism and destroyed the ability of individuals to make normative judgments, but rather real movements with one set of values intent on eliminating those committed to qualitatively different ones.”

In other words, Adorno and Horkheimer failed to develop a politics out of their critique of the culture industry. Adorno and Horkheimer focus too heavily on the content of leisure as mediated through the culture industry and not enough on identifying the political actors and actions that might transform the political-economic conditions that hold leisure captive. For this reason, Marcuse and Gorz are more useful for thinking about how political resistance and transformation are possible despite the “totally administered society,” especially because they each take the question of technology under serious consideration in ways that Aristotle and Marx could not, and Adorno and Horkheimer did not.
Although Marcuse is more hopeful than Adorno and Horkheimer with his idea of the “great refusal” that was later picked up by student movements in the 1960s, it is really Gorz who continues to develop critical theory’s legacy of “integrating philosophy, social theory, and politics,”65 into the twenty-first century.
Given his critical role in developing a politics of time through the insights of Marxism, Critical Theory, Ecology, and Feminism, it makes sense to end by reflecting on the contributions of André Gorz (1924–2007). Throughout the entirety of his work, Gorz never lost sight of the centrality of the fight for time or its radical potential for democratic socialist reform. He was particularly taken with the idea of the Left developing a politics of time out of the general decline of full-time employment in Western Europe. Chastising the social democratic political parties and trade unions for continuing to define their political agenda along the lines of protecting full employment, Gorz argued that labor might instead develop a politics around time in order to bring about a more equitable distribution not only of the remaining economically viable work, but also of the time freed by technological innovations. Although he focused primarily on Western Europe, Gorz’s economic and political analysis is useful for thinking practically about the material conditions necessary for developing a politics of time in general, which is to say a mandatory reduction in work time combined with a basic, or guaranteed income, as well as identifying the primary obstacles to implementing this political vision.

Gorz’s plan is not as utopian as it might at first appear. France’s implementation of the mandatory 35-hour workweek in 2000, for
example, was an attempt to deal with the high levels of unemployment, now reflected in the economic recession of the United States. Toward the end of his life, Gorz argued that critical theory must address the emerging mode of production, namely “immaterial capital, which is also termed ‘human capital,’ ‘knowledge capital’ or ‘intelligence capital.’” Gorz, quoting Marx, argues that immaterial capital creates wealth that “depend[s] less and less on labour time and on the amount of labour employed” and depends increasingly “on the general state of science and on the progress of technology,” which means that the original categories of political economy including labor-time may no longer be sufficient measures:

The call for a subsistence income uncoupled from working hours and from work itself is not, then, utopian. On the contrary, it recognizes the fact that “work,” as it has been understood for two centuries, is no longer the main productive force and that the main productive force, living knowledge, cannot be measured with the economy’s usual yardsticks, or be paid for according to the number of hours each person deploys it.

Gorz’s call for a basic income may be simultaneously more realistic about the emerging modes of production, and more radical than is generally recognized:

Having said this, I don’t think that the subsistence income can be introduced gradually and peacefully through top-down reform. As Antonella Corsani has written, “Above all, it must not be part of a redistributive logic, but part of a subversive logic of radically transcending wealth based on capital and labour.” The very idea of the subsistence income marks a revolutionary break. It forces people to see things differently and, particularly, to see the importance of the wealth that cannot assume the value form—that is to say, the form of money and commodities.

Unlike France, however, the United States does not have democratic socialist political parties or a strong labor movement to fight for a
reduction of the workweek or a guaranteed basic income. However, the Affordable Health Care Act may be a move in that general direction.

As mentioned the fight for time has a history in the United States leading up to the passage of Alabama’s Democratic Senator Hugo Black’s 30-hours bill by the Senate in 1933. The reduction of work hours was proposed in response to the Great Depression as a way to “increase productivity, reduce unemployment, drive up wages, strengthen the family, make time for domestic duties, [and] increase leisure time.” However, the “right to work” eventually won out over the fight for shorter hours, and the Roosevelt administration went with “work creation” over “work reduction,” echoes of which remain at the center of US economic policy today. As Hunnicutt argues:

With the failure of the Black-Connery bills and the advent of governmentally managed capitalism, the shorter-hour movement lost its short-lived political momentum. More important, the New Deal committed the federal government to assuring workers to a 40-hour week, and in so doing institutionalized a bias against free time in any form, leisure or unemployment. The two were virtually defined in terms of each other. Since the depression, few Americans have thought of work reduction as a natural, continuous, and positive result of economic growth and increased productivity. Instead, additional leisure has been seen as a drain on the economy, a liability on wages, and the abandonment of economic progress.

Although historians argue that the fight for time died in 1939, the fight for time in the context of the United States has continued in different, but related forms that need to inform one another in order to develop a more inclusive politics of time for today. This chapter brings together the insights of Marxism and Feminism with regard to their respective analysis of the politics of time. In this respect, Gorz is useful since he revisits the feminist domestic labor debates, but frames them within the larger economic framework. Privileging Marxism, Gorz fails to take feminist critiques of the sexual division of labor seriously, but both theoretical frameworks are strengthened by a more thorough integration.
The Fight for Time: Then and Now

As established, the fight for time originally sought to institutionalize limits to capitalism’s colonization of time by setting limits on the workday, thus allowing for, if not guaranteeing, the possibility of discretionary time. Under modern capitalism, the possibilities for increasing discretionary time for the exercise of temporal autonomy were further constrained by the commodification of leisure through the manipulation of needs, and the passive amusements provided by the culture industry that critical theorists argued replaced more autonomous and self-determined forms of activity conducive to the development of subjectivity and critical consciousness. In describing the shift from an economy based primarily on production to an economy based on consumption, Gorz identifies a corresponding shift from “prescriptive regulators [to] force individuals, on pain of certain penalties, to adopt functional forms of conduct” to “incentive regulators [to] ensure functional integration by inducing individuals to lend themselves of their free will, to the instrumentalization of their predetermined activity.” With regard to time, the primary prescriptive regulator has been the discipline of the workforce through clock time and the rhythm of machines, while the incentive regulators under and beyond Fordism have included consumption, and the culture industry as a form of recompense that only work given the severe time constraints under capitalism.

A primary condition of temporal autonomy depends upon the self-consciousness of the forces that constrain time. As Gorz argues, “One should not be given more free time but empowered to take it.” Thus the fight for time must address the relationship between production and consumption or “work” and “need” as situated under advanced capitalism. Similar to Marcuse, Gorz argues:

That exit [from capitalism] implies that we free ourselves from the grip capitalism has exerted on consumption and from its monopoly of the means of production. It means re-establishing the unity between the subject of production and the subject of consumption, and hence recovering autonomy in the definition of our needs and their mode of satisfaction.
Capitalism’s greatest strength has been the colonization of necessity largely made possible through the manipulation of “necessary” labor-time and the commodification of free time:

As productivity and real wages rose during a period of growth, an increasing proportion of the population would have chosen to work less. But workers were never allowed to adjust the hours they put in to the amount of money they felt would take care of their needs. Economic rationality has no room for authentically free time which neither produces nor consumes commercial wealth. It demands the full-time employment of those who are employed by virtue not of an objective necessity but of its originating logic: wages must be fixed in such a way as to induce the worker to maximum effort.14

The manipulation of necessity through the production and consumption cycles creates what appears to be a determined relationship between work and need despite the fact that “production has become increasingly distanced from need.”15 In contrast to the economic rationality of capitalism under which time is largely determined by the “needs” of capitalism, the fight for time has consistently prioritized the “needs” of human beings, especially those “needs” most neglected by capitalism. The persistent conflict and contradiction between “work” time and time needed to attend to human needs consistently presents itself as an opportunity to develop a political consciousness of time, or time-consciousness.

Historically, this conflict has been of particular salience to women whose time is further constrained by the sexual division of labor. Given the crisis in the neoliberal regime of accumulation based on finance capital and credit, the opportunities for developing a comprehensive alternative set of values through the fight for time present themselves, but connections need to be made between the larger economic trends and the opportunities to develop alternative ways to produce and consume. The fight for time provides the insight into necessity, mentioned by Hegel as necessary for consciousness, since it illuminates the unjust nature of the time constraints that people accept as unchangeable givens. Additionally, the fight for time provides an
alternative understanding of time in relationship to freedom from economic rationality.

Economic Rationality and the Ideology of Work

Similar to contemporary feminist economists’ challenges to the major assumptions of mainstream economics through qualitative considerations, the fight for time is one way to articulate a set of limits based on an alternative understanding of value informed by a qualitative relationship between time and freedom, which might serve as a form of resistance to the ideological and structural imperatives of capitalism to produce and to consume in ways overly determined by capitalism. Given that the accumulation of capital has no inherent limits, including no limits to the amount of labor-time extracted from workers as demonstrated by Marx, limits must be formulated outside the logic of what Gorz refers to as “economic rationality,” or the understanding of time and work that aims at maximum efficiency for purposes of increased productivity and profit in order to ensure continued economic growth.

Recognizing that time, much like work, is not inherently emancipatory because of the organization of both around the needs of capital in service to the profit motive, Gorz seeks to establish a new set of limits to economic rationality:

The history of capitalist society can thus be read as being first the history of the gradual abolition of the limits impeding the deployment of economic rationality, and then the history of the reimposition of new limits: from the abolition of slavery, of the sale of women, of the sale of children and of child labour, the setting of standards for housing density, hygiene, pollution control, and the like. To put it another way, the central problem of capitalist society, and the central issue in its political conflicts, has been, since the beginning, that of the limits inside which economic rationality is to operate. ¹⁶

Making time a central category of analysis helps to illuminate alternatives to economic rationality since it focuses on the more qualitative aspects of life that cannot be so easily quantified and rationalized. In other words, the qualitative aspects of time theorized by young Marx
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are useful for combating economic rationality, but what Gorz adds is the institutional referent for making these qualitative aspects a real possibility, namely the “calling for an unconditional social income” instead of the “right to work” that “has been written into most constitutions as a political right, a right of citizenship.”

Gorz recognizes, however, that an unconditional social income runs contrary to the dominant conception of economic rationality. It is fiercely combated by the representatives of capital. In their view, human beings are first and foremost means of production and their education, training and culture should subserve their productive functions. Education and culture must serve some purpose, must provide the economy with labour-power adapted for predetermined tasks.

Economic rationality is further characterized by Gorz as “the desire to economize, that is, to use the factors of production as efficiently as possible.” Economic rationality is related to instrumental rationality defined by the characteristics of “efficiency, productivity, [and] performance.”

For Gorz, extending economic rationality to domestic labor is fundamentally irrational and politically problematic for women’s equality because in his mind it only reinforces the existing sexual division of labor. Gorz begins his critique of capitalism by confronting the prevalent “ideology of work,” which he argues contributes to the extension of economic rationality by reinforcing the idea that work is the answer to all societal ills. The ideology of work is “a feature of ‘work-based societies’ that they consider work as at one and the same time a moral duty, a social obligation and the route to personal success.” “Welfare to Work” is an example of a US social policy informed by the ideology of work, but liberal feminists are as guilty of “valorizing work” as “an essential source of individual growth, self-worth, and social status” without any recognition of the social inequality between women.

More recently, Bell Hooks has criticized Sheryl Sandberg’s best seller, Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead in this regard:

Sandberg’s definition of feminism begins and ends with the notion that it’s all about gender equality within the existing social system.
From this perspective, the structures of imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy need not be challenged. And she makes it seem that privileged white men will eagerly choose to extend the benefits of corporate capitalism to white women who have the courage to “lean in.” It almost seems as if Sandberg sees women’s lack of perseverance as more the problem than systemic inequality. Sandberg effectively uses her race and class power and privilege to promote a narrow definition of feminism that obscures and undermines visionary feminist concerns.

Contrast her definition of feminism with the one I offered more than twenty years ago in Feminist Theory from Margin to Center and then again in Feminism Is for Everybody. Offering a broader definition of feminism, one that does not conjure up a battle between the sexes (that is, women against men), I state: “Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.” No matter their standpoint, anyone who advocates feminist politics needs to understand the work does not end with the fight for equality of opportunity within the existing patriarchal structure. We must understand that challenging and dismantling patriarchy is at the core of contemporary feminist struggle—this is essential and necessary if women and men are to be truly liberated from outmoded sexist thinking and actions.

Another response to Sandberg’s Lean In is Barbara Ehrenreich’s daughter, Rosa Brooks’s “Recline: Why Leaning in Is Killing Us.”

Back in the day, Henry Ford didn’t advocate the eight-hour day for his auto assembly line workers because he was a nice guy. He advocated the eight-hour day because research demonstrated that worker productivity cratered after more than eight hours . . . When a workplace is full of employees who always lean in and never lean back, it’s full of employees who are exhausted, brittle, and incapable of showing much creativity or making good decisions.25

Unfortunately, instead of simply celebrating an actual work-life balance in itself, the shorter workday is again sold as a way to improve
productivity! Gorz might retort: “It is only additionally that they also increase the productivity of labour: they enable it to become more intelligent, inventive, efficient, more in control of its own collective organization and external effects, and hence sparing of time and resources.”

His point being that to fight “economic rationality” we must stop justifying the qualitative aspects of the good life by always relating it back to work. Importantly, Brooks does argue that unstructured downtime is useful and necessary for creativity: “Other forms of creativity are no different. If we want to do more than just go through the motions, both love and work require a protected space in which creativity can flourish.” Brooks advocates what seems similar to the work-life balance, but she does say it has to be a collective movement, and not simply individuals “reclining” on their own.

Economic rationality focuses on calculability or quantity of available jobs rather than the quality of jobs and blatantly ignores the reality that the largest growing sector of the economy is the service sector, much of which is contingent. The ideology of work reinforces an antiquated political agenda that equates economic growth with full employment despite the reality of the decline of full employment and the corresponding rise in part-time and temporary service work in developed countries. The rise of service work, Gorz argues, is an attempt “not to provide work but to save it” by applying economic rationality to previously unpaid domestic labor. Gorz argues that these economic trends are “only possible in a context of growing social inequality, in which one part of the population monopolizes the well-paid activities and forces the other part into the role of servants.”

Further, these economic trends contribute to the creation of a “dual economy”:

The division of society into classes involved in intense economic activity on the one hand, and a mass of people who are marginalized or excluded from the economic sphere on the other, will allow a sub-system to develop, in which the economic elite will buy leisure time by getting their own personal tasks done for them, at low cost, by other people. The work done by personal servants and enterprises providing personal services makes more time available
for this elite and improves their quality of life; the leisure time of this economic elite provides jobs, which are in most cases insecure and underpaid, for a section of the masses excluded from the economic sphere.\textsuperscript{30}

The dual economy results in an “unequal distribution of work in the economic sphere, coupled with the unequal distribution of the free time created by technical innovations.”\textsuperscript{31} The service sector ultimately serves those with access to full employment and saves them time since they are “able to purchase time more cheaply than they can sell it personally.”\textsuperscript{32} In general, the service sector rarely provides economic security for the service-sector workers themselves unless they manage to unionize.\textsuperscript{33}

Importantly Gorz argues in his final works that, “The transformation of these activities into jobs does not save labour time and gains no time at the societal level; it merely redistributes time. The unproductive character of the services bought and sold is reflected at that level.”\textsuperscript{34} By contrast, in the Athenians assigning necessity to women, servants, and slaves, they at least gained discretionary time for politics and leisure. Under the dual economy, little is gained in terms of discretionary time or temporal autonomy. Again, we should consider: what are we saving time for? As Gorz argues, “Most often, service jobs merely transform into paid employment services that people could exchange without paying for them or activities they could just as easily take on themselves.”\textsuperscript{35} Time banks may be a good example of what Gorz is talking about because they seek to build community, rather than functioning simply as another economic system:

Time banks are organizations that treat time as a currency; in place of money, members earn, accumulate and spend time credits. These banks have been around since the 1980s, but they have become more popular since the start of the recession in 2008. There are now more than 300 time banks in the U.S, located everywhere from Appalachia to Oakland, and run by institutions ranging from art galleries to retirement centers to hospitals. Time banking is also flourishing online, with websites attempting to adapt an old-fashioned idea of neighborly favors for a digital
generation. “There’s a lot of unemployed folks and a lot of need, and if there was ever a time that this makes sense, it would be now,” says Edgar Cahn, a 78-year-old former staffer in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and the founder of time banking.36

The time bank seems to fit the vision Gorz seeks with the aid of a “subsistence income”:

As an article published by one of the most influential associations of the unemployed in France puts it, the subsistence income must “give us the means to engage in activities infinitely more rewarding than those they try to force upon us,” activities which are both fulfilling for individuals and create intrinsic riches that no enterprise can manufacture, no wage can buy and whose value no currency can measure.

These intrinsic riches are, for example, the quality of the environment, the quality of education, the bonds of solidarity, aid and mutual assistance networks, the extent of shared knowledge and practical know-how, and the culture developed and reflected in the interactions of daily life—all of them things that cannot take the commodity form, that are not exchanged for anything else, that have no price, but each of which has intrinsic value. It is on these things that the quality and meaning of life depend, the quality of society and a civilization. They cannot be produced to order. They can be produced only by the very movement of life and of daily relations. Their production requires unmeasured time.37

Gorz’s description of these intrinsic riches include many of the same values Marcuse sought, but is it realistic to say that certain qualitative experience cannot be commodified? For in the same book, Gorz discusses the commodification of life itself in the form of “genetically modified seeds,” or what Vandana Shiva refers to as “terminator seeds.” It would be useful if certain qualitative aspects of the good life were not able to be commodified, but clearly this has not been the case. Gorz seems to argue that a basic income would somehow de-commodify or at least allow people to reclaim these activities from the domination of capital, given they would no longer be sacrificed in the same way to the
labor market, and thus might began to reclaim the qualitative aspects of the good life. It is not clear how this would happen given the reality of the continued existence of the culture industry. In other words, would people simply just watch more television with their additional time than they do now? If increasing discretionary time is necessary but not sufficient to encourage people to look for alternatives beyond the culture industry that are ultimately more meaningful for them, what might be that source of motivation?

**Autonomy/Heteronomy**

In privileging time, Gorz is forced to reconsider labor as a foundational category of Marxist theory in general; more precisely he revisits the traditional leftist emphasis on workerism. He begins by making a distinction between “work” as informed by the conditions of employment under capitalism and “labor” as defined by self-conscious interaction with nature. He argues that “work” is not compatible with labor because of the fact that “work” is increasingly defined by heteronomy or “the totality of specialized activities which individuals have to accomplish as functions co-ordinated from outside by a pre-established organization.” In other words, the “sphere of heteronomy” is not self-directed, but other-directed by the “hetero-regulation” of the market, “which imposes its laws from without on individuals who are then ruled by them and are forced to adapt and to modify their conduct and projects according to an external, statistical and totally involuntary balance of forces.” Recognizing the increasing complexity of bureaucracy analyzed by Max Weber, Gorz argues that self-determined work under such conditions is not possible since “the overall working of these apparatuses is beyond the comprehension of the individuals within them and even of the individuals (ministers, managing directors, departmental heads and so on) who (formally) bear institutional responsibility for them.”

Rather than transforming the conditions within the sphere of heteronomy such as those related to worker control and self-management as he did in earlier proposals, Gorz seeks to limit the impact of this experience of “work” by decreasing work time and thus increasing the
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Although reminiscent of the Aristotelian-Marxist formulation of the relationship between necessity and freedom, whereby reducing the time spent on necessity increases the time for the exercise of freedom, Gorz argues the necessity/freedom distinction no longer makes sense, given that work under capitalism is not defined by human need, but by economic rationality or rationality defined by the imperatives of the market:

This is why, in our daily experience, it is no longer so much the freedom/necessity distinction which is decisive, but the autonomy/heteronomy opposition. Freedom consists less (or rather consists less and less) in freeing ourselves from the work we need to do to live and more to do in freeing ourselves from heteronomy, that is, in reconquering spaces of autonomy in which we can will what we are doing and take responsibility for it.44

Gorz refers to autonomous activity as “those activities...which are themselves their own end. In those activities, subjects experience their own sovereignty and fulfill themselves as persons.”45 Gorz includes unpaid reproductive labor or “tasks, repeated day after day, which are indispensable for the maintenance and reproduction of our individual lives”46 as autonomous because they are guided by values outside of economic rationality. For this reason, he argues against the commodification of domestic and reproductive labor.

The extension of economic rationality beyond the production process and into previously uncommodified domestic labor (and leisure activities) in order to “make work”47 is one of the primary obstacles Gorz identifies in reducing work time. Consequently, Gorz offers provocative arguments against the feminist “wages for housework” and “wages for motherhood,” which are useful for reconsidering the domestic labor debates48 through a politics of time. With Gorz, I argue that a reduction in work time is a radical proposal that fundamentally challenges the ideology of work and corresponding work ethic. Against Gorz, I argue that women’s continued disproportionate responsibility for domestic and reproductive labor paid or not, limits
their access to discretionary time and temporal autonomy in ways not accounted for in gender-neutral analysis of time under capitalism. For this reason, a politics of time must incorporate feminist criticisms of the sexual division of labor as related to women’s oppression. Additionally, a politics of time must address recent feminist criticisms of the original domestic labor debates for failing to provide a historical and intersectional analysis of the sexual, racial, and global divisions of domestic and care labor between women.\(^49\) Inequality between women allows some women the option of shifting the sexual division of labor onto the backs of “other” women rather than fighting for a more equitable distribution of domestic and reproductive labor and thus temporal autonomy for all. Although lacking an intersectional analysis of the sexual, racial, and global divisions of labor, Gorz’s criticisms of the commodification of domestic and reproductive labor remains useful in demonstrating how feminism is itself susceptible to reinforcing economic rationality and the corresponding ideology of work to the detriment of expanding equality for all women and not simply the privileged few.

**The Commodification of Domestic Labor**

The rise of the service sector lead Gorz to engage feminist critiques of the sexual division of labor in the household since women are disproportionately represented in service work and the commodification of domestic labor bears at least some resemblance to the “wages for housework” campaigns first waged by feminists in the 1970s as a proposed solution to gender inequality. Initially referred to as the “politics of housework,” feminists fought for the “recognition and redistribution”\(^50\) of domestic and reproductive labor, or what is now referred to as social reproduction.\(^51\) With regard to time, feminists point out that despite the political and economic gains made by the women, women continue to spend a disproportionate amount of time on social reproduction than their male counterparts:\(^52\)

Feminist scholars have argued that women’s continued responsibility for unpaid work in the home disadvantages them in the labor
market, both through periodic or long-term absences and through the burden of the second shift that wage earning women still bear at home. These labor market disadvantages restrict women to lower-paying, lower-status jobs, reinforcing men’s greater access to both resources and power. In turn, this inequality at the macro level maintains material constraints and ideological norms that uphold the gendered division of labor in the home.53

A politics of time must address the specific set of time constraints caused by the sexual division of labor, but not solely for the purposes of freeing up women to participate in the labor market since this simply reinforces the idea that work is inherently emancipatory and ignores the inequality between women based on factors other than gender, which is to say, the racial and global divisions of labor.54 The realm of necessity or social reproduction is never overcome as much as it is historically assigned and reassigned on the basis of hierarchies formed around the intersections of class, gender, race, and nationality.55 The realm of necessity is thus minimized for some at the expense of others who serve them.

Although he fails to address the racial and global divisions of reproductive labor between women, Gorz includes the constraints on women’s time due to the sexual division of labor in developing of a politics of time:

In particular, the labour movement’s campaign for a reduction in working hours cannot ignore the fact that the unpaid work done by women in the private sphere can be as hard as the labour which men and women have to put up with to earn their living. The campaign for shortening of working hours must, then, go hand in hand with a new and equitable distribution of paid work amongst all those who wish to work, and for an equitable redistribution of the unpaid tasks of the domestic sphere.56

Still, at other times, he expresses skepticism: “Do people really ‘work’ five hours in their homes after having worked seven or eight hours outside the home?”57 What Gorz means is whether domestic work is
(or should) be directed by economic rationality in the private sphere in the same manner as it is in the public sphere? He seeks to demonstrate the absurdity of applying economic rationality to domestic labor:

In other words, equity and economic logic appear to demand that everything people do be evaluated according to its exchange value on the market: the night the mother spends at the bedside of her sick child should then be paid for at the price it would cost in a confectioner’s; the birthday cake Grandma baked charged at the price it would cost in a confectioner’s; sexual relations paid for at the rate each of the partners might get at an Eros Centre, maternity at the price charged by the surrogate mother.58

For Gorz, domestic and care-giving activities are of incommensurable value and should be kept that way in order to protect the “last vestiges of self-determined and self-regulated life.”59 For these reasons, he argues against the feminists’ “wages for housework” proposals since they seem to endorse the extension of economic rationality into the private household, which in turn institutionalizes domestic labor as “women’s work,” rather than redistributing domestic and care work on a more equitable basis, which is exactly what has happened. In a related manner, he argues there are two conceptions of basic income:

There is the conception that sees it as the way of wresting life away from the commercial imaginary and the total employment model, and the conception which, by contrast, sees it as necessary remuneration for the time outside work, which now makes a crucial contribution to the productivity of work. It must be noted that this second conception contains a very formidable trap. Starting out from the idea that the capitalist production process derives profit from all the capacities, skills, and resources that people develop in their everyday life, it takes the view that the whole of life has become productive as the production of human fixed capital. The entirety of the production of self is thus reduced to economic work.60

He warns that the second “conception does not merely acknowledge the total ‘employment’ of the person—it legitimizes it.”61 Further, he
argues this second justification for a basic income: “concede[s] to capital the right to demand that the development of human capacities be done from the outset with a view to the advantage companies can derive from it, and hence that it be done.” Gorz proposes a basic income that “neither demands nor remunerates anything. In this conception, its function is, by contrast, to restrict the sphere of value-creation in the economic sense by enabling the expansion of those activities which create nothing that can be bought, sold, exchanged—and hence nothing that has a value (in the economic sense)—but only non-marketable wealth with an intrinsic value of its own.” He places domestic and reproductive labor under this more general rationale.

Although he describes the material conditions that might make gender equality possible, that is, a reduction in work combined with a basic income—Gorz never fully articulates how the sexual division of labor itself might be institutionally mediated. Instead, he reasons that a reduction in work time might lead individuals, regardless of sex, to do for themselves what they can only pay for now:

In other words, when free time ceases to be scarce, certain educational, caring and assistance activities and the like may be partially repatriated into the sphere of autonomous activities and reduce the demand for these things to be provided by external services, whether public or commercial.

While this may be true for the more enjoyable aspects of care giving or what is commonly referred to as “quality time,” Gorz’s reasoning is not as applicable to the more tedious aspects of domestic labor. Historically, the more onerous aspects of housework have been delegated to women of lesser economic and social status not because of a lack of time, but because of privilege and status usually in relation to the social construction of white femininity. While his general concerns about the consequences of applying economic rationality toward social reproductive work are valid because they invoke ethical questions about the applicability of economic rationality to care giving, it is simply not realistic to argue that a viable solution at this point in time is to exclude this type of work from commodification altogether.
Despite his failure to acknowledge the racial and global divisions of social reproductive labor, Gorz’s approach to the sexual division of labor remain instructive insofar as they move feminists beyond the ideology of work as exemplified in “Welfare to Work,” and the idea that domestic and care labor is women’s responsibility, paid or not. Gorz’s approach also releases the fight for time from an approach based on the rational that women need more time for their domestic and care responsibilities, which tend to “invoke and reinforce the conservative or neoliberal family values and agendas.”66 A politics of time must focus not only on the conditions that make it possible to determine one’s time by “gaining a measure of separation or detachment only from capitalist command,” as noted by Gorz, but also from the “imposed norms of gender and sexuality, and traditional standards of proper family roles.”67 Additionally, any analysis of social reproduction must take into account the racial and global divisions of labor that are rendered necessary by the lack of a substantive welfare state in the United States.

Feminist Approaches to the Commodification of Domestic Labor

The politics of housework is probably most familiar in the United States as the radical feminist demand for men to participate equally in the nuclear household. And although this particular political strategy may emphasize ideology over the mutually reinforcing political and economic structural underpinnings of the sexual division of labor, it does underscore the continued need for feminist consciousness around the politics of housework as an issue of unequal time distribution related to women’s potential for self-development beyond the “gender-neutral and… autonomous market individual as an ideal,”68 which only colludes with the processes of capital accumulation while at the same time it denies the reality that workers of both sexes may have family responsibilities.69 Radical feminist work on the politics of housework remains powerful to the extent that it illuminates the political aspect of the everyday in an accessible fashion70 by revealing exactly how the personal is political71 and why women have a
right to demand change. Women’s demand for equality in the heterosexual household remains an important step to the empowerment of women, but it should be noted that it is an individual solution to a collective problem, which begs the political question as to how time should be distributed across productive and reproductive labor in a given society if not by sex inequality as the automatic default. Women’s freedom depends upon the answer to this question.

In her classic essay “The Politics of Housework,” radical feminist Pat Mainardi argued that men benefit from the sexual division of labor since women are assigned the domestic tasks that are simultaneously the most necessary and repetitive, and as a consequence the most time consuming:

Here is my list of dirty chores: buying groceries, carting them home and putting them away; cooking meals and washing dishes and pots; doing the laundry; digging out the place when things get out of control; washing floors. The list could go on but the sheer necessities are bad enough. All of us have to do these jobs, or get someone else to do them for us.

Necessity compels eating, drinking, and sleeping, but it is patriarchy and the resulting sexual division of labor that genders time distribution across the realms of reproduction and production. Mainardi’s primary objection to the sexual division of labor is that it is not a fair division of labor because it privileges men’s time over women’s time in a very specific way that benefits men and disadvantages women with regard to free time in the private realm. As she states, “Participatory democracy begins at home. If you are planning to implement your politics there are certain things to remember. He is feeling it more than you. He’s losing some leisure and you’re gaining it. The measure of your oppression is his resistance.” In contrast to Aristotle’s justification for women’s confinement to the private sphere so that male citizens might have enough time to exercise freedom through political engagement in the public sphere, Mainardi argues that democracy must take place in all spheres of life including the private sphere, especially if women are to participate. In a similar fashion, the fight for
free time as originally conceived of as that time free from the realm of production must take into account the gendered aspect of time since many women do not experience the realm of reproduction as free time, but as a “second shift.”

Mainardi translates her husband’s responses to her request that they share the burden of housework. He states, “I don’t mind sharing the housework but I don’t do it very well. We should each do the things we’re best at.” According to Nancy Folbre this very argument is made by conservative scholars:

Conservative social thinkers, including many economists, insist that women are naturally suited to child care, and this, in turn, gives them a comparative advantage in providing care to others, including the sick and the elderly. Specialization, after all, increases efficiency, but specialization also affects the development of human capabilities and the exercise of bargaining power.

Mainardi politicizes her partner’s statement: “Meaning: Historically the lower classes (Blacks and women) have had hundreds of years doing menial jobs. It would be a waste of manpower to train someone else to do them now.” It is precisely this mentality toward necessity or “menial” jobs that creates distance (consciously or not) between people who do these jobs and people who do not. This is especially true if the people who do the so-called menial jobs are kept invisible so that there is never a chance to see the person’s humanity.

Since women spend a large portion of their time in service to husbands and children, Mainardi argues that men have more time to develop their potential beyond attending to their or their children’s basic biological needs:

If human endeavors are like a pyramid with man’s highest achievements at the top, then keeping oneself alive is at the bottom. Men have always had servants (you) to take care of this bottom stratum of life while he has confined his efforts to the rarefied upper regions. It is thus ironic when they ask of women: “Where are your
great painters, statesmen, etc.?" Mrs. Matisse ran a millinery shop so he could paint. Mrs. Martin Luther King kept his house and raised his babies.  

Mainardi argues both for the recognition of women’s historical contributions to the development of culture and politics and an acknowledgement of the unequal distribution of time as situated across necessity and freedom at the expense of women’s self-development. Audre Lorde makes a similar argument with regard to poetry:

Unacknowledged class differences rob women of each others’ energy and creative insight. Recently a women’s magazine collective made the decision for one issue to print only prose, saying poetry was a less “rigorous” or “serious” art form. Yet even the form our creativity takes is often a class issue. Of all the art forms, poetry is the most economical. It is the one which is the most secret, which requires the least physical labor, the least material, and the one which can be done between shifts, in the hospital pantry, on the subway, and on scraps of surplus paper. Over the last few years, writing a novel on tight finances, I came to appreciate the enormous differences in the material demands between poetry and prose. As we reclaim our literature, poetry has been the major voice of poor, working class, and Colored women. A room of one’s own may be a necessity for writing prose, but so are reams of paper, a typewriter, and plenty of time. The actual requirements to produce the visual arts also help determine, along class lines, whose art is whose. In this day of inflated prices for material, who are our sculptors, our painters, our photographers? When we speak of a broadly based women’s culture, we need to be aware of the effect of class and economic differences on the supplies available for producing art.

If, as Mainardi’s argument goes, men were able to develop to their potential as artists or orators because they had wives devoted to the realm of necessity in service to them, it would appear that the only way women can experience this sort of freedom is if they are also able to
assign, in whole or part, their share of necessity to someone else. And, this is precisely what has taken place as previously unpaid domestic and care labor has moved into the marketplace. Instead of men carrying half of the burden, though there are always exceptions within individual relationships, the work has shifted to hired help for those families with the means, in the form of personal nannies, certified nursing assistants, and housecleaners, all of which are disproportionately filled by women of lesser socioeconomic status. Those families without the means to hire private help negotiate time constraints by other commodified means. The negotiations of time constraints created by capital are thus resolved by capital as the previously unpaid reproductive labor of women has become increasingly commodified. Yet, these positions are still marked by the sexual division of labor.

As Nancy Folbre argues, “We ignore the fact that working for pay actually costs money—the money required to purchase substitutes for family care.”84 Since reproductive labor extends beyond the private sphere, the “equation of women with unpaid domestic work in the private sphere and men with paid work in the public sphere” is no longer an adequate model to thinking about the sexual division of labor.85 The formulation of freedom as minimizing the amount of time spent in necessity needs to be rethought in light of the gendered aspect of time since the realm of necessity or social reproductive labor continues to be filled disproportionately with women, whether it takes place in the private sphere or not. A better approach might reflect on how a democracy might address the realm of necessity so that it is more equitably distributed, and this cannot be addressed simply by offering state-subsidized childcare and elder care since the gendered nature of reproductive labor stays in place.

Mainardi goes on to frame the issue explicitly in terms of time as distributed across necessity and freedom: “One hour a day is a low estimate of the amount of time one has to spend ‘keeping’ oneself. By foisting this off on others, man has seven hours a week—one working day—more to play with his mind and not his human needs.”86 Thus she defines necessity broadly as “human needs” and freedom as time for thought. Men benefit from the sexual division of labor in terms of potential (if not realized) time for self-development since
Developing a Politics of Time

it is women, and not men, who are gendered to be consumed with necessity in service to others. This does not mean, however, that all people will use free time for the self-development. The preoccupation with necessity is no accident, but is the result of the gendering of time. In a recent *New York Times* article, “The Case for Filth,” the (male) author argues: “At least one thing is becoming clear: The only possible solution to the housework discrepancy [between women and men] is for everyone to do a lot less of it,” but his argument clearly elides the reality of how gender functions:

The solution to the gender divide in housework generally is just that simple: don’t bother. Leave the stairs untidy. Don’t fix the garden gate. Fail to repaint the peeling ceiling. Never make the bed.

A clean house is the sign of a wasted life, truly. Hope is messy: Eventually we’ll all be living in perfect egalitarian squalor.87

Despite the author’s presentation of the politics of housework, which he complicates by including emotional care work and transgender couples’ apparent unequal distribution of domestic labor (apparent because he does not cite the research he mentions), he ends with an overly simplistic solution that does not seem to really understand how patriarchy, sexism, and the sexual division labor are produced and reproduced not only in the household, but also beyond. For a more complicated understanding of how structural forces such as “welfare regimes, gender regimes, and household regimes… influence… people’s temporal autonomy,” see Goodin’s *Discretionary Time*.88 The American Time Use Survey is also available for statistics of time use in the United States, “which measures the amount of time people spend doing various activities, such as paid work, childcare, volunteering, and socializing.”89 Women still do disproportionately more of the housework than men. Goodin argues that personal choices in the household “depend crucially upon choices made by our government and your larger society. Societies encourage some sorts of household choices and discourage others. States reward some household choices while penalizing others.”90 The conclusion reached in Goodin’s
research is that what determines most whether domestic labor is equitably divided in terms of time is whether welfare, gender, and household regimes care about equality or not: “Temporal autonomy varies with welfare and gender regimes. On average, people have five hours more discretionary time in social democratic/female-friendly welfare/gender regimes than in either liberal/individualist or corporatist/traditionalist regimes.” Goodin makes a parody of their research: “To maximize temporal autonomy and discretionary time, people should: marry but never have children; if they do have children, never divorce; and maybe consider moving to Sweden.” Their larger and more serious point is that if select groups of individuals, namely single mothers, have significantly less discretionary time than others, then they should be considered a priority in developing a politics of time:

Two challenges affecting women’s ability to be self-determinant are the need for more time in order to move beyond poverty and the social supports to live a more autonomous life… Women need more time to improve their quality of life—time to further their education, advance their careers, take care of their health, and give care to relatives. The policy recommendation from the poll that women most strongly supported is paid leave to use for illness or to take care of a family member.

The results of the Shriver Report, “A Woman’s Nation Pushes Back from the Brink,” reveal that “one in three American women is living at or near the brink of poverty. This Shriver Report studies the profound change in the makeup of American families, and the failure of government, business, and other cultural institutions to adapt to this change.”

The gendered preoccupation with necessity is politically significant for there is a Hegelian argument to be made that there is a correlation between how people spend their time and their self-consciousness, especially if their time is spent disproportionately in service to another
in a relatively more powerful position. Mainardi suggests this very correlation:

The psychology of oppressed peoples is not silly. Blacks, women, and immigrants have all employed the same psychological mechanisms to survive. Admiring the oppressor, glorifying the oppressor, wanting to be like the oppressor, wanting the oppressor to like them.96

The colonization of time creates a situation of inequality whereby one person spends their time in the realm of necessity in service to another. This is particularly problematic when it comes to women as a group under patriarchal capitalism since their sense of self is largely formed around time devoted to others, especially through emotional and care-giving work. If patriarchal capitalism leaves men as a collective disproportionately in positions of power (economic, political, etc.), women must learn to negotiate within the context of an unequal distribution of power. This negotiation takes time and thought. This negotiation is not necessarily conscious or informed by feminist thought, which means that negotiations take multiple forms that may be in direct political opposition to one another. To account for these differences between women, second-wave feminists spoke of “false consciousness” as opposed to “raised consciousness,” meaning that some women did not have a political awareness about their specific historical position. In other words, they understood their position as unique and personal, rather than as political. A feminist consciousness is one that understands women’s position not as fixed or natural, but as capable of being transformed so that women’s potential might be realized beyond the specific gender roles of any given time period.

An important development since the 1970s (and the second wave of feminism) has been the commodification of women’s formerly unpaid reproductive activities. As Evelyn Nakano Glenn points out, “In the second half of the twentieth century, with goods production almost completely incorporated into the market, reproduction has become the next major target for commodification.”97 The commodified
approach to reproductive labor has been rightly criticized as leaving unequal gender relations in place, but it should also be noted that the growing visibility of this work has been a benefit as unions have increasingly started to organize the service sector including domestic labor. What is at stake for feminists seems to differ with regard to critics of commodification. As Glenn states:

Aside from the tendency of capital to expand into new areas for profit making, the very conditions of life brought about by large-scale commodity production have increased the need for commercial services. As household members spend more of their waking hours employed outside the home, they have less time and inclination to provide for one another’s social and emotional needs.98

Thus we see the ways in which the time constraints caused by the colonization of time just help to secure and privilege the market as the only source of fulfilling our needs. Glenn quotes Harry Braverman:

The population no longer relies upon social organization in the form of family, friends, neighbors, community, elders, children, but with few exceptions must got to the market and only to the market, not only for food, clothing, and shelter, but also for recreation, amusement, security, for the care of the young, the old, the sick, the handicapped.99

The growing recognition of paid domestic labor and the rise of the service sector in general pose benefits and disadvantages for women who occupy these positions. First, the commodification of domestic labor has arguably increased the visibility of “women’s work,” especially given the transition from an economic system based on production or “the making of things” to an economic system based on consumption or “the provision of services.”100 Second, the commodification of domestic labor only increases the power of the market as “reproduction has become the next major target for commodification.”101

Service work has come to be recognized as a legitimate source of work. Prohibiting the applicability of economic rationality toward domestic and care labor will not suffice. Applying economic rationality
to service work may be the only available means to rendering service work both visible and valuable. An alternative approach might focus on unionizing service workers, private and public, so as to give domestic and care workers the same rights afforded to other workers. However, unionizing makes sense only if the cheapest sources of labor, that is, undocumented immigrants—are included in unionization efforts. These jobs cannot be eliminated because they represent a human need that cannot be outsourced or resolved through technological solutions.

In contrast to Gorz, Margaret Jane Radin offers a more nuanced approach to setting limits to economic rationality, or what she refers to as commodification. Similar to Gorz, she wants to contextualize commodification as a world view shaped by capitalism, which informs our understanding of value, but she rejects the compartmentalization of market and nonmarket realms. Instead she argues that in reality what exists today is “incomplete commodification.” She is particularly interested in what she refers to as “contested commodities” or those “instances in which we experience personal and social conflict about the process and the result [of commodification].” In cases of contested commodities, Radin argues what exists is “incomplete commodification” to refer to the limits of commodification when it comes to personal attributes. Gorz fears that extending economic rationality to domestic and care labor will undermine social obligation and reciprocity. What feminist have argued is that paying for care work does not necessarily remove the human element. Radin argues that commodification or economic rationality should not be analyzed apart from the economic conditions that lead people into “desperate exchanges” in the first place, and she wants to situate commodification in relation to other kinds of social oppression.

The politics of housework takes a decidedly different angle when approached by feminists interested in the intersections between the racial and sexual divisions of labor. An intersectional approach challenges analyses of social reproduction based solely on the sexual division of labor in the private sphere by emphasizing the inequalities between women, whereby women of color and working-class women have historically been denied access to the same “intimate equality” or “the ability to devote oneself, wholly or in part, to intimate tasks...
for the benefit of one’s own family,” afforded to privileged white women. In some ways, it seems that Black women’s fight for access to “intimate equality” was at odds with white women’s established access to “intimate equality” because it was made possible largely by the hiring of Black women as servants. As Glenn states, “In the domestic sphere, instead of questioning the inequitable gender division of labor, [white feminists] sought to slough off the more burdensome tasks onto more oppressed groups of women.”

Glenn argues, “Historically race and gender have developed as separate topics of inquiry, each with its own literature and concepts.” As a consequence, reproductive labor has been largely ignored in studies of race. This is interesting insofar as it might be related to a possible racial division of labor within the scholarship of social reproduction itself. When social reproduction is thought of only with reference to gender, the inequalities between women remain somewhat hidden. Again, women of relative privilege have been able to manage the double burden or the second shift by hiring women of color and working-class women to assist them. As Glenn argues, not all women have had the same relationship to reproductive labor:

Reproductive labor has divided along racial as well as gender lines and that the specific characteristics of the division have varied regionally and changed over time as capitalism has reorganized labor, shifting parts of it from the household to the market. In the first half of the century racial-ethnic women were employed as servants to perform reproductive labor in white households, relieving white middle-class women of onerous aspects of that work; in the second half of the century, with the expansion of commodified services (services turned into commercial products or activities), racial-ethnic women are disproportionately employed as service workers in institutional settings to carry out lower-level “public” reproductive labor, while cleaner white collar supervisory and lower professional positions are filled by white women.

In other words, the historical racial division of labor in the household between women of different statuses is reproduced as occupational segregation within paid reproductive labor.
This difference in time distribution structures relations between women of unequal statuses by lending itself to a general association or stereotyping of one group of people with a certain type of work. Cameron Lynne Macdonald and David Merrill offer two explanations for occupational segregation: “Dominate groups control access to employment and provide access to coveted jobs based on membership to ‘ingroups’ and ‘outgroups’, while simultaneously making those inequalities appear ‘natural’ and “a natural human tendency to order a complex world through the use of categories. Individuals use stereotypes as an unconscious ‘cognitive shortcut’ to sort through the barrage of info…[which] occur whether or not a person carries animosity towards a given group.”110 As Macdonald and David Merrill argue, “This ‘niche’ may then translate into self-perpetuating stereotype from the perspective of future employers or consumers who then expect to find a certain ‘type’ of person performing a given service.”111

**Global Division of Labor**

Nancy Hartsock’s work on the relationship between women, primitive accumulation, and social reproduction is a good starting point for thinking about the global division of labor. Through her gender analysis of primitive accumulation, Hartsock is able to make connections between the exploitation of the global South’s women’s labor, in part, to fulfill the social reproductive needs of the global North. As she argues:

[There is a] creation of a new class of landless free laborers. Many forces are at work at present which are creating new classes of especially, women workers. The number of women wage workers worldwide has vastly expanded since the 1980s. Moreover, the skills required by the new networked, informational economies tend to draw on women’s relational skills. One can point as well to many specific s that push/pull women into the labour force: the fact that in many places women cannot own land, the pressures that lead women to migrate in search of jobs to support their children, the worldwide traffic in persons, especially women and girls, the impact of welfare reform in the USA, with its work requirements for recipients, etc.112
In a similar fashion, Rhacel Salazar Parrenas makes a powerful argument that connects “regressive welfare state regimes” and the politics of neoliberalism that “keeps childcare a private and not a public responsibility.” She argues that “the inadequacy of state welfare support is one of the greatest burdens on women in the labor force. Moreover, it instigates care inequalities between women and nations. Privatization engenders the commodification of care and the search for affordable care workers” and points to the example of the United States as one of the richest nations with the “least welfare provisions,” citing the overall lack of “universal health care, paid maternity, and parental leave, government provided childcare or family care giving allowances.” Thus Parrenas is able to persuasively demonstrate a connection between the “social patterns of welfare provisions” in the United States and “the direction of the migratory flows of foreign domestic workers” to fill the commodified versions of this labor. The use of guest workers as sources of cheap labor has been a continual strategy by the United States that works by pulling in workers when they are needed and pushing them back out when they are not.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Though few theoretical links have been made between the labor movement’s fight for time and the domestic labor debates, the fight for time was taken up by second-wave feminists in their fight against the sexual division of labor in the household that at its core was a fight over the unequal distribution of time between necessity and freedom between women and men. What was at stake was women’s potential time for self-development, but reframed the domestic labor debates forces the political question of necessity. The division of labor based along sex, race, class, and nationality lines creates a separation between who does and does not do certain jobs. This division between manual and mental labor creates real separation between human beings since it constructs and sustains a hierarchy. Meaningful time would mean having time that is balanced across necessity and freedom. When it
comes to women, the necessity/freedom divide is not possible because women have historically been not only confined to the private realm of necessity, but also the embodiment of necessity; or rather women’s subordination has been justified historically based on their biology, specifically their reproductive capacities.
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Conclusion

The fight for time remains an indispensable political project that needs to be recovered for the purpose of uniting seemingly disparate political issues that are, in fact, related in their mutual criticisms of the detrimental impact of capitalism on the quality of life. Through the lens of distributive justice, time has the potential to bring together a range of political actors under the fight for time as it relates to their specific but interrelated goals. In particular, I brought together the political concerns of Marxism, Critical Theory, and Feminism in order to extricate their respective contributions to different aspects of the fight for time, including the fight to reduce the workday, the criticism of the culture industry as detrimental to the emancipatory potential of leisure, and the domestic labor debates demonstrating that women continue to spend a disproportionate amount of time on domestic and reproductive labor in comparison to their male counterparts, as do working-class women and women of color in comparison to more privileged women. The fight for time as developed theoretically within the Aristotelian-Marxist tradition is particularly useful because it offers a history of asserting the radical notion that the quality of life is fundamentally related to the access of discretionary time and the exercise of temporal autonomy. Furthermore, the fight for time transforms freedom from an abstract concept into a concrete measurement of discretionary time. In order for temporal autonomy to be realizable it must be institutionalized through public policies that allow for or even encourage discretionary time.
This political-theoretical approach complements the existing empirical research on discretionary time by analyzing the structural and ideological forces under advanced capitalism in the context of the United States that most contribute to the experience of time as loss for “able-bodied, prime-aged people who are not involuntarily unemployed,” but I would add that time as loss is ultimately a loss of the qualitative aspects of time for everyone. Ultimately, a politics of time must fight for the political-economic transformations that enable individuals to make more meaningful choices with regard to their time, namely a reduction in work, creating and expanding public policies that increase discretionary time, but do not reinforce existing inequalities, and a call for a basic income. The strength of the logic and system of capitalism continues to rely on the domination over the control, meaning use, and allocation of time, which behooves the Left to prioritize the fight for time among their political concerns.

Leisure as a Regulative Ideal

The history of the fight for time as informed by the Aristotelian-Marxist tradition provides the ethical and political arguments for the importance of recovering a meaningful relationship between time and freedom. In particular, ethical considerations might be derived from Aristotle’s understanding of leisure as they relate to the good life. The good life is informed less by subjective or individual accounts of happiness, and more by the overall happiness of the community. Happiness is not a state of being, but self-development in relationship to the larger community. Since individuality is only possible within a given community, the ancients sought for self-regarding (private interest) and other-regarding (public good) behaviors to coincide among citizens. The good life is primarily defined by “self-rule” rather than “living as one likes.” For these reasons, Aristotle’s qualified understanding of leisure is useful insofar as it rejects the idea of freedom reduced to license, idleness, or passive amusement. Although they are often conflated, free time has little relation to the classical understanding of leisure. Free time is more closely related to individual license, which is a limited understanding of freedom that ultimately lends itself to the commodification of leisure. By contrast, the classical ideal
of leisure is related to critical reflection understood by Aristotle to be contemplation of the lived experience guided by a meditation upon the qualities that define the good life. Leisure is the condition that makes reflection of the human condition possible.

The classical understanding of leisure might serve as a regulative ideal for today. As a regulative ideal, leisure is useful for returning us to the basic principle that there is a qualitative difference between life and the good life. A life dominated by necessity severely restricts if not eliminates the exercise of temporal autonomy. As a regulative ideal, leisure offers a practical use of an ideal. It offers a way to guide our efforts by being able to discern if we are moving toward or away from the good life. Importantly, the classical ideal of leisure rejects the instrumentalization of leisure under capitalism, whereby leisure derives meaning primarily from its relationship to work. The regulative ideal of leisure links freedom with a particular understanding of noninstrumental time, which lends itself to Kant’s idea of “purposeful purposelessness.” Leisure is a good in itself, which resists time as related to the internalized disciplinary values of economic rationality. Leisure is the antithesis of economic rationality since the point of leisure is to have an altogether different experience of time. Time that is open-ended is a sort of freedom that is only possible with a good portion of time away from work. Leisure as a good in itself may open up qualitative experiences of time that are currently denied by the colonization of time. Overly determined time leaves individuals with little access to discretionary time and thus few experiences for the meaningful exercise of temporal autonomy:

Marx’s critique of the operation of the labor theory of value under capitalism involves a criticism of the elements of that system—labor-power and labor-time. He argues that a system which reduces the varieties of power to just one form of power—labor power—and the varieties of labor time to just one form of time—labor time—robs life of certain other crucial dimensions of experience. By implication, then, there are alternative experiences and organizations of experience which are possible, and some which are desirable.⁴
To make leisure possible today would mean not only to restrain, restrict, and censor the incursions of capitalism, but also to cultivate a cultural understanding that leisure makes many qualitative experiences possible that capitalism makes impossible by granting sustained amounts of time for self-reflection and self-development. Key to self-reflection and self-development is greater participation in the public sphere where people learn and practice how to rule and be ruled as citizens.

Since the colonization of time by capital extends beyond production, we cannot afford to assume that leisure is automatically the experience or expression of individual freedom and choice. For individuals to be empowered to want more control over their time, they need to recognize the contradiction between the interdependent and therefore social nature of time and the disproportionate allocation of “discretionary time,” which is to say a recognition of the political nature of time that is made to be a scarce resource under the demands of capitalism is necessary. However, I am not advocating a sort of possessive individualist understanding of time that exists today where people are furious when their time is “wasted.” Instead, I am advocating for the political-economic conditions that may make it possible for people to be more generous with their time because they will have more discretionary time on their hands. After all, the things that make life meaningful such as maintaining healthy relationships with family, friends, and lovers, building community, creating, writing, raising children, volunteering, coaching, mentoring, caring, etc., take immeasurable amounts of time.

**The Politics of Leisure**

Aristotle’s political writings offer an analysis of the political-economic conditions that make leisure possible while at the same time introducing the political nature of time as a collective resource that must be distributed based on the aggregate needs of the community. Introducing the necessity/freedom framework, Aristotle argues the reduction of time spent satisfying basic needs is an essential precondition of freedom, which relies on a corresponding division of labor between the private sphere (dominated by necessity) and the public sphere (politics...
and leisure). Leisure and political participation are made possible for male citizens through the exclusion and confinement of women, servants, and slaves to the household. Aristotle’s ethical and political considerations of leisure are at odds since he cannot reconcile necessity and freedom either at the individual or at the societal level. It is important to keep in mind that it is not necessity itself that creates a burden, but the unequal distribution of the time that must be devoted to necessity. The only reconciliation Aristotle offers is the future possibility of using technology to eliminate the need for the unequal division of labor across necessity and freedom. He never reconsidered the current division of labor as problematic even though he did recognize that it is justified by convention and not based on natural differences.

In contrast to Aristotle, Marx attempted to reconcile necessity and freedom through a historical materialist analysis of the political-economic conditions that might extend leisure to all. Marx criticized the abstract freedom of liberal democracy since it could not guarantee freedom to the working class whose time was consumed by their need to work. Marx’s apt criticisms of liberalism’s focus on political rights abstracted from the concreteness of the everyday lived experience remains useful for thinking about time as a collective resource that is unequally distributed across necessity rather than the mistaken notion that time is simply an individual’s private property. Marx argued the burden of necessity falls disproportionately to the working class, thus denying them their humanity. In his critique of the unregulated working conditions of industrial capitalism, Marx apprised us of the distinctly political nature of time by referring to capitalism’s control of time through time discipline and the manipulation of “necessary” labor time to extract surplus labor time. Whereby earlier generations of workers remembered work not disciplined or compelled by waged labor, later generations lost what I have referred to as “time-consciousness,” or an understanding of the historical nature of time as determined by the system of capitalism. Marx’s analysis remains relevant insofar as it reconnects historical materialism as related to the workers’ collective consciousness of themselves as historical producers. Time-consciousness releases time from economic rationality by demonstrating how time is political. To politicize time means to
understand that the allocation of time is up for political contestation as is the meaning and experience of time.

*The Fight for Time*

In chapter 2, I analyzed the relationships between the historical development of industrial capitalism and the colonization of time, which gave rise to the fight for time. I began with Marx’s analysis of the unregulated working conditions of industrial capitalism, with special attention paid to the political struggle over the length of the “working day.” In his analysis of primitive accumulation, Marx demonstrates how the accumulation of capital is made possible by dispossessing people of alternative ways of eking out an existence, which he argues compels individuals to work for a wage in order to survive in a market economy. Although Marx refers broadly to dispossession in all its various forms, the accumulation of capital depends on the general dispossession of time from the masses through the colonization of “necessity.” In other words, the organization of production (work) and consumption (need) come to be determined by capitalism since other alternatives are rendered either impossible or “inefficient.” The extent of the colonization of time by capital is related to the degree of reliance on the market and the ability of labor to resist compliance, but the control over time remains a consistent factor. The colonization of necessity is made possible through the manipulation of “necessary” labor time.

Marx’s analysis of the working day is useful since it offers a way to develop a theory of “time-consciousness” as related to historical materialism, or the ability to understand how capitalism structures our everyday existence including many of what we believe to be our personal values. With regard to the meaning and use of time, a structural understanding of time bases our understanding of time around “productivity” and “efficiency” to better fulfill capitalism’s need for both in its pursuit of profit. The internalization of this particular understanding of time is forced through the reduction of our free time to a very limited number of hours left after “work.” How we came to collectively internalize or accept these temporal values is relevant to the discussion at hand. For this reason, I spent some time considering how the transformation of time under early industrial
capitalism came to be accepted by the masses. The introduction of early industrial capitalism was rift with collective resistance to the colonization of time by capital. It is the historical amnesia of time not determined by capitalism’s needs, but human needs, which explains why most people feel the need to work under the conditions of capitalism; it is simply accepted as a fact of life and not a political condition that might be contested. In other words, the colonization of time is not reducible to the force of time discipline through mechanical clocks and waged labor as documented by historians, but the workers’ acceptance, however reluctant, of this understanding of time. The power of capitalism is related to its ability to inform the content of time through not only the structurally enforced mandate to work, but also the economic justification of the need for ever-increasing levels of productivity in order to ensure economic growth.

**Time-Consciousness**

In chapter 3, I developed the concept of “time-consciousness” as a way to reorient individuals to the political nature of time under the conditions of capitalism. Time-consciousness potentially enables individuals to recognize the objective possibilities of contesting the colonization of time that move them beyond apolitical or non-transformative coping mechanisms of dealing with the time constraints associated with capitalism. Georg Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness* offers an analysis of consciousness in relationship to history. In other words, Lukács attempts to link time as a category informed dialectically by experience and understanding, which is reminiscent of Marx’s understanding of the commodity cycle. In contrast to Marx’s analysis of commodity fetishism, Lukács offers a detailed analysis of reification or the petrification of social relations. Reification is related to a lack of time-consciousness or an inability to recognize the fluid nature of history. Reification of time-consciousness limits the realm of what is considered possible. Time-consciousness is a theoretical category of analysis that aims to render the dialectical relationship between the objective and subjective aspects of time as shaped by the colonization of time. The logic of capitalism dominates social time by masquerading as absolute time.
An analysis of the colonization of time by capital would not be complete without critical thoughts on the culture industry. In chapters 4 and 5, the colonization of time extends beyond production to the commodification of leisure. Adorno and Horkheimer’s criticisms of the culture industry are useful for thinking about why a qualified understanding of leisure remains politically relevant. The ideas informing the good life come to be dominated by materialist values conducive to the profit margin of capitalism. Taken uncritically, free time is commonly assumed to be the realm in which individuals make conscious choices with regard to the allocation of their time that is left over after work in the realm of production. Critical theory takes issue with this assumption through its critical assessment of the culture industry as detrimental to the development of subjectivity and critical consciousness. Marcuse offers a more practical political approach in his assessment of the emancipatory possibilities arising from technology, but only if, as I have argued, we start to ask to what end(s) we are saving time toward. If the values we seek include increasing discretionary time and temporal autonomy then this must be considered in the future development of technology.

**Developing a Politics of Time for Today**

In the final chapter, I turned to the work of André Gorz. Gorz has consistently rendered the fight for time central to questions of freedom. In *Critique of Economic Rationality*, he argues against time as informed by “economic rationality” and reinforced by the “ideology of work,” since each erases alternative economic responses to the reality of ever-rising levels of unemployment. He is particularly critical of labor for buying into the “ideology of work” by supporting “job creation” rather than contesting it. Job creation, Gorz argues, is made possible only by applying economic rationality to previously unpaid domestic labor, which is to say, the service sector. Gorz argues that this economic trend creates a “dual economy” between those with access to full-time employment and those who serve them. Economic rationality and the ideology of work have only contributed to the
colonization of time by rendering alternative economic arrangements invisible.

The rise of the service sector lead Gorz to engage feminist critiques of the sexual division of labor since women are disproportionately represented in service work and the commodification of domestic and care labor bears at least some resemblance to the “wages for housework” campaigns first waged by feminists in the 1970s as a proposed solution to gender inequality. By way of Gorz, I revisited the feminist critiques of the sexual division of labor through the lens of time. The sexual division of labor disadvantages women with regard to “discretionary time” since they are gendered to bear responsibility for a disproportionate amount of “necessary” domestic and care labor in the household, which is replicated in the market. The persistent conflict between “work” time and time needed to attend to human needs presents itself as an opportunity to develop a political consciousness of time. Historically, this conflict has been of particular salience to women whose time is further constrained by the sexual and racial divisions of labor. Feminist criticisms of the sexual and racial divisions of labor based on a notion of gender equality disrupt Aristotle’s justification of the division of labor between the private and the public realms by demonstrating the interdependence of the public sphere on the private sphere. By revisiting the domestic labor debates, Gorz places them within the larger economic trends of the growth of service-sector jobs, which are disproportionally filled by women. Examining the plight of women helps establish the need for being able to set limits on one’s time and the importance of being able to think of time as something that might need protection from relationships and the needs of others if women are to have access to discretionary time not overly determined by necessity. The gendered preoccupation with necessity is politically significant for there is an argument to be made about a correlation between how people spend their time and their self-consciousness, especially if their time is spent disproportionately in service to another in a relatively more powerful position.

**Where to Go from Here?**

The theoretical developments of the thinkers mentioned here brought together seemingly disparate elements of time, including the ethical,
the philosophical, and the political, which deepened the significance of the fight for time for the purpose of thinking about time as related to the development of human potential—a potential that is undefined, but simultaneously stunted and thwarted by the conditions of advanced capitalism. The fight for time lends itself to both through the institutional reduction of the length of the workday and week, while simultaneously bringing ethical and philosophical considerations of time to bear on the political relevance of the fight for questions of social justice. The political nature of time is intimately related to the historical development of global capitalism and should be treated as such. Analyses of time abstracted from the temporal constraints of financial necessity as determined by the organization of production and consumption under capitalism lack political insight, as do analyses that fail to take into consideration the sexual, racial, and global divisions of labor. The colonization of time is made possible through the compulsion to work for a wage in a market economy. The more reliant individuals are on the market for meeting their needs, the stronger capitalism’s hold on time. Reducing dependency on the market through the growth of a welfare state and a guaranteed basic income creates the concrete possibilities for valuing time in terms other than those defined by economic rationality. The fight for time must include objective possibilities for contesting the colonization of time by capital, including the call for a guaranteed basic income regardless of employment status, reduction in working hours, and an expansion of public policies that increase discretionary time including guaranteed paid parental leave, sick leave, vacation, and retirement.

Finally, who are the political actors who might conceivably take up the fight for time? As I have argued the desire for discretionary time and temporal autonomy already exists, but is currently being diverted (and depoliticized) into individual solutions framed by the so-called “work-life balance,” and “solved” by time-saving technology and seminars. Marcuse’s “great refusal” today should include refusing to accept time-saving ideology as if time were not severely constrained by the colonization of time. Individual solutions will not get us where we want to be. Still, the colonization of time presents the paradox that
the fight for time will require time from people who are already overworked and underpaid or underworked and desperately searching for work. Occupy Wall Street is a good example of full-time organizers whose activities were enabled in part by the solidarity of others who brought them food or housed them temporarily. Labor unions and labor movement organizations, feminist movement organizations, and environmental movement organizations could join forces to prioritize the fight for time. The fight for time should necessarily involve artists, writers, poets, playwrights, musicians, philosophers, and scientists who would combat the domination and passivity of the culture industry by introducing alternative choices to culture. Others might include those already advocating mindfulness, community gardens, the slow food movement, and sustainability. In other words, all people who are interested in the qualitative aspects of life not simply for themselves, but for all of humanity, and who cannot enjoy the good life when so many surrounding them do not have access to it. The desire to reconcile the contradiction between the haves and the have-nots is a strong one felt by many committed to social justice. Finally, people will be most motivated to fight for time when they think there is something they are missing out on. For this reason, leisure should be made as appealing as possible, something akin to what Kant referred to as “purposeful purposelessness,” perhaps only found today in the freedom of children at play. For it is only children called away from play who seem appropriately outraged at the injustice of the colonization of time by capital and reinforced by the adult world.
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Notes

Preface


2. To the best of my knowledge, there is no one currently trying to organize these particular workers in North Dakota.


10. As Goodin notes, “Others such as the young, the old and the involuntary unemployed might suffer the opposite problem—too much time and too little to do (Marie Jahoda, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and Hans Zeisel. *Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community*, trans. the authors with John Reginiait and Thomas Elsaesser (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1977; originally published 1933)—and the currency of time might not be the most relevant way of specifying what, in justice, they most need.”


**Introduction  Decolonizing Time**


2. See chapter 6 for Gorz’s definition of economic rationality.


5. Necessity is a historical concept that derives meaning from a specific historical context.


11. Ibid.


19. Ibid.


21. Ibid.


24. It should be noted that the fight for time is gendered, but not always in the same manner. Women once fought for time on the basis of their domestic and care-giving responsibilities outside of the workplace. See...

25. For a detailed description of the concept of necessity, please see chapter 1.

26. See Goodin et al., *Discretionary Time*.


28. This debasement may explain the common conflation of leisure with free time in everyday language. For the purposes of this chapter, we can again consider whether the conditions for the classical understanding of leisure actually exist since so many people today ask, “What leisure?” If we recall, the distinguishing characteristic of leisure is a condition unmarked by time. Under capitalism this experience is simply not possible for the majority of people given the time constraints of the working life that never fully allow them to forget the inevitable return to work, especially given the lack of public policy supporting time away from work for any reason.


## 1 Reclaiming Leisure

Greek and Roman concepts of society, freedom as non-domination foregrounds the relationship between social and political structures and human potential.”

2. Today the good life is variously referred to as quality of life, well-being, and happiness in the social sciences.


5. I borrow the concept of “temporal autonomy” from Goodin et al., *Discretionary Time*.


7. The idea of the “regulative ideal” originates in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 591, but is used by Stephen Eric Bronner, *Socialism Unbound*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 146: “But communism is discredited and socialism can now exist only as a regulative ideal.” Kant states, “Accordingly, I assert: the transcendental ideas are never constitutive use, so that the concepts of certain objects would thereby be given, and in case one so understands them, they are merely sophistical (dialectical) concepts. On the contrary, however, they have an excellent and indispensably necessary regulative use, namely that of directing the understanding to a certain goal respecting which the lines of direction of all its rules converge at one point, which, although it is only an idea (focus imaginarius)—i.e., a point from which the concepts of the understanding do not really proceed, since it lies entirely outside the bounds of possible experience—nonetheless still serves to obtain for these concepts the greatest unity alongside the greatest extension.”

8. Although food politics (and here I am thinking of former NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s ban on selling sodas and other sugary beverages larger than 16 ounces), was highly controversial and perhaps unconstitutional, it in the very least began a public conversation about choice and freedom in relationship to public health and food. See Joseph Ax, “Bloomberg’s Ban on Big Sodas is Unconstitutional: Appeals Court,” *Reuters*, July 30, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/30/us-sodaban-lawsuit-idUSBRE96T0UT20130730. See “Food is Power,”
Food Empowerment Project, http://www.foodispower.org/food-deserts / for a description of “food deserts”: “Food deserts can be described as geographic areas where residents’ access to affordable, healthy food options (especially fresh fruits and vegetables) is restricted or nonexistent due to the absence of grocery stores within convenient travelling distance.”


10. For more examples, see “Vacation Summit Report,” Time Day, http://www.timeday.org/right2vacation/default.asp. Take Back Your Time is an excellent resource for raising political time consciousness beyond a more limited understanding defined by economic rationality because this collection of like-minded people brings together seemingly disparate political concerns under the umbrella of a politics of time.


12. Ibid., 199.


17. Ibid., 173.


20. Ibid., 2.

21. “Thus property is an instrument to living; an estate is a multitude of instruments; so a slave is an animated instrument, but every one that can minister of himself is more valuable than any other instrument; for if every instrument, at command, or from a preconception
of its master’s will, could accomplish its work (as the story goes of the
statues of Daedalus; or what the poet tells us of the tripods of Vulcan,
“that they moved of their own accord into the assembly of the gods”),
the shuttle would then weave, and the lyre play of itself; nor would the
architect want servants, or the master slaves.” Aristotle, The Politics,
1254a.

Economy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 44.
23. M. M. Austin and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Economic and Social History of
24. Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: University of
26. Wilson Carey McWilliams, “Values and Politics” (speech given at the
Alliance for Citizen Education, June 9, 1979), text no longer available
from the Institute for the Study of Civic Values at http://www.iscv.org
/Civic_Idealism/McWilliams/ValuesPolitics/valuespolitics.html.
29. “The rule of a master over slaves exists by convention only and not by
nature.” Aristotle, Politics, 15.
31. Ibid., 93.
32. See note 21.
33. Martha A. Ackelsberg, Resisting Citizenship: Feminist Essays on Politics,
Community, and Democracy (New York, Routledge, 2010), 147.
34. Martha Craven Nussbaum, Creating Capabilities: The Human
Reflections on a Greek Ideal,” Leisure Sciences 10 (1988): 189. The
quote is from Aristotle’s Politics (1334a).
37. Martha Craven Nussbaum, “Women’s Capabilities and Social Justice,”
38. “Again, of all those faculties with which nature endows us we first
acquire the potentialities, and only later effect their actualization.”
40. This point is relevant to chapter 5 in my discussion of the appeal of
the culture industry as related to the time constraints under advanced
capitalism in the context of the United States.
42. Ibid., 328.
43. Ibid., 75.
44. Ibid., “The view that happiness is contemplation is confirmed by other
arguments” (333).
46. “Every art and every investigation, and similarly every action and
pursuit, is considered to aim at some good.” Aristotle, *The Ethics of
48. Ibid., 335.
49. Ibid., 83.
50. Ibid., 76.
51. “This is indicated, too, by the fact that the other animals have no
share in happiness, being completely activity. For while the whole life
of the gods is blessed, and that of men too in so far as some likeness to
them, none of the other animals is happy, since they in no way share
Ethics*, 77–79.
52. Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*
53. “The state comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life,
55. Chris Rojek, *The Labour of Leisure: The Culture of Free Time* (Los
Angeles: Sage, 2010), 133.
58. Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, in *Writings of the Young Marx on
Philosophy and Society*, ed. and trans. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H.
59. Nancy Schwartz argues, “Marx’s critique of the operation of the labor
theory of value under capitalism involves a criticism of the elements
of that system—labor-power and labor-time. He argues that a system
which reduces the varieties of power to just one form of power—labor
power—and the varieties of labor time to just one form of time—
labor time—robs life of certain other crucial dimensions of experience.
By implication, then, there are alternative experiences and organizations of experience which are possible, and some which are desirable.” Schwartz, “Labor, Politics, and Time in the Thought of Karl Marx,” 190.


61. See note 7.

62. Goodin et al., *Discretionary Time*.

63. The sexual division of labor and consequently gendered nature of time is covered in chapter 6.


65. Ibid., 8.

66. Ibid., 4.

2 Criticizing After Dinner: Marx and the Fight for Time for Human Development

1. For a detailed description of the concept of necessity, please see chapter 1.


3. The empirical evidence behind this research is provided by Goodin et al., *Discretionary Time*, 3.

4. See Paul Lafargue, “The Blessings of Work,” in *The Right to Be Lazy*, Lafargue Internet Archive, http://www.marxists.org/archive/lafargue/1883/lazy/ch02.htm, trans. Sally Ryan and Einde O’Callaghan for Marxists.org, http://www.marxists.org/, 2000. Original Source: Paul LaFargue, *The Right to Be Lazy and Other Studies*, trans. Charles Kerr (Chicago: Charles Kerr and Co., Co-operative, 1883). “Twelve hours of work a day, that is the ideal of the philanthropists and moralists of the eighteenth century. How have we outdone this nec plus ultra! Modern factories have become ideal houses of correction in which the toiling masses are imprisoned, in which they are condemned to compulsory work for twelve or fourteen hours, not the men only but also women and children. And to think that the sons of the heroes of the Terror have allowed themselves to be degraded by the religion of work,
to the point of accepting, since 1848, as a revolutionary conquest, the law limiting factory labor to twelve hours. They proclaim as a revolutionary principle the Right to Work. Shame to the French proletariat! Only slaves would have been capable of such baseness. A Greek of the heroic times would have required twenty years of capitalist civilization before he could have conceived such vileness.” For a contemporary critique of the “right to work” as a flawed political strategy, see Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).


13. Ibid., 111.


17. Ibid., 19.


19. Ibid., 422.

20. Ibid., 458.

21. Ibid., 424.


27. “The starting-point of the development that gave rise to the wage-labourer as well as to the capitalist, was the servitude of the labourer. The advance consisted in a change of form of this servitude, in the transformation of feudal exploitation into capitalist exploitation.” Marx, Capital, Vol. I, Part VIII, Chapter 26, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch26.htm.

28. “This primitive accumulation plays in Political Economy about the same part as original sin in theology. Adam bit the apple, and thereupon sin fell on the human race. Its origin is supposed to be explained when it is told as an anecdote of the past. In times long gone-by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more,
in riotous living. The legend of theological original sin tells us certainly how man came to be condemned to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow; but the history of economic original sin reveals to us that there are people to whom this is by no means essential. Never mind! Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority that, despite all its labour, has up to now nothing to sell but itself, and the wealth of the few that increases constantly although they have long ceased to work. Such insipid childishness is every day preached to us in the defence of property.” Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Part VIII, Chapter 26, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch26.htm. One only has to consider for a moment the rhetoric around welfare reform to understand that Marx was correct insofar as time is political.


30. Ibid.


33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.


41. Ibid., 353.

42. Ibid., 415–416.

43. Ibid., 415–416.

44. Capital has found ways to overcome the limits set by the state by paying overtime.
48. Ibid., 86.
49. Postone states, “I am suggesting, then, that the emergence of such a new form of time was related to the development of the commodity form of social relations. It was rooted not only in the sphere of commodity production but in that of commodity circulation as well.” Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 211.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., 189.
53. Ibid., 211.
54. Ibid., 202.
55. Ibid., 206.
59. Ibid.
63. This is why it does not make sense to speak of “false consciousness,” but instead contradictions within all consciousnesses.

3 The Reification of Time-Consciousness and the Fight for Time Reconsidered

7. Ibid., 54–55.
8. Ibid., 54.
11. Ibid., 201.
15. Ibid., 5–6.
19. Ibid., 83.
20. Ibid., 85.
21. Ibid., 86.
22. Ibid., 83.
23. Ibid., 86. Emphasis mine.
24. Lukács admitted conflation of objectification and alienation in his concept of reification (a term Marx did not use), which makes it difficult to determine what descriptions are specific to alienation and what conditions are specific to reification. Thus “reification” will have to suffice for now.
26. Ibid., 86.
32. Feenberg, *Lukács, Marx and the Sources of Critical Theory*.
33. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 89.
34. Ibid., 110.
35. Ibid., xxiv. “*History and Class Consciousness* follows Hegel in that it too equates alienation with objectification [Vergegenständlichung] (to use the term employed by Marx in the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*."
42. “Time, after all, was the master’s, as it had to be in a slave society. Clock- and watch-owning slaves would too easily become time-negotiating workers.” Mark M. Smith, *Mastered by the Clock: Time, Slavery, and Freedom in the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 7.


47. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 93.


50. Georg Lukács quoting Karl Marx, HCC, 152.

51. Holz et al., *Conversations with Lukács*, 56.


57. Ibid., xxiv.

58. Ibid.

59. Holz et al., *Conversations with Lukács*, 81.

60. Ibid., 54–55.


62. Ibid., 55.

63. Ibid., 55.

64. Ibid., 82–83.

65. Holz et al., *Conversations with Lukács*, 84.


67. Holz et al., *Conversations with Lukács*, 64 and 83.
69. Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, 88.
70. Ibid., 96.
71. Ibid., 99.
72. Ibid., 90.
73. Ibid., 166.
74. Goldman, Lukács and Heidegger, 60.
75. Ibid., 64.
76. Ibid., 61.
77. Ibid., 32–33.
78. Jay, Marxism and Totality, 104.
79. Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, 171.
80. Ibid., 169–170.
81. Lukács, quoted in Jay, Marxism and Totality, 105.
82. Jay, Marxism and Totality, 185.
83. Ibid., 197.
84. Ibid., 58.
85. Holz et al., Conversations with Lukács, 57.
86. Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, 208.
87. Ibid.

4 Critical Thoughts on Leisure

1. According to Marx, production shapes the object in relationship to the subject and consumption shapes the subject in relationship to the object: “Production thus not only creates an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object.” “The product only obtains its ‘last finish’ in consumption.” Karl Marx, Introduction, Grundsürse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, Section 2, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch01.htm.
4. This debasement may explain the common conflation of leisure with free time in everyday language. For the purposes of this chapter, we can again consider whether the conditions for the classical understanding of leisure actually exist since so many people today ask, “What leisure?” If we recall, the distinguishing characteristic of leisure is a condition unmarked by time. Under capitalism this experience is simply not possible for the majority of people given the time constraints of the working life that never fully allow them to forget the inevitable return to work, especially given the lack of public policy supporting time away from work for any reason.


6. Ibid., 382.

7. Ibid., 386–387.


10. Ibid., 391.

11. Ibid., 376.

12. Ibid., 373.

13. Ibid., 379.


15. Ibid., 387.


19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.


23. For an updated take on the consumer ethos today, see Benjamin R. Barber’s Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007).

27. Ibid., 403.
31. For additional descriptions of the move from a household based on production to a household based on consumption, please see Ruth Schwartz Cowan, More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave (New York: Basic, 1983).
32. In this chapter, I am primarily interested in the introduction of time-discipline/management and time-saving technology into the private household. Unfortunately, Cowan’s analysis does not explicitly address the division of labor based on class and race, but I do in the last chapter, since African-American women were often denied the experience of “intimate equality.”
34. Cowan, More Work for Mother, 49.
35. Ibid, 45.
36. Ewen, Captains of Consciousness, 118.
40. Ibid., 115.
41. In food production, for example, flour became something that was bought rather than made in the home. Milling, butchering, and canning along with the refrigerator increased the amount of food that was bought rather than made. “Indeed by the end of the century, processed foods of all kinds—packaged dry cereals, pancake mixes, crackers and cookies machine wrapped in paper containers, canned hams, and bottled corned beef—were part of the staple output of some of the


43. Ibid., 71.


46. Ibid., 15, 18–19.

47. Ibid., 12.


50. Ibid., 44.


55. Ibid., 40–41.

56. Ibid., 43.


59. Ibid., 18–19.

60. Ibid., 127.

61. Ibid., 9.

5 The Culture Industry: The Extension of Work, Disciplined Leisure, and the Deterioration of Culture


2. “The term culture industry was perhaps used for the first time in the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which Horkheimer and I published in Amsterdam in 1947. In our drafts we spoke of ‘mass culture.’ We replaced that expression with ‘culture industry’ in order to exclude
from the outset the interpretation agreeable to its advocates; that it is a matter of something like a culture that arises spontaneously from the masses themselves, the contemporary form of popular art. From the latter the culture industry must be distinguished in the extreme...Thus, although the culture industry undeniably speculates on the conscious and unconscious state of the millions towards which it is directed, the masses are not primary, but secondary; they are an object of calculation, an appendage of the machinery. The customer is not king, as the culture industry would like to have us believe, not its subject but its object.” Theodor W. Adorno, “The Culture Industry Reconsidered,” in Critical Theory and Society: A Reader, eds., Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas MacKay Kellner (New York: Routledge, 1989), 128–129.


7. Ibid., 121.

8. Ibid., 131. Emphasis mine.


11. Ibid.


13. “The entertainments manufacturers know that their products will be consumed with alertness even when the customer is distraught, for each of them is a model of the huge economic machinery which has always sustained the masses, whether at work or at leisure—which is akin to work.” Adorno and Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, 127.
20. Ibid., 4.
21. Ibid., 169.
22. Ibid., 126.
23. Ibid., 121.
28. Ibid., 13.
29. Ibid., 14.
30. Ibid., 16.
31. Ibid., 23.
33. Ibid., 167.
34. “Even those conciliatory sociologies that apply the concept of ‘role’ like a master key acknowledge this fact to the extent that the concept, borrowed from the theater, hints that the existence imposed on people by society is not identical with what they are in themselves or what they could be. Certainly no simple division should be attempted between human beings as they are in themselves and their so-called social roles. The roles extend deep into the characteristics of people themselves, into their innermost composition. In the age of truly unprecedented social integration it is difficult to discern anything at all in people that might be other than functionally determined.” Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, 167–168.
35. “Moreover, and far more importantly, free time depends on the totality of societal conditions. That totality now as much as ever holds people under a spell. In reality, neither in their work nor in their consciousness are people freely in charge of themselves.” Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, 167.


37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.


41. Ibid.


44. Ibid.


48. “In light of Marcuse’s criticism of ‘one-dimensional’ states of affairs by posing alternatives that are to be fought for and realized, it is wrong to read him solely as a theorist of the totally administered society who completely rejects contradiction, conflict, revolt, and alternative thought and action.” Kellner, introduction to *One-Dimensional Man*, xxvi.

49. Kellner, introduction to *One-Dimensional Man*, xxii.

52. Ibid., 7.
53. Kellner, introduction to *One-Dimensional Man*, xv.
65. Kellner, introduction to *One-Dimensional Man*, xxi.

6 Developing a Politics of Time: André Gorz and the Domestic Labor Debates

5. Ibid., 3.
7. For a detailed historical account of the fight for shorter hours in the United States see Benjamin Hunnicutt, *Work without End: Abandoning


9. Ibid., 104.


17. Gorz, Ecologica, 171.

18. Ibid., 172.


20. Ibid., 5.

21. Ibid., 219.

22. Ibid.


27. Little, The Political Thought of André Gorz, 102.


29. Ibid., 156.

30. Ibid., 5.

31. Ibid., 6.

32. Ibid., 5.

35. Ibid., 168–169.
40. Ibid., 32.
41. Ibid., 34.
42. Ibid., 32.
45. Ibid., 167.
46. Ibid., 13.
47. Weeks, “Hours for What We Will’: Work, Family, and the Movement for Shorter Hours,” 104.

“Marxist feminists place the gendered construction of reproductive labor at the center of women's oppression. They point out that this labor is performed disproportionately by women and is essential to the industrial economy. Yet because it takes place outside of the market, it is invisible, not recognized as real work. Men benefit directly and indirectly from this arrangement—directly in that they contribute less labor in the home while enjoying the services women provide as wives and mothers and indirectly in that, freedom of domestic labor, they can concentrate their efforts on paid employment and attain primacy in that area. Thus the sexual division of reproductive labor interacts with and reinforces sexual division in the labor market. These analyses drew attention to the dialectics of production and reproduction and male privilege in both realms. When they represent gender as the sole basis for assigning reproductive labor, however, they imply that all
women have the same relationship to it and it is therefore a universal female experience.”


51. “The term social reproduction is used by feminist scholars to refer to the array of activities and relationships involved in maintaining people both on a daily basis and intergenerationally. Reproductive labor includes activities such as purchasing household goods, preparing and serving food, laundering and repairing clothing, maintaining furnishings and appliances, socializing children, providing care and emotional support for adults, and maintaining kin and community ties.” Glenn, “From Servitude to Service Work,” 1.


54. “Reproductive labor has divided along racial as well as gender lines and the specific characteristics of the division have varied regionally and changed over time as capitalism has reorganized labor, shifting parts of it from the household to the market. In the first half of the century racial-ethnic women were employed as servants to perform reproductive labor in white households, relieving white middle-class women of onerous aspects of that work; in the second half of the century, with the expansion of commodified services (services turned into commercial products or activities), racial-ethnic women are disproportionately employed as service workers in institutional settings to carry out lower-level “public” reproductive labor, while cleaner white collar supervisory and lower professional positions are filled by white women.” Glenn, “From Servitude to Service Work,” 3.

55. Intersectional analysis cuts across various categories of oppression. Each analysis of oppression and strategy for resistance is unique insofar
as it addresses different type of political demands as well as different analytical constructs and research agendas.

57. Ibid., 136.
58. Ibid.
61. Ibid., 27
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., 28.
69. Lisa Maria Hogeland, “Fear of Feminism: Why Young Women Get the Willies,” *Ms. Magazine* V, no. 3 (November/December 1994). Hogeland makes a helpful distinction between gender consciousness or “awareness of women's vulnerability and celebration of women’s difference” and feminist consciousness or the “politiciz[ation of] gender consciousness, [which] inserts it into a systematic analysis of histories and structures of domination and privilege” that seems to be more generous than the idea of “false consciousness.”
70. By accessible I mean both easy to read and understand and more readily available because of the grassroots nature of second-wave feminism. Bell Hooks discusses the advantages and disadvantages as second-wave feminism became institutionalized in the university setting and became less grassroots. Along with Bell Hooks, the question of accessibility to feminist thought is of continued interest to me since feminism has the potential to transform women’s lives in significant ways. See Bell Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (Cambridge,

71. The private sphere has historically been framed as apolitical. Second-wave feminism challenged this idea by demonstrating the connections between the private and public spheres. In other words, the sexual division of labor in the household is in a dialectic relationship with the sexual division of labor reproduced and maintained outside of the household.


74. Ibid. Mainardi notes that both she and her partner have careers: “We both have careers, both had to work a couple of days a week to earn enough to live on. So why shouldn’t we share the housework?”


76. Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, 140. Cobble argues that working-class women fought for time so that they might fulfill their household and childcare roles: “The politics of time were as gendered as the politics of pay in the postwar era. Labor women supported efforts to reduce work time for different reasons then did men, and at times, they devised their own distinct counterproposals to those of the male-led labor movement. Working class women desired leisure as did men, but finding ways of meeting their dual responsibilities as breadwinner and caretaker was of even greater concern.”


80. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “menial” as follows: “Of service, employment, etc.: proper to or performed by a menial or domestic servant. In later use only with disparaging implication: of the nature of drudgery; servile, degrading; (spec. of work) lacking in reward or prestige, glamour, or status, undignified; requiring little skill”; http://dictionary.oed.com. However, this understanding of menial confers a value to this type of work in a specific cultural context. In contrast, Buddhism may value this work, not in terms of capitalism, but as intrinsically meaningful as a physical way to discipline the mind and body.

81. I am thinking here of janitors that clean buildings late at night.


90. Goodin et al., Discretionary Time, 239.

91. Ibid., 261.

92. Ibid., 192.

93. Ibid., 263.


98. Ibid.
99. Ibid.
100. Cobble and Merrill, “The Promise of Service Work Unionism.”
103. Ibid., 155.
104. Shatema Annice Threadcraft, “Labor,’ Free and Equal: The Black Female Body and the Body Politics” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2010), 15. “Black women, from the moment they began conscious political organizing, always articulated a concurrent critique of their place in American society that centered on their desire for access to legitimate intimate life. In claiming intimate equality, black women after Emancipation asserted their right to be women, wives, and mothers, rights enjoyed by most white women at the time, as much as the franchise was a privilege of all white men.”
107. Ibid., 1.
108. “Marxist feminists place the gendered construction of reproductive labor at the center of women’s oppression. They point out that this labor is performed disproportionately by women and is essential to the industrial economy. Yet because it takes place outside of the market, it is invisible, not recognized as real work. Men benefit directly and indirectly from this arrangement—directly in that they contribute less labor in the home while enjoying the services women provide as wives and mothers and indirectly in that, freed of domestic labor, they can concentrate their efforts on paid employment and attain primacy in that area. Thus the sexual division of reproductive labor interacts with and reinforces sexual division in the labor market. These analyses drew attention to the dialectics of production and reproduction and male privilege in both realms. When they represent gender as the sole basis for assigning reproductive labor, however, they imply that all women have the same relationship to it and it is therefore a universal female experience.” Glenn, “From Servitude to Service Work,” 2.

111. Ibid, 126.


114. Ibid., 143–145.

115. Ibid., 145.

116. Ibid.

**Conclusion**


2. Ibid., 3.


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