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LABOR AND LAMENTATION: A GENEALOGY OF ACEDIA,
ALIENATED LABOR, AND DEPRESSED AFFECTS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HISTORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS
with an emphasis in PHILOSOPHY

by

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September 2013

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Labor and Lamentation: A Genealogy of Acedia,
Alienated Labor, and Depressed Affects

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Abstract

Adam Dylan Hefty

Labor and Lamentation: A Genealogy of Acedia,
Alienated Labor, and Depressed Affects

The increasing importance of symbolic and emotional forms of labor in capitalism and the democratic profusion of mood disorders such as depression are major dynamics of the social life of late modernity in the US. These elements of human life are treated as separate in our received, cultural categories, but experientially they seem to converge. Using methods of Foucauldian genealogy and critical theory, I excavate the history of this relationship and theorize its contemporary dynamics. The genealogy starts with medieval acedia, a condition in which inability to work and depressed affects appear as a single problem. Acedia is a partial predecessor of modern conditions such as sloth, ennui, and melancholia, the divisions of which trace affective and social divisions emerging over the course of industrial, capitalist modernity. Late modern capitalism generates types of work and work processes which I characterize as subjective labor, forms of work which require symbolic and affective aspects of workers' subjectivities and intersubjective

relationships. Management of workers' moods and initiative becomes central to late capitalism. Late modernity articulates mental normalcy as a positive optimization of mood rather than eradicating abnormalities and a range of techniques of self care emerge, including anti-depressants, short-term psychotherapy, and alternative techniques such as meditation, mindfulness, and stress reduction. Both on the job and in "private" life, mood appears as a problem to be managed. Public discourses of depression are anachronistic at best if they treat work as a secondary question.

At a philosophical level, this genealogy implies a need to historicize the concept of alienation. Marxian alienation is premised on the production of physical goods in an industrial labor process. Industrial production and managerial techniques are still central to capitalism as a whole, but in advanced capitalist countries, subjective labor becomes politically and arguably economically much more central. Alienation in an economy dominated by subjective labor can be less about a separation between the worker and the product and activity of labor and more about dissociation within the worker's subjectivity. This renders late modern alienation as a problem which is irreducibly psychological and tied up with other dimensions of affective life.

Acknowledgments

Without the feedback and support of my advisor, Barbara Epstein, this dissertation would not exist in anything like its current form. She entered into the intellectual world of my project on its own terms even when some of its theoretical frameworks clashed with her outlook. What emerged was a conversation about the topics which pushed me to articulate my ideas in a clearer and more grounded fashion. She also looked out for my progress as a graduate student with consistent care and concern. I feel deep gratitude for this intellectual partnership.

Robert Meister taught me to think about acedia philosophically in relation to contemporary political dynamics. Taking his seminar and working for his class as a teaching assistant was a formative, inspiring intellectual experience that allowed me to conceive a key part of the initial trajectory of this project. He also helped me to think about the broad historical and theoretical vicissitudes of alienation.

Working with David Hoy was critical for my attempt at a sustained, somewhat heterodox use of Foucauldian methodology and concepts in my dissertation. I came to value deeply his generosity of engagement and feedback.

I'd also like to thank Angela Davis for her comments on the early, qualifying exam version of this project.

Many friends and colleagues took an interest in my work; conversations with them inspired me to keep going and to articulate my thoughts for other people. It's impossible to name all of the people who contributed in this way, but Lissette Olivares, Apryl Berney, Zhivka Valiavicharska, Trevor Sangrey, Lisa Stampnitzsky, Alexis Kargl, Joshua Brahinsky, Ari Cushner, Dawn Whitaker, Lucas McGranahan, and Johanna Rothe were very important interlocutors. While he may disagree with many of my conclusions, engaging with Charles Post around immaterial labor and precariat / new capitalism debates gave me a lot to think about and helped me sharpen my ideas. Writing partners helped me to keep working on a schedule and articulate bits of what I was thinking when the finish line was far from sight. I'd like to thank Yunnies Tsao Snyder, Alexandria Wright, Scout Calvert, and Rebecca Schein for their companionship, breaking the isolation of writing. Thanks to Harlan Weaver for a cat-sitting gig which was an ideal writing retreat at the very end.

Alexis Shotwell gave me priceless advice on the dissertation writing process and academic life. She and Chris Dixon periodically restore my faith that there can be something generative and collective about the work of radicals in the academy. Alexis pointed me in the direction of Dorothy Duff Brown, whose help allowed me to conceptualize and alter my own work process.

The idea that a quasi-monastic withdrawal from the world could be deeply political and communitarian, not just otherworldly, and that the activity of labor in small communities has something generative and not just authoritarian to say to modern life goes back for me to Deep Springs College. Many friends and classmates

are wrapped up in that experience, but I'd like to specially thank Joshua Joy Kamensky and Patrick O'Connor for their engagement with me around these topics over the years. Studying with Jeff Lustig there was a formative experience; he is missed.

This project stands at a level of philosophical and historical abstraction from many of the concerns which motivated it, but its personal meaning for me is deeply tied in with those experiences. Thinking together and trying to build something which connects fighting for a better world with the dignity and value of labor is a project which connects me with Abra Quinn, Brian Malone, Robert Wood, Isaac Silver, Jessy Lancaster, Amanda Armstrong, Michael-David Sasson, Joanna Misnik, Katy Fox-Hodess, Robert Caldwell, Jesse Saba Kirchner, Julie Jedlicka, James Illingworth, Dianne Feeley, Rachel Brahinsky, David Patt Jedlicka, J. Guevara, Sherwin Mendoza, Jordan Brocious, Kfir Cohen, Jessica Smith, Mary and Patrick Quinn, Jessica Taal, Shane Boyle, Kate Doyle Griffiths-Dingani, Shannon Ikebe, Anne Kelly, Blanca Missé, Michelle Glowa, Beezer de Martelly, Susan Dirr, Chanda Prescod-Weinstein, Johanna Brenner, and many, many others. Continuing to work with them sustains my optimism of the will in a world that continues to need the clarity of a pessimistic, sometimes even melancholic intellect.

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1) Conjuncture and Method

The changing nature of work and the cultural prominence of depression and other quotidian emotional disorders stand out as two arenas of social life in the United States and some other advanced capitalist countries which have been quite dynamic over the past 40 years. The most common forms of work in advanced capitalist countries like the US today, whether in the professional strata, in the working classes, or in precarious employment, are jobs in which the main activity of work involves the production not of objects but of subjectivities. The diagnosis and treatment of relatively common emotional problems, such as depression, anxiety, and various newer or newly prominent disorders, has undergone a massive quantitative growth and is the subject of much cultural reflection.

While working as a union organizer with healthcare and hotel workers, and later as a graduate student in the humanities, I came to reflect on the areas of overlap and possible relationships between these areas of human life that our collective, received, common-sense cultural discourse usually treat as completely separate realms. Anecdotes reveal only a slanted view of social reality, of course, and the field of common sense they reflect is rife with contradictions. These contradictions and slants can tell us something about the emergence of social problematics which lack a

theoretical articulation that reflects them, whether at a professional or popular intellectual level.

People talk about depression and anxiety in their own lives in a variety of ways: feelings of being inexplicably de-energized or overwhelmed, speculation about their own biochemical balance in light of a visit with a psychiatrist, hoping that a renewed commitment to exercise, diet, yoga, or meditation might put everything right, conflicts with loved ones, romances that went wrong, deaths of family members, concerns about their children, and so forth. All of these topics are longstanding parts of US cultural discourse about depression and emotional self-care. People also bring up their jobs, career plans, the frustrations of a hard day of work or a self-defeating cycle of procrastination, and feelings of ambivalence, dislike, burnout, or even trauma in regards to work.

Beyond their own personal experience, people often talk about depression and changes in work today in revealingly exaggerated societal and cultural terms: “Everybody is depressed these days.” “Everybody is taking Paxil.” “Everybody’s got their kid on Ritalin whether they need it or not – in my day we just called that a hyper kid and figured they would grow out of it.” “There are no more steady factory jobs with good pay and benefits, just crappy jobs as a barista or at Walmart.” “Why do bipolar, ADHD, Borderline seem to be ‘hip’ disorders all of a sudden?”

Working people I know who feel stuck in their jobs and their lives often talk about this in terms that come from the language of depression, whether they would have identified as emotionally depressed or met the clinical criteria for this condition

or not. Even workers who felt they had a career they liked often felt overwhelmed by the demands of workplaces that were sped-up and understaffed. Graduate students reflected on the ironies of “getting to do something you love all day” while facing the reality of being inducted into a profession where only a few would move forward to prized, tenured jobs and many more would end up working as overworked, undervalued adjuncts or leaving the academy.

I was involved with organizations of students, workers, and faculty fighting budget cuts, rising tuition, and declining accessibility in the public university. Organizing and activism could frequently shift from the highs of finding a common purpose to the doldrums and burnout of experiencing organizing as one more, emotionally draining demand in an already busy life, especially when it wasn’t clear if anything could be done to stop or change what seemed to be an inexorable force. Organizing, imagined as liberatory praxis, could become just more work which was sometimes alienating on its own terms. There’s a widespread common-sense notion in the US that people don’t engage in politics, activism, or community spaces due to apathy, but where I went I saw very little apathy and a lot of hopelessness that things could be different.

A relationship, however incoherent, between depressed moods and labor seems to be coming into its own in experience and common sense which is mostly ignored or treated as secondary in established discourses of psychiatry, self help, political change, work-life, and economics. What people put together in a conversation seemed to be running ahead of the received categories of discourse.

Depression and labor have not always been distinct arenas of human life. I began to trace the historical relationship between depressed affects and the life of work through a distant antecedent: acedia, the deadly sin which preceded sloth, a condition which combined symptoms of what we would now call depression and affective barriers to work, in early Christian, monastic contexts. Third and fourth century monks' descriptions of tedium, daydreaming, disgust, and social alienation seemed to resonate with contemporary depression memoirs and work-related conditions known mainly through neologisms like "burnout" and "compassion fatigue." I began to think about a genealogical way to study this problem. Could I trace a history of the relationship between depressive affective states, alienated forms of labor, and blockages or resistances to work, starting with acedia?

An important philosophical concept already at the crux of the relationship between labor and certain dejected or flat affects is Marx's alienated labor. The concept of alienation has been repurposed for a number of somewhat different aspects of human social relations. Marx's original articulation of the concept in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* began with the relationship of the worker under capitalism to the product and the activity of his labor. Marx's typical worker worked in a factory or workshop which produced physical products. Marx's account of alienation centers upon the relationships a worker has with the physical product of his labor, which confronts him in philosophical terms as something alien. Even as workers produce wealth, workers' conditions become impoverished; as workers produce social power, workers become weak. The labor processes of

workshops and factories in the relatively early stage of industrial capitalism with which Marx was familiar are prominent.

Much of Marx's concept of alienation still resonates today; something fundamental in his account cuts to the heart of a dynamic which still pertains for contemporary capitalism. Especially for late capitalism in the advanced capitalist countries, labor in factories producing physical goods is neither as typical nor as central to national political economies as it once was. We live in a society in which the most typical and quickly growing areas of work are mainly in service and information economies, performing work which usually involves some combinations of affective or emotional labor, symbolic or informational labor, and direct, bodily care work.¹ The Marxian account of alienation is not written with these kinds of labor in mind, and in some ways the basic object relations of these kinds of work are different from those of the factory setting. How should we re-theorize alienation given this shift? For all the various ways the concept of alienation has been used to think about social relationships outside the ambit of labor, the core concept of the alienation of labor itself has never been thoroughly historicized and renovated for late capitalism.

For a number of reasons, I decided to take *acedia* as the starting-place of this genealogy. *Acedia* was a critical problematic of monastic labor, and monastic labor is an important if generally overlooked predecessor to labor under capitalism. Medieval craft production was based not only in guilds and towns, but in monasteries, where monks themselves, lay brethren, and hired workers produced craft goods and

1 See figures 1-3, pp. 370-372.

foodstuffs for sale, tended sometimes quite extensive land holdings, copied scripts, and recited the monastic office. (The latter, of course, was reserved for the monks.)

To a greater extent than in the towns, monastic labor was centrally organized and disciplined, making it an important antecedent of modern management. Monastic work was a moral, ethical, spiritual, and proto-psychological problem long before it became a moral problem for lay people.

Acedia was the predecessor of the cardinal sin of sloth; the cardinal sins (originally demons, thoughts, or struggles) were developed within a monastic context. Pastoral concern for the moral lives of laypeople developed slowly over medieval history, and a total notion of lay morality was not really in place until close to the end of the medieval period. For several centuries, acedia was the most strictly monastic of all the cardinal sins; it was the last to be laicized. Its initial application for laypeople involved not so much laziness in general or failure to do one's worldly work, but reluctance to perform one's religious duties as a layperson. Thus, the problematic which eventually became laziness was developed for hundreds of years in an intensely spiritualized context. Monastic labor was a sort of moral laboratory in which precursors to the stigma of laziness and its converse, various work ethics, were developed.

Finally, the management of monastic work developed a particular relationship between external authority (the will of God as interpreted by a monastic superior, the order of a community, and a daily routine) and the monk's ability not only to internalize this authority but to trace the movements of his own desires to understand

and resist temptations and bring his actions into accord with God's will. Acedia was precisely the problem of having chosen such a life of duty and finding that one's will resists. In the words of Robert Meister, acedia is "the sin that comes after giving up sin without doing what comes next."² This relationship between self-management and external authority is recapitulated in some ways in contemporary management techniques, which I call managementality, the management of self-management.

We can see the roots of modern affective separations as well as traces related to late modern seeming novelties in the acedia problematic.

1) Late Capitalist Conjuncture

The social organization of the labor process in advanced capitalist countries has changed significantly since World War II. There is a great deal of disagreement about the exact nature and significance of these changes; I will look at these debates in some detail and propose a way of thinking about these changes in Chapter 4, Subjective Labor under Late Capitalism. I will attempt to situate the problems briefly here. Different kinds of work are coming to prominence within advanced capitalist countries. Some of these kinds of work are relatively new: symbolic labor in the information economy – especially various technical positions involving computer programming, network and database administration, etc., but also financial and security technicians, as well as service occupations around this "new economy" such as phone support. Reproductive and affective kinds of labor, traditionally the unpaid work of women in the home or the informal, paid work of women in others' homes,

2 Robert Meister, *After Evil: A Politics of Human Rights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 73.

has become ubiquitous as formal, paid, often highly exploited labor. Many kinds of work in the service sector fit this category, including that of home health aides, healthcare workers, counselors, therapists, personal hygiene workers (such as manicurists and skin care specialists), and child care providers. In some cases this work reflects expanded “leisure” spending; in other cases, work that was traditionally done privately, in the home, by individual women has been de-privatized as the social role of the housewife has evaporated, women’s “second shifts” of reproductive labor / household work notwithstanding. The vast majority of the largest, fastest-growing, and highest-growth occupations in the US fall in these categories.³

High modern industrial capitalism was mostly unconcerned with the affective lives of workers; the content, productive worker was typically described as being affectively simple or lacking affect altogether. Even enjoying your break-time too much might be a sign that you hadn’t disciplined yourself enough for industrial productivity. A stigma of laziness separated “productive,” stable, steadily employed workers from “problem” workers and the unemployed. With greater moral abstraction and stereotyping, paupers were sometimes placed in workhouses and asylums along with lunatics and mad people as a moral example of the evils of laziness, and the subjugation of racialized and colonized others was justified with an ideology which saw their “laziness” as constitutional.

Contemporary capitalism and its managerial apparatus is much more concerned with details of the mental states and affective capacities of its workforce. Many service-sector jobs require workers to produce certain affective displays or to

3 See figures 1-3, pp. 370-372.

manage customers' emotions. Many information economy jobs are also affective or require a lot of intersubjective work, for example, team design of a project. Some of those few symbolic laborers whose work is mainly individual are highly prized "symbolic analysts," and here the accent is placed less on affective labor and more on affective contentment and conditions for smooth functioning and creativity. The point of this is not the intrinsic happiness of the worker, but her contentment to spend long days at work. The design of these systems tends to be based on an understanding that symbolic workers need breaks and flexibility in order to achieve maximum mental productivity. Thus, premier dot-com workplace offered leisure activities, flexible hours, childcare, gourmet meals, and an on-site gym and dry cleaning, all to allow the worker to feel content and balanced, more at play than at work, and almost never having to leave. It became something like a company town for relatively high status, late modern technical workers.

Another important development of the past 40 years in this arena has been the partial, uneven weakening of traditional family structures, particularly the collapse of the Fordist model of the nuclear family. Even among sectors of the working class that were never included in that model, an increasing economic need for a two-adult household to have both adults working full time outside the home if possible has contributed to an erosion in the caring labor provided within many families. As women have come to work longer hours, men have typically not tended to pick up much of the slack in household work. In certain places, particularly within queer and non-heteronormative communities of young people, the erosion of the traditional

family has generated new modes of care and friendship / kin structures, but increasing numbers of people, especially middle-aged men, are living alone late into their lives, maintaining fewer deep community and interpersonal bonds. Some forms of reproductive labor which used to be performed regularly in the home have become rare or irregular or have been commodified in such a way that care is replaced with a simulacrum of care.

Advanced capitalism introduces in the sphere of commodity production a regime of “lean production;” in the sphere of the home it instigates a regime of “lean reproduction.” The prevalence of relatively cheap consumer goods, processed or prepared foods, and commodified services takes the place of a great deal of social reproduction in the home that was formerly considered socially necessary. The breakdown in traditional family order opens the possibility of new forms of intimate human communities to develop. However, in the short and medium term, for many people, this erosion of the traditional order of care appears as a crisis: lack of care and community along with increasing atomization and alienation.

Also in the past 30-40 years, a new mode of medicalizing and treating common emotional conditions like depression and anxiety has emerged. Especially after the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) was introduced, the social conception of mental illness began to shift, from the ubiquity of stigma and the prevalence of psychotherapy with a psychoanalytic theoretical basis to relative destigmatization and the notion of a biochemical basis for mental disorders. Depression began to become, simultaneously, a mood disorder and a

medical condition which anyone could have and for which anyone ought to be able to receive treatment. The introduction of Prozac and related antidepressants beginning in the 1980s made a psychotropic treatment available with rare occurrences of dangerous side effects, accelerating the democratization of this condition.

2) Theoretical Interlocutors and Method

Foucault's practice of genealogy is a methodological inspiration and an indispensable theoretical interlocutor for this project. I attempt to excavate histories of contemporary problems in relation to more distant problematics and to make a critical and dissociative use of historical knowledge.⁴ As I've developed this project as a genealogy, it rings true to say that genealogy is "gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary," operating with "an indispensable restraint."⁵ It seeks to record the discontinuities of history by "seek[ing] them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history – in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts." By recording these evasions and historicizing the a-historical, we often take a step away from the immediacy and experiential qualities of these very elements. This project contains a great deal about the labor process, how capitalism and managerial regimes structure labor, and affective structures like demons, sins, pathologies, stigmas, and disorders which are mostly defined from positions of power. It contains comparatively less about resistance, whether overt or covert, self-organization of the working classes and subordinate social groups, and articulations of these structures

4 See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Essential Foucault*, ed. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (New York: The New Press, 1994), 351-369.

5 "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 351.

driven by bottom-up dynamics, whether progressive or regressive. It also says little about the quite interesting project of the positive, political valences of depression that intellectuals around Feel Tank and others have taken up in recent years. It is more about subjective labor in-itself than subjective labor for-itself, and more about depression in-itself than depression for-itself.

Several Foucauldian themes are in play throughout this project. Foucault uses the terms “care of the self” and “technologies of the self” mostly in relation to antiquity. He introduces them with a genealogical motivation in relation to late modernity which is not always clearly spelled out, though it seems that his analysis of these techniques in relationship to Christian asceticism in late antiquity provides something of a missing link between his more generative assessment of the techniques of self-care in Greek and Roman antiquity and the pastoral power and governmentality of Christendom and modernity. I take up Foucault’s analysis of John Cassian in chapter 2. I argue that Foucault is right to find in Cassian’s authoritarianism and self-surveillance a precursor to modern and late modern techniques of governmentality. I believe he also misses potentially more generative discontinuities between early Christian asceticism and the practices of later, Western Christendom and modernity.

I also make use of this notion of techniques of self-care in the rather different context of late modernity, where I use it to consider a range of approaches to the management of one’s own mood and attentiveness as a problem. These techniques range from the pharmaceutical and biomedical to short-term psychotherapy to extra-

clinical techniques such as yoga, meditation, and mindfulness. I argue that this entire range of techniques constitutes a late modern technology of self-care.

The cultural impetus to make use of these techniques may be directly managerial, more broadly societal, or may stem from other contexts with a disciplinary element such as schooling, psychiatry, and mental health. In all of these contexts, use of these techniques constitutes the self as a problem in a way that is consistent with the internalization of managerial impulses. I take the term “managementality,” which has been suggested by critical management scholars as an analogue to and extension of Foucauldian governmentality, to reflect this process by which managing your mood, initiative, and attentiveness becomes a necessary function of work in contemporary capitalism. The use of these available techniques of self-care becomes an imperative optimization, in some cases. By focusing on this internalization of management within workers subjectivities rather than focusing mainly on the work of managers, I believe I am departing somewhat from the initial use of “managementality” developed in critical management studies. The question of managementality suggests a question about an apparent Foucauldian duality between techniques of self care and power. Techniques of self-care in late modernity appear as an exercise of power on the self rather than the voluntary, creative act of “creat[ing] ourselves as a work of art” which Foucault suggests as a generative potential of techniques of the care of the self.⁶ I take up these questions of the care of the self and managementality in detail in chapter 5.

6 Michel Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 351.

This focus on how techniques of self-care and self-management are articulated in contemporary capitalism also suggests a departure from Foucault, or an attempt to combine a Foucauldian paradigm with a Marxian one. After “The Great Confinement” chapter of *History of Madness*, which I analyze in connection with the theme of the stigmatization of poverty as laziness in chapter 3, the question of labor is largely and conspicuously absent from Foucault’s *oeuvre*. There may be a number of reasons for this; one would be Foucault’s distancing himself from reductionist forms of Marxism and from a Marxian intellectual framework. Another would be that he treats labor as belonging to a somewhat separate sphere from his own main questions of focus.

My objective for more than twenty-five years has been to sketch out a history of the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves ... to analyze these so-called sciences as very specific “truth games” related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves.

As a context, we must understand that there are four major types of these “technologies,” each a matrix of practical reason: (1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends of domination, and objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.

These four types of technologies hardly ever function separately, although each of them is associated with a certain type of domination. Each implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes. I wanted to show both their specific nature and their constant interaction. For instance, the relation between manipulating things and domination appears

clearly in Karl Marx's *Capital*, where every technique of production requires modification of individual conduct – and not only skills but attitudes.

Usually, the first two technologies are used in the study of the sciences and linguistics. It is the last two, the technologies of domination and self, which have most kept my attention.⁷

This passage is interesting in that it shows both how labor might be thinkable within a Foucauldian paradigm and how Foucault himself mostly elided it, considering it a Marxian question most strongly related to technologies of production which were somewhat outside of his central preoccupation. My contention is that labor, especially in late capitalist modernity, involves technologies of production, reproduction, power, and subjectivation. These are so deeply interlocked with other technologies of power and the self (like psychiatry of the optimum normal, pharmaceuticals, psychotherapy, and alternative techniques) that they call for joint analysis in a contemporary genealogical paradigm. This project as a whole constitutes an attempt to carry out such a work.

There is a significant Marxian strand to this methodology as well; my major theoretical and methodological touchstones are theories of alienation in the early Marx, Gramscian philosophy of praxis, and Harry Braverman's interpretation of the labor process. A phenomenological description of this project might call it a genealogy of the relationship between structures of depressive affective states, the social organization of work, and affective barriers to work. A more philosophical description might call it a genealogy of alienation, in particular the relationship between relatively functional or mild mental alienation and the alienation of labor.

7 Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *The Essential Foucault*, 147.

Marx sets out an understanding of the alienation of labor in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*; in different ways, Foucault and Fanon draw a relationship between this alienation which is typical of capitalism and the mental alienation of those treated as non-persons by colonial capitalist modernity. In chapter 3, I draw out a relationship between alienation and the criticism or pathology of laziness. The phenomenon that is upbraided as “laziness” by leading social groups has alienation as an inner, philosophical reality. In chapter 5 I argue that the subjective rather than object-producing nature of contemporary work in advanced capitalism has introduced a new aspect of alienation, and we need to historicize this aspect of Marx’s theory of capitalist modernity.

Some of my operating categories of Marxian analysis are taken from Gramsci. This includes particular terminology; for example, in describing class / race / ethnic / regional / strata formations, I often refer to “social groups” of one kind or another, especially “leading” or “subordinate.” Gramscian ideas of common sense, the relationships between professional intellectual activity, practical intellectuals, and common sense, and “the national-popular” as a term for a totality of cultural and political common sense in a given country and historical moment all make their appearance here. Beyond these particular categories, some of what I have learned from Gramsci’s methodology and structure of thought is present in this approach.

Harry Braverman sketches a theory of the relationship between the alienation of labor and managerial techniques which is inherently historically dynamic. This approach helps us to move away from a static, reified notion based on capitalism as it

existed in Marx's life. My use of Braverman is unorthodox, even though many of his insights resonate directly; I see his method as opening up the labor process as a rich terrain for theoretical work. He writes that the struggle for control of the labor process "presents itself in history as the *progressive alienation of the process of production* from the worker; to the capitalist, [this struggle for control] presents itself as the problem of *management*."⁸ This dialectic of progressive alienation of the work process on the one hand and management on the other (to which I would add the stigma and control whether direct or internalized of workers and subordinate social groups) is one which informs my view of the dynamic of the work process and its relationship to work-related affective barriers and ostensibly "private" emotional dejection and blockage.

This project is also in conversation with theoretical and cultural-critical work being done with the notion of affect, especially in the areas of affective labor and the history and cultures of depression. I take up affective labor in chapter 4; chapter 5 situates this project with respect to the last 20 years of theorizing depression and analyzes the categories of affect and mood. Chapter 5 also takes up differing ways the notion of affect is employed in contemporary theory and cultural studies. Throughout the project, I use terms like "affective states," "affective structures," and "affective conditions" as intentionally fuzzy categories which are used to put into relationship feelings that cross over and blur the lines of categories like demons, spiritual struggles, sins, effects of the humors, neuroses, stigmatized behaviors, pathologized

8 Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 58.

aspects of national, ethnic, or racial “character,” mental disorders, effects of biochemical imbalances, psychologized barriers to work, and the “infrapolitics” of quotidian, conscious resistance. No terminology is ever really pre-theoretical; for example, the description I’ve just given shows that my use of the category of affect does not fit with strict Deleuzian attempts to distinguish among affect as a pre-personal intensity, emotion, and feelings.

Chapter 2 treats the problematic of acedia in monastic labor and late medieval secular contexts and more recent revivals of interest in the concept. The concept of acedia originated in Egyptian Christian monastic practice in the third and fourth centuries and in the Hellenistic-Egyptian theology of Evagrius and Cassian. In this original context, manual labor was a central part of monastic life; acedia was a struggle that represented the difficulties of the monastic calling which centered upon labor and other monastic work. While acedia is occasionally remembered as “the struggle of solitaires,” it also applied to cenobitic communities. In later medieval practice, the centrality of manual labor often fell out of regular monastic practice, but the sin of acedia continued to be a primarily monastic vice concerned with monks who shirked their duties. Acedia became a very broad problematic embracing a wide range of affective states, behaviors, and relationships. In later medieval practice, it became the sin of spiritual apathy, which could be applied to laypeople as well as members of religious orders. Only towards the end of the medieval period was it applied to laypeople in regards to their worldly offices as opposed to in regards to

their religious duties; at this point, it began to transition into what became sloth.

Contemporary thinkers have turned to acedia as part of the long-term history of depression, as a way of thinking about dejected affective states which falls outside of the medical model of contemporary depression. It has also been revived due to its resonance with political depression and inaction. The centrality of specific activities and types of labor to the acedia problematic has remained mostly secondary. Sloth and laziness have become almost parodic categories in contemporary capitalism; they seem to tell us very little except for the stigmas and pathologies they trace. In sloth's predecessor, we can see at certain points a richly psychologized understanding of the vicissitudes of dejected affective states which turned to a great extent on labor and other routinized duties. Monastic order involved the development of interior discipline and self examination, on the one hand, and submission to external authority, on the other hand, and I argue that this dialectic of internalization and external authority presages in important ways something about the operation of contemporary capitalist management.

In chapter 3, I look at affective structures which were in some way successors to acedia: the stigma of laziness, the sickness of melancholia, a relatively short-lived but momentarily quite diffuse nerve disorder, neurasthenia, and a philosophical concept which drew out the dehumanizing nature of work under industrial capitalism, Marxian alienation. I argue that the stigma of laziness and productivist ethics function differently with respect to different strata and that the mobilizations of the notion of laziness trace important dividing lines within high modern capitalism. For productive

working classes in the capitalist centers, laziness was a stigmatized behavior to be rooted out; successfully setting it aside meant adopting a lifestyle of moderation and avoiding affective excess. The Protestant Ethic as analyzed by Weber was not intended to be a class ideology, but its major protagonists were not so much this laboring mass but striving entrepreneurs and skilled craftsmen whose services were in demand. Meanwhile, with respect to paupers who were sometimes put in workhouses along with lunatics and mad people, laziness was less a correctable behavior and more a moral example for the rest of the world. Racialized workers and colonized populations were stereotyped with ideas of inherent laziness that applied to an entire national or cultural group; these stereotypes had less to do with enhancing productivity than with ideological justifications of colonial domination and subordinate status.

In modernity, depressed affects were typically understood as having very little to do with work, though melancholia was sometimes thought of as a source for poetic creativity. An important exception was the nerve disorder of neurasthenia, a disorder which was thought to originate partly in the chaos of turn-of-the-20th-century modern life and overwork. However, the theme of work played a mainly subterranean role in the history of melancholia, depression's major predecessor.

I argue that alienation can be seen as a philosophical rendering, from the position of the worker, of the disgust with work the capitalist stigmatizes as laziness. These various strands mark some of the contradictions of modernity, and during this time period we can see the establishment of labor and emotional conditions as

generally exclusive domains of experience.

Chapter 4 sketches a theory of subjective labor in late capitalism, labor in which both the work process and the product of work have a heavily subjective component. These kinds of work are mainly affective or symbolic. Some also involve direct, bodily care, and many of them rely extensively on intersubjective relationships between workers or workers and patients, clients, customers, or students. I argue that previous theories of service work, caring labor, symbolic labor, affective labor, and immaterial labor have failed to theorize convincingly at the level of a political-economic totality the dynamics of these kinds of work. Negri and Hardt's immaterial labor assumes too many continuities between disparate kinds of work and assumes too broad an autonomy emerging throughout this work; much contemporary work in sociology, anthropology, and feminist studies offers compelling accounts of the dynamics of work in a specific set of jobs categories in a given place and time without trying to theorize the totality; and classic materialist-feminist theories do not theorize an appropriately up-to-date political-economic totality. The theory of subjective labor allows us to see some of what is new about these areas of work but also to see how deeply internally striated and hierarchical this work is.

Chapter 5 looks at contemporary depression and techniques for managing moods, ranging from private, clinical or pharmaceutical treatments to mood management on the job. DSM-III constituted a major upheaval in the nosology and treatment of mental disorders, including depression. Under DSM-III, psychiatry moved away from psychodynamic theories of the origins of mental disorders, instead

turning to disorders characterized by symptomatic clusters. While the DSM is officially theory-neutral, its primary authors had a predilection for seeing mental disorders as biochemical in origin, operating much like biomedical diseases. Following shortly upon DSM-III, there has been a profusion of treatments, ranging from antidepressant pharmaceuticals to short-term psychotherapy to alternative techniques like mindfulness, yoga, and stress reduction. Within this new concert of treatments and nosology, the normal / pathological divide of psychiatry has been rearticulated. Relatively mild mental and emotional problems, instead of being stigmatized and only treated amongst the elite, have become democratized conditions with democratized cures. Being depressed is now normal, where being normal is having a constant succession of moods that need to be managed; normalcy, instead of being an absence of disorder, is rearticulated as striving for emotional and psychic optimums in the face of manageable problems.

These techniques are integrated with new techniques of management on the job; I argue that capitalism institutes a new mode of “managementality” particularly with respect to subjective labor, though these techniques then spread across society. Managementality is the management of self-management; managerial functions of subjective labor are concerned with the cultivation of affects in their workers, such as affiliative behavior, service with a smile, feelings of authenticity, creative risk-taking, initiative, etc. Managementality appears to the worker as a new form of alienation which requires us to re-theorize the Marxian alienation of labor for contemporary work. Instead of a series of separations between a person and her environment,

product of work, and work process, the alienation of subjective labor looks more like shoving alienation down deeper into the subjectivity of the worker, alienation as dissociation.

This genealogical reconstruction shows that the relationship between depressed affects and working life becomes quite close in late capitalism. Our discourse of depression can no longer ignore the 1/3 or more of the day most people spend at work, and our understanding of the changing nature of work in capitalism should reflect the psychologized reality of contemporary alienation.

2) The Acedia Problematic

Contemporary problematics of subjective labor and its affective barriers, political “apathy” or “guilt,” and depression and mood disorders cannot be unpacked without reference to each other and to history. I begin with a distant and discontinuous genealogical resonance, the medieval problematic of acedia, the deadly sin that later became sloth. As a condition understood as having some relevance to modern life, the concept experienced a small revival beginning in the mid 20th century, a revival which has accelerated (though remaining quite small overall) so far in the 21st. In the final section of this chapter I will examine this contemporary revival of acedia, what is at stake the various ways the term is being reanimated, and how I see these uses as being tied to these interlocking, contemporary problematics.

The long, strange career of the concept of acedia began with some of the founders of Christian monasticism, the Desert Fathers and Mothers of third and fourth century Egypt. It was theologized as one of Evagrius Ponticus’s eight evil thoughts or demons, a list which after centuries of theological shifts and shifts in emphasis eventually became the familiar seven deadly sins we still know today. Over the course of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the concept of acedia eventually lost coherence, replaced in the catalog of sins by the seemingly more prosaic and

straightforward sin of sloth. From the 16th to the mid-19th centuries, the word virtually dropped out of the English language and most Western romance languages as well, except for fairly rare literary and historical references, only to see a very gradual revival in the late 19th century which gathered strength over the course of the 20th century.¹

1 Google's Ngram, an online search tool which shows the commonality of the appearance of words in published texts over history, at least in books that have so far been digitized by Google, gives us some interesting tools to visualize this. For example, the word "acedia" in English seems not to have appeared in print in books that have been digitized by Google from 1500-1720. There are a handful of mentions in the 18th century, a few more smatterings in the late 19th, and except for a couple of outlying publishing years in 1909 and 1967, a slow but steady increase from the late 19th century to the 2000s. See Google Ngram Viewer, "acedia," http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=acedia&year_start=1500&year_end=2008&corpus=15&smoothing=0&share= (accessed 13 March 2013). "Acedia" has become the accepted spelling in both academic and vernacular English, to the extent that this term has reemerged in the vernacular, but to compare archaic versions which at one point enjoyed greater currency, see Google Ngram Viewer, "acedia,accidie,acedy,accidia" http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=acedia%2Caccidie%2Cacedy%2Caccidia&year_start=1500&year_end=2008&corpus=15&smoothing=5&share= (accessed 13 March 2013). The overall trend here is similar from 1800 on, despite a flurry of outliers in the 18th century. In French, the more academic / Greco-Latin "acedia" has made a similar slow comeback while the vernacular "accide" has slowly faded away. See Google Ngram Viewer, "acedia,accide from the corpus: French" http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=acedia%2Caccide&year_start=1500&year_end=2008&corpus=19&smoothing=5&share= (accessed 13 March 2013). The concept seems to have had less of a rebound in Spanish or Italian. See Google Ngram Viewer, "acedia,acidia from the corpus: Spanish" http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=acedia%2Cacidia&year_start=1500&year_end=2008&corpus=21&smoothing=5&share= (accessed 13 March 2013) and Google Ngram Viewer, "acedia,accidia,pigrizia from the corpus: Italian" http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=acedia%2Caccidia%2Cpigrizia&year_start=1500&year_end=2008&corpus=22&smoothing=5&share= (accessed 13 March 2013). In Italian, the vernacular form, "accidia" seems never to have gone completely out of circulation, though it remains less common than "pigrizia" as a term for sloth. I suspect the lack of citations on Google Ngram before 1700 is due to a lack of books in Italian which have been digitized

The idea that the medieval notion of acedia might have something particular to say to contemporary social life does not seem to have made much of a recent comeback until the mid twentieth century, accelerating after 2000. Since then, the topic has seen something of a minor proliferation, including in Robert Meister's *After Evil*, Kathleen Norris's *Acedia and Me*, and a series of books on the history of depression. It receives an extended treatment in Ann Cvetkovich's *Depression*, and a brief discussion in Andrew Solomon's *The Noonday Demon*. Outside the domain of critical social thought, there has been something of a revival as well in the 2000s, with the development of an apparently new musical and cinematic interest in acedia.

Why this revival of a word that from the beginning, was always a strange, Greek interloper in Latin, other Romance languages, and English, always a bit mistranslated?² What work is it doing today, and how is this work related to the Medieval career of this concept?

This chapter will excavate the original, medieval acedia problematic, both as a theological construct and an aspect of the medieval social practices of monastic work. I'll assess the origin of these practices amongst the Desert Fathers of third and fourth century Egypt and the particular theological constructs of Evagrius, the first thinker to offer a theologized understanding of acedia, and John Cassian, whose work is largely responsible for importing this concept into Western monasticism and Christendom.

from this era. The graph of linguistic usage in German is not too dissimilar from that in English. See Google Ngram Viewer, "acedia from the corpus: German" http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=acedia&year_start=1500&year_end=2008&corpus=20&smoothing=0&share= (accessed 13 March 2013).

- 2 Siegfried Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 3.

I'll also consider the vicissitudes of acedia during the Middle Ages, particularly in Benedictine monasticism and its various revivals, under Scholasticism, and in later medieval laicization of the concept and in a few literary sources. The last section of the chapter will leap ahead to these contemporary revivals of acedia to assess why this concept is reemerging today and what work it is doing in the contemporary landscape.

I will attempt to trace the genealogy of medieval acedia as I believe it will shed light on three contemporary questions: the historical antecedents of depression and mood disorders, a historical resonance of contemporary affective barriers to work such as burnout, procrastination, and the oppressive ennui of office culture, and the revival of acedia as a contemporary if somewhat idiosyncratic and specialized concept.

The historical, medieval section of this chapter focuses on the theological vicissitudes of acedia as a concept as it relates to changing practices of work in monasteries. This optic reflects a different monasticism from that shown by a common approach which sees the socio-historical significance of monasticism as lying primarily in the gesture of withdrawal from the world. At least since Weber, this strain of interpretation has been common or even predominant outside of medieval history and studies. My approach is more interested in ways in which monasteries served as sites of work which was both reproductive work for the community and the production of goods for sale, both immaterial and material in nature. This work was often value-creating; it contributed to an accumulation of wealth of monasteries as

corporate entities; and it served as a laboratory for later systems of organizing the labor process and articulating social control. Monastic work was as an important precursor to capitalist labor relations, though clearly there are profound breaks and discontinuities as well.

In *The Sin of Sloth*, still to my knowledge the only book-length treatment of the history of medieval acedia, Siegfried Wenzel traces acedia to its Greek roots as a concept which denoted lack of care, both in the positive sense of being “carefree” or free of worry and in the negative sense of carelessness, and weariness, exhaustion, or apathy.³ It appears in the Septuagint, as faintness, weariness, or anguish, but only in the Old Testament. In all of these contexts, the term seems to have been used in varying, somewhat vague ways. It did not acquire a specific importance in theology and religious life until the desert spirituality of late third and fourth century Egypt, coinciding with traditionally understood origin points of Christian monasticism.⁴ Indeed, it is in connection with Egyptian monasticism of this period that the concept of acedia reaches a full, technical articulation.⁵

3 Wenzel, *Sin of Sloth*, 6.

4 As William Harmless explains, this traditional account of the origins of Christian monasticism, in which eremitical (solitary) monasticism begins with Abba Anthony, and cenobitical (communal) monasticism begins with Pachomius, obfuscates a lot, in terms of contending models of organizing monastic life, contending theological schools who turned out to be historical “losers,” and related forms of solitary or small-communal, ascetic religious life outside of Egypt (for example in Syria, Cappadocia, and Palestine) which are less well attested historically. See William Harmless, S.J., *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 417-448.

5 Wenzel, *Sin of Sloth*, 10.

The most substantive written, systematic, theological accounts of acedia in desert Christianity belong to Evagrius Ponticus and John Cassian. Evagrius's accounts fall mainly within the discourse of an aphoristic Christian desert mysticism, but his writing reflects his Hellenistic theological background. Cassian's account, written in Gaul after his sojourn in Egypt, is an explicit attempt to export the thinking of the desert fathers, including Evagrius, to a Western, monastic audience. It constitutes much more than a translation in a narrow sense, since Cassian gives the principal struggles and acedia in particular a more systematic, less densely mystical articulation; in the process of translation, he ends up significantly rearticulating the problematic. Evagrius's account is perhaps the most original, and it relates directly to the particular social institutions and historical situation of desert monasticism. Due to his later condemnation as an Origenist, his works played little direct role in the subsequent development of acedia in the West. Cassian's theology also partially fell out of favor for a while due to the theological controversies of the day. His description monastic life, his program for it, and his account of the principal struggles and acedia in particular survived and became fundamental for later medieval monasticism in the West due to the strong recommendation the Rule of St. Benedict gave to Cassian.

While Evagrius and Cassian gave acedia a theological architecture and a rich description, they did not "invent" acedia, the demon, thought, struggle, or sin; it was already a problem, in many ways quite a central one, for monasticism in the Egyptian desert. While it's difficult to reconstruct the social institutions of desert monasticism,

what we know about the social organization of early cenobitical communities in the Pachomian tradition and of the eremitical project enables us to put this tradition in conversation with Evagrian and Cassianic theology. In regards to acedia, there was a close relationship between this demon, thought, or struggle and the organization of monastic work.

A terminological note is in order here. I regard most of the attempts of articulate a difference between labor and work, particularly as some kind of transhistorical constructs, as artificial; generally I find them to be distractions from understanding the social organization of the labor process across a social system in a given historical moment. However, in Christian monasticism of late antiquity and the medieval era and in most historical texts referring to this period, the term “labor” is used to refer particularly to manual labor, such as braiding rope in fourth century Egypt and agricultural labor in the medieval West, and sometimes to small craft-work or housekeeping in the monastery.

Monastic regimes, both in the desert of late antiquity and in the later West, consisted of carefully ordered routines which were centered on three main elements: labor, prayer, and study. “Prayer” did not refer mainly to silent appeals to God, which might be the most common sense of this word today, but to chanting (either repetitive prayers or Psalms), choir, and later in the medieval era often increasingly complex forms of the monastic office. “Study” referred mainly to reading scripture and texts of monastic instruction but later also came to involve copying these texts. The usually intersubjective, affective activity of prayer and the principally solitary, symbolic

activity of study are in a very real sense a part of the work of the monk or the sister; in fact, the entire routine constitutes a regime of monastic work.

A key aspect of how this developed historically in the West was the way in which manual labor tended to drop out of monastic practice over time, as this work was increasingly performed by hired laborers or a second tier of lay brethren. The importance of manual labor got renewed in several monastic “revivals” which were often attempting to restore the practices of (an interpretation of) Benedictine, Cassianic, and early Apostolic spirituality. In any case, in the world of the desert Christianity of late antiquity and the medieval West, it seems to me that “work” is a broader category which potentially encompasses all of the routinized activity of the monk, while “labor” is a subset of monastic work which involves manual labor, housekeeping, and the cultivation or transformation of the external, physical world. I try to observe this distinction in this chapter.

1) Evagrius

For Evagrius and other principal figures of desert Christianity, acedia was a key struggle of monastic spirituality; Evagrius named acedia as one of his eight principal demons or thoughts. The discourse of the seven deadly sins, which eventually became the discourse recognized today around (interior) sin or vice, started out as a discourse that was at the same time a demonology and a psychology.⁶

Particularly given the sophisticated nature of Evagrius’s psychology, it’s difficult for

6 See David Brakke’s discussion of the shift from Evagrian demonology to the language of vice in Evagrius of Pontus, *Talking Back: A Monastic Handbook for Combating Demons*, translated and with an introduction by David Brakke (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2009), 6.

the modern reader to absorb this seeming duality or even know how to discuss it without importing a terminology which would be anachronistic and inaccurate with respect to how desert Christians, whether illiterate or educated in Hellenistic theology, thought these concepts. (For example, it's tempting to ask, did they *literally* believe in demons or are the demons *merely figural, metaphorical, etc.?*)

Without unpacking a whole series of questions which would take me well outside of the focus of this chapter, I'll say that the belief in external, real demons was entirely serious; in this case, this went hand-in-hand with a deep engagement with mental struggles which is far removed from "superstitious" or "magical" thinking. It's relatively easy for us to think of acedia as a thought, but more foreign to imagine what it would mean to understand it as an external demon to be combated.

What was acedia for Evagrius and his desert milieu? Modern translators sometimes translate Evagrius's acedia as "spiritual despondency" or "listlessness." This latter sense should be related to the notion that one of the first terms for acedia in Middle English was "unlust;"⁷ "lust" and "list" come from root words for desire or wanting which are common save for declension.⁸ The desire in question here is of course not lust in the sense of fornication, which is another of the principal demons, but desire for the good, following upon conversion to a life focused on serving God, "the sin that comes after giving up sin without doing what comes next."⁹

7 Wenzel 152.

8 "lust, n." OED Online. March 2013. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/111374?rskey=e0TU2y&result=1> (accessed May 16, 2013).

9 Robert Meister, *After Evil: A Politics of Human Rights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 73.

Evagrius gives many different accounts of acedia, some of which are particular to a particular aspect of it or a situation in which it arises. Evagrius's writings are dense, aphoristic, and somewhat scattered in comparison to the systematic exposition and long prose of Cassian, to whom we'll return later. Cassian's account is largely responsible for the way that the Evagrian system of principal thoughts was transmitted to the West, especially to Western monasticism; Evagrius's writings were suppressed under the cloud of the Origenist and Pelagian controversies.¹⁰ Many of them survived under other writers' names; a revival of interest in Evagrius only took place beginning in the 1950s. Cassian is more important for the history of Western Christendom, but Evagrius's concepts are of interest to us here for two main reasons. First, they constitute the most in-depth theological exposition of the acedia problematic which is written in, for, and about desert spirituality, as opposed to Cassian who was explicitly trying to transmit the wisdom of the Desert Fathers to the West. Second, Evagrius's account of the principal demons was in some sense the spiritual progenitor of Cassian's account. In examining them together, we can see how the concept began to shift very early in its career.

In the Evagrian system acedia has a distinctive relationship with other thoughts, particularly sadness and anger: "Sadness arises out of a failure of a fleshly desire...." "Acedia is a simultaneous, long-lasting movement of anger and desire, whereby the former is angry with what is at hand, while the latter yearns for what is not present."¹¹

10 Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 24.

11 Gabriel Bunge, *Despondency: The Spiritual Teaching of Evagrius Ponticus on*

The aspect of yearning for the lost object makes the sadness aspect of acedia sound like melancholia. Anger with what is at hand in combination with loss is distinctive to acedia. For Evagrius, acedia is a complex rather than a simple passion; it turns out to be a complex which is at the center of the spiritual problematic of monasticism.

[A]cēdia is the ‘heaviest’ of the monk’s wrestling opponents. [Evagrius] notes that where the other ‘thoughts’ latch ‘on only one part of the soul,’ this ‘noonday demon is in the habit of enveloping the whole soul and suffocating the mind.’¹²

Acedia and its overcoming occupy a central place in the monastic life, as a complex which may envelop the whole soul. Acedia is the struggle most particular to monastic life, and it touches nearly the whole of monastic life.

Some of the short, aphoristic statements about acedia are hard to place for the modern reader, but the longer passages give a good feel for the role of this struggle in Egyptian monasticism and resonate with contemporary emotional life.

The eye of the despondent one
 stares constantly at the window
and his mind
 presents visitors to him.
The door creaks,
 and he jumps up;
he hears a voice
 and peers through the window,

Acedia, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Yonkers: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2012), 54. Note: Bunge’s text consists of an original exposition of Evagrius’s teachings on acedia with extensive quotations from a wide range of Evagrian texts. Since Evagrius’s writings on acedia are spread out over so many different texts, some of which have not been translated into English, and some of which are collected under the names of different authors, *Despondency* is an indispensable secondary text for the non-specialist without a command of Greek trying to get a grasp on Evagrius’s theory of acedia.

12 Harmless, 326.

and he does not go away from there,
 until, exhausted, he sits down.
If the despondent one reads,
 then he yawns a great deal,
 and soon he sinks into sleep.
He rubs his eyes,
 and stretches out his hands,
and while his eyes wander from the book,
 he stares at the wall,
then he turns away again,
 and reads a little
and when he leafs through [the book],
 he searches for the end of the exposition.
He counts the pages,
 and determines the number of sheets,
finds fault with the writing and the design
 and in the end he snaps the book shut.
He lays his head on it,
 and falls into a not-too-deep sleep,
and in the end hunger
 wakes up the soul again, and the soul [now renewed]
attends to its own concerns.

The demon of despondency (acedia), also called the ‘noonday demon,’ is the most oppressive one. He attacks the monk at the fourth hour {10 AM}, and circles around his soul until the eighth hour {2 PM}.

First of all, looking at the sun, [the monk] concludes that the sun hardly moves or does not move at all, and he has the impression that the day is fifty hours long.

Then the demon compels the monk to look constantly out of the window, and to jump out of his cell, to observe the sun, how far it is removed from the ninth hour, and he looks now this ways and then that way to see if one of the brethren [appears from his cell].

Further, [the demon] instills in the monk a hatred for his place, his life [as a monk], and his manual labor, and [he whispers to him] that charity among the brethren has disappeared, and that he finds no one to console him. And if anyone has recently offended the monk, the demon also attends to this, in order to increase his hatred.

The demon leads him to long for other places, where one could easily find [life’s] necessities, and where he could take up a lighter and more profitable occupation. To this, [the demon] adds that pleasing God is not linked to one place, and that one can adore God everywhere.

The demon joins to this the remembrance of the monk’s

relatives and his earlier life. He describes to the monk how long life is, and brings before his eyes the toils of asceticism. He sets in motion against the monk, as it were, all his siege engines, in order to force the monk [if possible] to give up his cell and flee from the arena.

No other demon follows closely upon this one. After the struggle, the soul is in a sure state of deep peace, and an ineffable joy.¹³

The first passage resonates deeply with contemporary sensibilities. Except for the term “soul,” and perhaps also “despondent one,” it sounds very much like an account of a contemporary symbolic worker, someone suffering from writers’ block, working from home and suffering from procrastination, or an office worker in an isolated cubicle.

The second passage has a similar sensibility, though here we are faced with Evagrius’s demonology. Evagrius saw these demons and thoughts as external distortions against the trajectory of human life, which was basically oriented towards God. Egyptian Christianity in this period was in contact with and arrayed against Manichaeism, which had a dualistic view of the struggle between good and evil taking place at an ontological level within the human soul. The competition with Manichaeism may have been influential in the original development of Christian monasticism.¹⁴ So the insistence on the externality of demons rather than evil as an inherent part of the human could be partly understood in this light.

Evagrius was highly educated in Hellenistic theology and had had a successful, worldly career as a deacon and archdeacon in Constantinople. Personal

13 As quoted in Bunge, 75-76. Note: the [square brackets] and the text within them are Bunge’s; the {rounded brackets} are mine. The first selection is from *Tractatus de octo spiritibus malitiae* (*On the Eight Spirits of Evil*); the second is from *Capita Practica ad Anatolium* (*Practical Chapters to Anatolius*).

14 Harmless, 438.

scandal led him to a spiritual crisis in which he moved to Jerusalem, and, from there, eventually to monastic communities in Egypt. Most of the other Desert Fathers in Egypt were illiterate. Sayings attributed to them and stories about them are imbued with a deeply mystical understandings of the human spirit. Their accounts of demons are mostly external and visceral; their stories often turn on koans of wisdom which may well be contradicted in other stories. Evagrian theology is in some sense a midway point between this sparse desert mysticism and Hellenistic Christian theology.

It is interesting to examine these passages in light of the view of acedia as a complex of anger with what is at hand and desire or longing for what is unavailable. What is at hand in the first passage is reading, and the passage shows the many vicissitudes of longing for what is unavailable as they present themselves to the monk: sights and sounds of the outside world and ideas of visitors arriving, opposing the various kinds of aggravation, frustration, boredom, and distraction from the book he is reading. The second passage adds to this a series of frustrations, some of which seem particularly related to the cenobitic life: a hatred for his place, his life as a monk, and his manual labor, a lack of *agape* amongst the brethren, and obsessing over any offenses he has suffered. Then he begins to fantasize about being in a different location and/or having a lighter or more profitable occupation.

Evagrius considers acedia to be a condition that affects the totality of monastic life, one which particularly arises with respect both to manual labor and the other routinized aspects of daily life (which we could well say also constitute part of the

work of the monk). Acedia attacks the monk in his solitude with particular fury, when he is trying to pray or study, but it also appears in his social relations with other monks; it plays out a bit differently in the two contexts. In regards to individual prayer and study, we see an endless series of distractions and frustrations arise. With respect to monastic sociality, we see a series of frustrated and ideationally somewhat contradictory desires: on the one hand, a desire for company of any sort to distract from solitude; on the other, feeling socially isolated or shunned, a lack of community, and fixating on interpersonal difficulties.

In the former, more isolated context, it's not hard to see resonances with forms of contemporary symbolic labor that require solitude: the work of many writers, telecommuters, and students. Evagrius's description of acedia here resonates with contemporary affective barriers such as writers' block and procrastination. In the latter, more social dimension of Evagrius's acedia, it is easy to see resonances with the oppressive ennui of contemporary office culture and forms of sociality in other non-industrial workplaces.

The social-technical configuration of contemporary subjective labor is completely different from monastic labor, and it relies on the presence of industrial infrastructures and technologies. The structure and conditions of the broader societies in question are very different. The managerial regimes are different, too, in that contemporary subjective labor is often run through managerial techniques of lean production and Taylorism which come out of the industrial era. Where they may overlap is that there is a new interiority to the focus of contemporary

managementality which has a genealogical relationship with the disciplinary concerns of the physician of souls, the monastic Abba. While contemporary subjective labor requires commitment and identification with one's work, this identification is still (like that of Weber's entrepreneurs) something of a pale reflection of a religious calling.

At the end of this extended passage, we see the state that follows upon a successful resolution of this struggle: a deep, interior peace. This state, called *hesychia* in the Greek tradition and referred to as such in the literature of the Desert Fathers, was closely related to one of Evagrius's key theological concepts, *apatheia*, "passionlessness."¹⁵ For Evagrius, the first stage in the spiritual life is the cleansing of the passionate part of the soul, involving struggles with the eight thoughts; following struggles with some of the thoughts, another thought tends to come to the fore, but following a successful struggle with acedia, in part because it is a complex of other thoughts, and in part because it is a thought that relates to the whole of monastic life, one reaches this state of interior peace which is characteristic of *apatheia*. *Apatheia* for Evagrius is "a quiet state of the rational soul; it results from gentleness and self-control."¹⁶

In contemporary usage, a Westernized, syncretized version of Buddhist mindfulness occupies a space not entirely dissimilar from this meaning. Of course "apathy" has long since changed positions, from being a positive quality to a negative one which takes on many of the shadings of meaning of ennui and acedia. (As late as

15 Harmless, 391.

16 Harmless, 347.

the early 17th century, in English, “apathy” could still hold either a positive or a negative connotation, but by the middle part of that century, and certainly by the 18th, the negative sense predominates.¹⁷⁾

This concept of *apatheia* became central to the theological critique of Evagrius as Pelagian or Origenist. St. Jerome, and later, Augustine would see this notion as an excessive belief in the potential for good in the human will, as opposed to recognizing one’s dependence on God’s grace.¹⁸

2) Social Practices of Fourth-Century Egyptian Monasticism

Acedia played out distinctly within different forms of monastic life in Egypt in late antiquity. The main original forms of monasticism in what came to be orthodox Christianity in Egypt seem to have been hermits, cenobites (who lived in large, organized communal monasteries), and those who St. Jerome called *remnuoth*; the last usually were household-sized groupings of people who renounced private property and lived together, intentionally, within a city or village.¹⁹ In the fourth century, these were all accepted styles of monastic life, but by the late fourth and fifth centuries, Jerome and Cassian condemned the *remnuoth* (“sarabites,” in Cassian’s terminology) as undisciplined, inferior, and despised. In all likelihood, the *remnuoth* were harder for church leaders to control and more likely to be linked to urban (sometimes radical) movements.

17 "apathy, n.". OED Online. March 2013. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/9052?redirectedFrom=apathy> (accessed April 17, 2013).

18 Dunn, 71.

19 Dunn, 12.

Eremitical monasticism is usually presented as the first form of monasticism to arise historically, emulating the life of St. Antony. This account is not historically accurate even based on a straightforward reading of the sources used to support it, however, and it becomes even more muddled if we look at the broader context of third century Egypt.²⁰ Nevertheless, the eremitical experience was articulated a bit before the Pachomian, cenobitic communities began to be settled. The tradition of monks retiring to the desert began in Egypt sometime between the mid-late third century (depending on how one judges the historicity of Athanasius's *Life of Antony*), and was fairly well and somewhat broadly established by the 320s,²¹ whereas Pachomian communities did not start emerging until around 315, and did not begin merging into alliances until around 330.²²

Unlike the later, Western image of a hermit cut off from all human communication for years or living in complete isolation, "Egyptian eremitic monasticism was never an entirely solitary affair."²³ Rather, hermits flocked to the desert to congregate around famous ascetics, living nearby one another in small cells or caves. While most daily life was, indeed, solitary, anchorites would congregate for weekly communal worship, to learn from the teachings of a spiritual father of the community. Some of these anchorite settlements were quite extensive. Palladius claims, possibly with some exaggeration, that there were "no fewer than five thousand monks on the mount of Nitria alone."²⁴

20 Harmless, 418.

21 Harmless, 420.

22 Harmless, 424-25.

23 Dunn, 13.

24 Dunn, 15.

Daily life amongst the hermits consisted primarily of

meditation on the scriptures ..., psalmody, and manual labor. Normally, monks worked at weaving and plaiting their mats and baskets while meditating in their cells. As well as providing the means for supporting their meagre needs in food and clothing, work was seen as a way of achieving the ideal of unceasing prayer.²⁵

Thus in the ideal situation, the practice of *hesychia*, spiritual peace, overlapped significantly with the performance of manual labor. Unlike in later, Western monastic practice, where labor was often seen as an aspect of monastic life which could easily be left to hired peasants or lay brethren so that monks could spend more time in prayer, here, manual labor was seen as itself a form of prayer or a method of facilitating prayer.

The ethos of labor of Egyptian monasticism seems to have been informed by the humble background and existence of many of the monks themselves. In later Western Europe, monks were very often from aristocratic class backgrounds, though this varied widely based on the order and monastery in question and particular historical moment. At times, monasteries would even become something of a “relief valve” for surplus children of the aristocracy, as aristocratic families tried to avoid breaking their holdings into smaller and smaller inherited pieces.

The monasteries of third and fourth century Egypt did not have such a status; the entire class structure of the society was somewhat different. The desert fathers were not that different from the peasant society that surrounded them. Pachomian communities often existed in or near partly abandoned villages.²⁶ They consisted of

25 Dunn, 14.

26 Dunn, 32.

monks from a wide range of class backgrounds, though in most cases most were from the peasantry.²⁷ The internal hierarchy of Pachomian communities was based on date of entrance into the monastery rather than worldly rank.²⁸

Labor in third and fourth century Egyptian monasticism consisted primarily of repetitive tasks such as rope-making and basket-weaving, some manufacturing of sieves or weaving linen, and, much more rarely, work as scribes.²⁹ Evagrius worked as a calligrapher, which was considered somewhat unusual.³⁰ Dietary austerity, sometimes pushed to competitive extremes, was a central part of the ethos of Egyptian monasticism, but the everyday, normal ration “did not differ much from that of a poor Egyptian peasant.”³¹ Most of the desert fathers, excepting monks from elsewhere who had traveled to Egypt to be a part of the monastic movement like Evagrius and Cassian, were illiterate.

Labor was irreducibly central both to the practice and the theory of Egyptian monasticism, but it seems that maintaining the centrality of labor along with its meditative aspect was difficult. Some of the stories of the desert fathers reflect conflicts over this. For example, a story about John the Little tells that he “wanted to become like the angels who do not work, but worship God without ceasing.” His brother locked him outside for the night, to teach him a lesson, and then readmitted him, saying, “ ‘You are a human being. To eat, you have to work.’ ”³² The same Abba

27 Dunn, 30.

28 Harmless, 126.

29 Harmless, 175-76.

30 Harmless, 315.

31 Harmless, 176.

32 Harmless, 197-98.

is credited with another saying about the centrality of work: “What is a monk?... He is work. The monk works at everything he does. That’s what a monk is.”³³

While in theory, manual labor was an avenue for contemplation, in practice sometimes the two came into conflict. One Abba complained, “When I was in Scetis, the work of the soul was our real job (*ergon*), and our handiwork we thought of as a sideline (*parergon*). But now the work of the soul has become the sideline and the handiwork has become the real job.” While recent historians have tended to see this conflict as a real problem in a basically humane system of monastic organization, Dunn cites Philip Rousseau as an example of an earlier generation of historians to whom:

the Pachomian *koinonia* appeared as nothing less than a ‘monstrous’ and regimented system of labour camps, its houses reminiscent of the army barracks with which Pachomius would have been familiar in his days as a soldier in the Roman army, its spiritual values subordinated to relentless agricultural and craft production.³⁴

According to Dunn, this view reflects an exaggeration of the extent to which Pachomian life was very highly regimented. Nevertheless, worries about a possible conflict between the economic success of monastic life and its spiritual function seem to have arisen already with Theodore, a successor to Pachomius. “The good and efficient work habits of the *Koinonia* proved too successful – a pattern that would be repeated many times in the history of medieval monasticism.”³⁵ The work ethic and economic function of the monastery seemed to have a life of their own, beginning very early.

33 Quoted in Harmless, 199.

34 Dunn, 29.

35 Harmless, 137.

Other influential variants of monasticism in this period developed these themes of obedience and the regimented life in different ways.

[St. Basil's] conception of obedience to the head of the community was more subtle and far-reaching than that of Pachomius, and it represented an important refinement of the ascetical tradition. The novice was to renounce his own will and obey the superior in everything, in spirit as well as act, on the model of Christ, who was 'obedient unto death'. There was no room in Basil's monastery for the individualism and the spectacular ascetic feats of the Egyptian anchorites.³⁶

This refinement of spiritual fatherhood as a technique for transforming the self and the will is of great interest to us in relation to contemporary managementality and subjective Taylorism.

It's important to track the specificity of this Egyptian monastic form, however, as in later Western European monasticism, monastic economic success tended to go hand in hand with monks leaving their manual labor behind, giving the more menial tasks to hired workers or lay brethren, while in Egyptian monasticism it was the continued productiveness of the monks' own work that led to this apparent conflict between the spiritual and economic value of work. Also, the spiritually meditative value of work, while present in the Benedictine Rule and various back-to-Benedict revivals, tended to fall away in later Western European monasticism, with the value of work being remembered more for instilling humility. In the Egyptian context, the conflict was not between humbling but economically debased work and prayer, but work-as-production vs. work-as-prayer.

36 C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 9.

Acedia, and the related question of tedium, seems to have played a key role in this problematic of life and work in third and fourth century Egyptian monasticism. Acedia was the key struggle monks faced which had to do with the day-to-day routine of monastic life, though pride and vainglory were also great challenges, especially for accomplished monks. Acedia could affect a monk in any part of his life, though most typically when he was engaged in solitary contemplation; it could make him suspicious of his brethren and affect him when engaged in manual labor. Yet, manual labor and social exclusion were the most common antidotes to acedia prescribed by the Abba, the “physician of souls.”

3) Cassian

The original, Evagrian theological context of acedia and its close connection with the practices of fourth century Egyptian monastic labor are hardly ever recovered by contemporary sources, who instead start with Cassian. Cassian, like Evagrius, came from elsewhere to study with the desert fathers. While Evagrius seems to have originally come fleeing scandal and/or fleeing on the dictates of his own conscience, no such external motivation seems to have driven Cassian to Egypt. His origin is uncertain. “Gennadius says that Cassian was a Scythian, which would mean he grew up in the Dobrudja, in modern Romania. But some scholars discount this and argue that he came from where he ended up: southern France.”³⁷

Cassian’s account is in some ways more systematic and expository than Evagrius’s, and was written for a Western, Gallic audience. While Cassian came to be

37 Harmless, 374.

thought of as the major, Western theological exponent of Egyptian monastic spirituality, he didn't set out to write about Egyptian monasticism until he had arrived in Gaul, 15 or 20 years after he left Egypt.³⁸ Cassian's exposition of desert spirituality should be seen not as a neutral reconstruction, but as a tendentious intervention into the dominant forms of monasticism he found when he arrived in Gaul, "associated with Martin of Tours and even that of Lérins ... where the monks did no manual work."³⁹ These monastic forms tended to promote an aristocratic, intellectual ethos and to allow the monk to maintain a close relationship with his outside family. Cassian's intervention was prompted by something of a spirit of "revival:" a return to the simplicity, austerity, isolation, and manual labor of Egyptian monasticism.

Cassian identifies acedia as the "noonday demon" of Psalm 91:6, and also alludes to the origin of the term in Greek thought.⁴⁰ In *The Institutes* he discusses acedia in the context of "the struggle against the eight principal vices."⁴¹ *The Institutes* is not primarily a work of theology in the narrow sense. Cassian's purpose is to describe "just the institutes of these men and the rules of their monasteries and, in particular, the origins and causes and remedies of the principal vices."⁴² He forsakes "weav[ing] a tale of God's marvelous works and miracles. Although we have not only heard many of these and other incredible doings from our elders but have even seen them produced before our very eyes, we are nonetheless omitting all of

38 Harmless, 376-77.

39 Dunn, 79.

40 John Cassian, *The Institutes*, trans. by Boniface Ramsey (New York: The Newman Press, 2000), 219.

41 Cassian, 117.

42 Cassian, 13.

them: Apart from wonderment they contribute nothing to the reader's instruction in a perfect life." This approach leads to a careful, almost sociological interest in monastic practices and *habitus*.

Cassian's discussion of acedia follows immediately upon his discussion of sadness, *tristitia*. These two struggles are closely related, both for Cassian and for subsequent thought around schemes of the cardinal sins. (Centuries later, Pope Gregory would combine them.) Cassian generally prefers this term, "struggles," over language that would come to define the terrain later, of sin and vice, or Evagrian language of thoughts and demons. He chooses accompanying metaphors of combat and athletics, returning frequently to the motifs of "the soldier of Christ" and "the athlete of Christ" who struggles and triumphs.

Cassian begins his discussion of acedia by remarking that it "is akin to sadness."⁴³ His ninth book on sadness is relatively brief; his consideration of its origin is initially quite mysterious, identifying its onset with "separate and random attacks ... as a result of fleeting and changing happenstance."⁴⁴ This choice of words characterizes sadness as exogenous and short-lived as opposed to acedia, which is sticky, persistent, and characterized by ambiguity as to being endogenous or exogenous. He goes on to explain effects which are quite parallel to those of acedia: inability to pray eagerly and read carefully, impatience with duty, worship, and the brethren.

Cassian's explanation of acedia is more psychologically detailed, imagining a

43 Cassian, 219.

44 Cassian, 211.

scene of the monk in his cell (a scene that, with few changes, could describe the tribulations of the modern symbolic laborer, such as an office worker experiencing boredom in his cubicle or a writer or academic struggling with procrastination).

Once [acedia] has seized possession of a wretched mind it makes a person horrified at where he is, disgusted with his cell, and also disdainful and contemptuous of the brothers who live with him or at a slight distance, as being careless and unspiritual. Likewise it renders him slothful and immobile in the face of all the work to be done within the walls of his dwelling: It does not allow him to stay still in his cell or to devote any effort to reading. He groans quite frequently that spending such a long time there is of no profit to him and that he will possess no spiritual fruit for as long as he is attached to that group of people. He complains and sighs, lamenting that he is bereft and void of all spiritual gain in that place inasmuch as, even though he is capable of directing others and of being useful to many, he is edifying no one and being of no help to anyone through his instruction and teaching.... Then the fifth and sixth hours arouse such bodily listlessness and such a yearning for food that he feels worn out as if he had been exhausted by a long journey and very heavy labor or as if he had put off eating for the sake of a two- or three-day fast. Next he glances around anxiously here and there and sighs that none of the brothers is coming to see him. Constantly in and out of his cell, he looks at the sun as if it were too slow in setting. So filled is he with a kind of irrational confusion of mind, like a foul mist, and so disengaged and blank has he become with respect to any spiritual activity that he thinks that no other remedy for such an attack can be found than the visit of a brother or the solace of sleep alone.⁴⁵

Acedia then is a condition brought on within the scene of monastic work, particularly the symbolic aspects of monastic work (such as reading and prayer) rather than manual labor. Sadness, in contrast, is described principally in its connection with relational psychological dynamics such as desire that fails in achieving its object.⁴⁶

“[D]isturbing urges ... stored up within ourselves [are] the causes of our offenses and

45 Cassian, 219-220.

46 Cassian, 212.

the seeds of our vices.” Sadness can also be associated with a suicidal type of despair,⁴⁷ and can only take one truly positive form: a humble desire for repentance, which is quickened by the joy of contemplating future blessedness.

It would be overly simplistic to identify sadness as “non-work-related depression” and acedia as “work-related weariness,” even if subsequent ecclesial history did not involve such a substantial confounding and combining of the two. Though Cassian describes the origins of sadness as various, mysterious, and rooted in object relations, he also describes it as having an immediate effect within the symbolic labor of a solitary which parallels very closely the condition of acedia. Furthermore, acedia, while described in detail within the scene of symbolic labor, involves extensive fantasy about what is beyond the cell: imagining “far-off and distant monasteries ... more suited to progress and more conducive to salvation,”⁴⁸ his family, people he could visit – fantasy, both positive and negative, about anything beyond the cell and the tasks at hand. A primary symptom of acedia is that “the soldier of Christ, having become a fugitive and a deserter from his army, ‘entangles himself in worldly affairs;’”⁴⁹ in *tristitia*, the monk’s feelings, occasioned by worldly affairs, cause him to neglect his labors. These struggles, as described by Cassian, are interlocking mirror images of one another.

Cassian proposes several possible cures for acedia: a greater abundance of love for the brethren; desiring nothing of anyone; staying out of the affairs of others; withdrawal from those brothers who stubbornly persist in acedia. He sees labor as

47 Cassian, 213.

48 Cassian, 219.

49 Cassian, 221.

particularly central to the Apostle Paul's injunctions: "And work with your own hands, as we commanded you."⁵⁰ Here the discourse around idleness, which would become so central to the discourse of sloth, is present, and it is difficult for the modern reader not to jump to the conclusions of that discourse: sloth is a sin of idleness, and laziness, and the solution is to be made to work. Some of the seeds of that later full-blown discourse are present here, but the emphases of Cassian's story lie elsewhere. For example, he cites a saying "from the ancient fathers of Egypt, that a monk who is working is struck by one demon, whereas an idler is destroyed by innumerable spirits."⁵¹ This is in part an injunction to work, lest one be beset by many demons; yet, the one demon which strikes the working monk, *qua* working monk, is precisely that of acedia, which is the struggle under consideration here. Idleness thus is not so much central to the original position of acedia as it is a temptation, following upon the initial position, to be avoided at all costs as a troubling if seductive pitfall.

This emphasis on working *with your own hands* as opposed to the mental and spiritual labors of reading, praying, and meditating plays an important role in combating acedia. This is evident in an engaging story Cassian tells at the end of the book to illustrate the technique and purpose of such labor:

Lastly, consider Abba Paul [a father Cassian knew], one of the most upright of the fathers. He lived in the vast desert known as Porphyryon, was free of care by reason of his date palms and little garden, had enough provisions and a quantity of food, and could not do any other work to support himself because his dwelling was separated from towns and from habitable land by a seven days' journey through the desert, or even longer, and transportation cost more than he could get for the work that he did. He used to collect palm fronds and always

50 Cassian, 223.

51 Cassian, 233.

exact a day's labor from himself just as if this were his means of support. And when his cave was filled with a whole year's work, he would burn up what he had so carefully toiled over each year, to that extent proving that without manual labor a monk can neither stay in one spot nor ever mount to the summit of perfection. And so, although the obligation of earning a livelihood did not demand this course of action, he did it just for the sake of purging his heart, firming his thoughts, persevering in his cell, and conquering and driving out acedia.⁵²

He goes to great lengths to demonstrate that curative labor need be neither productive nor reproductively necessary, either for a community or for an individual. A monk must "toil" (an intensely physical term for labor) carefully and steadily even to stay in place in his spiritual progress. Nothing is said here of the monk's symbolic (spiritual and intellectual) work, the scenario in which acedia first appears.

This emphasis on manual labor as the primary remedy for acedia is noticeably more pronounced than Evagrius's. Evagrius mentions manual labor as part of the struggle with the demon of acedia, but most of his emphasis goes to patience and persistence, staying in the cell at all costs, not fleeing. Wenzel sees this differing emphasis as deriving largely from the different forms of monastic life at stake in Evagrius's Egypt vs. Cassian's interpretation of Egypt for Gaul.⁵³ While acedia was a term that was used in the broad monastic milieu in Egypt which included the cenobitical Pachomians, the semi-eremitical desert communities of Nitria and Scete, and the city-dwelling *remnuoth*, the more withdrawn communities of the desert had a kind of spiritual and theological hegemony. Discussions of acedia amongst Evagrius and the other desert fathers seem to be most densely attached to these semi-eremitical

52 Cassian, 233.

53 Wenzel, *Sin of Sloth*, 21-22.

communities. In contrast, the emphasis of monasticism in the West was always cenobitical; hermits in the West tended to go forth for periods of time in completely solitary excursions from established monasteries.

Wenzel argues that this cenobitical context leads Cassian to emphasize manual work as a remedy for acedia and to tend to reduce acedia to idleness.

The cenobitic life as Cassian established it at Marseilles, in contrast to the more individualized form of life followed by the hermits of Nitria and Scete, demanded a firm order imposed on the whole community. Here the idler constituted a much graver spiritual danger to the whole than among semi-hermits. In addition, it was basic to the cenobitic life that the monastery be a self-sustaining unit for whose support the individual monk had to contribute his share....

The vice which Cassian with the help of St. Paul strikes at is not really dejection or boredom but simply idleness....⁵⁴

This last sentence seems to suggest a reduction of acedia to idleness in Cassian which overstates the case, even compared to rest of Wenzel's analysis of Cassian, let alone the late medieval and renaissance career of sloth. Nevertheless, there is a shift of emphasis, from Evagrius's focus on a spiritual struggle and spiritual persistence to Cassian's use of the Evagrian concept and his concerns about the ordered, cenobitical, monastic life in Gaul.

There is also a transition from a context in which the majority of monks were former peasants, and doing manual work was a given, where the question had to do with the prayerful nature of that work, to a context in which at least some monasteries (such as Cassian's "rivals," if that is not too strong a term, in Gaul) were populated largely by former aristocrats who might prefer not to work given the choice. In this context, Cassian's emphasis on manual work and concern with idleness should be

⁵⁴ Wenzel, *Sin of Sloth*, 22.

seen not only as arising from an abstract desire to order the cenobitical community, but from a programmatic insistence on the importance of manual labor which would become a nagging question of medieval monasticism.

Cassian's depiction of object relations in the acedia struggle is notable, as well. He depicts this struggle as occurring both as if it is an external factor visited upon the soul of the monk and as an internal struggle within the monk's soul. This is largely consistent with the desert fathers' treatment of acedia as a demon and a thought, but demonology is somewhat less important for Cassian than for Evagrius. He depicts acedia as an internal psychological struggle that would sit well alongside Hamlet or Kierkegaard's much-belabored meditations on an excursion to the Deer Park, though Cassian is given to greater brevity. Yet at times Cassian also speaks in the external language of demonology or vice as an "adversary." The demonological references are largely outside of his own immediate work (the connection with the noonday demon of the psalm and the saying, cited above of the working monk struck by one demon vs. the idler destroyed by many).

The language of the adversary is more intrinsic to Cassian's writing. Here there is a brief moment of telling ambivalence. Having described a scene of acedia in painful detail, he considers "the unhappy soul, preyed upon by devices like these of the enemy, ... agitated until, worn out by the spirit of acedia as by the most powerful battering ram."⁵⁵ The use of simile here suggests that Cassian is groping to find adequate language to express this external internality. The soul is preyed upon by devices "like these of the enemy" (but they are really from within itself); the soul is

55 Cassian, 220.

worn out by the spirit of acedia “as by” the battering ram (but the spirit of acedia is really within the soul itself). But later in the same paragraph Cassian slips into a more straightforward war metaphor in which the monk is in a spiritual contest against an apparently external adversary: “For the adversary will the more frequently and harshly try a person who he knows, once the battle is joined, will immediately offer him his back and who he sees hopes for safety not in victory or in struggle but in flight, until he is gradually drawn out of his cell[.]” Here in trying to explain why one cannot run from acedia but must contend with it, Cassian is stymied, and has to return to a language that characterizes acedia as a demon or an adversary with “a mind of its own.”

Cassian is an important reference point for some of Foucault’s late work; a detailed engagement with Cassian is the subject of his lectures *On the Government of the Living*,⁵⁶ which formed part of the theoretical basis of the fourth (written, but never published) volume of *The History of Sexuality, Confessions of the Flesh (Les aveux de la chair)*.⁵⁷ In various lectures, notes, and short pieces, we can see a bit of the role Cassian and the development of Christian monasticism played in the development of Foucault’s notions of governmentality and pastoral power, and indeed as the link between the first (modern) and second and third (Hellenistic and Roman) volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault draws out this relationship between internality and authority in Cassian, viewing him as a transitional figure in whom

56 *Du gouvernement des vivants* (2012), forthcoming in English.

57 Jean-Michel Landry, “Confession, Obedience, and Subjectivity: Michel Foucault’s Unpublished Lectures *On the Government of the Living*,” *Telos* 146 (Spring 2009): 111.

technologies of the self turn from articulating the self to a precursor to later pastoral power.

Foucault's interest in Cassian focuses on a few primary themes: "the mode of dependence with respect to the elder or teacher, the way of conducting the examination of one's own conscience, and the obligation to describe one's mental impulses in a formulation that aims to be exhaustive-the *exagoreusis*."⁵⁸ In Foucault's reading, Cassian's techniques involve "taking hold of the thought occurrence ... probing rather deeply in order to grasp its origin and determine where it comes from (from God, from oneself, from the Devil)"⁵⁹

Foucault examines the practices of confession, making sharp observations on the changing, contextual nature of sin as involving actions or thoughts.⁶⁰ His concept of sin itself seems almost flat and ahistorical in places. As we've seen, the medieval Catholic notion of sin and cardinal sins was somewhat slow to develop. Though Cassian has a notion of sin, "struggle" is his more important, operative concept.

Interpreting Cassian's writing on "the devil" as equivalent to "the Other" as understood in contemporary French philosophy seems to me to be an anachronism and possibly a number error. ("One must rid oneself of the power of the Other, the Enemy, who hides behind seeming likenesses of oneself, and eternal warfare must be

58 Michel Foucault, "On the Government of the Living," in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984*, Vol. 1, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997): 83.

59 Foucault, "On the Government of the Living," 84.

60 Foucault, "The Battle for Chastity," in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984*, Vol. 1, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997): 195.

waged against this Other.”⁶¹) While Cassian does speak of “the devil” in the singular – probably more so than Evagrius – he also speaks of “devils” in the plural. His whole system of the eight principle struggles is a translation of Evagrian demonology. It’s not clear that such a diffuse and transitional way of understanding evil / evils can really fit with the philosophical framework of “the Other.”

Foucault’s remark that the spiritual battle as Cassian describes it is “a task of dissociation”⁶² is an intriguing one in relation to “alienation as dissociation” under contemporary capitalism. Foucault describes his interest in monastic confession as follows:

From the eighteenth century to the present, the techniques of verbalization have been reinserted in a different context by the so-called human sciences in order to use them without renunciation of the self but to constitute, positively, a new self. To use these techniques without renouncing oneself constitutes a decisive break.⁶³

This passage could very helpfully allow us to restate the genealogical trace of acedia in contemporary subjective labor as well as the profound rupture involved as follows. In contemporary capitalism, beginning gradually around World War II but accelerating in the 1970s, the techniques of self-care and obedience with traces in a Christian, monastic context have been reinserted in a different context in managerial practice and social administration. Subjective labor uses these techniques as part of a project of realizing the self (in identifying with one’s own labor, while being instilled with a deep and sometimes imperceptible form of obedience) instead of as part of a

61 Foucault, “The Battle for Chastity,” 195.

62 Foucault, “The Battle for Chastity,” 191.

63 Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984*, Vol. 1, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997): 249.

project of renouncing oneself for God (making use of a very external, clear regimen of obedience). This raises, rather precisely, the questions of managementality and alienation as dissociation in relation to governmentality in Foucault's work.

4) Benedictine and Later Medieval Monastic Practices

The Cassianic problematic of acedia persisted in Western Christianity, which for genealogical reasons is our focal point here, in two primary forms for the next several hundred years: in the evolution of the system of the deadly sins and in monastic practice, particularly in Benedictine practice and revivals. Cassian's account of the cardinal struggles and how desert monks contended with them became a foundational text for Western monasticism. Not only Western monastic orders but even later, Protestant religious figures have repeatedly sought some kind of return to the purity of early Christianity. They often looked to the same, few sources, though they read them differently in light of different questions they were asking: the community of disciples around Jesus, the apostolic community in Palestine after Jesus' death, third and fourth century Egyptian monasticism, and the Benedictine Rule. The primary theology of Egyptian monasticism available to the West after the condemnations of Evagrius was Cassian.

The alignment of factors that persisted in Egyptian monasticism did not survive unscathed in Western forms. In Egypt, as we have seen, monasticism involved putting the outside world at a distance; sometimes a great distance (as with the desert hermits), sometimes at less of a distance. The issue had more to do with distance from family and society than distance from wealth, which was not widely available even in

the towns. Labor was a key part of the daily monastic regimen, and ideally it was a form of prayer. Sometimes it was productive, sustaining the community and producing goods which had use value and sometimes surplus value as well. In other instances, it was unproductive economically speaking, pursued only for the spiritual well-being of the laborer. Monks in Egypt were more likely to come from the peasantry than the aristocracy, and to the extent that aristocrats did become monks, monasticism was more likely to be seen as a threat to aristocratic fortunes than as an escape valve that would become part and parcel of a Western, medieval system of maintaining and extending aristocratic fortunes.

The history of Western monasticism from at least the seventh century, if not the end of the sixth, to the high point of Scholasticism in the 13th century is largely tied to the history of the Benedictine tradition: its promulgation, sometimes competing interpretations of it, reactions against it, revivals of it, and syncretisms involving it and some other national monastic tradition. The Benedictine tradition is never static thing, relying instead on successive departures from and re-interpretations of an ideal. The ideal itself may have never been consistently and widely practiced, and it wasn't consistently and narrowly practiced for more than a generation.

The Rule of St. Benedict was composed shortly after 535. It was “one of a group of closely interrelated monastic Rules that were composed in Italy and southern Gaul in the first half of the sixth century.”⁶⁴ Scholars disagree on which of these Rules was first to be composed and who copied from whom. The Rule did not immediately achieve the hegemony it would later enjoy. In fact, Benedict was somewhat obscure

⁶⁴ Lawrence, 22.

in his own day,⁶⁵ and it wasn't until Pope Gregory the Great wrote his *Dialogues* in 593-94 that Benedict begins to stand out as a prominent figure.⁶⁶

Benedict's Rule laid out the routine of the monastic day, and in this respect provided a basis for centuries of monastic practice in Western Europe. However, many of the aspects of monasticism that came to be associated with the Benedictine approach did not originate in the rule itself. The rule's structure was based on the authority of an abbot in a local monastery. While Benedict seems to have had a broader community in mind for his writing than just his own monastery, "he did not envisage anything that could be called a monastic order. The kind of monastery described by the Rule was an autonomous unit, economically self-supporting, and having no constitutional links with any other religious house."⁶⁷

Taking up the question of obedience which looms so large in Foucault's account of monasticism, Lawrence argues that the Rule of St. Benedict stood the test of time above other Rules of that time period based in part on its relative flexibility:

[A]t several points where he is discussing the government of the monastery, [Benedict] reveals a more genial spirit than the [contemporaneous] Master's and a greater tolerance of human weakness. 'We hope,' he writes, 'we shall ordain nothing that is harsh or burdensome.' In both treatises the sheet-anchor of the community is the personality of the abbot, and here both authors were clearly influenced by Roman notions of paternal authority. But the authority of Benedict's abbot is less autocratic. In decision-making he is instructed to solicit the opinion of the whole community, including its most junior members, whereas the Master insists that no one is to proffer advice unless it is asked for. And Benedict's abbot is elected by the brethren, whereas the Master's abbot is given the power to designate his successor. Unquestioning obedience to the will of the

65 Lawrence, 18.

66 Lawrence, 19.

67 Lawrence, 25.

superior is demanded by both Rules, but Benedict tempers this doctrine with a repeated emphasis upon the bond of mutual love between head and members.

It's significant that this model, rather than a more transparently disciplinary one, was the gold standard to which medieval monasticism kept returning. Benedict's Rule was also intended to be less harsh than predecessor regimens, for example, that of fourth-century Egyptian Christian asceticism.⁶⁸

Classic Benedictine practice involved a triad of prayer (mainly collective rather than individual – time spent in church, choir, and the divine office), manual work, and study. Study later becomes symbolic work which may produce value, for example when copying texts becomes a major part of it. In the West from fairly early on there's a tendency for manual work to fall away. A return to manual labor along with returns to dietary austerity and community isolation tend to be pivotal aspects of the revivals. There's also a countervailing tendency to pick up new elements, such as the small manufacture of crafts for sale, hiring workers to perform manual labor, and eventually, pastoral service to the outside world.

In comparison with fourth-century Egypt, Benedict's Rule suggests a relatively increased emphasis on common prayer and a slightly lessened emphasis on work. Nevertheless, the summer timetable still “allocated upwards of seven hours to work” per day.⁶⁹ Still in Benedictine practice, prayer becomes the default activity and work a secondary activity. One cannot imagine Benedict saying, as an Egyptian fourth-century Abba did, “What is a monk? He is work.” The meaning and

⁶⁸ Lawrence, 29.

⁶⁹ Lawrence, 32.

interpretation of work have changed. Lawrence argues that Benedict's "insistence upon the value of manual work is in the Eastern monastic tradition. It had an ascetical as well as an economic function; it kept men humble...."⁷⁰ But in the Eastern tradition, as we have seen, labor had a deeper spiritual value than merely promoting humility. In the Egyptian monasticism, the labor process was considered meditative, itself an act of prayer. And performing labor was a way of conducting an inventory of the soul and of combating acedia. Benedict's concern with idleness already seems a bit more external to the soul, a step away from the deep internality of Egyptian monasticism.

This same time period saw a major revision to the list of deadly sins by the same Pope Gregory who promoted Benedict. Here, we find a consolidation of a list of seven chief vices, familiar to the modern reader, which omitted acedia and combined most of its characteristics with those of *tristitia*.⁷¹ But acedia did not disappear; Cassian's scheme existed side-by-side in church thought for centuries before a resolution was reached around the 12th century, in which Gregory's *tristitia* was replaced by Cassian's acedia⁷² in a consolidated system of seven deadly sins; of course, eventually, acedia would become the modern sloth. The partial occlusion of acedia here at the dawn of the Benedictine era indicates a period in which acedia would receive comparatively little development until around the 11th century. It remained important, almost exclusively confined within a monastic context, mostly based on an elaboration of some of the "offspring" of acedia listed by Cassian.⁷³

⁷⁰ Lawrence, 32.

⁷¹ *Sin of Sloth*, 23-25.

⁷² *Sin of Sloth*, 28.

⁷³ See Siegfried Wenzel, "Acedia, 700-1200," *Traditio* 22 (1966): 76-82.

While the monastic vice of acedia retained its relatively dormant importance, the social structures of post-Benedictine monasticism underwent many upheavals, with the role of manual labor in the monastic regimen being one of the pivotal, often-changing elements. By the beginning of the rule of Charlemagne, the difference between a community of monks and a body of secular canons had become often muddled in practice, and the norm of monastic practice was a “mixed rule” based partially on Benedictine observance, partially on Columbanus’s Rule, and partially on decades of accumulated local tradition.⁷⁴ Charlemagne pushed for uniformity in affairs of the church, standardizing the difference between monasteries and houses of canons and prescribing the Rule of St. Benedict for the former.

Under Benedict of Aniane, these reforms, promulgated by around 816-17 as a revival of the Rule of St. Benedict, developed an interpretation of this which “set Western monasticism on a new path which increasingly diverged from the Rule.”⁷⁵ These changes included a dilution of the autonomy of the local monastery and a lengthening of the divine office, which became the primary duty of the monastery and the focus of its monks. “There was little time left for manual work. The monastery employed servants for that purpose.”⁷⁶ The old equilibrium between prayer, work, and study had been destroyed. After Benedict of Aniane’s death, civil war and the defenseless nature of large, often wealthy monasteries led to the secularization of many abbeys.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Lawrence, 70-71.

⁷⁵ Lawrence, 76.

⁷⁶ Lawrence, 76.

⁷⁷ Lawrence, 78.

In the tenth century, Cluny attempted a revival of Benedictine monastic life as interpreted by Benedict of Aniane, especially focused on the message of renunciation of the world.⁷⁸ Before long, however, Cluny became the center of a monastic empire, center of a world unto itself, symbolized by the building of new, magnificent buildings.⁷⁹ The length of the divine office was increased yet again.⁸⁰

By the 11th century, manual labor in most Benedictine practice, including the rather dominant Cluniac variant, had become ritualized; “the abbeys of the eleventh century employed servants for menial jobs.”⁸¹ Meanwhile, intellectual work had come to occupy a great deal of the monk’s activity: administrative duties, reading, copying books, and artistic work. By this point, the gradual class-origin transformation of Western monasticism was nearly complete.

Tilling and hewing were work for peasants and had servile associations. Peter the Venerable argued that the delicate hands of his monks, who came from social classes unfamiliar with toil, were more suitably employed furrowing parchment with pens than ploughing furrows in fields.⁸²

The end of the 11th century and the beginning of the 12th saw a great degree of change in these arenas. Scholasticism emerged as a new, mainly urban theological and intellectual space which in some ways challenged or supplanted the hegemony of the monasteries within the Church and in other ways led to changes within monastic organization. A “quest for the primitive” movement within monasticism looked back to the Desert Fathers and sought to reinstate the practice of manual labor as a reaction

78 Lawrence, 85.

79 Lawrence, 88, 97.

80 Lawrence, 96.

81 Lawrence, 111.

82 Lawrence, 111.

to the opulence and centralization of Cluny, leading to the Cistercian reform. And acedia was significantly reinterpreted, from a predominantly physical vice associated with sleepiness in the 11th century to a predominantly spiritual vice in the 12th.

Reactions to the Cluniac tradition and the broader phenomenon of the concentration of wealth and aristocracy in monasteries led to an idealization of voluntary poverty in the monastic tradition. At the same time, a series of new Latin translations were making works of Greco-Arabic antiquity available in Western Europe, fueling medicine, scholastic philosophy and theology. Within monasticism, this turn to antiquity inspired a new appeal to the Desert Fathers, ancient apostolic practice, and to the original Rule of St. Benedict (*sans* the Benedict of Aniane and Cluniac interpretations).⁸³ Looking particularly to the eremitical experience of the Desert Fathers, new orders of hermits were organized in the West.⁸⁴ Many monks sought out more remote physical locations in which to practice “a literal observance of the Benedictine Rule [and] a desire to reinstate manual labor and private meditation in the monk’s timetable.”⁸⁵

While these eremitical experiments would challenge some of the assumptions of 11th century monasticism, major reform and an institutional challenge to the Cluniac model would not arrive until the Cistercian reforms at the dawn of the 12th century. The new, “desert” monastery of Cîteaux, founded in 1098, sought a renewed practice of the Benedictine Rule, “which for them meant a return to corporate poverty, symbolized by manual labor, and a location remote enough to save the

83 Lawrence, 146-48.

84 Lawrence, 149.

85 Lawrence, 153.

monks from entanglements with the outside world.”⁸⁶ Initially, the founders of the Cistercian order “refused to accept possession of churches, altar offerings or tithes, manorial rents, mills or serfs. This total renunciation of the usual means of supporting a religious community proved impossible to sustain for more than a generation.”⁸⁷ The return to manual labor quickly ran into complications as well, since many of the brethren were untrained for agricultural labor and unprepared for its physical demands. Thus, the Cistercians accepted lay brothers and employed hired labor in addition to the manual labor of the monks.

The use of lay brothers (*conversi*) was not new, but the Cistercians made use of them to an unprecedented degree, creating new conflicts. “Recruited largely from the peasantry, they provided the permanent agricultural work-force of the monastery....”⁸⁸ In most Cistercian abbeys, the lay brothers came to outnumber the choir monks, and Lawrence goes so far as to call the social order that was imposed in this context a form of “social apartheid.”⁸⁹ While lay brothers certainly had a key economic function, their place was also importantly moral and ideological. Manual labor, largely forgotten within monasticism under the reforms of Benedict of Aniane and Cluny, had reacquired moral weight. But who would perform the work?

Gradually, over the course of the early to mid 12th century, the Cistercian order wrested the moral leadership of Western monasticism from Cluny. The Cistercians amassed large land holdings; in contrast to previous orders, they worked these

86 Lawrence, 173.

87 Lawrence, 175.

88 Lawrence, 176.

89 Lawrence, 176.

holdings themselves instead of leasing them.⁹⁰ This engendered its own conflicts, as the growth of the Cistercian order sometimes had the effect of destroying villages and pushing peasants from the land. By the end of the 12th century, the Cistercians, who were founded on the ideal of voluntary poverty, had acquired a reputation for “an aggressive and unremitting drive for papal privileges” and “avarice and group acquisitiveness.”⁹¹

Wenzel analyzes a curious and major shift in the thinking around acedia at this same time period. By the 11th century, acedia had come to be associated with sleepiness and physical weariness in the carrying out of the monastic office. One saint is described as combating acedia by “tying ropes to the ceiling of his cell, putting his arms through, and singing the psalms thus in hanging position.”⁹² Accompanying the Cistercian revival of the interest in the psychology of the inner life, the 12th century saw a greatly spiritualized account of the vice.

This rethinking of acedia as a spiritual restlessness rather than physical sleepiness constituted a sharp turn in monastic thinking, but in some ways it represents the beginning of a broader reworking of the problematic that culminated in scholastic and lay, literary reworkings of acedia.

5) High Medieval Acedia: Scholasticism, Aquinas, and Dante

The condition of acedia evolved significantly during the latter centuries of the medieval period. Cassian, in the fourth century, took Evagrius’s notion of acedia as a

90 Lawrence, 191.

91 Lawrence, 190.

92 *Sin of Sloth*, 30.

way of conceptualizing monastic listlessness and dejection and schematized it as sort of a mirror image of *tristitia*, a persistent, almost melancholic *tristitia* emergent within monastic labor. Gregory's list of seven chief vices, formulated a century and a half after Cassian, omits acedia, combining many of its features into *tristitia*.⁹³ These two systems coexisted uneasily for several hundred years, with different aspects of the Cassianic depiction of acedia being emphasized at different times. In the 12th century, acedia and *tristitia* both came to be consistently identified as vices. Thomas Aquinas ended the controversy with his scholastic re-systematization of seven deadly sins, with acedia replacing *tristitia* from the Gregorian system.⁹⁴

What was this transformation about, and how was it related to the subsequent evolution and eventual devolution of the acedia problematic? The answer to this question can only be found in the conjunction of factors internal to Christian theology and factors tied to societal transformations and how these affected the relationships between monastic orders and lay people. Wenzel analyzes several aspects of this change within church discourse. The first shift has to do with several redefinitions of acedia along the body / spirit axis. "In general, writers through the 11th century saw in *acedia* primarily physical phenomena of idleness and somnolence, whereas in the following century spiritual authors laid greater stress on its inner phenomena of mental slackness, lack of fervor, tedium, and the like."⁹⁵ The 12th and 13th centuries saw the high point of a notion of acedia as spiritual inappetence. Two schemes of classifying sins saw acedia shift around this time period. The first scheme, of the

93 *Sin of Sloth*, 23.

94 *Sin of Sloth*, 176.

95 *Sin of Sloth*, 30.

Three Enemies of Man, grouped sins into sins of the flesh, sins of the world, and sins of the devil; the second scheme, which partially predates the other, grouped the chief vices into root sins which spring from the body or the soul.⁹⁶ Analyzing the frequency of textual references, Wenzel concludes that in the 13th century acedia appears to have been a temptation of the devil, while in the 14th it became a temptation of the flesh, in the first scheme; in the second scheme, acedia seems to have passed from being a sin of the spirit in the 12th century to being a sin of the flesh in the 13th and 14th centuries. This later version of acedia, emphasizing what Stanley Jackson calls the “neglect-idleness-indolence” aspect over and above the “sorrow-dejection-despair” aspect, sets the stage for what became our latter-day notion of the sin of sloth (*otiositas*, idleness, in Church Latin in this period, along with the development of *sloth* and similar vernacular words deriving from “slow”), but several other transformations would have to happen for this transformation to be complete.

Around this same time acedia, which had always been conceptualized as a monastic problem, began to be applied to lay people. Wenzel analyzes this shift from within church discourse, arguing that as Scholastic theology sought to give the “fusion of *acedia* and *tristitia* a sound logical and psychological basis,” it became “no longer a monastic vice but a moral perversion of human nature which could manifest itself in any profession, state of life, or locality.”⁹⁷ This laicized acedia is still a way-station between the affliction of the desert fathers and modern sloth, as it referred originally not to lay people’s laziness or indolence in their worldly affairs, but

96 *Sin of Sloth*, 168-9.

97 *Sin of Sloth*, 176.

negligence in their performance of religious duties.

St. Thomas Aquinas renders the classic, scholastic account of *acedia*, systematically completing the combination of *acedia* and *tristitia* and offering a fresh account of the vice, using quotations from Cassian, Gregory, and Isidore. It's notable that Aquinas's translators render *acedia* as "spiritual apathy," in many ways a fair gloss of Aquinas's rendition of the vice. (In this translation, of course, we should take "apathy" in its modern meaning, not that of Evagrian *apatheia*.) For Aquinas, *acedia* is primarily an emotion, "sorrow over spiritual good" and even more narrowly "sorrow over the divine good."⁹⁸ And, "Emotions in themselves are not sins.... When under control sorrow over evil merits praise; sorrow over the good and uncontrolled sorrow over evil are culpable. In this way spiritual apathy is a sin."⁹⁹ Aquinas goes on to attempt to resolve the contradictions between Cassian, Gregory, and Isidore, and to combine their accounts of *acedia* and *tristitia*. In his rendering, spiritual apathy (under the name of "*acedia*") becomes in its most restricted sense a special kind of *tristitia* (translated here as "despondency," the same term some translators use for Evagrius's "*acedia*"), despondency over the divine good.

The differences between the Thomistic account and the Evagrian and Cassianic ones are notable. Evagrius and Cassian are primarily concerned with the inner psychic life of monks, though as we have seen for Evagrius, this inner affliction is essentially one and the same as the outer affliction by demons. While Aquinas's account is spiritualized in comparison to 11th century accounts that emphasized

98 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Thomas R. Heath O.P. (London: Blackfriars, 1972), 27.

99 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 23.

physical sleepiness and torpor, his approach contains little of this inner illustration of the experience of the sin. Instead, Aquinas gives us (here and elsewhere) an exercise in neo-Aristotelian dialectical reasoning, disputing with prior experts and various manners of thinking on this sin.

Gone, in this account at least, are the many “offspring” of acedia whose elaboration fueled a turn of the 12th century expansive understanding of the sin. If acedia for the Desert Fathers was an expansive condition touching on the whole of monastic life, in the West, especially under Gregory it underwent a significant restriction. If the turn of the 12th century saw another expansive, generalized problematic of acedia, the Thomistic impulse is to harmonize and restrict once again, though Aquinas’s account of the vice would not prove to be very stable.

In Aquinas the notion of sin / vice itself has evolved to the high medieval Catholic position, unlike the various shadings of struggle, demon, and thought in Cassian and Evagrius. Finally, while Aquinas refers to some monastic examples, his scheme of vices is not set within the monastic life; Scholasticism had already established a space that blurred the border between Christian monastery and secular world. The ambition of the thinking here is universal beyond the monastic setting.

Some economic historians see in Aquinas’s interpretation of Aristotle a precursor to the modern labor theory of value. Egyptian monasticism valorized labor as a moral and deeply spiritual problem and built the core of a work ethic, but this was always localized within monastic walls. With Aquinas, the universal, societal character of the labor question emerges.

Towards the end of the medieval period, in some ways foreshadowing the Renaissance, acedia appears as both pivotal and pivoting in Dante's *Purgatorio*. Dante's Purgatory consists of a tier of circles, stacked on top of one another, with each tier slightly smaller than the one before, leading from ante-Purgatory and the gate of Purgatory at the bottom to Earthly Paradise at the top. Each sin gets its own terrace, so the structure is clearer with respect to deadly sins than that of the *Inferno*. Acedia occupies a central space in the *Purgatorio*. But is Dante concerned with acedia or sloth? Dante does not refer to sins in the *Purgatorio* predominantly by their names; instead, he begins with a description of them. He describes the sin under purgation on the fourth terrace as "[a] love of good that falls short of its duty ... Here the slackened oar is pulled with greater force."¹⁰⁰ This tercet contains, in miniature, a description of this sin both as acedia and as sloth. Inappetence for the good is a classic definition of acedia; in English, before the modern word "sloth" (from *slow*) became universal, one of many terms for this sin was *unlust* (related to modern "listlessness"). On the other hand, the reference to a slackened oar metaphorically connects this sin with a type of manual labor typically performed by a layperson; the slackened oar is the oar of the indolent, slothful rower.

The sinners on the terrace of sloth are running, constantly, to expiate their sluggish, slothful sin. Interestingly, they seem to run together as a group, perhaps intended as a contrast with the solitary nature of acedia.

Dante has a "transitional" view of acedia/sloth. Acedia is, first of all, rather

100 Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, trans. by Jean Hollander and Robert Hollander (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 349.

central to the *Purgatorio*, and therefore to the entire *Divine Comedy*. It is exactly central mathematically: the midpoint-canto of the poem is occupied with sloth. It takes place directly after a moment of complete and utter darkness. One could also argue that some version of acedia / sloth is thematically central to the entire *Purgatorio*, to the extent that it is concerned with making haste in overcoming sin, being zealous, and not being laggard. In ante-Purgatory, Dante and Virgil along with a crowd of singers are chastised just for this, which sets the tone for the rest of the *Purgatorio*. Virgil frequently must encourage Dante to hurry along, not to dally too much talking with various sinners, and the sinners themselves are always concerned to make as much haste as they can in making penance, though their stays on a given terrace could last for hundreds of years.

Acedia / sloth is the mid-point and the turning point of the seven cardinal sins for Dante, which he discusses here in an unusually long discourse from Virgil. The three lower circles are concerned with love bent to an evil or “defective love” (pride, envy, and wrath), while the three upper circles are concerned with excessive love of a secondary good (avarice and prodigality, gluttony, lust). Sloth or acedia is defined here as a laggardly love of the good. The notes observe that acedia was identified with the clergy in Dante’s day, “a reference not so much to their physical laziness as to their spiritually laggard lives.”¹⁰¹

Dante’s main exemplar of acedia is an abbot, tying acedia to its monastic background. Traditionally, acedia was presented as a sin which should be approached with sympathy and understanding if sometimes stern cures; for Cassian, it was a

101 Dante, 359.

struggle which all monks would face. Depression and sadness get a rude treatment throughout the *Purgatorio*. The laggardly nature of sloth is appears to be close to laziness or slowness, with none of the sadness identified with “torpor,” for example.

Dante’s vision of acedia is pre-modern to the extent that it is still identified with the clergy. Slowness to the good appears here as the space around the sin that arises once one has decided to leave sin behind. The sinner passes onto the terrace of acedia having literally just superceded the sins of one’s own commission. The terrace of the slothful is illuminated by starlight; Dante and Virgil have just passed through a moment of complete darkness. This sin is about slowness to the good, kind of a “meta-sin.” This “meta” character of this sin is also demonstrated through Virgil’s philosophizing and a dream sequence; the actual interviews with sinners, which comprise most of the other circles (especially the lower ones) are here compressed into a very brief account.

I have equivocated in referring to this sin in Dante as both sloth and acedia; the equivocation seems to be present in the text itself. Dante very rarely refers to the sins using particular terminology; usually he describes the sin instead. He uses particular terminology twice in the cantos concerned with acedia / sloth. The first such reference is to *indugio* (“procrastination” or “delay” in modern Italian); the second is to *accidia*. *Accidia* is still a term for sloth in modern Italian, though *ozio* is a more common term for the sin.

Dante is very modern in at times overlooking any melancholia, loss, or longing that arise from sloth and in others insisting that such feelings must simply and

quickly be set aside. While this does not reduce acedia to physical laziness that is especially applicable to the working person, it gets close. The danger of looking back on the previous life bookends the *Purgatorio* in a way, and the treatment is different than the acedia tradition. Traditionally, the sufferer/sinner of acedia was someone who was dwelling in these feelings of loss, and the cure was work, not so much as an expiatory penance but as a transformative one. Here, Cato at the beginning and Beatrice at the end both deliver stern rebukes: this looking backwards is inadmissible to the spirit of purgation. Cato chastises the gathered crowd in ante-purgatory for gathering and listening to a romantic song, calling the spirits “laggard.”¹⁰² (Casella, the singer, is considered particularly laggard.) Beatrice, too, rebukes Dante, first for being sad for the loss of Virgil (who suddenly disappears, sent back to Limbo) rather than rejoicing at her own presence, then for not having used his love for her as a way of progressing towards the good. Essentially, sloth is the key sin of the entire *Purgatorio*, and it is laggardness which must be countered with speed towards the good. Sadness is no excuse; in fact, it is a primary obstacle to speedy progress.

This modern aspect of Dante might fit right with Foucault’s recommendation of “hyper-activism” or Emily Martin’s notion of acedia understood as a resource for “hot” capitalism. The penitents in the terrace of sloth are manics for the good; in fact they are running constantly. And here is where Dante departs from Cassian and the monastic tradition; instead of wholesome sorrow to counter acedia, in which acedia is gradually effaced and transformed through work, the penitent one should give up any sadness and brooding as an act of will and run towards the good. Zeal is the antidote

102 Dante, 35.

to sloth, not wholesome sorrow.

The work of purgatory is always undoing the work of sin; it is very directly work on the self, often pictured as very embodied (we learn that the souls' bodies are actually made of air; they are projections of their mental states, a radical image of a psycho-somatic condition.¹⁰³ The soul craves punishment/penance/purgation here as on earth it craved sin. In the terrace of sloth, the penitents are running, not working on themselves; it's not exercise, but zeal.

6) The Historical Dissolution of the Acedia Problematic

Gradually, over the course of the late part of the Medieval period and the Renaissance, the spiritual sin of acedia disintegrated and was replaced by the quotidian, proletarian sin of sloth. Why was this? Wenzel, who seems to have surveyed the acedia literature in various genres more systematically than anyone, argues against the notion that at the end of the medieval period, the interesting, spiritual sin of sloth turned into the rather uninteresting, laicized, and unspiritual sin of sloth.¹⁰⁴ He points out that acedia had a dual character throughout the medieval period at least since Cassian, involving both idleness of the body (*otiositas*) and spiritual aversion of the mind (*tristitia* or *taedium*).¹⁰⁵ These various elements were stressed more or less in different eras and different kinds of literature. While a laicization of acedia was not realized until the 13th century, it was already introduced in the eighth and ninth centuries, and in this early, laicized context, the stress was already placed upon

103 Dante, *Purgatorio*, Canto XXV, 523.

104 *Sin of Sloth*, 164.

105 *Sin of Sloth*, 173.

otiositas.¹⁰⁶ The Scholastic focus on the spiritual aspect of acedia was an exception to the overall tide of how the sin was changing; the more lasting effect of their intervention was to strip acedia of its particular, monastic context.¹⁰⁷

Our modern conception of the middle ages in Western Europe often centers around the near universality of Christendom, but what this actually meant in terms of lay religious life changed significantly over the centuries. By the 13th century, “For many of the church-going laity a homily had long since ceased to be part of their normal experience.”¹⁰⁸ A new art of preaching and a new idea of the devout life of the laity was forged, which Lawrence calls “a hopeful message ... contrasted with the pessimism of the traditional monastic spirituality.” Hand in hand with these changes, the scheme of the seven vices was applied to the practice of confession and penance. Wenzel sees this practical shift as the core of the reason why there began to be a greater emphasis within acedia on the vice’s external faults of indolence – though still, primarily, in the performance of religious duties.¹⁰⁹

Wenzel observes the tendency in the later Middle Ages to “scold laborers for their laziness,” but asserts with an uncharacteristic lack of evidence that this is an unimportant feature of the development of the sin of sloth. He seems to be taking aim at a theory that the dissolution of acedia was a result of the rise of the bourgeoisie.¹¹⁰

The theory he presents lends itself well to another way of posing the question, whether the sin of sloth as it was taking shape had something to do with the extension

106 *Sin of Sloth*, 175.

107 *Sin of Sloth*, 176.

108 Lawrence, 259.

109 *Sin of Sloth*, 177.

110 *Sin of Sloth*, 179.

of pastoral power to the governance and management of populations.

Separated from its monastic origins, conceptually bloated to contain a wide variety of different particular conditions, and a linguistic, spiritualized stranger in a world where Christian theology no longer wielded absolute intellectual authority, the sin of acedia stagnated in its development and eventually discohered. It was replaced in some respects by sloth, in the system of deadly sins, by melancholia, a condition with secular theoretical underpinnings that carried forward some of the iconography and literary context of acedia,¹¹¹ and by ennui.¹¹²

7) Contemporary Revivals

Save for history, genealogy, analogy, and the occasional literary reference to a condition part of whose attraction lies in its archaicism and exoticism, the story of acedia should have ended with the Renaissance. Yet today, it seems to be experiencing a minor renaissance of its own, perhaps still at the level of literary exoticism. It has made an appearance in enough different kinds of media that we may wonder, why acedia now? What work is it doing in the new millennium? Kathleen Norris traces this revival all the way to the mid 20th century,¹¹³ but the re-animation of the concept seems to have gathered particular momentum in the past 15 years.

In the humanities, particularly in fields of critical theory and cultural studies, part of the renewal comes from the revival of interest in Walter Benjamin, who wrote

111 Wenzel, *Sin of Sloth*, 186.

112 See Elizabeth Goodstein, *Experience without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

113 Kathleen Norris, *Acedia and Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008), 2.

about acedia in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* and “On the Concept of History,” referring to it as “indolence of the heart.” Agamben’s *Stanzas*, published in 1993, also explored the concept contemporary critical theory at a time when its province was still mostly confined to medievalists.

Another source, this time in the work of a popular intellectual, is Andrew Solomon’s *The Noonday Demon*, a New York Times bestseller which arrived in the early heyday of the Prozac era. *The Noonday Demon* was a tour de force, combining memoir, literary and philosophical references, psychology, epidemiology, and journalism. It aspired to a certain comprehensive exposition of the contemporary cultural experience of depression, as its subtitle, *An Atlas of Depression*, indicates. And while other notable entrants in this era, such as *Listening to Prozac* and *Prozac Nation* aroused too much controversy to achieve a lasting, comprehensive status, Solomon’s book still bridges various divides and stands in as perhaps the most important single-volume introduction to the topic for the general reader which takes bioscience, psychology, population studies, and literature and culture seriously.

Solomon takes the title of his book from Cassian and Evagrius, though strangely, he identifies the “noonday demon” as “melancholic dejection” rather than as acedia, identifying acedia in the next paragraph with Aquinas.¹¹⁴

I have taken the phrase [the “noonday demon”] as the title of this book because it describes so exactly what one experiences in depression. The image seems to conjure the terrible feeling of invasion that attends the depressive’s plight. There is something brazen about depression. Most demons – most forms of anguish – rely on the cover of night; to see them clearly is to defeat them. Depression stands in the full glare

114 Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 294.

of the sun, unchallenged by recognition. You can know all the why and the wherefore and suffer just as much as if you were shrouded by ignorance.¹¹⁵

The work that “the noonday demon” is doing here, then, is partly in creating for depression a long, deep historical trajectory. Solomon sees in the Evagrian / Cassianic concept of the noonday demon (*acedia*) a particular resonance linked to noon as enlightenment – a demon who stands in the full glare of the sun. A few sentences earlier, Solomon mentions the relevance of labor to the noonday demon, and while it doesn’t show up here in his claims about its contemporary resonance, it’s easy to wonder whether this might play a factor as well in defining depression as a *noonday* demon, one which strikes in the middle of the work day and other daily activity. After all, in the high modern era melancholia was often associated with an excess of vapors and taking in too much night air, not with the harsh light of noon. Finally, it’s worth observing here, too, the revival of demonology as a metaphor at least for talking about depression. His positive citation of the notion of depression as a demon may stand in for the ultimate inscrutability of the underlying object of depression in our age. Despite growing scientific knowledge about the brain and a profusion of diagnostic criteria that promise scientific reliability, the thing itself still seems to be unclear.

Solomon follows this with a brief discussion of *acedia per se*, mainly in a 13th century context. He’s interested to note that the word “*acedia*” “seems to have been used almost as broadly as the word *depression* is in modern times,” and he notes the condition’s hostility to industry and activity.

¹¹⁵ Solomon, 293.

While most of Solomon's citations of acedia emphasize the tradition's psychological depth as a resource for analyzing depression in its historicity, he also sees the acedia tradition as an aspect of Christian morality which is responsible for the stigmatization of depression today.¹¹⁶ As we've seen, this gloss compresses a lot of history; a critical history of the stigma of depression would have to unpack this history much more carefully.

In *After Evil*, Robert Meister employs the notion of acedia and the model of medieval purgatory to think through the politics of transitional justice. The question of justice in political transitions centers in part upon the beliefs and actions of "beneficiaries of past evil who no longer condone it,"¹¹⁷ to which Meister draws an analogy with acedia as "the sin that comes after giving up sin without doing what comes next."¹¹⁸ Unlike in Solomon's account, the questions of the relationship between affect and action or work are central to Meister's acedia. He specifies that what is mostly at issue here in an analysis of monastic labor and penitence is "[t]he intense moral value attached to willingly performed work (not the labors of slaves or serfs)."¹¹⁹ What's really at issue here, then, is not work as the transformation of external objects or reproductive labor, but that aspect of work which is close to praxis and political action, which is conscious, deliberately taken, oriented towards a collectivity, and, in this case, affectively penitential or sorrowful.

Unlike Solomon's account, in which depression (and implicitly acedia as a

116 Solomon, 294.

117 Meister, 79.

118 Meister, 73.

119 Meister, 77.

predecessor) are treated starting as individual problems which may have public and social implications, Meister uses acedia as an analogy for problems primarily rooted in the political and the collective. Where Solomon sees the morality of the acedia problematic primarily as a precursor of (negative) stigmatization, for Meister the morality of acedia is double edged. On the one hand, he sees in the moral validation of the suffering of sinners and bystanders a scheme that might be used to challenge a liberal scheme which tries to put evil in the past without any work to overcome its lingering effects, and the finitude and work of purgatory as a compelling moral alternative to the notion of an infinitely deferred transitional time and permanent recovery.¹²⁰ On the other hand, there are clearly limits to acedia and penitential, purgative action as a model for contemporary politics, in its relative inattention to who might benefit from purgative action, a partial politics of redistribution, and indeed an open question mark for what justice might look like for victims and/or survivors.

Combining elements of popular / journalistic cultural theory, memoir, spiritual reflection, and psychology, Kathleen Norris's *Acedia and Me* has further contributed to the postmillennial acedia moment. If the Benjamin revival, Meister, and Ann Cvetkovich are primary figures of this revival in the academy, Solomon and Norris are perhaps its primary figures in the broader intellectual, reading public, or the so-called "chattering class." Norris's account is striking in comparison to these others, because she looks to acedia not so much as a historical antecedent or an analogy for contemporary problematics, but as a condition that has direct, experiential relevance

120 Meister, 79, 81.

to contemporary life. Judging by the success of the book, this proposition has not been met as completely arcane or bizarre.

Norris's interest in acedia is prompted by a concern for mental self care and lay spirituality. Norris herself is a Presbyterian who has been an oblate at Benedictine abbeys, and she rediscovered her Christianity after a mostly secular young adulthood. Thus, she's interested in the relevance of acedia for spiritual life in a diverse, mostly secularized contemporary reality. She sees faith as a journey and a process of questioning rather than a given. Her framework is clearly Christian, and a critic of Christianity might have a hard time reading Norris sympathetically. Nevertheless, hers is an ecumenical presentation which is uninterested in a lot of doctrinal concerns; it potentially opens onto discussions which originate within largely secular, Eastern-looking discourses of spirituality. In a sense, the version of acedia she reconstructs is closest to the 13th century version, which emerges out of a monastic context but constructs itself as relevant to a universal, psychological-spiritual problematic. Of course Norris's vehicle is the journalistic-intellectual-cultural memoir rather than the confessional or Scholastic logic. And while in the 13th century rethinking acedia constituted a project of the dominant Christendom of the age, Norris is well aware that in the 21st century, acedia is a strange, archaic interloper.

Norris's acedia is more like Solomon's than Meister's in that it is based in individual affective conditions that may have social and cultural implications rather than being based in collective-political relationships. While Solomon treats acedia almost as a medieval variant of melancholia, and Meister focuses on the vicissitudes

of sorrow and action that characterize it, Norris's emphasis is on the tedium-apathy-boredom aspect of the condition. While she is interested in the close relationship between depression and acedia, she goes to almost scholastic lengths to differentiate them.

The boundaries between depression and acedia are notoriously fluid; at the risk of oversimplifying, I would suggest that while depression is an illness treatable by counseling and medication, acedia is a vice that is best countered by spiritual practice and the discipline of prayer.¹²¹

Like the Gregorian-era distinctions between tristitia and acedia and various attempts to reconcile or separate them, this distinction in Norris's work sometimes feels like an artificial one which reinforces the naturalized notion of the medical model of depression.

Norris draws out the relationship between acedia and vocation, comparing acedia's attack on the monastic vocation to related challenges for writers, artists, and others for whom "the labor is long and the rewards are slow to appear, if they come at all."¹²² One of the most original aspects of Norris's treatment is a sustained meditation on writing and acedia which renders acedia the "deep history" of writers' block and challenges post-Romantic tendencies to celebrate poetic melancholia, ennui, and bipolar writing habits which have become *de rigueur* in a certain kind of literary culture.

Most recently, in academic circles, Ann Cvetkovich's *Depression* devotes a chapter to acedia. Cvetkovich's reading of the importance of acedia for the contemporary moment follows Norris in an important respect, encouraging us to take

121 Norris, 3.

122 Norris, 43.

up “matters of spirituality that have been rendered obsolete or taboo by a secular culture that, along with medicalizing the condition of feeling bad, also cordons off the spiritual from the political.”¹²³ Cvetkovich speaks with the voice of an academic from a secular cultural studies / queer theory milieu calling for attention to spirituality, as opposed to Norris’s explicitly Christian stance.

Cvetkovich’s project for acedia is close to my own in that she treats acedia as having genealogical and historical resonances which emerge through historical gaps and discontinuities, rather than a story of historical progress in which ancient or medieval interlocutors were grasping towards insights which could only be fully developed in the present. She sees traces of this progressive, continuous historicism in Solomon and Stanley Jackson. Her genealogical / historicist framework also sets her aside from Norris, who despite her many merits seems at many points to treat acedia as almost supra-historical.

Cvetkovich helpfully expands the sense of what such a genealogical project for acedia might entail beyond a continuous narrative of historical progress (or even, for that matter, continuous historical process treated as ambivalent). Citing queer medievalists like Carolyn Dinshaw, Cvetkovich posits:

[T]he writings of an early Christian on monastic life might be relevant for understanding contemporary depression, not necessarily because acedia and depression are the same, but because their unexpected juxtaposition produces insights about contemporary practices of contemplation and action that unsettle received wisdom about depression as a medical condition.¹²⁴

123 Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 104.

124 Cvetkovich, 87.

Indeed, Cvetkovich hopes to use the notion of acedia to decenter focus on a reductively medical model of depression while holding out the hope of a productive encounter between medical science and neurobiology, on the one hand, and cultural studies on the other. She also thinks that attention to acedia may disrupt “progressive or continuist histories of melancholy.”¹²⁵

Finally, Cvetkovich’s taking up of acedia draws a possible connection between the repetitive, ritualized nature of monastic practice and similar features of contemporary performance art. She engages closely with the story I cited above in which Cassian recommends the non-productive manual labor of moving palm fronds and burning them as an antidote to acedia.

In Wenzel’s exhaustive survey of the medieval literature, we can see how widely the nature of acedia can vary by author, focus, and practical purpose of a given text. The contemporary revival of acedia seems to exemplify just as wide a range of possible interpretations. Thus for Solomon, the noonday demon is part of a trajectory of melancholy dejection, while late medieval “acedia proper” is notable mainly for linking depression to a moralizing, stigmatizing discourse of sin. Meister emphasizes sorrow as an affect and inaction as a consequence of acedia. Norris focuses on the flatter, disengaged affects of acedia as apathy or tedium. Cvetkovich, aware of this possible range of states which can fall under the rubric of acedia, draws particular attention to the contradictory responses it can produce: not just lack of affect, but disgust and disdain, not just sleepy lethargy, but a powerful impulse towards flight.¹²⁶

125 Cvetkovich, 89.

126 Cvetkovich, 85.

If Norris and Solomon are primarily interested in acedia as a condition related to the well-being of individuals and only secondarily as something which speaks to a cultural, social, or political moment, Cvetkovich joins Meister in choosing a starting place that is deeply lodged in political, collective questions.

Beyond academia and the chattering public, acedia has become something of an obscure popular cultural phenomenon as well. Starting with Southern California based metal band Sloth in 1998, I've found at least seven albums, about 30 individual songs, and one band devoted to the concept which have been recorded around the world. (Some of the individual songs are offerings in a seven deadly sins themed album of cycle, so for these songs, perhaps we shouldn't overstate the swelling of interest in acedia in particular. It is still notable that acedia would take the place of sloth.) Many of these songs are metal, some are punk or hardcore, and there's a range of songs from other outlying genres. Part of the attraction here lies in the foreignness and antiquity of the concept, and initially, one could get the impression that acedia in contemporary music was just a generic name for an old, dusty, Catholic sin – acedia as the mysterious, theological cousin of melancholia. However, the overall musical and lyrical scope of these songs reflects a range comparable to that we see in the scholarly and journalistic texts I've analyzed.

French black metal band Blacklodge takes a literary approach in "Sulphuric Acedia," which consists primarily of a string of literary and biblical references to the noonday demon, saturnine melancholia, and so forth.¹²⁷ Bloodflowerz, a German

127 Blacklodge, "Sulphuric Acedia Lyrics," <http://www.maxilyrics.com/blacklodge-sulphuric-acedia-lyrics-8f16.html> (accessed 18 May 2013).

death metal band, presents a protagonist who is procrastinating, seemingly spiritually and socially alienated, with “no dreams and no goals.”¹²⁸ Another German death metal band, Dark Age, devotes an entire album to acedia. “Underneath These Burdens” merges nightmares and the noonday demon to get “daymares,” with a chorus: “Are you aware that I am tired / Empty... worn out... lifeless inside.”¹²⁹ Another song on the album criticizes religious leaders and parents who failed to stop “the Columbine Zeitgeist.” For these two German bands, there is a reworking of the concept of sin, in which an intense apathy or affective flattening of the sort Norris analyzes meets youth alienation.

San Francisco punk band Ecoli takes up similar themes, drawing a connection between a hermit’s cell, a prison cell, and a socially alienated modern person who has evidently been diagnosed with or stigmatized as having acedia. “Acedia its what they think. Plagues my will, can’t fulfill desire to do anything. Acedia: my attitude? Sloth is my decision that I pursue.”¹³⁰ For German melodic hardcore band Lasting Traces, acedia is linked to social alienation, suicide, and profound, melancholic loss.¹³¹ For German doom metal band Love Lies Bleeding, acedia produces a haunted, distorted sense of reality, an inability to act or hope after the recognition of sin, and an internal

128 Bloodflowerz, “Death of Souls + Acedia + Sloth Lyrics,”

http://www.nitrolyrics.com/bloodflowerz_the-death-of-souls-acedia-sloth-lyrics.html (accessed 18 May 2013).

129 Dark Age, “Lyrics – Acedia (2009) Album,”

<http://www.darklyrics.com/lyrics/darkage/acedia.html> (accessed 18 May 2013).

130 Ecoli, “Lyric sheet from ‘Judas Cradle’ 7” EP,”

<http://lyricsheetz.blogspot.com/2010/11/ecoli-judas-cradle-7-ep.html> (accessed 18 May 2013).

131 Lasting Traces, “Lyrics – Portraits – Acedia,” <http://loudsongs.com/l/lasting-traces/portraits/acedia> (accessed 18 May 2013).

coldness that recalls medieval humorism.¹³² French black metal band Merrimack gives us a mix of ancient and modern in a lurid description of the noonday demon.¹³³ Rhode Island born hip-hop artist Atman brings acedia back to the quotidian. He's just "trying to get up the stairs ... it's feeling like a setup." Here paralysis and a feeling of torpor are related to economic anxiety and constriction.¹³⁴

There seems to be a marked temporal shift of acedia in popular music. Songs from the late 1990s and the first seven or eight years of the aughts about acedia tended to be in or around metal – a genre that has always been interested in sin, demons, and a critical, often negative, sometimes inverted theology. An old sin newly rediscovered in the popular, intellectual lexicon was a natural topic for metal, even if (sometimes because) the exact content of it was hazy. Here the content of acedia often involves intense self-loathing, social alienation, and apathy-disgust – all themes that belong to classic acedia, but re-read in a light that puts them close to common contemporary themes in this field of genres. In the later aughts and early 2010s, more songs have appeared outside the arena of metal which cast acedia in a less intense or extreme, more quotidian light, in which acedia is linked to affectively flat disengagement from life, depression, and discouragement.

132 Love Lies Bleeding, "Acedia Lyrics," http://www.mclub.com.ua/s_txt.phtml?sn=289670&sid=7066 (accessed 18 May 2013).

133 Merrimack, "Parole Melancholia Balneam Diaboli (Of Acedia And Her Daughters) Lyrics," <http://www.greatsong.net/PAROLE-MERRIMACK,MELANCHOLIA-BALNEAM-DIABOLI-OF-ACEDIA-AND-HER-DAUGHTERS,102318185.html> (accessed 18 May 2013).

134 Atman, *Seven*, "Up the Stairs (Acedia)," Spiritz Music Group, <http://open.spotify.com/track/24uRS7cNKA5bft0cOgYG4P> (accessed 18 May 2013)

Since 2000, acedia has also been the subject of one horror short and a full-length horror movie by an independent filmmaker. The full-length movie, Joseph Ciminera's *Acedia*¹³⁵ is similar to some of the metal treatments in that it refers to an arcane sin and a theological doctrine which may never be fully understood or fully explained. The plotline of the movie involves the demonic possession of a little girl. Some priests and monks arrive from the Vatican and attempt to perform an exorcism. All of this, so far, fits with cinematic horror tropes around Catholicism, rather than anything reminiscent of the Desert Fathers and Mothers' demonology or a deeper engagement with monasticism.

Given this, it might be tempting to dismiss *Acedia* as having little to say about acedia today, beyond some obvious topical connections to monks and demons and the foreign, ancient feel of the word. The film initially passes over some of the more expected explicit content of acedia. A horror film about a sin encourages the viewer to look about for the protagonist sinner or sinners, and we are initially frustrated and unable to find anything satisfying. The priests and monks seem like faithful, "straight-arrow" types; one of them unexpectedly but successfully resists a strong temptation of lust. The possessed girl lacks a pre-possession back-story. The townsfolk have all succumbed to the temptations of a mysterious box, from which they can get anything they want in exchange for their soul. Using this box, a man saves his child's life and a woman asks for the return of her dead husband to keep her company.

Their sins seem understandable and even justified in ways that don't motivate the cinematic unraveling of the entire situation. Nor is it clear that their sins could be

¹³⁵ Joseph Ciminera, director, *Acedia*, 2012.

understood as acedia. The woman is lonely, and loneliness is part of acedia, but she is not lonely due to a monastic or vocational commitment. It's not clear that her loneliness could be a symptom of acedia, though it certainly fits with the related problematic of melancholia / tristitia. The man who saves his child's life doesn't seem to be guilty of a sin, in our modern sense, though perhaps he is caught between sin and giving up sin in a way that is somewhat reminiscent of acedia and which sets the events of the film in motion. The film starts when his child has gotten sick again after he has already, previously, turned to the mysterious box. This time, the man decides to give up sin by calling the priests for an exorcism, though why he makes this turn lacks a psychological explanation. Or rather, he seems to turn to sin and turn away from sin for the same underlying reason: to take the most effective action he can at a given moment to save his child's life.

It turns out, more than halfway through the movie, that the real "protagonists" of the movie in the sense of their being subjects of the question of sin are the group of priests and monks. They face a confrontation with the Devil, who shows up to combat the exorcism. He presents the priests and monks with a series of illusions and temptations which are linked to their own weaknesses; this proves effective even though the priests and monks offer a fairly spirited and lasting resistance. By the end of the movie, the viewer is unsure what is reality and what is illusion, what is godly and what is turning away from the good. Faith and truth have been shaken, and the movie offers no easy "back to normal." The movie effectively dramatizes the psychic confusion of a group of brethren who, having renounced sin with the explicit intent of

casting it out, find themselves becoming the agents of sin. This is, of course, precisely one way to restate the conflict at the center of acedia, though in this case the “psychic confusion” falls at the psychosis / possession end of the spectrum rather than towards quotidian dullness or tedium.

The word “acedia” has made a limited comeback, even though it remains an untranslatable linguistic stranger in English and really any other contemporary language besides Greek. Beyond the revival of the word itself, the underlying themes of acedia emerge using other terminology as well. For example, a recent pop culture blog post about Rihanna’s album *Unapologetic* characterizes the affect of the album as melancholic in terms which suggest resonances with acedia (“affective doldrums” which other critics describe as “bored,” “dull,” or “bland”).¹³⁶

We’ve seen that contemporary acedia has many of the same vicissitudes of medieval acedia, with a couple of important exceptions. Post-2000 and indeed even mid 20th century-present citations of acedia do not use this term to refer to a complex that is primarily focused on physical torpor or indolence absent a psychological complex; we already have discourses of psycho-somatic illness and sloth or laziness which cover this ground. Acedia as carelessness in religious observance has little relevance to the contemporary moment at least from the point of view of mainstream, secularized countries; this theme does not arise per se in the revival of acedia. Acedia

136 Robin, “Rihanna’s Melancholic Damage,” *it's her factory: pop culture and philosophy from a critical-race feminist perspective*, <http://its-her-factory.blogspot.com/2013/03/rihannas-melancholic-damage.html> (accessed 18 May 2013).

is recognized as a condition that is particularly grounded in the history of monasticism; even the pop culture references which play with the idea of acedia in the loosest fashion recognize that it has something to do with monks. But to the extent that it is revived as a condition which has relevance for contemporary life, no one wants to confine it to the religious life.

So what, if anything, are the common threads of contemporary experience that give life to renewed citation of an archaic sin / mental condition? Several of these are theorized explicitly in the literature I've discussed, but I'll try to schematize them here. First, depression is recognized as a massive contemporary problematic, a psychological condition that in some way seems to be a malady of the age. Acedia is a reference point because it shares many of the symptoms of depression, it was also a generalized malady at least twice (in fourth century Egyptian monasticism and in 12th to 13th century Western European Christendom), and it helps us decenter a reductionist version of the medical model which has come to dominate much public discourse of depression. The acedia discourse also references spiritual practice, routine, and psycho-somatic techniques of self-care which are becoming newly invigorated in contemporary life, and while acedia is linked, negatively, ideas about authoritarian forms of Christianity, it is also strange enough and old enough to allow a view into the Christianity of the middle ages and late antiquity that can be paradoxically decoupled from the hegemonic interpretation of that tradition while engaging with it. The monastic tradition also engages or resonates, at points, with Eastern spiritual practices which have become widely popular and indeed, are

recommended by contemporary economic, secular, cultural and social authorities as part of a contemporary regime of self-care and self-management.

Acedia also provides a discourse that examines depressed affects outside of completely privatized notions of intimate life. Of course the question of reproductive labor has always elided a split between the familial and the economic, a split which we can show to be artificial and a product of very particular histories; the history of depression lies partially within this split, in that melancholia was figured to some extent as a masculine problem needing care, and hysteria was figured as a feminine problem to be suppressed. Acedia gives us a discourse that is helpful for an analysis of the depressive position in these other arenas of life, though it isn't terribly helpful in terms of the gendered nature of these problems. There are a scanty few sources in which the Desert Mothers discussed acedia, but in examining these sources, it would have been difficult to say much more than "women suffered from acedia too and talked about it" and that male religious leaders were concerned with the management of women's work in abbeys. It would be interesting to see how acedia played out differently in nunneries and in regards to feminized labor; I have not found sources which address this directly. Acedia is nonetheless useful for a feminist project of effacing particularly modern constructions of the public and private in which depressed affects are private concerns to be treated with private reproductive labor or (much later, and for a long time only for the wealthy) individualized, clinical care.

Second, in public discourse about civil society and politics, "apathy" and "guilt" as ideas about disengagement tend to be profoundly under-theorized and

lacking nuance. Yet in this very territory lies a series of affective vicissitudes of disengagement, political torpor, political depression, refusal or failure to act to address rampant injustices, disgust which seems disconnected from action, non-clinically “bipolar” cycles of political zeal or mania and political dejection, etc. The acedia problematic offers a rich set of associations for these questions; in its Evagrian or Cassianic presentation, it turns upon rapidly changing vicissitudes of this sort.

Third, the spiritual discourse of sloth and the socio-political discourse of laziness seem inadequate at best as resources for thinking about contemporary work. Perhaps they always were more about stigma and pathology than analysis. They helped to draw dividing lines of modernity more than to motivate or understand “lazy” people, as I will show in chapter 3. Today the stigmatizing nature of these discourses is transparent, and their appearance in a discussion of contemporary work would usually mark the speaker as reactionary unless they were somewhat disguised. Even the micro-conditions which seem to have largely replaced sloth as archetypal complexes of contemporary work have a remarkably thin affective texture and limited scope: procrastination, writers’ block, care fatigue, burnout, the deadening torpor of office culture (my term for part of what is being satirized in *Office Space* or *Dilbert*).

The contemporary acedia literature doesn’t really draw out the centrality of specific activities of work to acedia, nor does it critique the impoverishment of the sloth / laziness framework. Nevertheless, it offers some suggestive connections. Norris uses acedia to develop a rich discussion of the problematic at the root of what is called “writers’ block;” her discussion shows this term to be impossibly flat. She

theorizes what she's doing here as being about the link between acedia and vocation, but doesn't go on to think about how vocation is related to affective identification with one's work which manifests itself in a range of relatively autonomous symbolic occupations. Meister and Cvetkovich both raise the idea of "compassion fatigue" in a political context, but pay less attention to compassion fatigue in the context of caring forms of affective and reproductive labor. Acedia offers a resource for rethinking these conditions, analyzing their scope and vicissitudes, and taking up their relationships with political affects and "private" depression and mood management. An analysis of the kinds of work involved in these arenas, the affective barriers or resistances in these kinds of work, the regime of management which works on these problems, and the way this problematic makes us rethink alienated labor will be the focus of chapter 4 and the last part of chapter 5.

These three interlocking contemporary problematics which resonate with the question of acedia raise the question of whether we can say that the acedia problematic is reassembled or reanimated in the contemporary moment, whether acedia serves an analogy for these various contemporary problems, or whether it provides genealogical resources and resonances for them which may be historically discontinuous. I don't think it's possible to say that acedia exists as a trans- or supra-historical condition outside of a theological context of Christendom or monastic practice.

When I started working on this question, I thought that it made sense to say that the acedia problematic was reassembling in the current moment. However, a

number of factors suggest to me now that it doesn't make sense to think about it this way. The word "acedia" is a linguistic stranger in English (and has been for its entire career in Latinate and Germanic languages) that remains rather untranslatable in full – terms like *unlust*, listlessness, despondency, and spiritual apathy all suggest a piece of this problematic, but seem to require philological, genealogical, or historical unpacking to really make sense. Furthermore, there's a tension in the development of acedia between the universalizing tendencies of Scholasticism and its original context, which was vocationally monastic and locally Egyptian. Scholasticism universalized and laicized acedia, stripping it of its local, monastic character. The resultant form of late medieval acedia was one that in some ways has less genealogical resonance for us than the "local" Evagrian material. I suspect that a universalized, de-Christianized but only partially secularized "acedia," posited as a name for this contemporary set of problematics, would be an artificial concoction whose utility would not seem to last long.

Given the way acedia has piqued an interest in pop cultures, I think it is possible that, within the scheme of seven deadly sins, we'll continue to see more and more references to acedia instead of sloth or to a combined acedia-sloth. However, this is only possible because the scheme of seven deadly sins is, itself, a mostly antiquated literary rubric that holds little relevance for modern moral, spiritual, psychological, or even religious life, except to the extent that it can be rearticulated in fresh works of literature, art, and film. Within this scheme, sloth seems to be considered particularly uninteresting and "un-psychological" compared to the other

vices. But this scheme has little to do with rearticulating the major contemporary problematics I've suggested which rub up against acedia, such as depression / mood disorders, political engagement / action, and affective barriers to work.

The resonance of acedia with these contemporary problematics is more than mere analogy, in part because the turn to acedia is motivated precisely by a dissatisfaction with the contemporary categories: "depression" is becoming overloaded and is subject to biomedical reductionism, political "apathy" and "guilt" are too thin to do the work we want to do with them conceptually, and terms for the affective resistances of contemporary work are too thin, diffuse, scattered, and static. All of these terms are held in ordinary discourse to pertain to separate spheres of human life: individualizing discourses of psychology and medicine, politics, and work (which, as an economic category, is traditionally separate in neoclassical thought not only from private life but also from politics). In late modern experience, these problematics not only have implications for one another but impinge upon one another and aren't really thinkable independent from one another. The genealogical work of acedia at its best has a deconstructive effect on the separation of these discourses.

3) Alienation, Laziness, and the Work of Depressed Affects in Capitalist Modernity

In chapter 2 I argued that the prehistory of our modern conceptions of labor was intertwined with the struggle of acedia and that the concepts of labor and acedia developed alongside one another in the context of various iterations of Christian monasticism. Since the manifestations of acedia overlapped with and bled into those of melancholia, and in fact sometimes the term “acedia” was used to refer to religious melancholia or to something closely akin to melancholia described in religious language, the modern sense that dejected affective states and the affects of labor and resistance to labor have very little to do with one another and are described by mostly separate conceptual structures had not developed. In fact, the single conceptual structure of acedia could be and was used to think about the affects that pertained to different kinds of work and other duties, resistance to or avoidance of that work or those duties, and what would come to be understood in a modern context as “private” feelings of loss, longing, and interpersonal disgust, fantasies, etc. In the context of the acedia problematic which developed alongside the modern notion of labor in its embryonic form, thinking about the relationship between dejected affective states and the affects of labor was no stretch; they were part of a single condition, albeit a

condition whose many vicissitudes and expansive range may have had something to do with its dis cohesion.

In the lexicon of alienation, within the acedia problematic, feelings of alienation and alienated behavior in the context of one's duties were thought to drive interpersonal alienation and (usually relatively mild, reversible) emotional/mental alienation. These terms are anachronistic, of course, given that neither the Marxist notion of alienated labor nor the New Left, updated notion of "social alienation" existed during the medieval era. Additionally, alienated labor for Marx is never just a given, static quality of labor, but the tendency towards a dynamic impoverishment and abasement. If the the problematic of monastic labor is an antecedent of the problematic of labor under capitalism, then we could say, in a parallel sense, that the acedia problematic is an antecedent of the problematic of alienation, but with a need in both these cases to attend to the disjunctures as well as the continuities.

By the time of "high modern" industrial capitalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the conceptual, managerial, governmental, and nosological affective structures of labor (including resistance to or avoidance of labor) and dejected affective states had become almost completely separate in ways that rarely admitted an overlap. Melancholia and depression, which correspond at least partially to the part of acedia involving dejected affective states, had come to be seen as problems having to do with electric currents, vapors in the air, early childhood experiences, and biological predispositions – everything except the workplace. To be sure melancholia or depression might be understood as preventing a person from doing his work, but

that was a secondary effect rather than a primary relationship, since melancholia might cause you to lose interest in and stop major life activities of all sorts. And the ability to work was understood as an ability to be disciplined and repress or delay gratification of or bifurcate and ignore most affective states, especially within the work process and time/work discipline of industrial production.

As the notion of *acedia* more and more was forgotten and replaced with the modern notion of sloth, affectively rich accounts of resistance to and avoidance of work were replaced with an affectively flattened account of sloth or laziness, which was seen as a simple, correctable behavior in the productive working classes and industrial bourgeoisie. In subordinate social groups, especially those defined by racial or colonial status or in terms of an explicitly pathologized mental condition, laziness was often treated as an inherent flaw, and the reasons for it were sought in racialized biology or lasting cultural traits. Hysteria as a gendered construct mainly applied to bourgeois women originates within this era as well; both hysteria and neurasthenia were often treated with the “rest cure” instead of manual work as a remedy for mental ailments.

It is the intent of this chapter to offer a rough chart of the development of this relationship between the nosology and treatment of dejected affective states, on the one hand, and changing forms of the social organization of the labor process, labor discipline, and the affective states which accompany these, on the other hand, in this vast, complex, and well analyzed period involving the rise of modernity and capitalism and what I consider a kind of culmination of a “high modern” form of

capitalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Geographically, this will attempt to engage with phenomena that were concentrated in the countries that would come to constitute the “advanced capitalist” in that high modern period – Western Europe and the US. I will also attend to how relationships between advanced capitalist countries and colonial subjects were one key arena in the construction of this relationship, particularly in figuring colonial subjects, both elites and workers, as unalterably lazy and incapable of adopting the productivist ethos necessary for capitalist development.

These concepts of high modernity and high modern capitalism could of course be further interrogated. I use them to suggest a periodization of the social development of the North Atlantic (Western Europe and the US) and capitalism in which the two are integral to one another. My use of this terminology is perhaps different from some uses of “high modernity” which focus on the element of central planning, in ideologically diverse contexts ranging from real existing Soviet bloc socialism to fascism to statist capitalism in Western Europe and the US New Deal era. For one thing, my area of focus is on the advanced capitalist world, not on Eastern Europe or the then Soviet bloc. I also see the statist phase of high modernity as a relatively short-term experiment lasting from roughly 1917 until the post-WWII reconstructions. Other periodizations would probably agree with the end-date here, seeing in the Cold War reconstructions the beginning of dynamics which would lead into alternately figured postmodernity or late modernity. I have a personal preference for the latter formation in regards to many dynamics, but I’d like to mark the “post- vs. late” question with some deliberate agnosticism which should be unpacked

elsewhere.

Perhaps my difference from some other understandings of the “high modern” is that I see the essential values of high modernity as already present or well on their way to being developed in economically liberal if governmentally statist contexts in the 19th century. A non-exhaustive list of the key values or tropes of high modernity in my estimation would include: confidence in the possibilities of scientific, intellectual, technological, economic, and historic progress; a tendency towards centralization of resources and vertical integration, present in the institution of the factory in 19th-century capitalism before the inception of statist economic experiments and only gradually superceded afterwards; and an application of standardized models of economic or social life to different contexts, often attempting to begin from a “blank slate;” the presence and both economic and political importance of “massified” social / class groups, particularly the centrality of an industrial working class and the privileging of male, industrial workers as a social group with historic weight. Some accounts of high modernity give the term a negative connotation; in my account, some of these elements may appear as naïve, others as nostalgic or as lost objects in whose loss we may recognize something precious; what unites them is not these valences, but the fact that they are tropes and values which once seemed to be the height of modernity which now seem unthinkable.

This present essay will surely be not only rough but insufficient in several respects. The larger project is to provide a genealogy of the relationship between the nosology and treatment of dejected affective states and affective states associated

with the labor process which would attend to the transformations and fragmentations of this relationship in detail – to do for this relationship something like what *History of Madness* does for the cluster of madness, reason, and unreason. Genealogy is always concerned with fragmentation rather than cohesive, causal narratives. Nevertheless, the difference between careful genealogy which attends to a series of transformations in detail and speculation is a demon in the details. Rather than a genealogy proper, the present essay should be called a series of genealogical vignettes, or at best an essay towards a genealogy.

That proviso given, this chapter will attempt to trace a series of questions. What happened to acedia over the course of early modernity? How was one of its successors, sloth / laziness, mobilized in drawing or reinforcing some of the lines that define social groups in modernity and in growing cultures of capitalism? What are the affective dimensions of the alienation of labor, and how are those to be historicized? In what ways did the affective structures of bourgeois life, such as melancholia and neurasthenia, which in a sense are also successors of acedia, exclude the question of work, and in what ways did they entomb or preserve a relationship with work?

1) Reminders of the Acedia Problematic

I have already stated that acedia as a problematic was resolved into essentially three separate problematics of melancholia-depression, sloth-laziness-indolence, and ennui-boredom. Stanley Jackson's traces how the "sorrow-dejection-despair" aspect of acedia became disarticulated from the "neglect-idleness-indolence" aspect of it.

In subsequent centuries [to the sixteenth] acedia received much less

attention in the Western world as a distinct condition, and sloth became the usual denotation of the sin when it was mentioned. Further, sloth acquired a certain life of its own in postmedieval religious and secular writings. The emerging Protestant concerns about the importance of work meant that idleness became a danger to be guarded against (Weber 1958, 155-163). Also, the uneasy concerns of urban leaders when faced with the problem of growing masses of able-bodied poor led to strenuous efforts to contain such idle persons who were considered to be culpable because of their inactivity (Foucault 1965, chap. 2). Sloth came more and more to mean a reprehensible idleness that was preached against by lay and religious leaders alike, usually with no indication of attention to the presence or absence of dejection in the persons under criticism.¹

I have some disagreements with the Weberian tradition, both in terms of the centrality and relationship of Protestantism to the productivist ethic and with regards to the novelty of a moral concern with workers' idleness. Nevertheless, this captures in a few sentences the importance of the question of sloth or laziness which takes up one aspect of acedia.

Jackson also discusses the way in which "melancholia" and "melancholy," during roughly the same time period, came to take the place of much of what had been the sorrow-dejection-despair aspect of acedia.

During the sixteenth century melancholia/melancholy continued to refer to the mental disorder in a medical context, but the terms were also used to mean the black bile or to denote the person of melancholic temperament, *and*, more loosely, they were often used to refer to almost any state of sorrow, sadness, grief, dejection, or despair.... Over time the tendency seems to have been for melancholia to come once again to be restricted to denoting the illness, while melancholy remained both a synonym for melancholia and a popular term used with a breadth and diffuseness not unlike our use of the term depression today. Many states of dejection which might have been conceived of as acedia during the medieval centuries came to be viewed as melancholy, occasionally in the sense of a medical condition

1 Stanley Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: from Hippocratic Times to Modern Times*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 76-77.

but more frequently in the sense of an unhappy, sad, or grief-stricken condition without significant clinical implications.²

In addition, Jackson cites Panofsky and Saxl on the way in which the iconography of 16th-century melancholia took up typical figures which had represented medieval acedia. The idea that clear separations can be drawn between acedia as a sin vs. melancholia as a medical condition or a set of emotional experiences, or that acedia and melancholia derive from entirely different intellectual and cultural traditions and can therefore be clearly separated, must be given up. While they derive from separate source material, they constitute two thematics of reflection upon sorrow-dejection-despair in human experience which merge by the 16th century.

Jackson traces the disarticulation of acedia into separate strands of sorrow-dejection-despair and neglect-idleness-indolence; there is also a third strand of the unraveling of acedia into modernity, which we might call a ennui-boredom-anomie aspect. As Elizabeth Goodstein writes in her critique of Reinhard Kuhn, “rather than identifying acedia and melancholy as primitive forms of ennui, we must find a more complex way of articulating the relations between the modern experience and its historical antecedents.”³ Given melancholia’s place along a line of development: melancholia-acedia-melancholia-depression-mood disorder and sloth’s place along a line: acedia-sloth/laziness-burnout/procrastination/care fatigue/writers’ block/etc., I

2 Jackson, 76.

3 Elizabeth Goodstein, *Experience without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 64. Goodstein’s account offers a carefully historicized reading of boredom in modernity. For an account of acedia as a precursor to anomie, see Andrew Crislip, “The Sin of Sloth or the Illness of the Demons? The Demon of Acedia in Early Christian Monasticism,” *Harvard Theological Review* 98 (2005), pp 143-169.

will focus on these two strands rather than the ennui-boredom-anomie strand in the present chapter. A fuller genealogical account should evaluate the emergence and meanings of these elements in relation to the nexus of dejected affective states and affective blockages or resistances to labor.

Another way to frame this would be to say that a splitting-off occurred within the concept of acedia, correspondent to the rise of new fundamental social classes, secularization, and new forms of economic activity which required something like a monastic regimen of control instead of the traditional, loose relationship between landlords and peasants, the collection of rents and gross output under the threat of non-economic coercion. Sloth-indolence became central to the problem of the management of the working classes – a problem which Stanley Jackson’s citation of Foucault shows, was not ever only about managing workers themselves, but also about managing the biopolitics of those resistant to or excluded from the circuit of productive labor. And melancholia and eventually hysteria became conditions from which the question of work was systematically excluded as they became conditions attached to a bourgeois subjectivity which did not labor, but which in the case of male bourgeois was not separate from an expectation of “productivism.”

2) Alienation and the Affective Structures of Modernity

Much of this story centers upon the relationship between various affective-conceptual structures which are within modernity’s narrative about itself (which represent fragments of the acedia problematic in some sense, though the extent to which we are also dealing with new elements should not be under-emphasized):

productivism / the ideology of productivity in industrial capitalism, especially as it figured industrial capitalists and workers as “the productive classes;” laziness, indolence and sloth, which I’ll argue were used ideologically with respect to different social groups, to some extent enforcing a division between productive workers and various racialized, colonized, lumpenized, or mentally pathologized social groups; melancholia, principally figured in relation to the bourgeoisie and largely divorced of a relationship with work; neurasthenia and hysteria, which were variously work-related. The category of alienation is also part of modernity’s story about itself, but it is part of a critical story that at least at its inception was largely separate from the day-to-day discourse of work or affective structures. Arguably this changes post-WWII, when a broader concept of social alienation gains currency in the 1960s, and from the 1990s to today, when the slacker phenomenon can be described as a kind of alienation.

It’s also arguable to what extent alienation is an affective category within theory. Marx’s early writings on alienation are imbued with a philosophical humanism in which alienation has an affective character close to a theorization of a worker’s experience within industrial capitalism. In his later writings, alienation takes up along with labor and value a more abstract or formal character. I’m primarily concerned here with the more concrete, affective, and close-to-experience aspect of alienation. The relationship between that kind of alienation and abstract alienation is further from the scope of this project than the relationship between concrete alienation of labor and the later social alienation or the (apparently unrelated)

terminology of alienation in the world of mental disorders, where alienation is a kind of insanity involving estrangement of the self from other aspects of the self itself and the objective world. While this stretches the psychiatric meaning of “alienation,” I’m also not primarily interested in putting alienation of labor in conversation with severe forms of mental alienation, but in whether milder affective disorders with which an individual can usually still continue some daily functions and with which estrangement from self and world is partial, such as melancholia, neurasthenia, anomie, depression, and anxiety might be thought of as forms of “mild mental alienation” deserving to be put in conversation with particular forms of the alienation of labor.

In this sense, this entire project could be subtitled, “A Genealogy of Alienation.” “From the outside,” it is a genealogy of the relationship between various affective structures of the labor process, on the one hand (the series: acedia; sloth/laziness, productivism; and in the contemporary moment, burnout, procrastination, writers’ block, care fatigue, and the deadening ennui of office culture) and structures of dejected affective states, on the other (the series: melancholia, acedia, melancholia, depression, mood disorders). “From the inside” it is a genealogy of alienation in its historical forms and of the relationship between alienated labor and “mild” or partial mental alienation. If the last chapter was about acedia as a precursor to alienation, and the next two chapters will be about contemporary alienation as a form with some features which are distinct from the classic form, the present chapter is an analysis of the historical form of “high modern” alienation.

Alienation may seem to be such an entirely familiar theoretical concept as to need little further elucidation, but since I have posed the question of to what extent alienation is an affective category especially in terms of concrete alienation in Marx's early work, it seems worth tracing some of these affective resonances which are present from the beginning of Marx's exposition of the concept in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. Alienation of the worker for Marx in *EPM* consists of four primary aspects: alienation from the product of labor, alienation from the activity of labor or the labor process, alienation from oneself, from one's species-being as a laboring creature, and alienation from other people. What are the affective resonances of these various aspects of alienated labor? In relation to the product of labor:

(The laws of political economy express the estrangement of the worker in his object thus: the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more value he creates, the more valueless, the more unworthy he becomes; the better formed his product, the more deformed becomes the worker; the more civilized his object, the more barbarous becomes the worker; the mightier labor becomes, the more powerless becomes the worker; the more ingenious labor becomes, the duller becomes the worker and the more he becomes nature's bondsman.)⁴

Thus, the result of labor under industrial capitalism is to render the worker poor, unworthy, deformed, barbarous, powerless, dull, and enslaved. The affective range here goes beyond how the worker is usually imagined in this period. While "powerless," "dull," and "enslaved" sound perhaps like affective states viewed from below that are called laziness or indolence when viewed from above, "unworthy," "deformed" and "barbarous" sound more like the affective structures impugned upon

4 Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, trans. by Martin Milligan (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 73.

modern capitalism's colonial and pathologized others. There is perhaps some resonance here too of the old peasantry and artisans being brought gradually under the yoke of time- and work-discipline. People whose parents might not have seen themselves as any of these things might, under the pressure of their subordinate role within capitalism, begin to experience themselves as all of these things.

For Marx, the heart of the human's relationship with labor is not to be found in her relationship with the product of labor, but in the labor process itself, the activity of labor. So the affective content of this aspect of alienation is particularly worthy of note.

First, [the alienation of the activity of labor is constituted by] the fact that labor is *external* to the worker, i.e. it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home.⁵

I've used the female pronoun here to heighten a certain jarring disconnect with Marx's text. Clearly the form of alienation he's talking about here is concerned with those workers whose work is in the sphere of production of external objects, outside of the home, in the workshop or factory, who in this period would be nominally men, though historically many women and children worked in factories as well. A housewife would be at home when she is not working and at home or in the market when she is working, and when she is working she would be not at home even if she is at home. And a domestic worker would be at home or in someone else's home

5 EPM, 74.

when she is working, and she would almost never be not working. Another layer is added, still, if part of the work of the housewife or the domestic worker is to create, for someone else, a feeling of home. This partiality will figure into my later account of subjective labor, in which, in or outside the home, the relationship between a worker and work process changes, as the relationship between the worker's body, transformation of an external, sensuous object, and subjective phenomena changes.

Of what it speaks, this is a powerful passage; the worker here is rendered through the work process self-denying, unhappy, mortifying his body, ruining his mind, outside himself (dissociated, perhaps), and not at home. Given our connection with acedia, it is interesting to note the resonances with monastic labor here: *denies himself, mortifies his body*. In contrast to the Weberian sense that the capitalist problematic of the productive labor process has left monasticism well behind, Marx here figures alienated labor as one in which the worker becomes an unwitting object of ascetic self-denial, here alienated from his own will as well as from any connection with any sense of a divine good.

The experiences of being unhappy and outside oneself or dissociated in the work process are notable here, and again stand somewhat beyond typical descriptions of the affects of labor in this time period, even descriptions of the blockages to or dissatisfactions with work. It is perhaps a banal observation at this point, but capitalism can make you depressed or dissociated, and dissociation is one word for a "mild, partial" alienation of the sort I have been considering.

Not only the gendered nature of these passages but their humanism should be

noted:

[M]an (the worker) no longer feels himself to be freely active in any but 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 animal.⁶

The relation of labor to the *act of production* within the *labor* process ... is activity as suffering, strength as weakness, begetting as emasculating....⁷

Part of the degradation of the worker is that his truly human capacities – for Marx, his labor – have been degraded to an animal state of providing for immediate necessities. And the lost dignity of labor under capitalism appears here as tied up with weakness and emasculation. Both the humanity (as counterposed to animality) and masculinity of the worker are under attack. This line of reasoning will probably ring strange for the contemporary critical reader, for whom the degradation of “animal” functions appears more obvious than the degradation of “human” functions, and for whom a male worker’s threatened masculinity seems like a symptom of lost humanity that is tied up within a patriarchal value system. Indeed even today, this is a live question for labor for-itself: is it possible to re-figure the dignity of labor as something other than the worker’s demonstration to himself of his own masculinity by virtue of his ability to provide for his family and guarantee his participation in the *polis* by virtue of exercising a preeminently human, productive capacity?

The third aspect of the alienation of labor is the alienation of the human from nature and her *species being*. Labor for Marx is the life-activity which is proper to the human, a form of production which is “universal” rather than based on immediate

6 EPM, 74.

7 EPM, 75.

needs, applying “the inherent standard to the object,” “in accordance with the laws of beauty.”⁸ Alienation from nature and species being does not translate quite as immediately into affective terms as alienation from the product or the labor process, but it’s clear from Marx’s language that the consequences may be dire.

In tearing away from man the object of his production, therefore, estranged labor tears from him his *species life*, his real species objectivity, and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his organic body, nature, is taken from him.

Similarly, in degrading spontaneous activity, free activity, to a means, estranged labor makes man’s species life a means to his physical existence.⁹

Again we get a sense of degradation, separation, and loss of connection, perhaps more profoundly here because it involves an alienation from one’s own human capacity and natural being. An immanent critique here would argue that Marx’s own humanism involves an alienated separation between natural “animal” capacities and those which are figured as distinctly human and that an unalienated self-conception would also refuse this separation.

Finally, alienation is the estrangement of a worker from other workers given the market-driven impulse to competition instead of cooperation or solidarity. All of the forms of alienation one experiences towards oneself, in the first two categories, also exist with respect to other workers (or, more generally, other working-class people).

Alienation, like acedia, involves a person who relates to herself as a non-self-identical self. Particularly in its early, desert phase the other self of acedia was clearly

8 *EPM*, 77.

9 *EPM*, 77.

defined: the self who may be under the influence of a demon, an external being. Later, *acedia* would be understood as an alienation from the good, a separation from God's will. What is the other self of estranged labor, the self who is recognized to be poor, unworthy, deformed, barbarous, powerless, dull, enslaved, self-denied, unhappy, bodily mortified, mentally ruined, dissociated, and not at home? These rich and varied characterizations do not seem to suggest a single figure onto which the otherness of alienation is displaced. Empty of any central identity or being, the other self of alienated labor seems to be a series of misshapen shadows.

Here we also have an analogue for what I earlier described as a "splitting off" between melancholia and sloth. "[E]verything which appears in the worker as an *activity of alienation, of estrangement*, appears in the non-worker as a *state of alienation, of estrangement*."¹⁰ Indeed, melancholia or bourgeois forms of neurasthenia could well be described as "states of alienation." "Sloth" has never been a very insightful explanation for much of anything, beyond a small measure of creative tactics for subversion at work and a large measure of projective identification on the part of leading social groups. And the "activity of alienation" is certainly closely related to the problematic of the Protestant work ethic and productivism, the necessarily inverse of stigmata of laziness, whether transitory or inherent, of working-class social groups.

An important question for future analysis would draw out the relationship between the paradigm of alienation on the one hand and othering on the other, ranging from Levinasian philosophy to Edward Said's account of imperialism. Purely

10 *EPM*, 83.

on the philosophical plane, many proponents of 20th century French accounts of the Other draw distinctions between radical otherness and otherness in dialectical theory which supposedly is always bound up in other-self-hood rather than complete, radical otherness. It's not clear on the surface exactly how well this distinction holds, since several of the main French theorists are also in part bound up in the dialectical, Hegelian tradition. Taken from the standpoint of material history rather than philosophy, it would be interesting to think about Said's notion of othering in relation to colonial subjects who were considered inherently, constitutionally, culturally, or biologically lazy, in comparison to first-world workers as subjects of alienation who were criticized for being lazy by choice or due to smaller cultural flaws which could be criticized and changed. In this framework, alienation and othering seem less like radically different schemata and more like interlocking aspects of an overarching problematic. However, a full exploration of the theory of othering and the Other in relation to alienation is beyond the scope of this chapter.

3) Laziness, Ideologies of Productivity, and the Boundaries of Social Groups in Industrial-Era Capitalism

To the worker, the progress of capitalism is the process of alienation; this same alienation appears to the capitalist as a barrier to progress and is phenomenologically stigmatized as alienation.

Ideologies of productivity played a central role in gradually "working up" and disciplining pre-industrial peasants, artisans, and manual laborers to the eventual norms of industrial capitalism, for which they were to serve as the seed of a new set

of working classes. When intellectual representatives of leading social groups criticize the working classes for habits of laziness, sloth, or indolence, this criticism operates as part of this productivist ideology. Productivism and the accompanying ideology of laziness is not supposed to be a particularly interesting feature of modernity or capitalism, either in general or compared with several of the other main features of this chapter. Alienation, melancholia, and hysteria are major touchstones of critical theories of modernity, and while they play a slightly lesser role, ennui and neurasthenia have received a fair amount of attention as fascinating problematics. But why would anybody want to write about laziness? On its face, such a project seems like the ultimate shooting-fish-in-a-barrel form of critical theory.

By seeing the ideology of laziness as a ubiquitous background of work under capitalism in modernity, critical theory has failed to analyze its operations carefully and to see how it functions with respect to the project of industrial capitalism. It's my hypothesis that the ideology of laziness played a role in the boundary-making of modern capitalism, helping to define various social groups against one another. Laziness played a role in defining the "productive" bourgeoisie against rentier classes and an aristocracy who were figured as historically backwards and wasteful. It helped to define the productive section of the working classes, who were expected to be a junior partner in capitalist development (while performing most of the work to create it at least in the metropolitan heartland). For them, laziness was a temptation to be overcome. On the other hand, capitalism's others and excludeds were also defined in boundaries set in part by the ideology of laziness, but here laziness was seen as a

temptation or a struggle and more often seen as an innate cultural or even biological trait which justified the subordinate status of the group in question. In different ways, social groups that were branded with this sort of characterization included mentally pathologized others, the lumpen-proletariat, remnants of the old pre-industrial order who had not yet been disciplined to capitalist regularity, more-or-less permanent sections of the so-called industrial reserve army of labor, racialized workers, and colonized nations. In this section, I will survey how the ideologies of productivism and laziness were used in a few of these various contexts and draw some tentative conclusions about its role and importance.

In this section, I'll be mainly thinking about criticisms of workers and excluded social groups as lazy, resistance to work taken as a psychological or cultural flaw, and productivist ideologies and critical theories which take up this understanding of laziness and resistance. For the moment, I'm holding aside the tradition of seeing resistance to work as a political stance and texts which promote laziness as either an act of resistance of the oppressed or, often with some degree of irony within a bourgeois context, as an approach to the art of living which resists the increasing reach of an industrial capitalist value system. These kinds of texts constitute a counter-narrative of modernity, and their objections reveal something important about the productivist narrative; however they never manage to articulate a program which constitutes a real alternative. I'll return to this tradition later in the chapter.

In this section I will work mostly forward historically, mostly "outward" from

centers of capitalist production and political power, and mostly “downward” from capitalists to the productive working classes to those excluded from capitalism. The second and third of these choices are somewhat arbitrary, though they do allow us to more easily follow the grain of a certain kind of productivist logic. It would be worth looking at this from the outside-in and downside-up as well to see what else emerges from another angle.

3.1) Time-Discipline, Displacing the Norms of Pre-Industrial Work-Life

The classic text on the rise of industrial work-discipline in England is E. P. Thompson’s “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism.” It describes how the characteristically irregular labor patterns of pre-industrial life were replaced over the course of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, not without a great deal of struggle, with norms of working-class life which prioritized being at work on time, working a full shift, and not missing time (all of these notions being somewhat new ideas which had to be introduced). Industrial capitalism had something of a head start in England compared to other countries, so it developed and imposed these disciplinary techniques over time, in response to its own expansionary drive, without importing techniques or playing catch-up with other nations. Industrial discipline elsewhere in the world would be experienced somewhat differently, as national bourgeoisies of the various countries would impose techniques in trying to catch up with England elsewhere in western Europe and North America, or, in the case of colonial workforces, discipline would be imposed partly by national elites and partly by the dictates of foreign factory owners and political and military authorities. The English

case has been well analyzed and is unique and instructive because it unfolded over a relatively long period of time during which the outcome was not initially presupposed by many of the participants.

Thompson cites pre-industrial work rhythms of peasant life and small-scale artisanal production as “natural” work-rhythms,¹¹ involving a “task-orientation” instead of the “timed labour” which is typical of industrial work with its characteristic time cards, factory whistles, fixed shifts, etc. Task-oriented labor is relatively humanly comprehensible, in that “the peasant or laborer appears to attend upon what is an observed necessity.” This type of work shows the “least demarcation between ‘work’ and ‘life.’” “[T]o men accustomed to labour timed by the clock, this attitude to labour appears to be wasteful and lacking in urgency,” that is, to be lazy.

In the Marxian framework I’ve just examined, neither the labor process nor the relationship with the product of labor in traditional task-oriented labor would constitute unalienated labor. The peasant may still be putting his life into an object that is not his own. Pre-industrial work like work under industrial capitalism has an element of coercion, and at least archetypically the coercion involved in pre-industrial labor may be more direct (a lord’s army ordering you to work) than the economic necessity that drives the need to work as a laborer in an industrial setting. But alienation for Marx is a process, and it is under industrial capitalism that its rate of intensification increases; the dehumanization and degradation he describes as alienation is in part related to this new regime of time-discipline.

11 E. P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,” *Past and Present* 38 (1967): 60.

As a consequence of this shift, “[t]hose who are employed experience a distinction between their employer’s time and their ‘own’ time. And the employer must *use* the time of his labour, and see that it is not wasted: not the task but the value of time when reduced to money is dominant.”¹² This shift in the basic structure of work process from task orientation (even on, say, a farm where the farmer is clearly the boss of several workers) to timed labor where an employer purchases the worker’s labor power as a measure of hours has a direct consequence for idleness as a problem. What was previously a minor moral concern is now a major impetus of management, not only at the level of a single enterprise but writ large throughout an economy.

Thompson further observes that timepieces served as a marker for sections of the working class that had “made it” as established, stable, relatively well paid sectors; watches and household clocks became symbols of achievement for retirees, workers in thriving industries, and trade union leaders.¹³ Time-discipline, accepting for oneself the norms of productive capitalism which made “fuddling” and idleness true and punishable sins, was not necessarily the province of the entire working class, but really a relatively privileged if historically impoverished and alienated segment.

This concern was certainly not lost on leading ideologists and political economists of the day. Adam Smith’s account of productivity increases allowed by the division of labor – which Braverman will further specify as “the division of labor in detail, the manufacturing division of labor”¹⁴ – sees the task idea in small

12 Thompson, 61.

13 Thompson, 70.

14 Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 72.

manufacture or a factory as something that saves time not only due to the efficiency of breaking down work into tasks which can be performed repetitively, but due to the fact that the task idea can be used to undermine the worker's "natural" tendency towards laziness.

[T]he advantage which is gained by saving the time commonly lost in passing from one sort of work to another is much greater than we should at first be apt to imagine it. It is impossible to pass very quickly from one kind of work to another that is carried on in a different place and with quite different tools. A country weaver, who cultivates a small farm, must lose a good deal of time in passing from his loom to the field, and from the field to his loom. When the two trades can be carried on in the same workhouse, the loss of time is no doubt much less. It is even in this case, however, very considerable. A man commonly saunters a little in turning his hand from one sort of employment to another. When he first begins the new work he is seldom very keen and hearty; his mind, as they say, does not go to it, and for some time he rather trifles than applies to good purpose. The habit of sauntering and of indolent careless application, which is naturally, or rather necessarily acquired by every country workman who is obliged to change his work and tools every half hour, and to apply his hand in twenty different ways almost every day of his life, renders him almost always slothful and lazy, and incapable of any vigorous application even on the most pressing occasions.¹⁵

This passage is striking, since for the first couple of sentences we seem to be dealing with a very technical question of the time lost in passing between different kinds of work. As the paragraph proceeds, however, Smith's criticism of the typical country artisan of the day takes over. First, "a man commonly saunters a little;" this seems to be not such a big thing, and indeed a common characteristic of people in general. We get a new beginning which is "seldom very keen and hearty" and a trifling; now to sauntering is added "indolent careless application." Finally, this country workman is

15 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations, Books I-III* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 113-14.

described as “almost always slothful and lazy, and incapable of any vigorous application even on the most pressing occasions.” We have gone all the way from a slight, normal sauntering habit to a blistering invective against a man who is wasting his employer’s time.

Smith suggests that this seemingly “natural” laziness is really a result of traditional structures of the labor process which can be easily altered with the modern division of labor. Simply, the capitalist or a manager can take control of the labor process, convert the workman into a detail worker, and obviate his need to change tools and tasks during his shift. This creation of the detail worker is really a secondary factor to that of time-discipline which has a related effect of making the work more controllable and alienating.

Braverman analyzes other effects of this detail division of labor as well: it “dismembers the worker ... destroying the craft as a process under control of the worker.” The individual worker is no longer capable of producing an entire finished object; instead, the knowledge of how to produce is controlled by management (and eventually, sections of the enterprise which are close to management such as planning and design). It has another important effect as well: the Babbage principle, such that dividing a craft cheapens its individual parts, allowing the greater part of the labor needed to produce many goods to be paid as unskilled manual labor.¹⁶ The notion of “efficiency” in capitalist economics is often treated in an obfuscatory way, such that controlling workers and keeping them from wasting time is presented as the whole. Certainly this is one concern of the capitalist, in adapting the worker to the detail

¹⁶ Braverman, 80.

division of labor instead of traditional craft labor with “natural” irregular rhythms, but the capitalist achieves two other important objectives in this process as well: control of the labor process and cheapening of the labor that goes into it.

Thompson also draws a connection between this greater discipline and time-thrift on the one hand and enclosure, the fencing of much of the traditional common grazing land which played a role in forcing peasants to leave their rural life and become a new working class.

Enclosure and the growing labour-surplus at the end of the eighteenth century tightened the screw for those who were in regular employment; they were faced with alternatives of partial employment and the poor law, or submission to a more exacting labour discipline.¹⁷

In recent years, a new critical political economy has returned to the question of enclosure as one aspect of primitive accumulation or accumulation by dispossession, activity by which not only are people displaced, but a body of capital is amassed which can be monetized and invested. Thus, this question of stigmatizing traditional work rhythms as a form of laziness is intimately linked to the dynamics that allowed industrial capitalism in England to accelerate.

Early managerial regimes required to impose this discipline on restive English workers ranged from the mixed to the autocratic. In the latter camp, Crowley Iron Works was governed by “an entire civil and penal code, running to more than 100,000 words.”¹⁸

Some have pretended a sort of right to loyter.... To the end that sloath and villany should be detected and the just and diligent rewarded, I have thought meet to create an account of time by a Monitor, and do

17 Thompson, 78.

18 Thompson, 81.

order and it is hereby ordered and declared from 5 to 8 and from 7 to 10 is fifteen hours, out of which take 1½ for breakfast, dinner, etc. There will then be thirteen hours and a half neat service... [calculated] after all deductions for being at taverns, alehouses, coffee houses, breakfast, dinner, playing, sleeping, smoaking, singing, reading of news history, quarelling, contention, disputes or anything foreign to my business, any way loytering.¹⁹

We can see here the sense in which idleness was a *problem* for English capitalists in this era; surely such a code would not reference all of these activities (normal, human activities which might interrupt an irregular work pattern) unless they were happening with some regularity. At the same time, this was not a problem which could be conquered easily, this particular effort involved discipline in a quasi-military, direct sense.

At least at this phase, there was not a clear delineation between working out of economic need and extra-economic forms of compulsion, nor was there a clear delineation between the new proletariat and social groups that would subsequently become mostly excluded from the circuit of capitalism. Braverman cites Pollard to this effect:

[T]here were few areas of the country in which modern industries, particularly the textiles, if carried on in large buildings, were not associated with prisons, workhouses, and orphanages. This connection is usually underrated, particularly by those historians who assume that the new works recruited free labor only.²⁰

He cites Pollard further on the Crowley Iron Works experiment:

The firm provided a doctor, a clergyman, three schoolmasters and a poor relief, pension and funeral scheme, and by his instructions and exhortations Crowley attempted to dominate the spiritual life of his

19 Quoted in Thompson, 81.

20 *The Genesis of Modern Management: A Study of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain*, cited in Braverman, 66.

flock, and to make them into willing and obedient cogs in his machine. It was his express intention that their whole life, including even their sparse spare time (the normal working week being of eighty hours) should revolve around the task of making the works profitable.²¹

Braverman himself concludes that this “method of total economic, spiritual, moral, and physical domination” was a “forerunner of the company town” familiar in more recent, US contexts.²² Of course the Crowley experiment was something of an outlier, but it represents a limit case of early industrial centralization, discipline, and a very direct form of alienation in which the capitalist aspires to moral guidance as absolute as the most authoritarian abbot, creating the factory as a total institution.

Regimes of labor process tend to extend from an original context to subsequent applications throughout a field of social life. Here, if the factory-industrial context was the source of time-discipline, it came to be applied as well in the social and domestic life of the poor and in schools. Moralizers inveighed against loitering in markets, churches, at tea, and in bed.²³ Schools were supposed to teach “Industry, Frugality, Order, and Regularity”²⁴ and to get “idle ragged children; who are not only losing their Time, but learning habits of gaming” off the streets.

One could tell out of this story a history of capitalist managerial / disciplinary regimes based in the workplace, of which we here have discussed two: an early mercantilist / enclosure phase, with direct resistance to discipline on the part of workers and direct suppression of that resistance, and an early factory phase which also corresponds to a shift in the scene of struggle to limiting the hours of the working

21 *Genesis of Modern Management*, cited in Braverman, 67.

22 Braverman, 67.

23 Thompson, 83.

24 Thompson, 84.

day instead of refusing the system of timed labor discipline entirely. Probably the Babbage principle which sees the creation of the detail worker corresponds mainly to the first of these, though it is intensified and generalized with the second. Looking forward, I will suggest that Fordism and Taylorism constitute later industrial managerial / disciplinary regimes, and that flexibilization / lean production and mood management constitute even more contemporary regimes in industrial and subjective labor. While these managerial / disciplinary regimes appear successively in history, they also represent a range of techniques which are not necessarily exhausted historically at the end of a given phase. In fact, as new areas of work are created and new areas of human activity are enclosed or new areas of nature and the commons dispossessed and brought under the regime of capital, managerial / disciplinary regimes of labor are introduced which may represent a mix of these techniques, including some seemingly pre-industrial motifs (e.g. the reintroduction of piecework) along with controls of the work flowing from Taylorism and lean production.

3.2) Internalizing Capitalist Norms: Productivism and Weber's Protestant Ethic

The initial imposition of the discipline of timed labor and an initial breakdown of traditional crafts into detail work were carried out with direct regulation and force and resisted both directly and indirectly. In subsequent generations, the internalization of these norms would be a frontier of capitalism, a moment famously theorized in Weber's *Protestant Ethic*. Weber's notion of a capitalistic ethic to some extent resists a simple class analysis, since he believes the ethic flows more from cultural and religious ideas than from class being. To the extent that he does locate the driving

force of the ethic, he finds it in “rising strata of the lower industrial middle classes” acting out of a broad moral and civic consciousness, not mainly in the activity of “capitalistic entrepreneurs of the commercial aristocracy.”²⁵

The thrust of Weber’s argument finds precepts in various Christian sectarian ideologies which, applied to life in the economic world and ultimately secularized and stripped of particular religious content, drive the creation of a capitalistic ethic particularly amongst a couple of key groups, the aforementioned lower industrial middle classes and skilled workers / artisans. This overlaps with but does not necessarily exhaust the question of the development of internalized work-discipline in the working classes, unskilled and temporarily unemployed, or skilled but employed in stagnant or secondary industries rather than “rising” ones, in addition to these rising-strata skilled workers and petit bourgeoisie. Weber tends to see Catholicism as functioning as a negative ethic for unskilled workers and sometimes suggests that Lutheranism or other non-Calvinist forms of Protestantism might correspond to skilled segments of the working class that are not especially backwards but not completely oriented towards the external world. According to Weber, a secularized version of Calvinism is particularly compatible with capitalism for two main reasons: 1) it adopts the Lutheran notion of work as a calling; 2) unlike Lutheranism, which tends to recommend a more passive acceptance of fate and God’s will, Calvinism recommends “intense worldly activity”²⁶ as a sign of election.²⁷

25 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 28.

26 Weber, 67.

27 Weber, 69.

It's an ingenious argument, though there are other ways of figuring the importance of religious ideology to the internalization of capitalist norms both before Weber and after him. Thompson suggests that the intensified preaching around the virtue of industry and a moral critique of idleness was a question of a greater focus on an already existing theme rather than a new field of Christian morality,²⁸ and he draws out a particular emphasis on the husbandry of time in Methodism.²⁹ One of Weber's major predecessors in German political economy, Lujo Brentano, held a much more positive assessment of the Catholic and medieval contribution to what he called the "spirit of capital," understanding medieval guilds as anticipating 19th century German trade unionism.³⁰ While Brentano's major works were written much earlier than *The Protestant Ethic*, Brentano lived to see its publication and was critical of Weber's stance on monasticism. Since I'm also writing about the relevance of monasticism to labor process under capitalism and taking a somewhat different tack, it's worth noting a bit of what Weber has to say here.

Weber underestimates the importance of labor both to the theory and the practice of monasticism. Monasticism was an important precursor to modern capitalism in the sense that it provided an organized center of intellectual as well as economic activity. Monastic routine was strictly organized, along lines that anticipate the daily timetables and regimens of John Wesley³¹ or Benjamin Franklin, the prime

28 Thompson, 87.

29 Thompson, 88.

30 See P. Ghosh, "From the 'Spirit of Capital' to the 'Spirit' of Capitalism: The Transition in German Economic Thought between Lujo Brentano and Max Weber," *History of European Ideas* 35 (2009): 62-92.

31 Thompson, 88.

exemplar of Weber's capitalistic ethic.³² Indeed Franklin's "Scheme of Employment" looks like nothing if not a secularized version of a Benedictine scheme of the canonical hours.

Weber discusses monasticism primarily in terms of withdrawal from the world.³³ Here Weber glosses Luther and seems to accept his critique: "The monastic life is not only quite devoid of value as a means of justification before God, but he also looks upon its renunciation of the duties of this world as the product of selfishness, withdrawing from temporal obligations."³⁴ As we've seen in the previous chapter, the actual track record of medieval monasticism on withdrawal from the world was much more mixed. At an ideal level some degree of withdrawal was usually prescribed, but in practice many monasteries were very integral to local economies, becoming centers of small-scale craft production, education, and scholarship in the last few centuries of the medieval era. Sometimes they were involved in local political and community concerns too, becoming refuges for disgraced aristocrats and players in turf battles over local lands. To be sure, some of the Benedictine revivals tried to restore the idea of a remote location and withdrawal from the world to the monastic ethos, but the question of withdrawal from the world was a problem for monasticism because normally it wasn't followed, not because it was followed too consistently.

What was practiced with more consistency in monasticism was less

32 Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography* (New York: Vintage Books/The Library of America, 1990), 85.

33 Weber, 40.

34 Weber, 41.

withdrawal from the world than withdrawing from the former life: withdrawing from pleasure, comfort, worldly enjoyment, and familial ties. The first three of these, it could be noted, are contiguous with Calvinist asceticism. Weber treats contemplation as the main anchor of monastic life, in part due to focusing heavily on theology from the Aristotelian tradition rather than engaging with historical monastic practices or even the various rules of monastic life.

Weber can go so far as to acknowledge Christian monasticism as rational, in the main, but remains convinced that its otherworldliness rendered it largely secondary as a source for later engagement with the world.

Without doubt Christian asceticism, both outwardly and in its inner meaning, contains many different things. But it had a definitely rational character in its highest Occidental forms as early as the Middle Ages, and in several forms even in antiquity. The great historical significance of Western monasticism, as contrasted with that of the Orient, is based on this fact, not in all cases, but in its general type. In the rules of St. Benedict, still more with the monks of Cluny, again with the Cistercians, and most strongly with the Jesuits, it has become emancipated from planless otherworldliness and irrational self-torture. It had developed a systematic method of rational conduct ... to bring his actions under constant self-control with a careful consideration of their ethical consequences. Thus it trained the monk, objectively, as a worker in the kingdom of God, and thereby further, subjectively, assured the salvation of his soul.... Contrary to many popular ideas, the end of this asceticism was to be able to lead an alert, intelligent life.

On the other hand, the difference of the Calvinistic from the medieval asceticism is evident. It consisted in the disappearance of the *consilia evangelica* and the accompanying transformation of asceticism to activity within the world. It is not as though Catholicism had restricted the methodical life to monastic cells.

But the most important thing was the fact that the man who, *par excellence*, lived a rational life in the religious sense was, and remained, along the monk. Thus asceticism, the more strongly it

gripped an individual, simply served to drive him further away from everyday life, because the holiest task was definitely to surpass all worldly morality.³⁵

The progressivist trajectory from “planless otherworldliness and irrational self-torture” to rational Jesuits does not fit with the history of Western monasticism. It’s unclear who this history would fit with “planless otherworldliness” except for maybe a few outlying mystics. “Irrational self-torture” suggests a critique of the early desert hermits, who certainly engaged in sometimes extreme contests of mortification of the flesh and endurance of ascetic privations. These extremes and contests are remembered today mainly in the accounts of contemporary desert fathers who criticize them for missing the point. And these practices exist more or less contemporaneously with the elaboration of a complex Greco-Egyptian psychology and demonology which was if anything simplified and stripped of some nuance in its later translation to Gallic and Roman contexts.

It is certainly true that the goal of Catholic asceticism was to remain a monk, and medieval Catholic efforts to secularize monastic ethics were somewhat lacking in the urgency and spirit of ascetic renewal that would characterize Calvinism. I do not wish to suggest that the entirety of the dynamics of capitalist labor process and productivism were already present in monasticism, or that Weber is wrong about the force of a certain kind of sublimation of Calvinism. But in privileging the role of Calvinism above many other factors including other religious tropes that played a role in shaping the background of capitalist labor ethics, Weber draws a partial picture.

Whatever the particular cultural combination of predecessor ideas were that

35 Weber, 72-74.

contributed to the internalization of the productivist ethic and the injunctions against laziness, it seems that in the case of established working classes e.g. in England this was successful:

By the 1830s and 1840s it was commonly observed that the English industrial worker was marked off from his fellow Irish worker, not by a greater capacity for hard work, but by his regularity, his methodical paying-out of energy, and perhaps also by a repression, not of enjoyments, but of the capacity to relax in the old, uninhibited ways.³⁶

Of course the capitalistic ethic of Weber, the time-discipline of Thompson, and the norm of steady, unimpeded production that we see lauded by Smith and analyzed by Braverman are not identical, though all three inveigh against laziness and towards a productivist ethic of some kind. Time-discipline is mainly about conforming oneself to external norms of showing up to work at a fixed time every day and working a fixed shift, notionally without taking breaks, practically by taking breaks which are themselves disciplined, the absolute minimum necessary. Breaking up the work into tasks treats what the worker does once on the job. While time-discipline is directly affective, in that it to some extent erects or at least greatly hardens a division between “work” and “life,” the task idea seems less affective if we begin with the premise that the idea of work belongs to the capitalist or manager and the worker is there to alienate his working capacities within a given time frame. This is, of course, exactly the mentality that the task idea instills in us, to the extent that if we think about work as labor rather than as a calling, it’s difficult to imagine the old idea of pride in craft-work well done, where the idea of the work belongs mainly to the worker.

³⁶ Thompson, 91.

To the extent that the Protestant ethic treats work conceived of as a calling, and the task idea tends to break down crafts into cheap, repetitive manual labor, it's difficult to escape the idea that we are not in fact looking at a single "capitalistic ethic" or an attitude which is proper to any productive member of the capitalist project, but at least two separate ethics. There is one attitude which is proper for "cutting edge," striving sectors of capitalism – a privileged section of skilled workers and entrepreneurs – who along with eschewing laziness are expected to apply their creativity and inventiveness to a calling, taken as a whole, idealized area of "life's work." Another attitude is proper to the mostly unnoticed workers, whether they be unskilled or semi-skilled cogs in the factory system, or highly skilled workers whose skills are undervalued in a given socio-economic conjuncture. This ethic is largely about conforming oneself to a work-pattern which has been determined by another, and especially initially a lot of the norms are most easily related in the negative: don't show up late or miss days, don't drink to excess so that you are unable to work, don't take long, leisurely breaks, don't stop between tasks to talk to coworkers, don't think too hard about each task you are doing, don't take off weeks at a time to attend festivals or deal with family matters, don't sleep on the job; etc.

In the next chapter I will discuss some things that have changed in contemporary capitalism, which is dominated within the advanced capitalist countries by subjective types of labor, but this division maintains itself to some extent. Highly autonomous, highly paid, "cutting edge" sectors of subjective labor are governed by the Protestant ethic, maybe even more so than any substantial social group in Weber's

time. Compared to workers in related fields in a previous era of capitalism, there is an erosion of time-discipline in some particular jobs. This is often used to both enhance the sense of a job as a calling and to reverse the work/life split, paradoxically only in the interest of extracting more work from a person. Meanwhile many low-paid, less autonomous subjective workers are subject to the exact same kinds of time-discipline as their predecessors in manual labor. The difference here is that in addition to conforming to those external norms of self-regulation, they are also expected to conform to and at least while they are on the job internalize and project affective and behavioral norms of service, customer satisfaction, friendliness, etc.

3.3) Scientific Management: Factory Workers Managed, Split, and Flattened

So far, I have discussed phenomena that are identified in Britain at least most strongly with the 18th century, although some of the historical particulars begin in the 17th or continue into the 19th: the establishment of an industrial, detail division of labor organized around the task idea, the grouping of workers into large, disciplinary factories, the gradual instillation of time-discipline into the working classes, and the internalization of these ethics for example via a capitalist ethic, especially amongst “rising sectors” of skilled workers and entrepreneurs. All of these organizational ideas criticized previous, irregular forms of labor (which might seem to correspond more to “natural” human rhythms) as promoting indolence and to be done away with or relegated to backwards sections of the economy under the banner of modernity and progress. These “organizational ideas” (a rough term, since many of them were only theorized after the fact, and the practices which characterize them grew up in many

cases with only a partial conscious articulation) tended to render labor alienated in the specific Marxian sense, even if the forms of labor that preceded them were often hierarchical, coercive, and not forms of work that would be experienced as a realization of human purpose by the worker, so therefore we shouldn't call them "non-alienated." I've already discussed some of the affective consequences and dynamics of these new rules of the game of labor; in general, the motion was towards a separation of work and life and the suppression of affective expression in both. At work, time belonged to the employer, and communication amongst workers or taking breaks to deal with personal needs was discouraged; the ideal worker was a machine, affectively flattened. And even the worker's domestic and free time, the space to which emotional life was relegated, were to be disciplined and brought under control so that it didn't impinge on the worker's ability to be ready for work. Not just affectively flattened, the remainder of affect in the worker was to be split apart from the majority of his daily life and even suppressed therein.

Subsequently to this, over the course of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th, from the standpoint of workers under capitalism alienation was intensified in two or three waves, while from the standpoint of capitalists managerial control was intensified in two or three waves.³⁷ English capitalists instituted a wave of "scientific management in the late 1800s, coinciding with the Depression of 1872 and utilizing extensive piecework. Scientific management reached the peak of its influence using time-motion studies to drive a worker to maximize his productivity in 1910s in the

37 See E. J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 345, 361.

US, and was theorized by Frederick Winslow Taylor.

Taylorism today is often considered a “classical perspective” in management theory; Braverman observes that subsequent managerial theories may have rejected the names of Taylorism and scientific management, because they have a negative or harsh association and a few of Taylor’s specifics have been discarded, but that this is partially because many of the main principles of Taylorism are now considered self-evident and are widely practiced in day-to-day management.³⁸ The essential principles of Taylorism, which was a philosophical culmination of a pre-existing trend in management, are dissociation of the labor process from the skills of the workers, gathering the knowledge of work into the hands of management,³⁹ separation of conception and execution,⁴⁰ and use of this monopoly over knowledge to control each step of the labor process and its mode of execution.⁴¹ The goal of this theoretical construct was “to render conscious and systematic, the formerly unconscious tendency of capitalist production,”⁴² which intensified alienation from the standpoint of the worker and enhanced not only mechanical efficiency but, possibly more importantly, managerial control.

Scientific management would clearly have affective effects on workers’ sense of alienation and feelings of satisfaction, pride, and dignity on the job. It’s less immediately obvious from the theoretical principles that it was intended to engage with workers’ affective states. However, it turns out that the question of stamping out

38 Braverman, 87.

39 Braverman, 113.

40 Braverman, 114.

41 Braverman, 119.

42 Braverman, 120-1.

the last remnants of “laziness” was at the heart of the project.

[T]he greatest obstacle to the attainment of this standard [of the workers producing the maximum physiologically possible in a day’s labor, in Taylor’s terminology ‘a fair day’s work’] is the slow pace which they adopt, or the loafing or ‘soldiering,’ marking time, as it is called.... This loafing or soldiering proceeds from two causes. First, from the natural instinct and tendency of men to take it easy, which may be called *natural soldiering*. Second, from more intricate second thought and reasoning caused by their relations with other men, which may be called *systematic soldiering*.... The natural laziness of men is serious, but by far the greatest evil from which both workmen and employers are suffering is the *systematic soldiering* which is almost universal under all the ordinary schemes of management and which results from a careful study on the part of the workmen of what they think will promote their best interests.⁴³

While a lot of different behaviors on the part of workers could constitute this “systematic soldiering,” one of the principle things Taylor has in mind here seems to be the tendency of workers to encourage each other to work at a steady rate, in order to avoid physically wrecking themselves and to make sure that the majority of workers don’t look bad to their bosses at the expense of a few “star” workers. Taylor based his analysis on the physical abilities of workers who he considered particularly outstanding physical specimens, isolated from other workers and driven to produce their maximum. He was also concerned with breaking down traditional craft control of the work, by which senior, skilled workers would pass down knowledge of the work to junior, less skilled apprentices or quasi-apprentices. Traditional craft control might have included a sense of solidarity and expectations around working together and the proper rate of work (something less than a physiological maximum), which would have constituted “systematic soldiering” when opposed to a management

⁴³ Quoted in Braverman, 97-8.

speedup campaign.

Thus, with Taylor, the attempt to eradicate the “laziness” of the modern, productive worker continues. Taylorism at least in its initial program places less emphasis on internalized forms of discipline and more on constant, external surveillance and total domination of the work process, to an extent that would have impressed even Ambrose Crowley.

3.4) Pathologized Excludeds I: Confining Paupers and Mad People

For workers acknowledged as part of capitalism’s productive “center,” the development of modern capitalism meant successive, intensified forms of alienation and managerial control, which tended to dissociate the worker’s work from craft knowledge and work rhythms, to make more rigorous the separation of “work” and “life,” and to split off affective expression into a regimented aspect of “life” while communication and affective expression were, notionally at least, completely to be suppressed on the job in favor of machine-like affective flatness and efficiency. But what of those who were not so acknowledged: Marx’s so-called industrial reserve army of labor (structurally unemployed people who will be offered work during an economic boom) and “lumpenproletariat” of vagabonds, criminals, and the economic underworld, mentally pathologized others who did not conform to the productive norms of capitalism, racialized, mostly working-class social groups who were treated as second-class citizens, and imperial capitalism’s management of nations and workforces outside of its own borders?

These various “others” of capitalist productivity are, of course, quite different

from each other and internally differentiated within each grouping. If capitalism and modernity had something of a homogenizing project within its centers, with factory workers ideally rendered equal, similar, and replaceable and political masses ideally rendered as non-individuated, on its margins capitalist modernity seems to have had more of a heterogenizing effect. Of course, some differences originate from within a given dialectic of history which is accelerated under capitalism, while others may predate or originate from outside this schema. It is difficult to say anything cohesive about a phenomena that shows up in reference to such a variegated set of experiences, even about something like how they were treated in regards to a problematic of laziness and productivity.

Nevertheless, in a very general sense it is possible to say that the ideology of laziness played a somewhat different role in the excluded social groups than it played in “productive,” working-class social groups. For working-class social groups it was seen as a vice located in social and cultural traditions of work which could be rooted out, using some combination of regimented, total management techniques and internalized discipline, and which morally upstanding workers and their families could refuse with relative ease. Matching the way working-class affective states were split off and flattened, laziness becomes a very simplified, almost childish affective state with a mostly emptied-out psychology (especially in comparison with the psychological and classificatory complexities of *acedia*). For the various excludeds, the notion of laziness tended to be applied to the behaviors of groups with a much broader cultural or biological brush. Laziness became less a vice to be rooted out and

resisted, more an explanation for why a group of people were to be confined or excluded and treated as incapable of “progress.” In the rest of this section, I will look at a few instances of the ideology of laziness in reference to these marginalized or excluded social groups.

The classic work of critical theory treating the question of idleness in relation to unemployment, work, and confinement of both poverty and madness is “The Great Confinement” chapter in Foucault’s *History of Madness*. Foucault’s entire treatment turns on a complex set of vicissitudes turning around not only madness, but reason, unreason, alienation, and mental health. It’s difficult to isolate out a strand and discuss it in a way that is accurate to the overall project. Nevertheless, labor and idleness are interesting in this regard, since they are central questions in this early chapter of *HOM* while labor in particular is something of a lacuna subsequently in Foucault’s work.

“The Great Confinement” treats the creation of “vast houses of confinement” and a “gesture” that designated confinement as natural, involving “forced fraternization between the poor, the unemployed, the criminal, and the insane.”⁴⁴ This idea traces a process which Foucault sees happening starting in the mid 17th century (though they can be traced back to 1575 in England⁴⁵) and continuing in full force until the early part of the 19th century. The focus of the chapter is on developments during this time in England and especially France.

Foucault sees the space of confinement in this period as bringing together “a

44 Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 47.

45 *HOM*, 53.

new sensibility to poverty and the duty to relieve it, new forms of reaction to the economic problems of unemployment and idleness, a new work ethic ... all held together by the authoritarian forms of constraint.”⁴⁶ Taking up some of the themes we’ve already examined in Weber and Thompson, Foucault is interested here in the consequences of the underside of the Protestant ethic (though he finds it evident in Catholic moral thinking as well), particularly here the way in which both poverty and ending poverty become moral, civic issues. Ultimately confinement became doubly justified. For the “good poor,” the General Hospital was justified as a “gesture of assistance,” while the “bad poor ... turned the gesture into an act of repression.”⁴⁷ “‘Enemies of good order, lazy, deceitful, lascivious and given over to drink, they speak no language other than that of the devil their father, and curse the Bureau’s teachers and directors.’”⁴⁸ While this confinement came to include the mad as well as the poor, according to Foucault the original connotations of confinement had nothing to do with the idea of treatment that we typically think of being the reason for confinement of the mad. “What made it really necessary was a work imperative. Modern philanthropists like to divine the signs of concern for illness where there is nothing to be seen other than the moral condemnation of idleness.”⁴⁹

Begging and idleness were public problems, as reflected in public and legal discourse, from the beginning to the middle of the 17th century in France. “[F]actories became bigger and more widespread, and brotherhoods and guilds saw their rights

46 *HOM*, 54.

47 *HOM*, 60.

48 Dom Guevarre, *La mendicita provenuta* (1693), quoted in *HOM*, 60.

49 *HOM*, 62.

dwindle.”⁵⁰ Church authorities even proclaimed joining these orders to be a sin. So the primary meaning of confinement during this time period was to hide away the unemployed and penalize the idle. But to this, Foucault argues, was joined a second purpose: during better economic times, the confined could work to “serve the interests and prosperity of all. The cycle was clear: in times of high wages and full employment, they provided a low-cost workforce, while in a slump they absorbed the unemployed, and protected society against unrest and riots.”⁵¹ Thus, at least to some extent, confinement served as a valve to control some of the bottom portions of the “reserve army of labor” and put them to work during times of economic expansion. This may not have worked as a permanent mechanism, but like the Crowley factory-as-total institution and the Taylorist time-motion study with a task-sheet, it suggested the limit of what capitalism was trying to achieve at the time, an absolutist effort the traces of which are still evident in later, more implicit forms.

Foucault suggests that the eventual disappearance of the house of confinement in the 19th century suggests their failure at addressing real social problems; their success was in an assertion of value.

In this first take-off period of industrialization, labour did not appear to be linked to problems it might cause. On the contrary, it is seen rather as a general remedy, an infallible panacea that solves all forms of poverty. Labour and poverty face each other in a simple opposition, and the domain of the one is in inverse proportion to that of the other.⁵²

Labor appeared as an ideology for the poor in a slightly different sense from how it appeared for productive, stable sections of the working class or for skilled workers

50 *HOM*, 63.

51 *HOM*, 66.

52 *HOM*, 69.

and entrepreneurs. For the productive, stable sections of the working class, the problem was not so much keeping working, as it was the job of the capitalist who bought their labor power or managers the capitalists hired to figure out how to make them do that. Continuous work is not the object of the moral lessons directed to the productive workers, so much as avoiding the many temptations of idleness: drinking, idle talk, fraternizing, doing errands and taking breaks from work. If idleness for the productive working-class was a temptation to avoid, for the poor, Foucault suggests it was considered a sinful state in which they were fully immersed, which could only be overcome by compulsion.

Toil was not a law of nature, but it was contained in the state of man since the fall. For that reason idleness was an act of rebellion, and in some senses became the worst of all possible revolts.... For the Middle Ages, pride (*superbia*) had been the greatest sin.... But all seventeenth century texts by contrast agree on the infernal triumph of idleness, and it was idleness that now led the great round of the vices and encouraged all the others.... In the houses of confinement, work therefore took on an ethical significance: as idleness had become the supreme form of revolt, the idle were forced into work, into the endless leisure of labour without utility or profit.⁵³

Idleness here has a different moral thrust than within the Weberian Protestant ethic. There, the emphasis is more of a positive one: activity in the world that treats work as a calling, frenetic activity designed to help convince oneself that one is amongst the elect. The poor are treated as a negative example in this double sense: either indigent and grateful, they will be spirited away and given work, or rebellious and sinful, they will be forced to work as an example to all, whether their works are productive or not. This is reminiscent of the importance of work in early

⁵³ *HOM*, 70-1.

monasticism, but for the monks manual work was a form of prayer and the activity of constant work a way of taking stock of oneself, under the guidance of an Abba but of one's own volition, whereas the injunction to work in the great confinement seems to have been more about demonstrating the value of work and the consequences of idleness to society as a whole.

The historical accuracy of *History of Madness* is of course a matter of some debate, as is its applicability beyond the French case which it analyzes most thoroughly. Peter Bartlett's *Poor Law of Lunacy* takes up the question of how England during this time period was different from Foucault's Franco-centric account. In general, Bartlett sees a greater primacy of the economic and the industrial revolution in the English case and sees enclosure and expulsion rather than only confinement as the primary forms of exclusion.⁵⁴ Though Bartlett deals briefly with the old Poor Law of 1601, his primary interest is in 19th-century laws and their administration; by the 19th century, Foucault argues that confinement was on the wane, at least for everybody except the mad, who were no longer surrounded by "[t]he circle of poverty and the circle of unreason."⁵⁵ Bartlett's account is focused on legal administration, while Foucault is focused more on the professionalization of power especially through doctors and medical discourses, and Bartlett criticizes Foucault for presuming a neat division between discipline and law and focusing only on the former.⁵⁶

54 Peter Bartlett, *The Poor Law of Lunacy: The Administration of Pauper Lunatics in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), 1.

55 *HOM*, 417.

56 Bartlett, 243.

These provisos and differing specifics aside, the broad strokes of Bartlett's argument would add layers of detail and nuance to a Foucauldian account without contradicting its main thrust. Bartlett characterizes the old Poor Law, based on a 1601 statute, as establishing a threefold categorization of institutionalized poor, providing work for the willing, charity for the unable, and punishment for resisters.⁵⁷ By the early 19th century, the Poor Law was in crisis, due to soaring costs and civil unrest.⁵⁸ A new Poor Law, enacted in 1834, abolished outdoor relief to the able-bodied and set up new workhouses, aiming to terminate pauperism and act as a deterrent to able-bodied poor.⁵⁹ As in the French case, these institutions housed both the poor and lunatics (though there was a somewhat inconsistently applied distinction between lunatics and idiots).⁶⁰ The Poor Law saw several shifts. In the first quarter of the 19th century it was linked to the project of enclosure and forcing the poor off of traditional lands; there was a surplus of labor, which led to civil unrest.⁶¹ The new Poor Law of 1834 abolished the threefold categorization and decriminalized the refusal to work. In theory this did away with the distinction between deserving and undeserving poor but "equated unemployment and the need to seek relief with immorality."⁶² This led to a new image of poverty, centered on individual responsibility and market forces.⁶³

Again, the institutionalization of poverty would serve as a warning to the able-bodied poor to encourage work and warn against idleness. The fact that the reason for

57 Bartlett, 33.

58 Bartlett, 38.

59 Bartlett, 40.

60 Bartlett, 54.

61 Bartlett, 73.

62 Bartlett, 78.

63 Bartlett, 88.

this idleness was often a lack of available work mattered little, nor were these kinds of schemes primarily designed to teach skills to the poor or reintegrate them into regular, paid employment outside of a workhouse. The idle poor, given work or made to work were symbolically important for the rest of society.

Aside from the particular history of the Great Confinement, another important aspect of *History of Madness* for my questions in this chapter is Foucault's framework for the question of alienation. This is a secondary theme early in *HOM* which acquires greater importance later on, as Foucault suggests a relationship between alienation as a term for a kind of madness and alienation in the philosophical, Hegelian or Marxist sense. To trace a few of these usages: Foucault calls confinement "the first alienation," which "is not entirely metaphorical" as a term: "that movement whereby unreason ceased to be an experience in the adventure that any human reason is, and found itself instead avoided and enclosed in a quasi-objectivity."⁶⁴ In the next chapter, Foucault argues:

[T]he strange concept of 'psychological alienation' ... is little more than an anthropological confusion of these two different experiences of alienation, the first of which concerns those who have [juridically] fallen under the power of the Other, and are chained to their liberty; while the second is the individual turned Other [Outsider, Excluded], [socially] excluded from the fraternal resemblance between men."⁶⁵

In a later chapter concerning medicalization and pathologization of unreason, Foucault suggests that the "alienation" of physicians and the "alienation" of philosophers have an "obscure, shared origin" but that after Hegel, the traces of this

64 *HOM*, 103.

65 *HOM*, 131.

connection could no longer be seen.⁶⁶ And a subsequent and maybe final movement:

Madness thus eluded all that might be historical in human becoming, and instead took on meaning in social morality. It became the stigma of a class that had abandoned the forms of bourgeois ethics, and just as the philosophical concept of alienation was taking on historical meaning thanks to the economic analysis of work, the medical and psychological concept of insanity was severed from history to become instead a moral criticism in the name of the compromised salvation of the species.⁶⁷

To simplify this narrative perhaps overmuch, Foucault suggests that the alienation of labor and mental alienation have a common origin in the confinement of the poor and those excluded from or unwilling to work along with unreasoning others and the mad. These are distinct and sometimes opposed kinds of exclusion and otherness which nevertheless stem from a common source; along with these, we could possibly also put into the conversation racialized otherness and Othering in a colonial context, the latter certainly located in different institutions.

Yet, this community of alienation, Foucault suggests, was never able to cohere as a historical experience, relegated instead to a dusty, unnamed-at-the-time and hard-to-recognize point of origin. In fact it was mostly erased as having any commonality. The alienation of labor was theorized following upon Hegelian rationality, which Foucault seems to find much more stultifying than its 18th century predecessors; Foucault seems to think that by the time of Marx, any trace of the relationship between reason and unreason has been forgotten. Meanwhile, madness, which has already been confined and thereby alienated, is medicalized under the positivist concept of “insanity” and again, the sense that unreason could enter into any kind of

⁶⁶ *HOM*, 372.

⁶⁷ *HOM*, 378.

dialogue with reason is lost under a kind of double alienation in which unreason is no longer able to be recognized at all.

This is a rough summary, and a full analysis would not only have to trace more extensively Foucault's use of the term "alienation" and its more general use in French psychiatry, but to be precise about Foucault's use of "unreason," which at times seems to be almost a synonym for madness, at times to be a greater category which includes madness, and at times to be a separate, parallel category that goes hand-in-hand with madness for much of modernity, only to disappear in the 19th century and to reappear, in some form, as the Unconscious of psychoanalysis. In any case, this suggests something about the relationships between the alienation of labor, social alienation, mental alienation, and Otherness – both how they are historically intertwined and why they cannot be thought together regularly today.

3.5) Marginalization: Racialized Workers outside the Core Industries

The theme of laziness / idleness takes on yet another role in regards to racialized workers and racialized working-class social groups who typically do not have access to stable, "core" industrial jobs except during periods of strong economic expansion. Here it serves to stigmatize the groups in question and justify various second-class or caste-like statuses. However, behavior stigmatized as lazy may also be a form of collective action, a form of the "systematic soldiering" Taylor saw as so pernicious to capitalist interests.

Stigmatization of subordinate racial groups as lazy is so common that analyzing it broadly would be, once again, shooting-fish-in-a-barrel cultural critique,

while trying to catalog all of the cases in which this sort of characterization is made would be an exhausting if possibly interesting project. I've chosen to focus on a couple of already well-analyzed examples which are especially important in the US, because I think they provide an interesting view of what the ideology of laziness is doing in these cases. It's entirely possible, of course, that it has somewhat different dynamics in other countries or eras.

Robin Kelley takes up the racist ideology that treats Black workers as shiftless, lazy, immoral, and inept in "Shiftless of the World Unite!," the first chapter of *Race Rebels*. He examines a wide range of occupations, from industrial workers to domestics to transit and agricultural workers; the bulk of his examples are from late Reconstruction-1940 in the South, though he refers to at least a couple of post-WWII situations as well.

Kelley reconsiders materials that describe Black workers as " 'unreliable,' 'shiftless,' or 'ignorant.'"⁶⁸ To some extent, these characterizations served as racist ideology to justify a subordinate status or the use of physical coercion by foremen. Additionally, "in many instances these descriptions are the result of employers, foremen, and managers misconstruing the meaning of working-class activity which they were never supposed to understand": systematic, collective activity, albeit articulated furtively without the overt consciousness of a social movement or direct, economic-corporate activity. Black workers could sometimes take advantage of stereotypes of "inefficiency and [a] penchant for not following directions [to] create

68 Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 22.

... havoc and chaos for industrial production or the smooth running of a household.” Domestic workers in particular generated a whole range of strategies to gain some control over the household labor process, “including slowdowns, theft or ‘pan-toting’ (bringing home leftovers and other foodstuffs), leaving work early, or quitting, in order to control the pace of work, increase wages, compensate for underpayment, reduce hours, and seize more personal autonomy. These individual acts often had a collective basis that remained hidden from their employers.”⁶⁹

Kelley suggests that these everyday acts of subversion or humanization of the labor process are an “infrapolitics”⁷⁰ which bear a relationship to organized resistance without being an implicit version of the latter waiting to burst into full fruition. As Taylor suggested, sometimes the politics of laziness include a deeper, collective or semi-collective strand of resistance that is only semi-visible to managers and foremen. Taylor thought that this systematic soldiering could be stamped out with proper, constant supervision and a series of tasks that would keep the worker busy during his entire shift and which would exhaust him by the end of it. Hard, physical coercion of workers was certainly not a stranger to the South, but Kelley suggests that it played out differently along gender lines with Black workers and white workers. While white workers might have seen hard, physical work as especially manly (and therefore at least some of them might have gone along with a Taylorist scheme to pay them more for a hard day’s work), amongst Black workers, such hard labor and being

69 Kelley, 18. See also, Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: To 'joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

70 Kelley, 33.

physically driven would be more likely to be viewed as “servile,” degraded, “messy,” and “unsocial” rather than manly.⁷¹ It’s also likely to be the case that many of the industries that employed Black workers in the South during this time period would not have had the centralized organization necessary to surveil workers constantly in a Taylorist manner, relying instead on older techniques of “driving” workers which were at least partly holdovers from antebellum slave labor. In any case, laziness as an ideology referencing Black workers was not seen as a temptation to be stamped out, so much as a permanent brand of inferiority which only a select few could supercede.

Confronting the politics of being criticized as lazy was something of a double-edged sword for Black workers during this time period. There is evidence that in some situations, “theft, sabotage, and slowdowns ... reinforced the subordinate position of black coal miners in a racially determined occupational hierarchy.”⁷² Many Black workers responded by providing “cooperative, efficient, and productive labor.” And at least in some cases, the Black church joined its white counterparts as we’ve already discussed in extolling a version of the work ethic for its flock.

The National Baptist Convention, for example, issued pamphlets and reports criticizing workers for laziness and idleness, suggesting that hard work – irrespective of wages [and] of the nature of the work itself – would lead to success and respectability for the race as a whole.⁷³

Again, it’s interesting to compare this tack with other particular approaches to preaching the work ethic we’ve seen. Thompson’s Methodists preached the virtues of promptness and personal regimen, seeing laziness as a personal and individual

71 Kelley, 31-2.

72 Kelley, 24.

73 Kelley, 24.

temptation which individual congregants and families could conquer. Weber's Calvinists and a secularized form of Calvinism extol the virtues of busy activity in the world in pursuit of a calling as a form of demonstrating, at least to oneself, one's righteousness. Foucault's preachers focus on the critique of idleness as a sin and a revolt and on forced labor as a demonstration of justice. Kelley suggests that the NBC accepted the notion of laziness as a problem for Black people and sought to change it through a long-term program of racial uplift. In this the NBC was not alone; much of Booker T. Washington's program had a similar thrust.

George Sánchez's considers a somewhat parallel racialization of labor amongst Mexican immigrants to Los Angeles in the 1920s. There are several important differences between Sánchez's and Kelley's scope and object of study, even beyond historical specifics. While Kelly is particularly interested in this relationship between infrapolitics and social movements, Sánchez is more concerned with the labor process itself and the role it played in the experience of community-formation. Kelley is interested in a wide range of industries and makes a point of thinking about women domestic workers, whose work has typically been overlooked in labor studies. Sánchez is interested in a narrower range of manual labor jobs and is less focused on women as workers, certainly in part due to the fact that many Mexicans in LA in the 1920s were single men whose families remained in Mexico.⁷⁴

[M]ost Mexican immigrant laborers were concentrated in jobs outside the factory during the 1920s. The kind of work obtained by Mexican immigrants in the agricultural, railroad and mining industries did not

74 George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 195.

resemble modern factory labor in several important ways. The “rule of the clock” which, according to Gutman, characterized factory labor discipline often did not apply in these industries. Outside of a controlled environment, if not in the “open air,” Chicano workers could be driven to longer hours based on piece-rates and completion of tasks, rather than on hours in the day. At times, the tasks were limited only by daylight. Since workers lived on or near work sites, their day did not end with a clear separation from the work environment. Instead of requiring the development of internal discipline within each worker, Mexican laborers were often controlled through gangs driven by a foreman. Intimidation, pressure, and even violence were more characteristic than time discipline and economic incentive. This feudal system of labor dominated the industries in which Mexicans were concentrated throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century.⁷⁵

This is a fascinating passage, and while Sánchez doesn’t cite Thompson he does the work here of putting the prevailing labor process of this period and set of industries in conversation with Thompson’s time discipline. Sánchez suggests that the techniques of management here are quite different than those in a formal, “core” industrial setting, especially one managing white workers’ labor, predominantly. Nevertheless, Sánchez’s conclusion to this paragraph that this non-factory system of management amounted to a premodern, “feudal system of labor” seems to me incorrect, given that it was a system founded on modern exigencies of extracting as much efficient labor as possible and managing a population whose work habits are viewed by the dominant group as problematic and lacking in a desired work ethic.

Both Hobsbawm and Braverman suggest that piecework is not necessarily a premodern throwback, but may be combined with “systematic and detailed control on the part of management over the processes of work, a control that is sometimes

75 Sánchez, 190.

exercised more stringently than where time rates are employed.”⁷⁶ Premodern forms of coercion, while no less coercive, would not have focused on driving workers to longer hours. And as several sources I’ve examined suggest, an interplay between intimidation, pressure, coercion, and violence on the one hand and (internalized) discipline and economic incentive on the other hand have always been part of capitalism’s mode of organizing a labor force. As Gramsci suggests in another field, capitalism functions through forms of hegemony that mobilize “an amalgam of coercive and consensual mechanisms.”⁷⁷

This form of labor broke down the classic, industrial split between work and life, Sánchez observes, by housing workers near their work-sites and the use of piece rates. This work/life split was broken down, here, not in the interest of restoring a “work-life balance” or of restoring humanity to the work process, but in the interest of totalizing exploitation and efficiency. This will be a theme in managerial innovations of the 20th century involving different types of work and strata of workers. If the work/life split is part of a moment which really instigates alienation in the modern sense, labor process innovations that destroy the work/life split do not necessarily de-alienate work; in fact, they may serve to intensify the alienation by extending the alienation into what little space was still reserved for “life.” It should be noted in this respect that even industrial labor impinged into the space of “life” by marking it off as a distinct sphere and by imposing certain norms and habits within it, especially of regularity and restraint. Once the worker’s movement had accepted the

76 Braverman, 63. See also Hobsbawm, 362 on the use of “regressive piece-work wages” as an aspect of modern, scientific management.

77 Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), 179-80.

split and the imposition of habits, the next struggle was not only over the length of the work-day, but to curtail this impingement into the space of life, as reflected in the classic slogan for the eight-hour day, “Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what we will!”

What, from the standpoint of employers, were the characteristics of Mexican labor that required an array of managerial techniques with this particular array of modern and premodern, coercive and consensual mechanisms? Here Sánchez suggests a more complex picture than that of mere laziness.

The same employers who maintained harsh conditions and low wages for Mexican workers often complained that Mexicans showed no loyalty to the arduous work they were assigned or to the companies for which they worked. “The average Mexican likes the easy way to payday,” said one Los Angeles railroad official. “He will work hard but does not like to be held responsible or likes to worry after the day is done.... As soon as he has a little money he lays off and goes to spend it. He does not come back till he has [to].” Another frequent complaint was that the Mexican worker was generally slower than other laborers.⁷⁸

Mexican laborers during this time period observed that while Anglos might do nothing while the foreman was away, they could get Mexican workers fired for “loafing” if they rested even momentarily, given the stereotyped view of their labor and an ethnically stratified workforce.⁷⁹ Sánchez suggests that many Mexican workers accepted their being assigned hard, physical work with “a mixture of disgust and pride” and a sense of manliness as well as an understanding of the racist ideology at play. This suggests a somewhat different reaction than Kelley’s analysis of how Black workers thought about hard, physical work as “servile,” though the reaction there is

⁷⁸ Sánchez, 190.

⁷⁹ Sánchez, 190-1.

complex as well.

Part of this managerial ethos of control relied upon racist and Orientalist notions about Mexico. Thompson observes that “Mexican paeons in the early years of this century were regarded as an ‘indolent and child-like people,’”⁸⁰ criticized for “lack of initiative, inability to save, absences while celebrating too many holidays, willingness to work only three or four days a week if that paid for necessities, insatiable desire for alcohol – all were pointed out as proof of a natural inferiority.”⁸¹ Sánchez cites a head of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce:

The Mexican is an Indian and must be considered so. He is undergoing an active evolution and we must always take this thought into consideration in dealing with him. His wants are few and his habits, while docile, are not in harmony with western civilization.... To pay him an exorbitant salary only meant to cater to his extravagance; to pay him a living wage and add to his future comforts seemed to be the only way in which to handle him.⁸²

We see here very familiar criticisms of Mexican workers as slow, lazy, indolent, drinking too much, taking too many holidays; these are the same criticisms, Thompson points out, that were made of English workers during the industrial revolution. At the same time, these criticisms, when applied to English workers as a whole, were never taken as a sign of natural inferiority, but as a problem for managers and governments to figure out how to discipline and habituate workers to the new regime, a problem for individual workers and families to discipline themselves in their own moral lives, and a problem for churches and other civic leaders to deal with

80 Thompson, 91.

81 “Theorist of economic growth” cited in M. D. Bernstein, *The Mexican Mining Industry, 1890-1950* (New York, 1964), ch. vii, which is cited in Thompson, 91.

82 Cited in Sánchez, 191.

through a kind of moral husbandry. One could argue that Mexican workers in Los Angeles were working in proximity to Anglo workers who had already been habituated to these norms, but Sánchez suggests that Anglo workers didn't work any harder than their Mexican counterparts, they just knew how to play the game of looking busy and how to take advantage of their position in the racial/ethnic hierarchy. Given this, it seems that the ideology of laziness was less about habituating Mexican workers and changing their habits, and more about justifying their subordinate status and (very directly from the Chamber of Commerce) low wages.

To this familiar problematic of laziness, enacted here as a globalized criticism of a race rather than as a program for separating out the productive workers and encouraging their moral and ethical uplift, we must add the frankly weird essentialism and Orientalism evident in some of these views. Railroad official Mr. Hill imputes to some unique characteristic of Mexican-ness attitudes towards labor that are probably pretty close to universal amongst manual laborers performing highly alienated work, such as “[not liking] to worry after the day is done” or “not com[ing] back till he has [to].” George Clements, the head of the Chamber of Commerce, posits Los Angeles employers as benevolent paternal figures in a process of “evolution,” where low wages have an important moral and pedagogical function. Unlike Black workers in the South, Mexican workers in LA in this period are considered “docile” but “not in harmony with western civilization” and “extravagant.” It's not clear what either of these claims were meant to denote literally, but the social connotation is clear: by painting Mexican workers as outlandish others who will evolve towards modernity

and western values with the benevolent care of an Anglo employer, one can obscure the way in which low wages and othering serve to establish a semi-permanent, subordinate, cheap labor, super-exploited strata within the workforce.

Both for Mexican workers in LA and Black workers in the South in these historical moments, laziness is inveighed as a global critique of a racial or ethnic group and a justification of a semi-permanent, caste-like status. In both cases, the critique of the group's supposed laziness is also employed to suggest some long-term if receding-out-of-reach program for group uplift, productivity, and advancement. At least some Black "talented tenth" leaders in the South believed in this program themselves and articulated it, though it was highly contested, and collective if furtive resistance to these norms was significant. Both Thompson and Sánchez suggest that the program of ethnic uplift may have at least initially been more racist ideology and less of a program accepted by some layer of Mexicans, though it's certainly possible that there are examples of this articulation. Sánchez does not look as deeply as Kelley into the possibility of some kind of systematic soldiering amongst Mexican workers in these industries, although he certainly suggests a racial-ethnic consciousness that was emerging and a critique of racist versions of the work ethic.

3.6) Pathologized Excludes II: Colonialism

We've already seen in the last section how an ideology of laziness with respect to a subordinate group of workers within the US relied on colonialist attitudes towards those workers' country of origin, Mexico. (And, while most African-American workers in the South in the early part of the 20th century or the late part of

the 19th were several generations removed from Africa, similar speculations existed in regards to African work rhythms and the imprint of African cultural norms on Black descendants in the US, etc.) But what of ideologies of laziness as they were applied to populations outside the national borders of the advanced capitalist countries, particularly in regards to the colonized?

Syed Hussein Alatas's book, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, catalogs the functioning of this ideology rather precisely in regard to Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines from the 17th to the 19th centuries. He is most interested in the impact of this ideology within the national-popular of these countries; the book concludes with an analysis of the impact of these ideologies in post-colonial politics.

Alatas argues that "the image of the indolent native was the product of colonial domination generally in the 19th century when the domination of the colonies reached a high peak and when colonial capitalist exploitation required extensive control of the area."⁸³ Elsewhere, he argues that the main development of colonial ideology took place in the 18th and early part of the 19th centuries, and that the second phase of colonial expansion, 1870-1900, "was tied to a mode of production which did not experience drastic changes in vast areas of activity" and so remained essentially ideologically static from the previous period.⁸⁴

Alatas sees the genesis of this ideology in "a justification of Western rule in its alleged aim of modernizing and civilizing the societies which had succumbed to

83 Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos, and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1977), 70.

84 Alatas, 17-18.

Western powers.”⁸⁵ He thinks that this ideology was intended for a European home audience in the case of the Dutch in the 18th century.⁸⁶ In contrast, in the case of the Philippines, evidence suggests that the ideology of laziness had less to do with the home audience and more to do with a campaign to subjugate Filipinos intellectually and morally in order to achieve political and economic subjugation. Sinibaldo de Mas, an emissary of the Spanish Crown sent to the Philippines in 1842, wrote frankly of how to enact such a colonial ideology such that “the coloured population must *voluntarily* respect and obey the whites.”⁸⁷ He thought that the maintenance of colonial rule would require that “we avoid the formation of [Filipino] liberals,”⁸⁸ using Christianity to spread “enthusiasm and ... willingness to suffer martyrdom,”⁸⁹ and “to completely break the pride of the natives so that in all places and at all times they should consider the Spaniards as their masters and not their equal.”⁹⁰

This question of the use of religion would become quite important and contested in the Philippines. Some of the arguments over indolence were rooted in a conflict between Spanish and Filipino clergy. The latter were accused of failing to provide information necessary for the Spanish governance of the colony and of encouraging or at least not suppressing rebellions.⁹¹

What were some of the vicissitudes of this ideology of laziness? Sir Thomas

85 Alatas, 7.

86 Alatas, 22.

87 Sinibaldo de Mas, *Report on the Condition of the Philippines in 1842*, III, *Interior Politics* (Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1963), 121, cited in Alatas, 25.

88 de Mas, 133, cited in Alatas, 26.

89 de Mas, 147, cited in Alatas, 26.

90 de Mas, 156, cited in Alatas, 27.

91 Alatas, 109.

Stamford Raffles, the founder of Singapore, explained laziness and other supposed psychological traits of Malays early in the 19th century “in a historical and sociological manner ... in the light of situational exigencies.”⁹² Thomas Swettenham, a British writer in the late 19th century, saw a “lack of initiative, or incentive for acquiring wealth” across class lines amongst the Malays, which he attributed to a combination of the traditional, authoritarian political and legal structure of the society and the climate, which allowed an ease of obtaining the minimum necessary for life.⁹³ Another late 19th century British writer, Hugh Clifford, saw West Coast Malays as “sadly dull, limp, and civilized” in response to the British presence, while East Coast Malays remained mysterious, attractive, and barbarous.⁹⁴

German scholar Feodor Jagor thought in the late 19th century that Filipinos lacked incentive in their labor.⁹⁵ The British were critical of Spanish rule in the Philippines, and thought the Spanish themselves were too indolent to properly investigate what was going on outside of Manila⁹⁶ and thought that Filipinos were indolent due to the hot climate.⁹⁷ Another British visitor to the Philippines explained Filipino idleness by describing the Filipino as an animal for whom idleness is “his felicity.”⁹⁸

For the Dutch in 18th and 19th century Java, little reference to laziness was

92 Alatas, 40.

93 Alatas, 45.

94 Alatas, 46.

95 Alatas, 55.

96 Alatas, 57.

97 Alatas, 58.

98 Alatas, 59.

made until after direct regulation of labor began around 1830.⁹⁹ The system devised to manage this indolence included paying wages in advance and then holding laborers captive to pay off a debt.¹⁰⁰ (While the specific technique is different, both this example and the example of Mexican workers in LA in the 1920s include innovations in direct domination of the worker rather than purely economic exploitation.) Alatas argues that in the Dutch case, laziness became a key point of conflict between different factions of Dutch colonialism, between conservatives who advocated for a “culture system” of agricultural production using compulsory, often unpaid labor¹⁰¹ and liberals, who called for free labor with European-style economic exploitation. The (more numerous) conservatives thought that “the Javanese was not capable of free labor,”¹⁰² while the liberals thought that natives were unwilling to perform forced labor, which was incorrectly being interpreted as indolence.¹⁰³

What do these many characterizations suggest was at play in the colonial ideology of laziness? Purely biological explanations play less of a role than one might expect given the attention that has been paid recently to biological racism in the 19th century. At least one account treats natives as animal-like and suggests that their supposed laziness is a product of this nature. But this complete dehumanization as a justification for permanent domination plays less of a role than justifications for a tutorial sort of domination.

The tutorial role is suggested both by some of the explanations that find

99 Alatas, 61.

100 Alatas, 62.

101 Alatas, 63.

102 Alatas, 64.

103 Alatas, 67.

laziness at root in corrupt, traditional administrations (which don't allow natives to trust that they can build upon the profits of industrious labor in the future) and climate, which sometimes seems to serve as a semi-biological explanation for an indolent "national character," but other times fits into this social explanation of the ease of providing for the needs of today and a lack of motivation to provide for the wants of tomorrow. Alatas calls this full sentiment "a rare, clear formulation of the capitalist concept of indolence"¹⁰⁴ which shows more about the values of the colonizers than it does about the nature of the colonized. The colonial capitalist sensibility here is one in which the natural *telos* of the human is to work in accordance with a kind of Weberian ethic which is interrupted by backwardness and bad civil institutions and exacerbated by a climate in which immediate needs may be available without much effort. Ethical, Western guidance is justified on the basis of being needed for the progress of these poor, limited, backwards people. Sometimes laziness was explained as partially a result of bad colonial practices or administration, but this was usually not advanced as a reason to end colonialism or grant independence, but rather would be part of a critique by one group of colonialists arguing against another in favor of a more modern and pedagogical, less autocratic form of colonialism.

Alatas points out that these characterizations of Southeast Asians as morally inferior, lazy, and stupid have a lot in common with depictions of the British working class. The differences, he says, are that the theme of laziness in reference to colonized groups is generalized to the entire group and inflicted by a minority on a majority.

104 Alatas, 107.

There is a “lack of inhibition” in these representations in which (Orientalist) “[i]magination ran wild.”¹⁰⁵ “The British capitalist ... did not insult the worker’s religion, culture, race, language, and customs – he shared these with him.” To all of these differences, we might add that English workers were treated as capable of overcoming laziness and the past habits of their class on an individual or family basis, given the proper work structure, while Southeast Asians were treated, whatever substantive explanations for laziness were advanced, as needing a prolonged period of Western tutelage and subjugation to get them up to the level of the more advanced European working classes.

Other postcolonial thinkers have gone further to analyze the internalization of the notion of laziness. Albert Memmi claims that this trait of laziness “seems to receive unanimous approval of colonizers from Liberia to Laos, via the Maghreb.”¹⁰⁶ In his chapter, “Mythical Portrait of the Colonized,” Memmi traces similar ground to Alatas via a psychological dialectic rather than historical archives. He concludes that this internalization is perhaps more damaging than the original ideology of laziness coming from the mouths of colonizers.

More surprising, more harmful perhaps, is the echo that it excites in the colonized himself. Constantly confronted with this image of himself, set forth and imposed on all institutions and in every human contact, how could the colonized help reacting to his portrait? It cannot leave him indifferent and remain a veneer which, like an insult, blows with the wind. He ends up recognizing it as one would a detested nickname which has become a familiar description. The accusation disturbs him and worries him even more because he admires and fears his powerful accuser. “Is he not partially right?” he mutters. “Are we

105 Alatas, 30.

106 Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. Howard Greenfeld (London: Earthscan Publications, 2003), 123.

not all a little guilty after all? Lazy, because we have so many idlers? Timid, because we let ourselves be oppressed.”¹⁰⁷

Sartre posits that Fanon, like Kelley, sees in laziness a “form of sabotage” and in petty theft “the start of a still unorganized resistance.”¹⁰⁸ Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan suggests that Fanon goes even further in inverting the values of the work ethic, seeing this sabotage as a form of biological self-protection and that “the exploited farmer or worker who is so intense at his work and refuses to rest is a *pathological* case.”¹⁰⁹ Fanon’s analysis of blackness marks it as particular from the Southeast Asian cases, and he claims an internationalism for racism that makes his analysis applicable for Blacks in the diaspora living in advanced capitalist countries as well, though his cases mainly start in the colonial situation.

Fanon’s analysis of colonial alienation takes aspects of Marx’s alienation with an analysis of racialized/colonized otherness and psychiatric alienation. His take on who is alienated in this dialectic is somewhat broader than Marx’s; he speaks of “alienated (duped) blacks and ... of no less alienated (duping and duped) whites.”¹¹⁰ For Marx, the inhumanity of the bourgeois does not mean that he is alienated; for Fanon, the inhumanity of racist and colonial power are signs of the alienation of the oppressor as well as the oppressed. Fanon’s alienation is possibly more absolute than Marx’s in some senses, in that it involves dehumanization as ontological erasure

107 Memmi, 131.

108 Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), lii.

109 Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York: Plenum Press, 1985), 223.

110 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967),

rather than dehumanization as objectification and separation from human realization.

4) Dejection and Exhaustion, from Humors to Psychoneuroses in Relation to Idleness and Work

I've suggested, following Stanley Jackson and others, that if the problems of sloth, laziness, idleness, and indolence are one set of problems that take up one split-apart aspect of medieval acedia, melancholia takes up another major split-apart aspect of the acedia problematic. The affective register of laziness ranges from pleasant stupidity (which is imputed especially to subordinate social group subjects), to affective flatness (especially of productive, objectified, core workers), to pathologization as violent and dangerous (in the case of resistant subordinate social group subjects). The principle affective register of acedia, that of dejected affective states, was split off of acedia onto melancholia.

While laziness, sloth, and idleness have been secondary topics in much of philosophy and critical theory, melancholia has been a primary one, and there are many aspects of the question of melancholia which could be brought into relationship with the historical and theoretical questions I've raised so far here – particularly, in regards to the last part, the question of racialized melancholia. Some of these connections would be a fruitful ground for further study. For the purposes of this short study, I will indicate the vanishing thematic of labor and the relatively impoverished connection with idleness as understood in modern theories of melancholia and suggest some ways that an unconscious theme of labor may have reemerged in high modern theories, before turning to neurasthenia, a turn-of-the-20th-

century condition of “nervous exhaustion” which was closely tied with questions of work.

Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* is both the first major early modern text and the last major Renaissance text on the subject. The *Anatomy* is a compendium of Renaissance thinking on the subject, compiled with a medical intent for the early modern reader. It is a serious text that often turns on a wry irony of tone, which given the content also seems like a particularly modern gesture.

The *Anatomy* contains no mention of acedia, and a long section towards the end of it on religious melancholia only briefly intersects with this history. We can see the trace of acedia, however, in the theme of idleness, which plays a framing if somewhat flat role in the project, and in the theme of solitariness, which is often discussed together with idleness and is sometimes illustrated with examples involving monks. Burton treats the topic of melancholia as a vast terrain involving a wide range of causes, symptoms, and cures. The theme of idleness is important to the *Anatomy* as a whole, but it is one theme among many, and more importantly the specifics of its treatment are far from the complexities of medieval acedia and closer to the flatness of the thematic of idleness and laziness that we’ve seen emerge and develop as part of modernity and capitalism. Furthermore, for Burton, an aspect of melancholia is touched upon by idleness and solitariness, but it’s not clear what this affectively rather light aspect has to do with the dejected affective states which are present elsewhere and will come to constitute the center of melancholia.

Idleness plays a framing role for the *Anatomy*, quite literally. Early in the

prefatory remarks of Democritus to the reader, Burton writes, “There is no greater cause of Melancholy then idlenesse, *no better cure than businesse....* I writ therefore, & busied my selfe in this playing labor....”¹¹¹ And at the very end of the entire work, before a short epigraph in Latin, he concludes:

Onely take this for a corollary and conclusion, as thou tenderest thine own welfare in this, and all other melancholy, they good health of body and minde, observe this short precept, give not way to solitarinesse and idlenesse. *Be not solitary, be not idle.*¹¹²

It’s interesting, for one thing, that solitariness itself should be almost a sin, especially given the monastic tradition and the idea of acedia as something you had to struggle through – we’ve arrived at a kind of opposite of that idea.

The injunction against idleness here seems like a fairly general, multipurpose one compared to the experiential accounts or scholastic adumbrations of the types of acedia. Burton calls idleness “the badge of gentry,”¹¹³ which is interesting as well – though he does occasionally, following some of his sources I’m sure, use rather forlorn, monastic examples, his real emphasis here is on wealthier strata with time on their hands, not on a critique of idle workers.

Burton treats this type of melancholy as initially very pleasant but turning into something quite dark, and here I think he captures something psychologically still resonant, an experience which might be close to modern procrastination.

[M]ost pleasant it is at first, to such as are Melancholy given, to ly in bed whole daies, and keepe their chambers, to walke alone in some solitary grove ... to meditate upon some delightsome and pleasant

111 Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 6.

112 Burton, vol. III, 445.

113 Burton, vol. I, 238.

subject.... A most incomparable delight, it is so to melancholize, to build castles in the ayre.... So delightsome these toies are at first, they could spend whole daies and nights without sleepe, ... so pleasant their vaine conceits are, that they hinder their ordinary tasks and necessary businesse, they cannot addresse themselves to them or almost to any study or employment, these phantasticall and bewitching thoughts, so covertly, so feelingly, so urgently, so continually set upon, creepe in, insinuate, possesse, overcome, distract and detaine them, ... untill at last the Sceane is turned upon a sudden, by some bad object, and they being now habituated to such vaine meditations and solitary places, can endure no company, can ruminate of nothing but harsh and distastfull subjects. Feare, sorrow, suspition, *subrusticus pudor*, discontent, cares, and wearinesse of life, surprise them in a moment, and they can thinke of nothing else, continually suspecting, no sooner are their eyes open, but this infernall plague of Melancholy seazeth on them, and terrifies their soules, representing some dismall object to their mindes, which now by no meanes, no labour, no perswasions they can avoide....¹¹⁴

This driving stream-of-consciousness style conveys, perhaps similarly to Evagrius and Cassian's narratives of acedia, the feeling of an experience which starts with a delicious solitude and exploratory fantasy and ends with a crash into melancholic horror. Burton associates this type of melancholy with students and lovers who "cannot perform their offices,"¹¹⁵ a formulation that seems to allude to monastic offices.

Burton suggests that the cure for melancholy brought on by solitariness and idleness is exercise, labor, recreation of pretty much any kind¹¹⁶, or help from friends.¹¹⁷ Again we can see how far we have moved from acedia – to suggest that a nice day of sporting activity could be just as good a cure as manual labor would be absurd within the discourse of acedia, as would the idea that the person struggling

114 Burton, vol. I, 243.

115 Burton, vol. I, 421.

116 Burton, vol. II, 69.

117 Burton, vol. II, 106.

with acedia should be rewarded for his losing struggles with contact with friends.

Burton does suggest that there is a kind of generalized social “distempered Melancholy”¹¹⁸ which is linked with both idleness and poverty as well. This seems to be linked to the kind of rebellious idleness which Foucault thinks must be made an example.

Yet amongst many Roses, some Thistles grow, some bad weedes and enormities, which must disturbe the peace of this body politicke, Eclipse the honour and glory of it, fit to bee rooted out, and with all speede to be reformed.

The first is idlenesse by reason of which, wee have many swarms of rogues and beggars, theeves, drunkards, and discontented persons (whom *Lycurgus* in *Plutarch* calls *morbos reipub.* the boiles of the common-wealth) many poore people in all our Townes, *Civitates ignobiles*, as *Polydore* calls them, base built citties, inglorious, poore, small, rare in sight, ruinous, and thin of inhabitants.¹¹⁹

Notably this problem of idle poor people, stated in the preface, is more of a condition of the nation that suggests that melancholy needs to be taken into account than a suggestion for treatment. In fact there is no treatment for the rebellious poor, who are bad weeds and enormities to be rooted out. This is an approach which is entirely consistent with the confinement and exemplary treatment Foucault analyzes. It is not so consistent with the individualized treatment Burton prescribes for the idle, melancholic gentry, to whom he devotes so many pages. Their melancholy is an objection of relatively gentle, empathetic humor and detailed, humane ideas for treatment.

Several of the features we see here would establish rules of the game for melancholia that, despite radical changes in ideas about the true causes and proper

118 Burton, vol. I, 71.

119 Burton, vol. I, 75-6.

cures of the condition, would not undergo significant transformations until the era of psychoanalysis or even afterwards. First, there's a class splitting off between the gentry or the bourgeoisie, for whom humane, individualized treatments are to be provided, and the poor and excluded others, who are generally pathologized and treated as a population to be governed rather than individuals to be treated or even a workforce to be managed. Second, the theme of work would be mostly absent from the discourse of melancholia. It would occasionally appear as a form of busyness which is good for staving off melancholia (here, along with sports or games), or as part of an often-ironic literary reference, but the idea that the life of work and the affective structures of labor were closely related to the conditions of dejected affective states, an idea that was self-evident within the acedia problematic, became almost unthinkable at this point. It has remained almost unthinkable to this day, although a new convergence of practices in the rise of mood management paradigms both in work-life and in the treatment of mood disorders suggests that the theory will have to catch up with the practices.

Leaping ahead to a classic psychoanalytic text on melancholia, Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" arguably maintains the focus on a higher class strata, but the themes of work and of dialectics reappear on a different plane. Freud's description of melancholia begins with a relationship of self to other in which the ego seeks recognition and some kind of fruition of desire in another. Quickly, however, the question of the external world seems to fade away, and the question that remains is internal.

First there existed an object-choice, the libido had attached itself to a certain person; then, owing to a real injury or disappointment concerned with the loved person, this object-relationship was undermined.

The result was not the normal one of withdrawal of the libido from this object and transference of it to a new one, but something different for which various conditions seem to be necessary. The object-cathexis proved to have little power of resistance, and was abandoned; but the free libido was withdrawn into the ego and not directed to another object. It did not find application there, however, in any one of several possible ways, but served simply to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object.¹²⁰

Here we see a transition from a concern with recognition from other subjects to a psyche that is turned in upon itself. For Freud, this inwardness is an abnormal state.¹²¹ Melancholia results from an unrequited hunger for recognition, from rejection, a refusal to recognize. In certain circumstances, which Freud does not elaborate here, the ego gives up its quest for recognition and “wishes to incorporate [the lost] object

120 Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” trans. by Joan Riviere, in *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 170.

121 Here Freud’s theory differs somewhat from that of important interpreters who further developed his concepts. Melanie Klein developed Freud’s notion of melancholia into the idea of a “depressive position,” developed in early childhood and available throughout life. In Klein’s theory one is always relating to internal psychic objects, rather than directly relating with other people in the world; the self is one of these internal objects with which the ego identifies. For Lacan, as well, the relationship of the self to the other is secondary to the question of the self’s relationship to unconscious desire; fidelity to this desire becomes a positive ethical project. For Klein and Lacan, in different ways, one wonders whether a relationship between the self and the genuinely external other is truly possible.

The statement that Freudian melancholia begins with a clear relationship between a self and an external other must be complicated a bit, however. Freud suggests that there is a “disposition to succumb to melancholia” which lies in “the narcissistic type of object choice” (171). Thus for many melancholic patients, the “original” self-other relationship may already be clouded by the relationship of self to self, which may account in part for the tendency to devolve into a purely self-enclosed state.

into itself, and the method by which it would do so, in this oral or cannibalistic stage, is by devouring it.”¹²² This consumption-identification serves to detach the ego from its attachments in the outside world, instead focusing it on its own inward circumstances. This is seen, from the standpoint of the external world, as a loss of desire; it is really a redirection of desire inward as frustration. In Freudian melancholia the self-relation is no longer one of simple self-equivalence, I=I, ego=ego. Instead, the identification of the ego with the internalized lost object and the subsequent punishment of this object/self by the ego is the primary relationship examined.

The medieval discourses around acedia lack, of course, the problematic of the self/subject which characterizes so much of modern philosophy. The soul is generally taken to be normally and normatively unified (or to be divided but ordered in a Platonic fashion). However, the demonology of third century desert Christians, the context in which acedia arose, suggests a relationship with an external other who is a non-person, a demon, which is at the same time something internal.

Acedia was an evil spirit; the demon of acedia, or “noonday demon,” attacked the ascetic or tempted him. Sometimes acedia meant the demon, and sometimes it meant the evil thought that the demon provoked the ascetic to entertain.¹²³

The notion of demons is almost recapitulated in scientific terms in the Kleinian notion of the internal object: something internal to the psyche which seems to have a life of its own, to haunt the self. The Christian notion of the demon should not be seen merely as premodern mysticism; it was also an attempt to grapple with the Church

¹²² Freud, 171.

¹²³ Jackson, 67-8.

fathers' "struggle with their own inclinations."¹²⁴ Since struggling with acedia is about a struggle with a being – a demon – at the same time as one's own thoughts, we could well say that it is also a condition that involves a relationship with a non-self-identical self – a self which is attacked by demons and must be defended and purified. This is of course a rather different picture from Freudian melancholia. Part of what is interesting for Freud about melancholia is how it can become a long-term affliction in which the self identifies with and attacks the substitute internal object. Except in extraordinary cases of possession, demons are generally understood as a more temporary if persistent affliction which does not penetrate as deeply into the self.

Both conditions, however, involve an inward turning and a loss of appetite as regards new objects in the external world. Freudian melancholia is characterized in part by an inability to attach "normally" to a new object after an object has been lost to the psyche. The object in question here is primarily another person. Acedia is characterized by shunning God and the good as if they were evil, becoming "disdainful and contemptuous of the brothers who live with [one] or at a slight distance,"¹²⁵ and sloth in regards to one's work in the community, the external world. Here we have a similar pattern of turning away from the external world towards psychic depression, but with some additional elements above melancholia's lost object/other. In fact the relationship with "the brothers" is usually a relatively minor footnote in all of this – the alienation from God and one's own labors in His service are usually the central problems.

124 Jackson, 67.

125 John Cassian, *The Institutes*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, O.P. (New York: The Newman Press, 2000), 219.

Freud discusses a type of work that the melancholic ego undertakes. This is not work, however, in the sense of external labor in the world, but work within the psyche, the work that the psyche is doing in and on itself. Freud returns here to the analogy with mourning, comparing the work of melancholia to the work of mourning in overcoming loss.

That which consciousness is aware of in the work of melancholia is thus not the essential part of it, nor is it even the part which we may credit with an influence in bringing the suffering to an end.... Just as the work of grief, by declaring the object to be dead and offering the ego the benefit of continuing to live, impels the ego to give up the object, so each single conflict of ambivalence, by disparaging the object, denigrating it, even as it were by slaying it, loosens the fixation of the libido to it.¹²⁶

Here the analogy with mourning seems to reach a bit. Freud is much clearer on how the work of mourning produces something, an ego that is eventually able to overcome obsessive focus on grief and loss. Melancholia is problematic in large part because there seems to be no clear proof that “after a lapse of time it will be overcome.”¹²⁷ It is hard to judge the productivity of the work of melancholia, and Freud concludes that such an understanding must wait for further investigations on the economics of the psyche. In any case, this remains entirely a problem of internal, psychic labor – that which the psyche itself can consciously perceive and the “real” labor of melancholia, which is unconscious.

The paradigm of acedia, in contrast, relates the sufferer’s spiritual condition to his labor in the world in a twofold manner. The condition of acedia is characterized by neglect of work, of weariness and neglect of worldly duties, but the physician of

126 Freud, 178.

127 Freud, 165.

souls also prescribes work, especially physical labor, as part of the path toward overcoming this condition. If work is the problem, then how can work be the solution? Here there is a clue of sorts in the explicitly physical nature of the work called for to “treat” the sin/disease of melancholia. Physical labor must in some indirect way “work on” the ego of the sufferer; it quite literally takes him out of himself for a bit and leaves the self somewhat altered. Of course self-alteration in this model is slow, certainly laborious, and takes place bit by bit. Physical labor indirectly works on the soul in a way parallel to the subconscious labor of Freudian melancholia. The difference, of course, is that for melancholia we are looking at the conscious vs. unconscious internal work of the psyche itself, whereas for acedia we are looking at the unconscious manifestation of external work.

In general, it seems that physical labor must have been a rather effective treatment for acedia, perhaps as likely to succeed and certainly much quicker than modern analysis. Why, then, has it dropped out of the prescriptive universe of the modern physician of souls, the psychotherapist? One could speculate here on a number of factors, one being the psychotherapist’s interest in maintaining his role as a specialist. But why does the idea of being told to work off your depression inspire a bit of shock or disgust?

A principle factor, here, is the form of alienated labor under capitalism. For Marx, *praxis* has the same twofold character as *work* had for the monks, except that the valences are reversed. In the Marxist tradition today, if the term *praxis* is used at all, it is used to refer to *political* praxis, or what Marx calls “practical-critical

activity.” Marx also, however, speaks of labor itself as “human sensuous activity, praxis.”¹²⁸ Praxis, in other words, is both work, especially manual labor, which becomes alienated under capitalism and political work, revolutionary work. For medieval Christians, manual labor was seen as the way to supercede an acedia born out of alienation from one’s spiritual/communitarian labor. For Marx, political praxis is seen as the way to supercede the alienated state of labor under capitalism.

In our current political moment, this Marxian picture becomes problematic in two ways. 1) Late capitalism involves a much greater centrality of affective and symbolic labor within the sphere of alienated labor. 2) On the left, the current climate produces not just something like a political melancholia but an alienation from praxis, a feeling that traditional forms of political work are themselves alienated from the real work that needs to be done. This produces a situation within capitalism that is reminiscent of the acedia position.

If the themes of idleness and work become secondary or submerged terms in discourses of melancholia, for the relatively short-lived but momentarily quite expansive condition of neurasthenia around the turn of the 20th century, the relationship with work is essential. George M. Beard suggested the designation of “neurasthenia” in 1869. He struggled to gain acceptance for this idea for several years, but by 1880 it had taken off; by 1920 it had essentially discohered as a unitary condition explaining a wide range of cases.¹²⁹ A wide range of symptoms were

128 See, for example, Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” in *Selected Writings*, edited by Lawrence H. Simon (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 99 for these terms.

129 Barbara Sicherman, “The Uses of a Diagnosis: Doctors, Patients, and Neurasthenia,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* XXXII,

clustered under the category of neurasthenia, but the center of the condition was nervous exhaustion often brought on by overwork, originally mainly amongst business and professional classes (though this would change over time),¹³⁰ a sort of Protestant ethic and civilized norms gone haywire. “[C]aused by overwork, it left victims unable to work;”¹³¹ it gained acceptance in part because it was a less stigmatized diagnosis than the nearest alternatives, which included malingering,¹³² a claim which was sometimes made of women who were thought to be “hiding behind their illness so as not to perform their duties as wives and mothers, and the suspicion always surrounded neurasthenic men as well.”¹³³

The functioning of neurasthenia as a condition at the crux of gender and work is quite interesting. Tom Lutz notes that “[m]en who couldn’t or wouldn’t work were often diagnosed as neurasthenic ... but doctors gave the same diagnosis to women who *wanted* to work and study.”¹³⁴ Women were more often diagnosed with neurasthenia than were men, but “Beard was especially eager to legitimize it as a diagnosis for men,”¹³⁵ and some physicians mistakenly considered it a male malady. Amongst women, this diagnosis served as a more respectable alternative to hysteria. It was generally applied to compliant, civilized women who exhibited “a proper amount of illness ... and a willingness to perform their share of the work”¹³⁶

no. 1 (January 1977): 33, 36.

130 Sicherman, 44.

131 Tom Lutz, *Doing Nothing: A History of Loafers, Loungers, Slackers, and Bums in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006), 141.

132 Sicherman, 38.

133 Lutz, 142.

134 Lutz, 142.

135 Sicherman, 42.

136 Cited in Sicherman, 41.

Hysterics, in contrast, were often accused of resistance, evasiveness, or *la belle indifférence*.¹³⁷ For men, similarly, neurasthenia was considered the respectable, less stigmatized alternative to a diagnosis of hypochondria.

Neurasthenia and hysteria were the primary conditions which were treated with S. Weir Mitchell's rest cure; though men were also prescribed the rest cure, its prevalence in regards to "female maladies" has earned it the reputation of being a particularly gendered treatment. The rest cure usually involved complete bed rest for weeks or months, without books or other stimulation, and isolation from friends and family – which we could contrast both with the use of manual work as a cure for acedia and Burton's injunction that melancholics should avoid isolation at all costs. Independent women like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Virginia Woolf, and Jane Addams not only chafed under the rest cure, but sometimes considered the cure to be far more crazy-making than the original "nervous exhaustion," as dramatized in Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper." Sicherman is careful to point out that the rest cure was probably helpful in many cases, and was used judiciously rather than across the board by many physicians.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, its use as a particularly gendered cure has earned it not only a certain historical infamy, but a sense that the social role of this cure had something to do with an anxiety over the role of women in society.

Neurasthenia became something of a "malady of the age" and was even considered rather fashionable at one point.¹³⁹ However, by the 1920s, the class valence of neurasthenia (or the remaining question of nervous exhaustion, even after

137 Sicherman, 41.

138 Sicherman, 49.

139 Lutz, 143.

the diagnosis had lost much of its explanatory power and medical coherence) had changed, and business and professional strata had a changed sense of the proper cure for such conditions. In the 1910s and 20s, the medical establishment thought that work was “at one and the same time the prime cause of the disease *and* the prime cure.”¹⁴⁰ Langdon Mitchell, son of S. Weir who was the inventor of the rest cure, thought that the answer to nervous disorders was for those business and professional strata to throw themselves into their work as a source of “joy;”¹⁴¹ in this, he was fairly typical of his generation. “In the 1920s, all of a sudden, everyone seemed to agree that the working class worked too hard and deserved more leisure, while the same voices suggested that the upper classes had too much leisure and not enough work.”¹⁴²

Meanwhile, the typical neurasthenia case in the twilight of the condition was no longer from the business and professional strata, but a working-class person. Economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen thought that the mind-numbing, machine-tending nature of industrial work caused fatigue neuroses, and “[s]ome mental hygienists ... argued that labor unrest was ‘psychopathological,’”¹⁴³ requiring of course not a change in power relations or ownership of the means of production but better industrial engineering. Sicherman suggests, more positively, that the treatment of working-class people allowed a segment of society whose mental needs have often gone unheard to get treatment, at a time when until recently prior, the only mental health care available was to be institutionalized for a serious condition in an

140 Lutz, 190.

141 Lutz, 191.

142 Lutz, 191.

143 Lutz, 192.

asylum.

Similarly to the factory worker in this case, the homemaker was thought to suffer from an “occupational neurosis;” advertisers suggested that a solution to this problem was a slew of new, labor-saving household appliances, which would free women up not for leisure, of course, but for the “ennobling” emotional work of mothering.¹⁴⁴ If the particular diagnosis of neurasthenia collapsed under its own weight, the broader question of work-related neuroses and nervous disorders involving overwork and excess leisure fell mostly by the wayside in the 1930s, when economic collapse and the unavailability of work led to a relative de-psychologization in how people thought about it. Some of these themes would reemerge, however, in mainly postwar discourses around anxiety.

Melancholia, not neurasthenia, was the major condition under which people with relatively mild dejected affective states were categorized during in this high modern, capitalist period, though sometimes melancholia had connotations of severe incapacity that would require institutionalization as well. Neurasthenia included symptoms that are reminiscent both of acedia and of modern depression, such as insomnia, feelings of heaviness, impotence, hopelessness, and incapacity from work and other daily activities.¹⁴⁵ Overall, capitalist modernity deemphasized the relationship between dejected affective states and work, focusing instead on biological and psychodynamic causes rooted in early childhood development. The history of neurasthenia as well as work and idleness as submerged terms within the

¹⁴⁴ Lutz, 192-3.

¹⁴⁵ Sicherman, 33.

discourse of melancholia suggest that this relationship did not disappear, and in fact still kept pressing itself to the surface, even though it was obscured by a splitting apart in the nosology and theory of affective conditions such that it became unthinkable as a general question.

5) Laziness as Conscious and Political, not Psychological

So far I have spoken almost entirely of the labor process “in itself” and affective structures, conditions, and characterizations that have been imposed from without rather than developed in conflict with the productivist ethic. Even where I have written about resistance, whether open or surreptitious, I have written about how it was pathologized or misunderstood. But what of resistance not as a psychological phenomenon or a psychopathological response, but of political resistance? Instead of the slew of ideologies marshaled in defense of productivism and the splitting apart of working and subordinate social groups that make up laziness-in-itself, laziness-for-itself? Within this category there are two main trends: idling or slacking as an ethic, originating usually though not always within the privileged strata, and political resistance as a project, originating within or proposed as a project for the working classes and subordinate social groups.

Tom Lutz’s *Doing Nothing* is essentially a history of idling or slacking as an ethic, though it by no means limits itself to this sub-arena, and it touches upon many of the themes of this chapter. Lutz sees this history as particularly important in light of the contemporary phenomenon of the slacker, involving youth culture and young people, sometimes though not always from relatively well-off strata, who find

themselves facing lesser economic prospects than their parents and who seem to have only dead-end, intrinsically deadening, service-sector work available to them. He sees the figure of the slacker as predated, in some ways, by the 18th-century figures of the idler and the loungeur and the 19th-century figure of the loafer.¹⁴⁶

Lutz sees this ethic as a response to capitalist modernity's valorization of work; before the industrial revolution, he argues, work was largely considered a curse and labor "had no honor in and of itself."¹⁴⁷ As we've seen, this claim is largely invalid if we look to monastic labor rather than agricultural labor as a major prehistory of the ethic of labor in capitalism. (I'm not sure that it's correct with respect to craft labor either, unless Lutz means to argue that the theme of "the dignity of labor" was only articulated in response to capitalist encroachment.)

Nevertheless, there is something particularly modern and industrial-era about the figures of the idler and so on, as Lutz suggests. For example, he sees the loungeurs of the late 18th and early 19th centuries as deliberately resisting time discipline,¹⁴⁸ their way of life keeping an "ironic, at times depressive distance" from industrial mercantilism and their own consumerist hedonism. This irony is a distinctly modern aspect of many of these representations, and Lutz's careful readings find this irony not only in the idlers' and loungeurs' writings, but in those of the proponents of the work ethic. He notes that that great progenitor of the capitalist ethic himself, Benjamin Franklin, had an "ironic distance [from] ... his own dogma,"¹⁴⁹ evidenced

146 Lutz, 14.

147 Lutz, 14.

148 Lutz, 95.

149 Lutz, 67.

by his life in Europe after he became famous as an “air-bathing, flirtatious epicure”¹⁵⁰ who John Adams considered “too indolent and dissipated” to conduct affairs of state.¹⁵¹

This double irony performs a critique of the productivist ethic while reinforcing its inescapableness within capitalist modernity. The slacker ethic fits with this general trend, except that in the era of the idler and the lounge, capitalism was an expanding, morally hegemonic system, while contemporary capitalism seems to persist despite an almost necrotic lateness because the new still cannot yet be born or even really envisaged. While the slacker may or may not experience late capitalism as particularly tenuous, in the particular context of the US, the slacker ethic picks up on a post-Watergate political acedia or “apathy” towards and lack of faith in political as well as economic institutions. Work is not just tied to a vapid consumer culture, work itself is seen as “worthless, depressing, and unredemptive.”¹⁵² Of course, it’s questionable whether the slacker ethic continues today or is a cultural moment of the 1990s. Some pundits wished to suggest in the 2000s that the slacker “generation X” had been replaced by a more practical-minded, pre-professional generation Y who embraced the work ethic not out of idealism or any grandiose expectations for work, but out of a pragmatic willingness to “do what it takes.” However, post-2008 dead-end service-sector jobs are more dead-end than ever, now with added levels of overall insecurity and the impossibility of “getting ahead” for many. While the specificity of the slacker ethic may be somewhat relegated to the 90s, it seems entirely possible that

150 Lutz, 73.

151 Cited in Lutz, 67.

152 Lutz, 8.

slacker culture will presage contemporary ambivalence towards work, tinged with greater insecurity and downward mobility at a “mass” level.

The history of political resistance to the productivist ethic under capitalism looks mostly like a downward slope. Thompson argues that in England, resistance to the capitalist program of time-discipline came in three generational phases. In the first phase, “simple resistance,”¹⁵³ working people attempt to maintain pre-industrial patterns of work and life against the encroachment of industrial norms. Second, “workers begin to fight, not against time, but about it,” and this leads to a period of history in which workers’ organizations are absorbed in fights over the length of the working day. And in the third phase, workers “struck for overtime or time-and-a-half. They had accepted the categories of their employers and learned to fight back within them. They had learned their lesson, that time is money, only too well.”¹⁵⁴

The overall thrust of Thompson’s argument leaves one pessimistic that it is possible for working people collectively to resist this now thoroughly internalized time-discipline short of other radical, conjunctural changes. He seems to have some expectation that Britain at least would have “enlarged leisure, in an automated future”¹⁵⁵ and that we would then be faced with a problem of how to spend such leisure time and whether it is possible to recapture old, uninhibited rhythms of leisure – essentially suggesting that the arena of possible subjective agency is in leisure and consumption rather than in work, though of course part of the question remains “how to break down the barriers between work and life” without doing this merely as a

153 Thompson, 85.

154 Thompson, 86.

155 Thompson, 95.

pretext for intensified, “company town” exploitation.

In the 2010s hardly anyone would take a future of enlarged leisure for granted. The more common dystopian scenario involves an automated future with a wealthy few who can enjoy this, a poor many who provide them with personal services, and an even poorer multiplicity of excludeds who have no work, no leisure, and no hope. In such a context, it makes sense to see labor and/or its refusal, rather than leisure and consumption, as the grounds upon which the norms of capitalism could be fought.

Paul Lafargue’s *The Right to Be Lazy* in many ways belongs to a space between the first two of Thompson’s moments of resistance. It has all the passion, if not the optimism, of a manifesto, upbraiding the working class for their role in accepting and internalizing the productivist ethic. Writing in the 1880s before the wide diffusion of the term “mental illness,” Lafargue calls work in capitalist society “the cause of all intellectual degeneracy, of all organic deformity.”¹⁵⁶ While both claims ring with exaggeration, Lafargue here anticipates some of the radical critiques of antiwork and anti-psychiatry activists nearly 100 years later.

Lafargue’s polemical target is what he regards as a deformation in the workers’ movement beginning with the revolution of 1848, the (originally Proudhonist) proclamation of a “right to work” as a rallying cry in economic depressions. He goes beyond a narrow critique of this formulation, seemingly rejecting the idea, embraced by his father-in-law, Karl Marx, that the onset of capitalism and the industrial revolution had brought progress despite great losses.

¹⁵⁶ Paul Lafargue, *The Right to Be Lazy and Other Studies* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1907), 10.

“Far better were it to scatter pestilence and to poison the springs than to erect a capitalist factory in the midst of a rural population. Introduce factory work, and farewell joy, health and liberty.”¹⁵⁷

Here Lafargue seems to reject both time-discipline and industrialism. Some of his suggestions, such that the working class should re-learn how to drink to excess and celebrate many holidays, would be direct, “simple” resistance of the kind Thompson sees in the first moment of the industrial revolution, in which workers had not yet accepted time discipline. Tying himself as well to the later tradition of the fight over the length of the work day, albeit with a maximalist flourish, Lafargue suggests a fight for the three-hour day, “reserving the rest of the day and night for leisure and feasting.”¹⁵⁸

Lafargue nearly despairs of the idea that the proletariat can be convinced of the perniciousness of the work ethic, saying that it would take a legion of “communist physiologists, hygienists, and economists” to accomplish the task. In this, he humorously anticipates Thompson’s point that the internalization of the work ethic and time discipline seems to be a one-way street, even if it internalizes values which lead workers essentially to exploit and manage themselves. Thus, even though Lafargue’s text is a polemic addressed to the workers’ movement, and as such occupies a much different position than the dilettantish idler and lounge texts, he too ends up in a kind of ironic position which suggests that much of this text is a polemical exaggeration to make a point rather than a serious program.

157 Lafargue, 22.

158 Lafargue, 29.

Much of Lafargue's rhetoric anticipates a radical antiwork politics which would only gain a sustained hearing in the late 20th century, beginning with the Situationists. However, some of his ideas now seem quite anachronistic, such as his suggestion that the working class should not only abandon its work ethic but "develop indefinitely its consuming capacities."¹⁵⁹ He also fails badly to recognize domestic, affective labor as work, when he complains that "those buxom girls, always on the move, always cooking, always singing, always spreading life, engendering life's joy, giving painless birth to healthy and vigorous children" are now laboring away in factories.¹⁶⁰

I am reminded here of Maria Mies's concern that the Marxist preoccupation with abundant leisure time is not a utopian vision regardless of gendered standpoint.

The vision of society *in which almost all time is leisure time* and labour time is reduced to a minimum is for women in many respects a vision of horror ... because it *will be women* who have to restore to the then idle men a sense of reality, meaning and life.¹⁶¹

Mies agrees with Thompson in rejecting "the distinction between socially necessary labour and leisure," but goes further in a different direction by also rejecting "the Marxist view that self-realization, human happiness, freedom, autonomy – the realm of freedom – can be achieved only *outside* the sphere of necessity and of necessary labour, and by a reduction (or abolition) of the latter."¹⁶² Much of Lafargue's text is a polemic that makes the reader think rather than a serious proposal, and in his call for

159 Lafargue, 50.

160 Lafargue, 17.

161 Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed Books, 1998), 217.

162 Mies, 216.

more feasting it's difficult to resist his enthusiasm entirely; as Bill Haywood said, "nothing's too good for the working class." Yet, in an era where a culture of rampant debt-driven consumerism threatens the environment and seems like part of the problem of capitalism, driven by the lifestyles not only of businesspeople and professionals but also of working-class people, the modesty of Mies's proposal for unpacking the division between work and life without devaluing the former seems more like a serious starting place.

The question of antiwork politics may have a renewed relevance today, after long being relegated to the margins. For example, during the recent Occupy movement, the question of organizing amongst low-wage service workers was raised in a way that valorized a post-slacker, antiwork ethos. Occupy Oakland established a Precarious and Service Workers' Assembly which met a few times before transforming itself into Workers Against Work and then disbanding along with much of the infrastructure of Occupy itself. Situationist and Italian autonomist antiwork ideas have garnered renewed interest within student movements in California and in the post-Occupy milieu. This version of antiwork politics lacks the ironic, self-effacing edge of the predecessors I've mentioned here. It remains to be seen whether this can or will articulate itself into a political force. With US unions weaker than they've been since the early 1900s and generally unable to hold the gains of past reforms and reformist proposals to ameliorate the alienation and exploitation of work in shambles, the radical antiwork alternative may well have a chance to make its case.

We must take into account here some changing aspects of work itself and the

changing affective structures and regimes of treatment which organize them. In modern capitalism, the theme of dejected affective states was largely split off from the theme of work and idleness, and the latter was articulated and in many instances internalized as a productivist ethos with variegated tenets and emphases depending on the strata for which this ethos was primarily instigated. The theme of work was largely suppressed or marginalized within the discourse of melancholia, the major condition concerning dejected affective states, but under the discourse of nervous exhaustion something of this relationship resurfaced. As we will see in subsequent chapters, in contemporary, late capitalist modernity this relationship becomes much clearer and stronger and is rearticulated using a more or less common terminology, even if the contemporary relationship between depression and mood disorders, on the one hand, and the affective structures of blockages to labor, on the other, have not been re-theorized.

4) Subjective Labor under Late Capitalism

The structure of contemporary, late capitalism changes in a number of ways from that of the high modern phase of capitalism in which industrial production was concentrated in advanced capitalist centers. Changing regimes of labor process¹ within these advanced capitalist centers play a key role in these changes; they have been analyzed under rubrics varying from postindustrialization to lean production. In addition to the question as it exists in relation to workplaces, there are relationships between these structural shifts and changes in national-popular political life which are related to changes in the organization of work. The activity of labor in late, advanced capitalism is based on the labor of subjects whose subjectivities are differently engaged, employed, and alienated when compared with the labor process of industrial labor (though the two should never be considered as divorced, since contemporary labor process is based largely on technologies both in the engineering and the

1 The term “labor process” was developed as something of a term of art by Harry Braverman in his *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism*, and the notion has since been taken up in sociology and Marxist theory as “labor process theory.” Braverman traces his own notion of labor process back to Marx. Broadly, the labor process concerns the organizational system of the workplace as opposed to the product of labor or other factors. The theory of subjective labor has some substantial differences from Braverman’s theory, but the notion of labor process is a helpful analytical starting point. Some of what is at stake in subjective labor involves the activity of labor in a slightly broader sense than the labor process in its most restricted sense.

managerial senses derived from industrial labor). This contemporary labor process and contemporary forms of alienation and activity in turn enable and disable extra-economic forms of praxis differently from industrial labor. The theory of subjective labor is a construct which attempts to give a structure for thinking about some key developments in labor process and this broader field of relations labor : subjectivity : praxis.

Various theoretical constructs already exist which analyze changes in contemporary capitalism in relation to regimes of production. Theories of flexibilization, lean production, and post-Fordism analyze modes of organizing industrial production. Some accounts find shipping and transit central to a nexus of just-in-time production. Political and economic cases have been made for the centrality of low-wage, service-sector work, especially that of women of color, to contemporary capitalism. The rise of the so-called information sector and the seeming ubiquity of the “knowledge worker” play a key role in many liberal and neoliberal paeans to the “new economy.” Others see the key dynamic as one of increasing precarity and economic insecurity for those, like formerly stable strata of the working class, young people, and aspiring professional strata, who face declining prospects and uprootedness, both in general under late capitalism and in particular following the economic crisis of 2008. I’ll review some of these theories in more detail later in the chapter, but I’ll start by describing briefly the unique theoretical terrain of subjective labor.

Subjective labor is a social, technical configuration of labor which, in much of

the advanced capitalist world, appears as a successor of sorts to industrial labor. A conceptual history of the activity of labor would look at successive iterations of labor process which come to be organizationally and culturally central in given historical moments. Thus, pre-capitalist economies have been based largely in agricultural labor, along with tributary systems of exchange; I've also examined monastic labor as a particular layer of socio-economic activity in medieval Europe which generated the modern concept of labor, serving as a precursor to the workshop and the factory. Craft labor and the small workshop are characteristic of pre-capitalist and proto-capitalist accumulation. (Some would already call this phase incipient capitalism.) The large factory in a concentrated, industrial center (which often doubles as or is near a political center) is characteristic of capitalism in its high modern, industrial phase.

Contemporary capitalism is characterized by the shift of heavy industry to secondary sites, the flexibility of light industry to relocate quickly, new, just-in-time technologies of distribution and transportation, and the increasing centrality of symbolic and affective work around the world. This work is especially concentrated in advanced capitalist centers in the sense that a very large proportion of the population in these places is performing this kind of work. These kinds of work increasingly coming to the fore include intellectual and symbolic forms of labor (typified by, though by no means limited to, the so-called information economy), emotional and affective forms of labor (typified by, though no means limited to, the so-called service sector), non-industrial, service-oriented bodily forms of labor, and reproductive labor which has been brought under formal, capitalist conditions. These

categories are overlapping rather than exclusive of one another. Taken together, these kinds of work coming to the fore constitute a new social-technical configuration of labor under capitalism, a partial successor to industrial labor: subjective labor. This chapter will offer a theoretical sketch of this notion of subjective labor, to show how it can be used to analyze these somewhat separate dynamics.

Methodologically, this account is a “top down” account of subjective labor that posits a construct as a tool to understand several contemporary modes of laboring subjects. I hope that this construct can be fairly finely attuned to specificities which appear along a number of axes, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, region, urban/rural, and class strata, as well as the distinctions between various occupations along lines of pay, autonomy, and respect. In fact, part of my reason for starting anew with such a construct rather than working from an existing one such as the notion of immaterial labor is that immaterial labor seemed to me to be insufficiently attuned to some of the differences in its central field of analysis. As a top-down account, I posit a political-economic totality and work to develop a nuanced version of the theory which is useful for thinking about the differences as well as the commonalities of these specificities.

This approach lies opposite from rich case-study based, “bottom-up” accounts of caring labor, emotional labor, information work, sex work, and “labor in the bodily mode” in anthropology, sociology, and feminist studies, which analyze case studies in depth and then posit some broader theoretical accounts. There are of course benefits and drawbacks to both approaches, and my work draws heavily on these bottom-up

accounts. By providing a totalistic account, I hope to view from a different vantage point overall lines of development and schematize this new form of labor in relation with other macro-social changes.

1) Sketch of a Theory of Subjective Labor

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, most of the areas of greatest expected job growth over the next 10 years are in areas like retail sales, customer service, personal services, healthcare, and office work at low to middle levels of pay and autonomy.² These jobs belong to the low- and moderate-wage service and information economy. While not as significant in absolute numerical terms, in percentage terms a large degree of growth is also anticipated in some occupations involving higher levels of pay and autonomy, mostly involving healthcare: physicians, biomedical engineers, sonographers, and various kinds of therapists. Most of the remaining job growth involves direct manual labor and seems to be involved either with transit and shipping or with an expected upturn in construction after several years of stagnation and widespread unemployment. This projected trend of

2 For a visual presentation of the largest and fastest-growing occupations and the occupations with the most expected job growth, annotated with the categories of subjective labor, see figures 1-3, pp. 370-372. I will refer to the jobs referenced in these charts throughout the chapter. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Table 1.4: Occupations with the most job growth, 2010 and projected 2020,” US Department of Labor – Bureau of Labor Statistics Website, 1 February 2012, http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_104.htm and “Table 1.3: Fastest growing occupations, 2010 and projected 2020,” US Department of Labor – Bureau of Labor Statistics Website, 1 February 2012, http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_103.htm. See also Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Data Tables for the Overview of May 2011 Occupational Employment and Wages,” “Employment and Wages of the Largest Occupations, May 2011,” US Department of Labor – Bureau of Labor Statistics Website, http://www.bls.gov/oes/2011/may/featured_data.htm

rising levels of employment in work involving services and/or symbolic manipulation exacerbates tendencies which have been underway for decades, with particular accelerations in the 1990s (dot-com and service sector boom), 1970s (stagnation and layoffs in manufacturing and an increase in office employment), and post-World War II restructuring.

It's now a commonplace to assert that the US economy is based on services and information rather than the manufacturing of physical goods. Such claims tend to be exaggerated, overlooking the continued importance of manufacturing. For example, though a lot of manufacturing jobs have indeed moved overseas or been outmoded by technological changes, others have moved from highly unionized areas in the Midwest and Northeast to less unionized areas in the South and Southwest. Also, contrary to the notion of manufacturing and services as distinct "sectors," a lot of service work involves marketing, sales, and distribution of manufactured goods as well as customer support for those goods.

I'd like to make a somewhat less sweeping claim than the commonplace one: under advanced capitalism in the US, work involving personal services and symbolic manipulation have tended to be the fastest-growing areas of occupation for a sustained period of time, to an accelerating degree. These areas of work are becoming increasingly important for the political self-understanding of contemporary capitalism as well as for its economic operation,³ though clearly there are many other important

3 Political and economic importance of a sector of the economy or a workplace may overlap or diverge. For example, transit and shipping seem to be increasingly central from an economic perspective to the just-in-time operation of contemporary capitalism, but only occasionally does this economic centrality have a political expression – for example, during a transit or shipping strike, an

factors as well. Both these statistics and the various particulars of these occupations deserve much closer scrutiny, but I want to start by observing some general dynamics of these areas of work.

These service and informational kinds of labor coming to the fore in the contemporary US economy have a heavily subjective component. The work process in these kinds of labor centers upon workers' affective, intellectual, and/or bodily subjectivities. There is, of course a sense in which all labor is subjective, in that it is performed by workers who are subjects. Furthermore, to paraphrase Foucault, different kinds of labor might entail different kinds of subjection and subjugation as well as invoking possibilities of subjectivation.

Nevertheless, many of these forms of work becoming more and more central to capitalism are subjective in a particular sense, especially when compared to the labor process of the high modern factory. Many of these forms of work require workers to produce a particular subjective state as part of the work process: an affective response, a mood, initiative, or intellectual attentiveness or engagement. Oftentimes, they center upon affective and/or intellectual interactions and relationships either between workers or between workers and customers, clients,

occupation of a city's ports, or perhaps during a natural disaster which interrupts shipping / transit lines. Similarly, due to political agitation, questions of racial dynamics, or sustained public discourse, particular occupations or jobs may have a political importance that seems more sustained than their economic importance. For example, the Walmart worker and the Starbucks worker are still iconic figures for the service economy, even though from a strictly economic perspective, both of these corporations have struggled recently to maintain their previous dynamism. The importance of immigrant workers is a political flashpoint over and above the strictly economic question of the necessity of immigrant labor to the current US economy.

patients, or students. These forms of work are not primarily aimed at producing an object; instead, they aim at a result which typically involves a subjective state or create a product which is largely intersubjective and social-material rather than objective in the sense of being physical-material.

In manufacturing or craft labor, the worker transforms an external object or natural raw materials through her own physical actions and the use of tools. She mixes her labor with the object, which is then violently separated from her in a painful process of alienation, but the object never enters into her, and in that sense she remains separate from the object. It is relatively easy to tell the difference between the worker and the product of her labor. Parts of the worker's subjectivity are completely disengaged from the production process of manufacturing, even more so that was the case in craft production. Her mind may wander on the assembly line, as long as some part of it remains attentive to the repetitive task. The employer does not care about the worker's subjective state, unless it interferes with the norms and time-work-discipline of production – in which case it is labeled as pathological.

In symbolic, affective, bodily, sexual, and reproductive labors, it becomes much more difficult to separate the worker from the product of his labor, whether analytically or experientially. These types of labor include high-status, high-autonomy jobs as well as low-status, low-autonomy jobs. In the former, the worker is both actively and structurally encouraged to identify himself with his work, to “get into it,” to love doing it, and to dissolve the boundary between work and play, often in favor of an (ideally imperceptible) lengthening of the work day. Burnout looms as a danger

in this type of work.

In lower status, lower autonomy jobs, the worker's attitude towards his work is likely to involve a higher degree of conscious alienation; nevertheless he is forced to conclude that the capitalist wants not only the actions of parts of his body (as in manufacturing), but his body itself, or its representation, or his mind, or his affective and interpersonal capacities.

The highly autonomous subjective worker internalizes a late modern version of the Protestant Ethic. For lower autonomy, medium prestige and medium pay workers like flight attendants and servers, the worker's authenticity, "sense of ownership," and enjoyment of work become prized commodities. The most heteronomous subjective worker performs a role fully and precisely engineered by another, overseen by a very real foreman. No one expects a front-of-the-house team member at McDonald's to enjoy his work, but he can lose his job for transparently hating it; his hirsute display, uniform style and fit, and mannerisms are governed by a precise code invisible to the customer, while his norms of polite service are often governed by a code often posted on the wall, visible to all.

We will want to examine what happens to alienation in these various scenarios. Is it escaped, because the worker is an actor who is able to find self-gratification in his work, or is it merely reiterated on a level which is even more deeply enmeshed within the worker's subjectivity? Does this vary based on specific labor conditions such as varying degrees of autonomy, or is there one "rule" of alienation that can be said to apply to subjective labor in general?

Bodily, symbolic, affective, and reproductive forms of labor vary tremendously among themselves as well as between specific jobs within given categories. A job at a technical support call center and being a doctor are both jobs that could be classified as requiring extensive symbolic and affective labor, both also involving a significant reproductive element in certain conditions, under a broad enough understanding of capitalism's reproduction / production systems. These two jobs differ widely, not just in levels of autonomy and prestige, but in other structural features of the jobs themselves and the kinds of institutions in which they exist.

These aspects of subjective labor can coincide and overlap, though they represent, to some extent, differing aspects. For example, the work of doctors and nurses is symbolic, affective, and reproductive. The work of nursing assistants is bodily, affective, and reproductive. The work of computer programmers is symbolic, not in general affective or reproductive. Both computer workers' and healthcare workers' work is typically very intersubjective in terms of labor process; team interactions are needed to get anything done. The work of janitors is bodily, not in general affective or reproductive, though in some cases this work might fit into a conception of expanded reproduction, and the intended invisibility of janitors in corporate settings could be understood as an affective performance.

The work of back-of-the-house food service workers (line cooks and cleaners) is conceptually the closest to industrial or craft work of all of these examples, in that it involves the transformation of external objects (ingredients) into a product (food). This work has reproductive and symbolic components (which exceed the symbolic

components of assembly-line work, but are less than or equal to the symbolic components of the work of machinists. It has an affective component, both in the sense that the product even as produced by the line cooks is already tied to an affective presentation, and in the sense that its production is part of an overall labor process which includes the labor of more directly affective workers (servers, whose work is primarily affective and reproductive, and might be secondarily bodily). Almost all food service work has a strongly intersubjective component in terms of labor process, except for the rare isolated individual cook who only interacts with a server via written tickets.

In this sense contemporary industrial labor can also be said to have strong subjective components, and indeed, we could say that contemporary industrial labor is in many instances subjectively saturated. This is true, first, in terms of the work process – the now-ubiquitous “team concept” requires a wider, more affectively engaged range of interactions between workers and between workers and supervisors than was the case with the traditional assembly line, where the goal was to reduce the worker to the level of a machine or simple manual labor as much as possible and put the creative process as much as possible in the hands of management. Second, this is true in terms of the entirety of the work process, which includes levels of affective customization, niche advertising, and presentation of more variegated kinds than was the case under classic high capitalism as typified by Ford’s Model T: one type for all. Notions like brand loyalty and even such economic basics as demand are indivisible from an affective component, but one of the characteristic features of late capitalism

is its tendency to multiply and thicken the affective layers and sheen of commodification. The sale and purchase of an iPod or a customized, new car today involves levels of affective specificity, complexity, involvement, and identification that go over and above those involved with the sale and purchase of a radio or a car under high, industrial capitalism.

Recognizing, then, that these aspects of subjective labor overlap and coincide with each other and with industrial and craft forms of labor, let us explore each of these aspects in turn, and how they group and help us understand areas and processes of work in contemporary capitalism.

1.1) Affective Labor

Affective labor is work in which the work process draws heavily on worker's affective capacities; the products of this kind of work usually have a strong affective component. Sometimes this work produces care or other diffuse "products." Affective labor always has an intersubjective character involving a worker or workers and their client(s), customer(s), patient(s), student(s), etc. Often this work also has an intersubjective character in terms of workers' relationships with one another, though this is not necessarily a primary, defining feature of this kind of work. Often work process and product are not clearly distinguishable in affective labor, to the extent that the act of providing a service is also the process of rendering it, though much affective labor also has a "hidden" aspect, preparation that precedes a final presentation and interaction.

I will use the terms "affective labor," "emotional labor," "affective work," and

“emotional work” interchangeably, though these terms have different histories. “Affective labor” is a term that comes out of feminist theory of the 1970s; the particularities of this term in Italian autonomist feminism were taken up and developed as well by Negri and Hardt, who define it as “labor that produces or manipulates affects such as a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion.” The term “emotional labor” was introduced by Arlie Hochschild, whose definition involves “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display.”⁴ Hochschild’s definition focuses on work performed outside the home, in formal, capitalist conditions; she uses the term “emotion work” for the same kind of work performed in a private context. “Affective labor,” in contrast tends to be concerned with several kinds of work, all of which have traditionally been feminized: unwaged work in the home, informal, paid work in others’ homes and in small-scale markets, as well as formal, paid work. Additionally, Hochschild’s definition focuses on the laboring subject’s own self-management and display, while Negri and Hardt’s focuses on the product of this labor as the manipulation of a consumer’s affective state. (This difference seems primarily methodological; Hardt and Negri define affective labor as a subset of immaterial labor which is itself defined by its products, while Hochschild’s interest stems more from the worker’s relationship with himself.)

It seems unclear whether the distinction between emotion and affect which has animated the turn to studies of affect in the academy significantly informs these different uses, though at a few key points in their exposition of affective labor Hardt

4 Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1983), 7.

and Negri describe affect in their Spinozan terms. In addition to the Spinozan tradition, other authors rely on theories of affect that derive from Silvan Tomkins and Eve Sedgwick, theories of both emotion and affect which derive from feminist theory, and, more rarely, psychoanalysis.

While these various genealogies are worth appreciating, I will use the terms “affective labor” and “emotional labor” more or less interchangeably. I tend to agree with the feminist/Negri and Hardt insistence on a continuity among formal waged, informal paid, and unpaid labor, but I agree more with Hochschild’s focus on subjectivity and relationality instead of on products of labor. I tend to prefer the term “affective labor” over “emotional labor,” since a determinate affective content of a given labor process can find its expression in a number of distinct emotional complexes. Nevertheless, the Spinozan tradition deserves further attention, particularly to the extent that it highlights the relationship between affect and action (praxis).

It’s also worth keeping in mind a proviso Sedgwick gave to the burgeoning study of affect which is also applicable in a discussion of affective labor, namely that reifying something called Affect or Affective Labor gets us away from the particular affective qualities of different kinds of work which may operate in really different ways.⁵ Hochschild’s approach is helpful here, again: what’s affective about bill collectors’ work involves instilling feelings of fear and distrust, while the work of flight attendants involves care and calming affective management of a group of

5 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003): 110-111.

people, passengers on a plane. The common feature of both kinds of work is that it requires affective self-management on the part of the worker, the projection of a certain mood or a certain affective performance designed to evoke a certain kind of response in the client or passenger. But the affects involved, both in terms of content and fluidity and both on the worker end and the client end, are very different.

Affective or emotional labor relies upon the emotional resources of a laboring subject and an affective projection that occurs upon, from, or through him. It can create an emotional response as part of its “product” in the consumer or client, but emotional labor can also focus on avoiding or controlling rather than evoking emotions – for example, calming an angry customer or redirecting her anger before it becomes irrevocably attached to a given situation.

It’s worth observing here as well that the original traditions of theorizing affective / emotional labor come out of feminist theory, in contexts where the primary work of the theory was trying to theorize work being performed by women, but as these theories have been developed further, their relationship with gender has become more ambiguous. Hochschild devotes a chapter of *The Managed Heart* to bill collectors, who are typically men, and is explicit about the fact that though gender plays a role in the construction of different forms of emotional labor, both men and women perform it. This is true both “atypically,” when men hold typically feminized jobs (e.g. as nurses or elementary school teachers) or when women hold typically normatively masculine jobs (e.g. as security guards) and “typically,” in the sense that it’s important to recognize that the roles of security guards and bill collectors have a

strongly emotional component which normatively is considered to be “a masculine role,” as compared to the roles of nurses and elementary school teachers, whose work is typically thought of as involving caring or nurturing qualities which are normatively associated with women. The gender ambiguity of the category of affective labor is evident in Negri and Hardt as well, but in their work there is a tendency for gender to drop out of the analysis.⁶

It should be clear that although I’m considering affective labor as part of a burgeoning category of work under late capitalism, it’s also important to remember that as a category there’s nothing new about it. People have always cared for each other, instilled fear in one another, etc., and some of these affective relationships have always been tied to ongoing jobs or vocations. What’s new about contemporary affective labor as an aspect of subjective labor is: 1) much affective labor which was traditionally performed in the home or via the hiring of household servants is increasingly brought under formal, capitalist conditions of a labor market, the products of which are commodified. 2) The starting-place for the work process for these kinds of work once so formalized is organized along lines which are informed by the whole history of the organization of work process under capitalism, including the Babbage principle, Taylorism, mass production / Fordism, the team concept, flexibilization, as well as a kind of mood management which really rises to the fore with subjective labor.⁷ 3) Under contemporary capitalism, more and more

6 See for example Schultz, Susanne, 'Dissolved Boundaries and “Affective Labor”': On the Disappearance of Reproductive Labor and Feminist Critique in Empire', translated by Frederick Peters. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 17:1, 77 — 82 (2006).

7 On the use of the Babbage principle and Taylorism to clerical and service work,

commodities sold are primarily or substantially affective.

The kinds of jobs that fit under each of the aspects of subjective labor – often overlapping with one another and with other forms of work – could be potentially quite an expansive list. As a rough starting place, I’ll consider occupations as they are represented in Bureau of Labor Standards statistics, particularly in three tables: Employment and Wages of the Largest Occupations, Occupations with the Most Job Growth, 2010 and Projected 2020, and Fastest Growing Occupations, 2010 and Projected 2020. See figures 1-3, pp. 370-372, for a version of these three tables annotated with subjective labor categories.

Of the 15 largest occupations in the US per the BLS, six would fit under the category of affective labor: retail salespersons, food preparation and serving workers, registered nurses, waiters and waitresses, customer service representatives, and nursing aides. If healthcare work runs the gamut from registered nurses on one end to nurses’ aides on the other in terms of pay, respect, and autonomy (doctors being a professional, exalted, supra-managerial presence from the standpoint of these workers, however sped-up and even somewhat proletarianized they may find themselves on their own terms), then the symbolic nature of the administration of care on a floor is the domain of RNs, while the intensely bodily aspect of the work is given to aides and orderlies: a classic example of the Babbage principle.⁸ The work of RNs

see Braverman, ch. 15 and 16.

- 8 The Babbage principle in a nutshell: cheapen work by breaking it up into components, giving the complicated, symbolic-manipulation components of the work to a few, higher-paid workers while dividing the rest of the “simpler” and more physically intense tasks amongst lower-paid groups of workers, in Babbage’s original example divided by gender and age, though under contemporary capitalism the Babbage principle is almost always applied along

and aides shares an affective component, though the extent to which RNs are affectively present (as opposed to hovering above affective interactions with patients, organizing the life of the ward or floor) depends on the particulars of a given institution and, to some extent, the particulars of how that ward is organized and the proclivities of individual nurses.

Retail sales, customer service work, and waiter/waitress work share many affective aspects in terms of customer interaction. Customer service representatives are somewhat unique amongst affective workers in that the affective interactions which comprise it may take place over long distances.

The category of “combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food” seems to be one which combines strongly affective work (food service) with work which, while it may produce a product which has a strongly affective component (the presentation of food in a certain way), is not itself primarily affective. It’s notable that this work is combined in the work itself, i.e. this is a single category of workers who perform both kinds of duties. It’s notable that this category comprises a larger group than dishwashers and all the different categories of cooks put together,⁹ suggesting that in fact a large segment of food workers have combined duties that

racial and ethnic lines. See Braverman, 79-83.

- 9 BLS Occupational Employment Statistics online, accessed 15 May 2012. See <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes353021.htm>, <http://www.bls.gov/oes/2008/may/oes351011.htm>, <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes352014.htm>, <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes352011.htm>, <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes352019.htm>, <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes352015.htm>, <http://www.bls.gov/oes/2008/may/oes352012.htm>, <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes359021.htm>,

include both traditional “front of the house” service and “back of the house” preparation.

Of these six occupations, I’d argue that three are normatively understood in the contemporary US as “women’s work:” registered nurses, customer service representatives, and nursing aides. Retail sales and food preparation and serving work probably tend to be more feminized than not, both in terms of bodies hired to perform the work and how they are understood in common-sense imagination, though these jobs are not quite so gendered as the first three. “Waiters and waitresses” is fairly clearly a “coed” category.

Three of these occupations are typically low-wage occupations, with annual mean wages under \$26,000. Waiters’ and waitresses’ annual mean wages are low as well, but these figures don’t include tips. Customer service representatives, at an average of \$33,120 per year, barely make enough to be considered part of the “stable, comfortable” working class, though it’s likely that this category includes a wide range of relatively highly paid and relatively low-wage workers, given the disparate categories of workers who fall under the rubric of customer service. RNs are clearly a separate category from these other workers in terms of wage, respect given their occupation in society, and the decision-making and intellectual content of their work.

12 of the 30 occupations with the greatest projected job growth also appear on the list of the largest 15 occupations. Of the remaining 18, 11 have a significant affective component. Several of these are related to healthcare (home health aides, personal care aides, licensed practical and vocational nurses, physicians and surgeons,

and medical assistants) or education (postsecondary teachers, childcare workers, elementary school teachers, teacher assistants); additionally, there are receptionists, information clerks, and security guards. It should be said that the work of physicians and medical assistants is typically more symbolic than affective, though in some cases it has an affective component. Education is both thoroughly affective and symbolic, though common-sense understands it to be more affective for younger children and more symbolic at the postsecondary level.

Of these eleven occupational categories, six normatively are highly feminized: home health aides, personal care aides, licensed practical and vocational nurses, medical assistants, childcare workers, and receptionists and information clerks. Two, elementary school teachers and teacher assistants, are normatively somewhat feminized. Two, physicians and postsecondary teachers, tend normatively to be imagined as masculine, and one, security guards, is strongly imagined as masculine. Like Hochschild's bill collectors, security guards do a type of affective work which is typified as masculine and which is based around qualities like security and discomfort (on the part of possible wrong-doers) rather than care.

Of these eleven occupations, six fall into the low-wage category, making an annual average of less than \$26,000. Medical assistants make almost \$29,000 on average, while LPNs and LVNs make a little over \$40,000, putting them into that "stable, comfortable" sector of the working class, provided of course that those are full-time jobs not otherwise made precarious. The category of postsecondary teachers is deceiving, since it includes both highly paid and well-regarded professors and low-

paid, low-status adjuncts and lecturers. Elementary school teachers, making an average of over \$51,000 are part of the stable, comfortable working class or are the most proletarianized of professionals, depending on one's perspective. Physicians, of course, hardly fit with these other groups of workers in terms of wage, status, or autonomy; they are the most highly regarded of professionals. Even doctors face conditions of speed-up in response to rising insurance and medication costs affecting the entire industry which are not completely distinct from proletarianization, but these tendencies have not eroded the prestige of the occupation.

Only 2 occupations on the fastest growing table also appear on either of the previous tables. Of the remaining 28, 12 are strongly affective in character. Most of these are healthcare-related occupations, such as veterinary technologists and technicians, physical therapist assistants, occupational therapy assistants, physical therapist aides, marriage and family therapists, physical therapists, dental hygienists, health educators, mental health counselors, and veterinarians. This list includes a couple of interesting items, including the veterinary categories. Feelings of care, comfort, and competence are involved here, both with the patients, the animals, and with their people, the indirect clients paying for the service in most cases. Clearly the intersubjectivity of affective labor is not necessarily limited to human subjects. It also includes a couple of categories we might call "purely affective." Most of the jobs we've discussed require some central affective component along with other elements, but for marriage and family therapists and mental health counselors, working with affect is central and everything else is secondary.

The two remaining occupations on the fastest-growing table which have a significant, though perhaps not dominant affective component are meeting, convention, and event planners and market research analysts and marketing specialists. Both of these categories of workers, and particularly the latter, are unique amongst the affective workers we've discussed in that the affective component of their work comes not so much from dealing with individual clients as from dealing with the affects of groups who are secondary clients (attendees at a convention or event) or groups whose affective response is separate from the worker via the abstraction of the market. Nevertheless, both of these jobs clearly have an important affective component. The success or failure of an event depends in some substantial part on the feelings of the attendees about how it is organized, and marketing is all about understanding and manipulating the affects of the masses and niche groups.

Most of these jobs are not as highly normatively gendered as the jobs on the first two tables, with the exception of the physical and occupational therapy categories and dental hygienists, which are normatively feminized. Most of these occupations are also somewhat higher paying and higher status than those just discussed amongst the largest occupations and those with the most job growth. The fastest-growing jobs are not nearly as large in numerical terms as the largest occupations and those with the most job growth; they represent a particularly dynamic group of professional and semi-professional jobs, but most of the largest occupations and the occupations providing the greatest job growth in the area of affective labor are low to moderate wage.

Braverman's remark on the relationship between the low-wage service economy and a few professional occupations still holds true of today's affective labor.

We see here the obverse face of the heralded "service economy," which is supposed to free workers from the tyranny of industry, call into existence a "higher order" of educated labor, and transform the condition of the average man. When this picture is drawn by enthusiastic publicists and press agents of capitalism (with or without advanced degrees in sociology and economics), it is given a semblance of reality by reference to professional occupations. When numbers are required to lend mass to the conception, the categories of clerical, sales, and service workers are called upon. But these workers are not asked to show their diplomas, their pay stubs, or their labor processes.¹⁰

Similarly, today, while the notion of affective or emotional labor under capitalism evokes a common-sense complex combination of creativity and expressiveness as well as dangers such as burnout, we should recognize that much of this work is low wage, low autonomy, and low status. It may require a great deal of a worker's affective capacities, but more often than not expressiveness is less likely than affective exploitation. Of course in a technical sense, all workers' work under capitalism is exploited, in the sense that it produces more value for the employer than the rate at which it is paid. To this strict, Marxian sense of exploitation, we could add here that affective relationships between humans range between those that are mutually beneficial and enlivening, in some sense, even if they are also sometimes work, to those that are one-sided and emotionally draining, in the colloquial sense, exploitative. In commodifying affective relationships, contemporary capitalism takes work that could be enlivening and meaningful for the person who is performing it,

10 Braverman 373.

work that typically is somewhat rewarding in non-commodified contexts, and renders it increasingly mass-produced, sped-up, and alienated.

1.2) Symbolic Labor

Symbolic labor is labor in which the work process, product of labor, or both, involve a large degree of the manipulation and communication of symbols, involving linguistic, mathematical, graphic, or musical / auditory components. As it primarily turns on a worker's intellectual capacities, and symbols are used to communicate different kinds of information, I will use this term more or less interchangeably with "intellectual labor" and "informational labor."

I prefer the term "symbolic labor" as a term of art, since "intellectual labor" and "informational labor" or "information work" both tend to focus our attention on "knowledge work," really a subset of this kind of work, which often involves high degrees of autonomy, creativity, pay, and respect; it is work which is often more professionalized than proletarianized. ("Professional" work can also be subject to partially proletarianized conditions, as doctors, nurses, and teachers in the US today know well.) Knowledge work of this sort is certainly an important part of advanced capitalism, but discussions of new kinds of work tend almost inexorably to focus on this shiny side of the "new economy" rather than lower-paid, low-autonomy, low-respect jobs involving the recording, communication, and transmission of symbols. Jobs in this latter category outnumber the former by quite a lot; the repetitious drudgery that characterizes a great deal of symbolic labor has yet to receive its deserved focus. "Symbolic labor" is a term that's fairly far removed from common-

sense usage. It doesn't necessarily conjure up the creativity implied in "intellectual labor."

To examine a few other ways of schematizing this kind of work: Negri and Hardt define symbolic labor as "labor that is primarily intellectual or linguistic, such as problem solving, symbolic and analytical tasks, and linguistic expressions;"¹¹ In principle, this definition is very close to my own, though in working through the dynamics of the theory, Negri and Hardt tend to emphasize creative, highly autonomous, more highly paid kinds of knowledge work over lower paid, repetitious, heteronomous forms of work; at a vulgar level, theirs is a world of symbolic labor with a lot of computer programmers and very few cashiers. To some extent, this bias can be seen in the definition; while "symbolic and analytical tasks" could include a wide range of work, "problem solving" and "linguistic expressions" tend to emphasize the creative aspect of symbolic labor over the acts of repetition, recording, transmission, proliferation, and communication which are in fact at the center of what is at the center of a symbolic economy.

Robert Reich argues that three broad categories of work are emerging based essentially upon 1) levels of autonomy, creativity, and pay in the work and 2) whether the work must be performed in-person or can be sold over a distance.¹² His category of symbolic-analytic services would seem to be the one most related to what I'm calling symbolic labor, but importantly, this is only the most creatively autonomous

11 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 108.

12 Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st-Century Capitalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 174-180.

and highly paid work in this arena, including engineers, scientists, bankers, and lawyers. Essentially this is a category that corresponds to old managerial and professional categories, with the proviso that the categories may not be as fixed as they were in an earlier phase of capitalism. His category of “routine production services” on first blush seems to be a category of the workforce destined to be antiquated by “new” capitalism, but then we learn that it is its essential underpinning, or at least one of them.

Indeed, contrary to prophets of the “information age” who buoyantly predicted an abundance of high-paying jobs even for people with the most basic of skills, the sobering truth is that many information-processing jobs fit easily into this category. The foot soldiers of the information economy are hordes of data processors stationed in “back offices” at computer terminals linked to worldwide information banks. They routinely enter data into computers or take it out again – records of credit card purchases and payments, credit reports, checks that have cleared, customer accounts, customer correspondence, payroll, hospital billings, patient records, medical claims, court decisions, subscriber lists, personnel, library catalogues, and so forth. The “information revolution” may have rendered some of us more productive, but it has also produced huge piles of raw data which must be processed in much the same monotonous way that assembly-line workers and, before them, textile workers processed piles of other raw materials.¹³

The relationship Reich draws between routine information-processing work and industrial labor was already analyzed by Braverman, writing at the early dawn of the computer era:

This automatic system for data-processing resembles automatic systems of production machinery in that it re-unifies the labor process, eliminating the many steps that had previously been assigned to detail workers. But, as in manufacturing, the office computer does not become, in the capitalist mode of production, the giant step that it could be toward the dismantling and scaling down of the technical division of labor. Instead, capitalism goes against the grain of the

¹³ Reich, 175.

technological trend and stubbornly reproduces the outmoded division of labor in a new and more pernicious form.¹⁴

In some important respects, this routinized side of symbolic labor resembles industrial production, but in others it doesn't. First, symbolic labor even of the most routinized sort revolves works with different raw materials from industrial labor, requiring, in general, only incidental physical faculties and sometimes rather complex mental faculties. Secondly, routinized symbolic labor tends to be precarious, flexible, and insecure to a greater extent than was the case for "classic" industrial labor in capitalism's industrial centers, though to what extent that has to do with industrial organizational development, weakened unions and lack of unionization in symbolic occupations, or with technological development and the content of the work is an open question.

More importantly for selecting a set of categories, it's important to understand that levels of pay, autonomy, and creativity involved in different kinds of symbolic labor vary along a spectrum, rather than belonging to two distinct categories as Reich describes. His true symbolic analysts represent a fairly small subset of the overall workforce, though more and more professional and managerial occupations are becoming occupations of this sort. However, between the extremes of the symbolic analysts and routinized symbolic processors lie an important range of jobs with a strong symbolic component, including nurses, secretaries, clerks, teachers, and assistants to these occupations.

My objection to Braverman's reduction of symbolic labor work processes to

¹⁴ Braverman, 328.

Taylorism is that Taylorism is only one of several managerial technologies employed in the symbolic workplace. The Babbage Principle, Taylorism, Fordism, lean / team production, and a new form of managementality involving the internalization of managerial norms are all simultaneously present in the symbolic workplace. It would be a mistake to overlook the commonalities between contemporary management and the “classic” Taylorist version, but it would also be a mistake to overlook new and distinctive managerial technologies. I’ll return to this question in the last two sections of chapter 5.

Of the fifteen largest occupations according to the BLS, nine have strongly symbolic components. Again, this is not to say that they are symbolic to the exclusion of other aspects of subjective labor; five of those nine jobs are also affective, and three of those five are, additionally reproductive in character. Most of these jobs are at the low to moderate end of the pay/creativity/autonomy spectrum: retail sales, cashiers, office clerks, waiters and waitresses, customer service representatives, secretaries and administrative assistants, store clerks, and bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks. It’s fair to say that even these categories include a fairly wide range, however, all the way from retail and cashier positions which are generally acknowledged to be at the bottom of the symbolic labor economy to clerks, secretaries, and administrative assistants who may be mostly in the “lower-middle” part of the spectrum. (Note: referring to a position on this pay / autonomy spectrum as “lower,” “middle,” or “lower-middle” should not be confused with similar sounding language for describing economic classes, language which is incoherent on a serious,

analytic level, though it must be taken seriously as a kind of common sense around class and a language of policy and media.)

It may be objected that jobs like retail sales, waiters and waitresses, and customer service don't belong on this list at all, because they are more affective than symbolic, while cashiers might not be considered symbolic workers at all by some, either because cashiers have been around for a long time before the "new economy" or because their work somehow doesn't "rise to the level" of symbolic labor. Again, I'm using this term in a pretty broad, descriptive manner, to include all workers whose work includes a significant element of manipulating symbols.

All of the levels of creativity and autonomy involved in symbolic labor are relative, since even the most "obviously" creative workers in this category don't actually create new symbols, but manipulate and mobilize them. For example, writers don't create letters or languages, much less the networks of allusion and discussion that give their works a context for meaning. This process, in addition to mobilizing symbols largely within existing fields of meaning, also defies its Romantic type to the extent that contemporary symbolic production tends to be less and less reducible to the brain-and-pen work of a single genius, auteur, or virtuoso; instead, the profusion of new music, visual culture, and writing tends to owe its existence more and more to team processes, even if they are understood and marketed as a product of individual creativity.

Returning to the routinized and affective side of symbolic labor, retail salespeople, waiters and waitresses, customer service representatives, and cashiers are

all symbolic workers to the extent that their jobs centrally require the recording and transmission of symbols. The first three of these categories may turn on affective elements to a greater degree than on symbolic ones, since success or failure in these occupations most spectacularly turns on affective interactions with customers. Certainly in the case of waiters and waitresses, it would probably be fair to say that the symbolic element of the job is secondary. However, less spectacularly, it's not possible to succeed at any of these jobs without the careful recording of symbols and their communication. And this is more the case with these jobs than it would have been for a traditional assembly line, manufacturing job, where a worker might have to interpret a symbolic matrix for himself but not directly participate in the recording or transference of symbols.

Of the fifteen largest occupations, registered nurses are the only ones with a strong symbolic character whose work appears at a much higher place along the pay / autonomy spectrum. Again it may be objected that nurses' work is more affective or reproductive than symbolic, since the defining characteristic of their work involves interaction with patients. However, especially in a hospital setting, it could be argued that registered nurses' work ends up being more symbolic than affective, since RNs are responsible for keeping track of charts, medications, and paperwork for a unit, and are supervising patient interactions, while a lot of the more sustained patient interactions go to vocational and practical nurses, nurses aides, and orderlies. In other settings and on some particular units within a hospital, the amount of RN work involving direct patient care may be much higher than this.

As stated in the section on affective labor above, the occupations with the most job growth include 12 which are on the largest occupations list and 18 which aren't. Of these 18, at least 10 and arguably 12 have strongly symbolic components: postsecondary teachers, childcare workers, elementary school teachers, receptionists, medical secretaries, teacher assistants, licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses, physicians and surgeons, and medical assistants. The two questionable categories are sales representatives in wholesale and manufacturing and first-line supervisors of office and administrative support workers. Sales representatives in wholesale and manufacturing might well be considered part of manufacturing or as symbolic workers. It's worth noting here that the categories I'm developing have little to do with "sectors" of the economy, to the extent that the notion of sectors is at all coherent. If we were thinking in terms of sectors, these sales representatives would clearly belong to manufacturing rather than to "services" or "information." In truth this whole notion of sectors is rather misleading and unclear, and a great many of the jobs we've discussed already could appear either directly (office clerks, secretaries, bookkeeping) or indirectly (retail sales, cashiers, customer service, store clerks) appended to manufacturing. Indeed, this line of argument appears to some extent in Braverman, and Marxist critics of postindustrial theories tend to cite this kind of thing to argue that the apparent shift away from "manufacturing" towards "services" may have as much to do with jiggling categories as substantive changes. Nevertheless, to the extent that we are concerned with work materials and processes of particular workers rather than sectors of the economy, these sales representatives would be

doing work which is primarily symbolic (and secondarily affective) in character.

First-line supervisors of office and administrative support workers are, of course, supervisors, and therefore not workers in most classifications. First-line supervisors, however, are often not very far removed from the workers they are supervising. The content of their work is likely to be largely symbolic and affective in nature. These supervisors are often organic intellectuals of the workforce.

Looking at this second set of jobs, a number of the observations I've already made will hold. Another consideration that needs to be added here regards teachers, teacher assistants, and childcare workers. So far I've looked at occupations where levels of pay and job autonomy, independent judgment, and or creativity necessary for a job tend to vary in tandem with one another. Training is another factor, which I haven't discussed, which tends to vary in tandem with these. In healthcare, for example, these variances seem somewhat orderly. The highest paid occupations (physicians) have the most autonomy, require the most independent judgment, and require the most training. Levels of autonomy, independent judgment, training, and pay vary more or less in tandem with one another, from doctors and surgeons to "professional" occupations including RNs to "technical" occupations including LVNs / LPNs and many kinds of therapists to "service" occupations including CNAs, orderlies, and food service and environmental service workers. The seeming "orderliness" of this system may belie a great deal, since the essential caring functions of a hospital or skilled nursing facility may rest directly on the affective labor of low-paid workers. But these workers are still, supposedly, exercising less

independent judgment than their superiors in a rather intricate, multi-step hierarchy, so some appearance of order is maintained.

In contrast, no such order or smack of meritocracy exists in education. Childcare workers working with young children in a preschool or public school setting are paid barely above minimum wage rates, despite performing work which requires a fair amount of independent judgment, a great deal of creativity, and often a fair amount of training. Elementary and secondary teachers' pay varies a great deal from district to district and state to state, largely according to the strength of unions. The category of postsecondary teachers has a great deal of internal variation in pay and job security, ranging from professors to adjuncts, though most of the positions in question require similarly high levels of training. Certainly education and childcare is not the only area of work that sometimes requires high levels of autonomous judgment and skill along with low levels of pay and job security, but its creep further and further along those lines is quite notable.

All of these jobs in the second set fall under the category of low to moderate levels of pay and moderate to high levels of autonomous judgment and responsibility, except of course for physicians and surgeons, the only "top-level" profession appearing on the table of occupations with the most expected job growth. It appears towards the bottom of the list, under six other medical classifications and just above medical assistants. The role of doctors in providing healthcare is of course quite important from a number of perspectives. In public perception of how healthcare works, they play a deciding role, and in actual medical practice they are an

inescapable node of functioning. But as a percentage of the healthcare workforce, they are a relatively small number.

Of the 28 fastest-growing occupations which are not amongst the largest or the occupations expecting the largest numerical growth, 20 have strongly subjective components. Here we see more of the top- and upper-middle level professional classifications, like biomedical engineers, meeting and event planners, sonographers, interpreters and translators, market research analysts, marriage and family therapists, audiologists, health educators, cost estimators, medical scientists, mental health counselors, and veterinarians. Here finally we see the ranks of Reich's symbolic analysts. It's interesting that even here, computer / internet jobs do not predominate. Instead, seven of these eleven professional occupations are appended to healthcare or mental health in some way. Of the remaining nine fastest-growing, symbolic occupations which don't have professional levels of autonomy, all are also healthcare-related: veterinary techs, physical therapist assistants, occupational therapy assistants, physical therapist aides, medical secretaries, physical therapists, and dental hygienists.

It might be tempting to conclude from this survey that Reich's highly paid, highly autonomous symbolic analysts are but a very small part of symbolic labor, which centers upon low-paid retail workers and cashiers, moderately paid, moderately autonomous clerks, secretaries, and administrative personnel, and healthcare workers of all strata, also including a few other stray categories of professionals. This does suggest that trendiness may have over-accentuated the centrality of computer-focused

work in the contemporary economy, but of course statistics can misrepresent things and fail to capture political centralities as well as economic chokepoints and sites of particular stress. While the jobs I've chosen to analyze briefly here are certainly important, to some extent the selection of these jobs and not others is arbitrary. It's also possible that by looking at kinds of work that are growing from 2000-2020, for example, we might miss kinds of work that grew from 1980-2000 but have remained stable since then, without individual classifications getting large enough to make it onto the largest 15 jobs list.

Certainly Silicon Valley and the Silicon Valley model of well-paid, highly autonomous, but also mobile and low-security professional occupations focused on computers and the internet economy remain very important parts of symbolic labor. Aside from healthcare and education and to some extent government administration, computer jobs provide a significant slice of the higher-income, professional part of the symbolic labor economy. Still, at the same time, we can see from this survey what a large mistake it would be to focus an analysis of symbolic labor exclusively on this particularly glitzy and novel aspect of it, without looking at the low- and moderate-wage jobs that provide the bulk of the growth in this arena and without examining the areas of work around which it is clustered: healthcare and education.

1.3) Reproductive Labor: an Emerging Regime of Lean Reproduction

The category of reproductive labor is a different kind of category from affective or symbolic labor. These two categories refer to the kinds of work processes and productive materials used in different kinds of work, particularly as they relate to

different aspects of the worker's subjectivity. So, while traditional manufacturing work, to some extent in craft-work but to a greater extent in industrial production, is indifferent to a worker's subjectivity, affective labor makes use of a worker's affective capacities, while symbolic labor makes use of a worker's symbolic / intellectual capacities. As we've seen, these categories overlap with each other often, perhaps even more often than not.

The notion of "reproductive labor" refers to a different question, that of whether capitalism is producing something (which would use "productive labor") or reproducing itself and its own social conditions (which would be "reproductive labor"). While traditional Marxian accounts make productive labor the specific, driving force of capitalism and see reproductive labor as necessary but secondary, some socialist-feminist accounts have begun to see reproductive labor as central and manufacturing production as a relatively secondary, historically and geographically contingent sort of work. It's also questionable (both for me, and for many materialist feminist theorists) whether the distinction between productive labor and reproductive labor is ultimately coherent, or whether a lot of things produced in contemporary capitalism are both questionably "things" and questionably in a gray area between production and reproduction. But before going into this any further, it's important to unpack some of the different possible meanings of the terms "reproduction" and "reproductive labor," since they are often used in unclear, contradictory ways.

At a very basic level, "reproduction" means something totally different in feminist theory from Marxist economics, though the category of "reproductive labor"

is essentially a materialist feminist category used to think these together. This category has been a very productive one, but as we make a transition from using it to think about women's unwaged work in the home to paid work, performed outside of the home usually but not entirely by women, certain conceptual confusions have entered the picture. I want to attempt to clarify this category for the purpose of thinking about subjective labor, a type of labor which includes all genders of workers, though in some important ways it may be feminized, as I'll discuss below.

Proviso: it feels important to acknowledge a hesitancy I feel, as a straight-identified, male theorist, in reworking a fairly central category of feminist theory such as reproductive labor. Of course reworking the categories is taking them seriously, but there's a way in which male theorists tend to appropriate aspects of feminist theory and run with it while dropping out some of its specifically gendered dimensions. In fact, Negri and Hardt's theory of immaterial labor, an important interlocutor for my theory of subjective labor, if one for which I have serious criticisms, has been rightly criticized for just this. My hope for the idea of subjective labor is that it provides a structure for theorizing about changes in contemporary capitalist labor process at a level of political-economic totality which is structured in terms of gender, as well as race, ethnicity, and region, and that it will be a theoretical construct which is relatively sensitive to dynamics within the political-economic totality which have more and less to do with these particular striations of it. My intent is only partially determinative, to be sure, and a larger part of the work remains for the reader to see if the theory achieves this or is useful for this and for subsequent interlocutors to see if

the theory is helpful for navigating these levels.

It's also worth mentioning that the materialist feminist theory I'm drawing on here has its roots in socialist feminism and the women's liberation movement, and much of the literature is deeply and passionately imbued with ideas of revolution. Some of it also deals with the question of women's separatism which now seems somewhat anachronistic. I too hope that my reflections will have some relevance for people who are trying to make some sense of themselves as workers and subjects, people who are trying to overturn and undo the regimes of labor and power that control them. The culture of theoretical debate does not exist on the same level as it did in the 1970s, though it's interesting to note that some of the style and urgency of the materialist feminists, especially in relation to some of the Italian autonomists, has been revived in contemporary Occupy Patriarchy and communization circles.

In feminist theory "reproduction" has first and foremost had to do with reproduction in a social and biological sense: child-bearing and child-rearing. In Marxist theory, "reproduction" has to do with capitalism's ability to continue creating the conditions for its own perpetuation; "simple reproduction" would be a capitalist society's ability to reproduce itself as it is, while "expanded reproduction" is capitalist society's ability to reproduce itself with economic growth. These two theoretical matrices converge somewhat in the notion of social reproduction or reproductive labor, which involve the activities necessary for caring for the working class and reproducing its daily ability to work (such as providing food, clothing, leisure, a home that is outfitted according to socially determined standards, and healthcare) as well as

the activities necessary for raising a new generation of workers, that is, children (such as providing food, clothing, opportunities for play, a home, and healthcare all once again, and additionally child-rearing, education, and training).

Most of these activities can be performed on an unpaid and non-commodified basis, historically almost always by women in the family, though nothing in principle prevents a society from assigning any of these activities to men. Many of them can also be performed by informal, paid labor in the home (usually this has involved middle- or upper-class women, functioning as managers of the home, hiring women of subordinate ethnic or racial groups to work in their homes). Many of them can also be performed by formal, paid labor in the home (for example, hiring a company to clean your home instead of doing it yourself or hiring someone via an informal, private arrangement). Some of these activities can also be congealed in material or immaterial products and fully commodified; for example, use of prepared food (to the extent that it is a substitute for cooking more than a leisure activity) or use of new technology for cleaning. As Ursula Huws and others have observed, this last tendency can cut against a common-sense notion that the contemporary economy is always producing more service work; it also tends to change social expectations around the amount of reproductive labor seen as socially necessary.

Many of the activities I've discussed as affective labor and several of the activities I've discussed as symbolic labor fit into this category of reproductive labor as well. They are not analytically distinct, but the different terms shed light on different features of labor.) To look at some related discussions in materialist feminist

theory, Ann Ferguson defines “sex / affective production” as “the production and reproduction of *people* in family and kinship networks”¹⁵ as opposed to “the economic realm (the production of *things* to meet human material needs ...).” As Ferguson and Folbre use this term elsewhere, it refers to “the bearing and rearing of children, and the provision of affection, nurturance, and sexual satisfaction.”¹⁶

Whereas Hochschild’s idea of emotional labor and Hardt and Negri’s idea of affective labor are focused on waged labor under conditions of formal exchange, Ferguson and Folbre use this construct to refer to women’s work in the home – classically understood as unwaged, though critics have pointed out that women of color, especially, have performed this kind of work in white women’s homes for a wage, albeit sometimes “informally,” for generations. This construct could also be taken to include work such as sex work which by definition takes place outside the home (or at least outside the family, though again we could find the exception), but which is gendered and feminized. Wally Secombe understands “the reproduction of labor power” as “reproduction of the *capacity* for work”¹⁷ involving physical maintenance, psychological maintenance, and skill building for workers (i.e. husbands, grown men) on a daily basis, and future workers (children), on a generational basis. Her analysis is focused on domestic work, though she points out that the skill-building component of

15 Ann Ferguson, "On Conceiving Motherhood and Sexuality: A Feminist Materialist Approach," In *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*, ed. Joyce Trebilcot (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Allenheld, 1984), 155.

16 Ann Ferguson and Nancy Folbre, “The Unhappy Marriage of Patriarchy and Capitalism,” in *Women and Revolution*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 318.

17 Wally Secombe, “The Housewife and Her Labor under Capitalism,” *New Left Review* I/83, January-February 1974: 14.

children's education is shared with the state (or, today, with private schools, nurseries, etc.).

Ursula Huws, like Hardt and Negri and Hochschild, begins from an optic focused upon waged labor exchanged under formal capitalist relations. She divides the category of "services" into three categories:

The first of these consists essentially of a socialization of the kinds of work that are also carried out unpaid in the home or neighborhood. This work includes health care, child care, social work, cleaning, catering, and a range of personal services like hairdressing. It also includes what one might call "public housekeeping," such as the provision of leisure services, street cleaning, refuse collection, or park keeping. Even "live" entertainment – and the sex industry – can plausibly be included in this category....¹⁸

A second category of service activity could be classified as the development of human capital – the reproduction of the knowledge workforce itself. Into this category come education and training and some kinds of research and development....¹⁹

The third category ... is the "knowledge work" that is either directly involved in the production of physical commodities or involved in the production of new commodities that are entirely weightless.²⁰

These subdivisions are analytically helpful, but again the definitions are messy; at this level, the category of services could encompass most of what I mean by "subjective labor." I use the term "reproductive labor" to highlight the factors that Secombe understands as "the reproduction of labor power" as these are in dynamic tension with the first two categories of (formal-sector) "services" as understood by Huws. (Her third category of services would relate most clearly to what I call symbolically

18 Ursula Huws, *The Making of a Cybertariat: Virtual Work in a Real World* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2003), 131.

19 Huws, 134.

20 Huws, 135.

saturated and symbolic labor.)

Unlike affective, symbolic, and sexual / bodily labor, reproductive labor does not refer to an aspect of the subject's laboring capacities. I should stress again that these first three categories do not represent separate capacities; most sexual / bodily labor is also affective; affective labor requires a bodily display; most kinds of symbolic labor also require affective communicative capacities; etc. Thinking about each of these categories helps draw our attention to ways of thinking about labor we might forget if we privileged one or two of them. But reproductive labor belongs to a different categorizing scheme, one that refers to capitalism as a system which produces things and reproduces people (workers, on a daily basis, and children, generationally). Almost everything in the category of reproductive labor could also be understood within one of the other three categories, if not more than one. Huws suggests a possible exception, when she points out that the washing machine "materializes" rather than "dematerializes" the labor of washing clothes.²¹ The labor of washing clothes with a washing machine is still reproductive labor, which has a bodily component (picking up clothes, changing loads), a symbolic component (sorting them into loads and setting the machine according to a system), and an affective component (caring for oneself and family members, which the laundry products industry thinks is central to the extent that advertisements center around such qualities as softness). The industrial labor of manufacturing the washing machine is congealed into this process, and I take Huws's point to be that this process involves more industrial labor and fewer hours of service labor than previous ways of

21 Huws, 132.

doing the wash (by hand, or by taking it to a laundry). Advances in efficiency, here in the reproductive sphere, often rely on advances in manufacturing; in this important sense, industry remains as central as ever, even if a great deal of that industrial production is now done by distant workers or machines. It should be clear, here, that production and reproduction are not truly separate from each other – and we will see further ways in which this is the case; in the contemporary subjective economy, reproductive features become more and more a function of the productive process and vice versa. To the extent that we can separate it out analytically, reproduction relies heavily upon and is predominantly constituted by the subjective element.

These various theoretical constructs can be confusing, but it's important to look at them to see what they each include and exclude. I agree with Natalie Sokoloff that viewing women's work in its totality would require an understanding of "the dialectical relations of women's work ... both paid labor in the market and unpaid labor in the home."²² This question remains central, especially in the sense that Huws's first category of services consists almost entirely of feminized labor (labor which is performed mainly by women, and culturally treated as women's work, i.e. temporary, low-paid, work performed in public which is equivalent to women's traditional work in the home, etc.), and the second category would not be possible without significant amounts of feminized labor. Certainly women's double day, as well as the treatment of women as "casual" (temporary, unreliable, etc.) is relevant here, and should illuminate the fact that subjective labor can only be understood as

22 Natalie Sokoloff, *Between Money and Love: The Dialectics of Women's Home and Market Work* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), x.

differentially gendered.

To make use of this theory today, we need to take account of an important change that has accelerated since the 1970s. A lot of the theory has a focal point of women's unpaid labor in the home, and particularly the labor of housewives. Today, while women still perform a great deal of unpaid labor in the home, and despite a seemingly advancing ideology of gender equality men perform very little of it, the figure of the housewife has been gradually disappearing from the stage of history, displaced by the working woman performing a double or triple shift. As more and more women have entered the formal workforce – even under subordinate and flexibilized conditions – the total number of hours spent on housework have decreased.

It is important to note here that the figure of the housewife never was, historically or currently, a figure that represented the experience or the prospects of most women of color in the US. Evelyn Nakano Glenn observes:

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.²³

Again, there is a shift here from informal labor to formal relations of capitalist exchange, but this time from informal-sector waged labor to formal-sector waged

23 Evelyn Nakano Glenn, “From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor,” *Signs* 18, no. 1 (Autumn, 1992): 3.

labor, rather than nonwaged labor to waged labor. For women of color the double day (plus) is also very old news, since women of color were also always responsible for reproductive labor of their own families.

What happened to this disappearing housework? Relatively little of the slack has been picked up by men. To some extent, the amount of housework seen as socially necessary under a certain phase of high industrial capitalism has shifted. Some labor that was seen as socially necessary in the era of the housewife is no longer seen as necessary. The labor of a housewife ironing clothes has been largely rendered obsolete in two ways – technologically by the introduction of “wrinkle-free” fabrics, and ideologically by a more casual style of dress at school and in the workplace. The ideology of white labor in the US from the 1800s through the 1970s was the “family wage,” the idea that a male worker’s income should be sufficient to provide for the reproduction of himself, his wife, and his children, all at a “middle-class standard of living.” The family wage is now an unreachable ideal for almost all of the working class, and it has finally been mostly abandoned as ideology, though the temporary and low-paid nature of many feminized jobs still bears the mark of this tradition. The middle-class standard of living remains a key ideological mechanism, but its pursuit now involves two factors foreign to the working man of the post-WWII order: the double (or sometimes triple) day of his wife and the extension of a vast credit economy to the working classes. To some extent, “productivity gains” have been made within this kind of work as it has been socialized (that is, brought into the market).²⁴ A certain portion of the work of an adult worker’s reproduction must be

24 This use of the term “socialized” follows the standard use in the literature, which

performed by the worker himself, and this portion has probably grown over the last period. Trends such as an increasing number of men living alone well into and beyond middle age can be noted here. Thus to a certain extent we can historicize the emergence of the Foucauldian question of the care and technologies of the self as one which has renewed importance under contemporary capitalism, particularly with the destruction of previous economies of care.

I think it is also possible that the dynamics of flexibilization, speed up, deskilling, multi-tasking, and contracting out which apply to production apply to reproduction as well; if the workplace is experiencing “lean production,” the family (especially, though not exclusively, in the working class) is experiencing a good deal of “lean reproduction.” Socially necessary reproduction time is being cut to the bare bones, and capitalism is experimenting with the extent to which entertainment and

follows logically from Marx’s use of the term, suggesting that industrialization involved a socialization of production which only had to be rationalized and redistributed under socialism. I find this usage a bit counter-intuitive and problematic. If a hypothetical family that would have had its meals prepared by a housewife in 1960 (perhaps according to social norms that now seem unimaginable) now eats out or eats pre-prepared foods most of the time, there is a sense in which the labor of food preparation has been socialized and an efficiency has been achieved: four hours of labor on the market usually earns more than enough to pay for the prepared food, which would have required more than four hours of shopping, transportation, and cooking labor by the housewife to prepare it in the “old” way. Of course “slow food” and “quality time” advocates might insist that the emotional benefits of a meal together can be lost in this way. The idea of an intentional community suggests to me what it would mean for this work to be socialized: the work is traded between community members or performed by a specialized community member. In contrast, there’s something perverse in calling a trip to KFC a “socialization” of dinner, since fast food culture contributes to a process of social isolation. The labor of food preparation may be de-privatized, but the meal is atomized. To paraphrase Dewey’s remark about the danger of equating socialization with nationalization, socialization requires a lot of conscious considerations beyond mere de-privatization.

spectatorship can take the place of care. This would provide us with an objective correlate to understand both liberal (“slow food,” “quality time”) and conservative (“family values,” neo-traditionalist) reactions to the changing family structure under late capitalism. Both attempt to grapple with a contradictory reality: a real erosion of traditional patriarchy (though that comes with a strong tendency to generate new forms of patriarchy or masculinism as well) hand-in-hand with lean reproduction, a real deficit in the caring labor that was available in the family. The tendency to generate new forms of caring community outside of the traditional family structure, mostly densely among queer young people, constitute the main evident response to this problematic which, structurally speaking, is radical.

1.4) Bodily Labor

One of the materialist feminist categories for thinking about reproductive labor was “labor in the bodily mode.”²⁵ While most of subjective labor as it is coming to prominence today is either affective or symbolic, and thereby distinct from craft and industrial labor which is in some sense more bodily, there’s also an important subcategory of subjective labor which is bodily. This work tends to be low-paid service work. Much of it, like physical therapy, personal care, and home health work,

25 Michael Hardt (“Affective Labor,” *Boundary 2* 26:2 (1999): 96) traces the notion of “labor in the bodily mode” to Dorothy Smith’s *The Everyday World As Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), 78-88. This phrase is certainly one that resonates in feminist theory, and Smith discusses labor in the context of Hegel’s master/slave dialectic and a typically female “bodily mode” of organizing knowledge, vs. a dominant, male abstract, conceptual mode of organizing knowledge, and goes on to argue that women’s work often mediates men’s abstract, conceptual hegemony of the world of labor. However, she does not use the full phrase “labor in the bodily mode” in this context.

is also affective. Janitorial work, cleaning, and groundskeeping work could be said to be bodily without being predominantly affective, although there's a quality of "invisibility" expected of some janitors, e.g. in large office buildings, which has an affective quality. Back of the house food service work (e.g. line cooks and dishwashers) are also engaged in bodily labor that's not primarily affective, although to the extent that cooks are involved in the arrangement and presentation of food, this certainly has an affective component. However, cooks are not directly, affectively engaged with customers the way servers are.

Conversely, almost all affective labor can be said to involve the body in a way that is different from industrial labor in that affects are displayed using the body, through non-verbal signaling, posture, uniform, and direct touch, in addition to the use of verbal signals. One way to understand affective labor as such would be to say that it relies on the expressive capacity of the entire surface area of the body without reference to the interiority of the body (though the desire for "authenticity" in emotional work appeals to exactly this interiority, if with ambiguous success).

I'm using the notion of bodily labor here in a slightly different sense from the term "labor in the bodily mode" in feminist theory, though this theoretical usage partially suggested my own category. "Labor in the bodily mode" typically meant labor in which there is contact between bodies; it was mostly used as a synonym for what I'm calling affective labor or caring labor, making use of a Deleuzian terminology of bodies, affect, and relationality. Physical, caring labor such as nursing assistant or personal care work lies at the heart of both definitions. But janitorial work

would count as bodily labor in my definition, because it is very physical while not involving the transformation of an external object, while it might not count as “labor in the bodily mode” in a Deleuzian-feminist sense, unless you wanted to theorize invisibility as a special kind of affective absence. Meanwhile, front-of-the house hotel or restaurant work might count as labor in the bodily mode in a Deleuzian-feminist sense, since it involves contact between bodies, but if it involves minimal physical exertion, it would not count as bodily labor in my sense. For me, subjective labor can be subdivided because it draws on different (if possibly overlapping) aspects of workers’ subjectivity. Subjective labor is affective to the extent that it draws on workers’ affective capacities, symbolic, to the extent that it draws upon workers’ symbolic capacities, and bodily to the extent that it draws upon workers’ bodily capacities. Bodily labor is distinguishable as a form of subjective labor because it involves a significant amount of bodily exertion, and it tends to involve the whole body, rather than a highly repetitive, mechanistic repetition of a series of acts involving only one or two body parts.

Bodily labor in this sense engages the body in a different way from craft work and, even more so, from industrial work. Under the successive pressures of the Babbage principle and Taylorism, craft work and industrial work tended to make use of the worker’s body in very particular, mechanistic ways. It’s possible to argue that actual mechanization has replaced some of these workers, while the regime of management that has followed on Fordism (which involves elements of Toyotaism, the team concept, and lean production) has relaxed some of the extremes of Taylorism

in this regard. It's also possible to see the Babbage principle, Taylorism, Fordism, lean production, and managementality as techniques of management which are often employed in concert. In any case industrial labor in general, particularly in instances where we see the strongest examples of the Babbage principle and Taylorism, tends to divide up the work and break down the bodily-mechanical motions needed to carry out specific tasks into rote tasks often involving isolated body parts or particular, repetitious kinds of motion. Bodily, subjective labor does not tend to be broken up in this way. It tends to involve kinds of motion that involve the whole body and which cannot in principle be completely routinized, especially as when (in personal healthcare work) the work involves the body of a worker and the body of a client.

Besides subjective bodily work and industrial and craft work, there are other areas of labor which are intensely bodily: mainly the extraction of natural resources, agriculture, and some kinds of transportation work. These kinds of work tend to be similar to subjective bodily work in that they involve the whole body rather than an isolated body part engaged in a highly repetitive task. However, they are similar to industrial and craft work in that they involve the transformation of an external object, via extraction, cultivation, harvest, or transportation, rather than an interaction with another body or a space (as in janitorial and cleaning work and groundskeeping). Since back-of-the-house food service work does involve the transformation of external objects (cooking food or cleaning dishes), it is in many ways the part of subjective labor that is closest to industrial (or even industrialized agricultural) work.

The less affective bodily work (janitorial, cleaning, and grounds work and

back-of-the-house food service) tend to be slightly more susceptible to mechanistic thinking, both in terms of Taylorist schemes to “rationalize” the work process and actual mechanization. Many science fiction fantasies are incomplete without robots or machines tending to grounds or janitorial work, but so far, this mechanization of subjective bodily labor has not been practical in the same way that it has been possible to mechanize more and more of the assembly line. In part, this is due to the fact that these kinds of work, while seemingly repetitious from an anecdotal standpoint, are in fact not as easily reducible to rote routine as are some industrial processes. Of course it’s possible that new technological advances will open up new possibilities in this arena.

1.5) Sexual Labor

A few particular words are due here to a form of labor which does not appear in any prominent location on the BLS tables: sexual labor, or sex work. Following on my definitions of affective, symbolic, and bodily labor, I define sexual labor broadly as any kind of work that draws upon a worker’s sexual capacities or which involves the deliberate, overt, and direct sexual stimulation of a client. Construed as such, the category would include activities such as erotic dance and striptease as well as escort and erotic massage. (This definition is not far at all from the most common definitions of sex work.) Sexual labor is always affective, in that the sexual desires being stimulated for the client are affective in nature and in that sexuality is a subjective capacity which, for the worker, is essentially affective, even if the affective performance is “inauthentic” or the feelings involved are ones of disgust, fear, or

dissociation, instead of or in addition to desire and pleasure. Sexual labor is also almost always bodily, in that a bodily performance of the worker is central to the work. Perhaps phone sex would be the exception, here, although even here, the work usually involves the bodily stimulation of a client, even if this stimulation is slightly more mediated in the case of sex work.

Some feminist theorists have examined the continuity or relationship between typically unpaid sexual encounters that, while not primarily understood as “work” in the formal sense, may involve laborious expenditures of emotional and sexual labor which can be quite one-sided at times, feeling like pleasure for one participant, usually the man in a heterosexual couple, and feeling like work for the the other participant, usually a woman in a heterosexual couple. This has been particularly true for wives, and a certain strand of materialist-feminist theory going all the way back to Engels analyzes the centrality of this to the social relationship of marriage and the way in which, through marriage, a husband gains property in or mastery over his wife’s sexual and emotional capacities, though this logic in contemporary US society could be extended to girlfriends, mistresses, and other, less formal kinds of couples, in which sex is often exchanged at least in part for material or emotional security or advantage. I’m primarily interested here in paid sexual labor, the conditions of which are alienated essentially by definition, as opposed to unpaid sexual labor in intimate or social settings, which may or may not be alienated depending on the particulars.

The formal alienation involved in sex work was famously used by Marx to exemplify “the *general* prostitution of the laborer.”²⁶ Feminists have returned to and

26 Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the*

critiqued this note extensively. It remains to be seen to what extent this alienation is of a special kind vs. an example of alienated labor in general; I'll argue below that alienation takes on a different shape in the context of subjective labor.

I've already pointed out that subjective labor is not necessarily "new," what's new is its prominence and synthesis with industrial technologies. I've already made this case in terms of affective, symbolic, and reproductive labor, but it's also true in some special ways for bodily and sexual labor. Bodily labor, intensely physical work that does not involve the transformation of an external object, has always existed in some form since people have cared for one another and cleaned their living spaces. What is relatively novel in contemporary capitalism is the organization of more and more of this work under formal, capitalist relations at higher levels of abstraction; more of this work is being performed by janitorial services, nursing home employees, and in-home care workers who work through an agency or are technically contractors of the state rather than this kind of labor being performed without pay within the family or through paid but private, usually informal contracts.

Sexual labor, of course, is not new either, and unlike these other kinds of bodily labor, it is mostly not formalized or even legal, though various local efforts around the world have been attempting to change that and to organize sex workers through union, guild-like, or workers' center type structures. It would not be surprising, barring other changes, if sex work were to emerge more and more as a formalized activity within capitalism in the coming years, though there are

Communist Manifesto, trans. Martin Milligan (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 100.

countervailing tendencies as well. Even without that, the technologies used to organize sex work have changed quite a bit recently, particularly given the growing centrality of the internet to potential clients and sex workers finding one another.

Of course, more needs to be said to determine the stakes and consequences of these changes in the work process of bodily and sexual labor, as they shift from sometimes paid, sometimes unpaid, usually informal activities to paid, more and more formalized or at least abstracted activities.

1.6) Subjectively saturated industrial, craft, and agricultural labor

Capitalism's increased attentiveness to subjectivity is not confined to subjective labor. Agricultural, craft, and industrial production are becoming increasingly imbued with affective and symbolic attributes. This is the case when food products and manufactured goods are increasingly caught up in marketing and even manufacturing processes which are targeted to the niche desires of various groups of consumers. In labor process terms, this is only partially an addition to what I've already said, since much of this work is performed by subjective workers of various sorts (advertisers, marketing departments, engineers, and designers) within businesses devoted to agriculture or manufacturing or by contractors devoted to these kinds of work. Nevertheless, it is an important facet of the increasing centrality of subjectivity to capitalism, so I'll say a few words about it here.

Marx already observed that there was something "queer" about commodities which distinguish them from mere physical-material objects, but it must be said that this strangeness of the commodity, its subjective valences which exceed its

physicality and use value, has taken on a multiplicity of dimensions as we move from the era of non-standard manufactured goods, to high Fordism (standardization and an impulse toward widespread, popular availability), to niche marketing, to customization and niche manufacturing, to the fetishization of craft-like industrial processes which rest upon a desire for small-scale, small-batch production, food made using local ingredients, and an appreciation of the “quirks” of craft production, all created through a labor process that is still or increasingly dependent on industrial techniques.

Again it’s important to observe that while this subjective turn of capitalism accelerates in tandem with subjective labor, some aspects of it predate the main turns. The glory day of high Fordism was the early 20th century, and already by the mid 20th century niche marketing and some degree of customization in industrial production were coming into play. In US automobile manufacturing, for example, competition between Ford and Chevrolet led to the gradual introduction of a few various models and customized features as early as the 1930s, though certainly this trend greatly accelerated and blossomed with the post-WWII boom.

Contemporary advanced consumer capitalism turns upon fine operations of taste which are grounded in subjective judgments. In the US, for example, as recently as the late 1980s beer consumption was in the main fairly standardized and not culturally variegated, with the exception of localized enthusiasms for German beers at Oktoberfests and a few other niche communities – niches that weren’t predominantly created by capitalism or catered to very carefully. With the micro-brew and import

explosion of the 1990s and 2000s, beer sales in the US became incredibly variegated and organized according to individual and subcultural tastes.

While in the main advanced, consumer capitalism has this tendency to proliferate and fetishize niches, sometimes counter-tendencies can also destroy these niches. The contemporary US music industry is a good example of this. While the 1990s saw a proliferation and commodification of various musical niches, widespread file-sharing has decreased the viability of a number of mass-market niches. Whether musical creativity will suffer as the kinds of music sold and propagated are reduced to fewer styles which are marketable to a larger cross-section of the population or whether these niches survive in a partially non-commodified form remains to be seen.

It is worth noting that this particular form of commodity fetishism shapes both the cultural context and many of the actual workplaces in which the contemporary profusion of subjective labor continues. Contemporary capitalism's intensified interest in subjectivity is about both of these things: the management of a subjective labor workforce and the creation of increasingly fetishized commodity fetishes which increase the surpluses capitalists can gather for goods and services on the consumer end. In some cases, fetishized, niche demands can create opportunities for new supply.

2) Subjective Labor and Gender

Of the five aspects of subjective labor I've identified, three of them tend to have very strongly feminized characteristics. Reproductive labor is a category that grew out of women's work in the home (whether those women's own homes or the

homes of other women). As it has been brought under the aegis of formal, capitalist conditions, most of it has remained women's work in the sense that most workers in these categories are women and most hiring is gender-segregated with a few exceptions. Of course, as the work becomes more variegated and the institutions through which it is organized become more complicated, the organizational structures of it branch off in predictably gendered ways. In a sense, for example, the entire work of a hospital is involved in reproductive labor: hospitals play a primary role in the ongoing reproduction of the working class as healthy enough to work and in the final stages of biological reproduction, childbirth. Of course they also care for the aged, which is probably not reproductive in the strictest sense that after the age of retirement and having children, the aged are not playing a big role in producing the ongoing conditions of capitalism; yet, I would argue that this work remains reproductive in a broad sense, since socially necessary reproduction usually includes a notion that populations which are "surplus" from a strict productivist standpoint are still deserving of care. This is a particularly dense nexus in terms of the aged, since they are tied through family bonds to workers and professionals in ways that the poor and otherwise marginalized aren't always or necessarily. Thus it's a hallmark of lean reproduction that battles over pensions and healthcare for the elderly take central stage. From a capitalist productivist standpoint, this is something that can be cut, but it offends the sensibilities of expanded reproductive labor.

Of course hospitals are not new, though I will argue that they have become increasingly broad institutions in late capitalism. Not all of the jobs in a hospital are

feminized or held mainly by women. Doctors are at least as likely to be men as women, and in some specialty fields of medicine and technical related fields – radiology and radiology techs, for example – there are more men than women. Almost all nursing occupations tend to be feminized. Nevertheless, there are a lot more male RNs now than there used to be, and this probably has some correlation with the evolution of the field, especially in hospitals, to a more professional, less bodily role. Interestingly, this gendered hierarchy does not hold all the way down the line, since some of the less affective bodily labor jobs (orderlies, environmental services) tend to be mainly held by men, albeit often men from a subordinate ethnic or racial group in a given labor market. Hospital food service positions tend to be more gender-integrated than many other positions in the hospital.

A similar argument could be made about teaching and childcare, which are gendered occupations in different ways as one proceeds from preschool and childcare to primary, secondary, and postsecondary teaching. Very roughly: work with younger children is often understood more as care and emotional management, and it tends to be more feminized; at the high school and college level, as teaching is understood to be increasingly symbolic and abstract, the profession tends to be more professionalized and male. At the professorial level, even teaching itself tends to be devalued in favor of research, and here there remains a fairly high degree of male dominance, though less than at one time. In general, reproductive labor remains highly gendered and largely women's work, but in institutions which are defined by reproductive labor are themselves striated in gendered, racialized, ethnic, and

regionally specific ways.

Affective labor obviously overlaps with reproductive labor more than not, though some feminist theorists have objected to the notion of affective labor (for example in Hardt and Negri's work) as emptying out some of the particularly gendered aspects of this work. Be this as it may, the category of affective labor tends to be highly feminized, though perhaps not quite by definition so much as is the case for reproductive labor. And there are important counter-examples, notably where the category of affective labor does not overlap with the category of caring labor.

Hochschild gives the example of bill collectors, a job which is highly affective but not caring, instead based on a need to instill feelings of discomfort, and this is a job which is predominantly male. Similarly, security guards, prison guards, and police officers have jobs which are highly affective in nature but where the predominant affect is not one of caring, and these are also traditionally male jobs.

It's important to note that predominantly male and predominantly female jobs are largely such due to segregated practices in the labor market which are informed, among other things, by stereotypes about gendered work abilities and proclivities. Certain jobs have changed from being mainly men to mainly women as social opinions about those jobs and the technologies used to perform them have changed. For example, psychoanalysts and early talk therapists were almost entirely men, whereas today, psychotherapy is more and more feminized; this probably has a relationship to the fact that commonsense notions of the field have changed from being more about analysis and scientific rationality to being more about caring and

empathetic listening. Clerks were once a predominantly male position, as office staffs were expanded, secretarial labor became highly feminized, as it was seen less as the right hand of management and more as “paperwork” with its own proletarian (symbolic and affective) structure.

Sexual labor and bodily labor are arenas in which the vast majority of workers are women, though there are men as well. As I’ve pointed out above, the more bodily labor is also heavily affective, the more people in those jobs tend to be women.

Symbolic labor is the one overall exception to this generally somewhat feminized slant of subjective labor, and – again in keeping with gendered stereotypes – the common-sense notion of a symbolic worker or an intellectual worker is a freelance writer or a Silicon Valley computer engineer, both of whom are more often than not imagined to be male. Returning to the variegated jobs that fall beneath this rubric amongst the largest and fastest growing, however, it’s clear that some of the positions included in this category are feminized. Education and healthcare are areas with large numbers of female subjective workers. Secretarial work is symbolic, feminized work. Depending on locale and particular kinds of businesses, a great number of cashiers are women, and the majority of customer service representatives are women.

The larger question, of course, besides the fact that the categories of work I’m analyzing include a great deal of women’s work, is, what is the significance of the notion of subjective labor for feminist theory, and what is the significance of the gender vector for the theory of subjective labor? Part of what is at stake here is

theorizing what happens as more and more traditionally women's work gets included in formal, capitalist relations.

3) Subjective Labor's Interlocutors

In presenting the notion of subjective labor thus far, I've tried to offer an account that generalizes from literatures in various fields, including (critique of) political economy, feminist theory, sociology, and labor studies. In trying to offer some relatively conceptually coherent categories which correspond to material dynamics and realities as I understand them, I've made some gross generalizations from existing literatures and terminologies combining categories and traditions that are in tension and ignoring features of the theories that didn't fit with my analysis. In this section, I'd like to review some of the main parameters of this literature to suggest where the theory of subjective labor fits within it. Unfortunately this is not the place for a close, careful engagement with all the texts in question; it is more of a review of the trajectory that subjective labor marks through these conversations.

3.1) Immaterial Labor

Probably the boldest totalistic attempt to theorize the significance of the rise of the service and information economies – and the only one in a contemporary context which really occupies a similar scope to that of subjective labor – has been Hardt and Negri's notion of immaterial labor. My first attempt to construct a theory of subjective labor stood on the shoulders of immaterial labor theory and the critiques of this theory, especially by feminists and more traditional Marxists. As I've developed

the theory further, it seemed less useful to articulate it as occupying some kind of space within this conversation, since I hoped it would get beyond some of its flaws. Nevertheless, given this genesis, it seems important to review immaterial labor briefly.

In referring to immaterial labor, Hardt and Negri hope analyze the development of forms of labor including symbolic labor in the traditional sense and affective labor. They relate the latter to the materialist feminist theories I have been discussing, in brief, pointing out that this category involves the subordination under industrial hegemony of some of “what has traditionally been called ‘women’s work,’ particularly reproductive labor in the home.”²⁷ Given the extensive debates around reproductive and affective labor in the 1970s and 80s, it is somewhat surprising that Hardt and Negri mention this but do little with it theoretically.²⁸ David Camfield argues, somewhat convincingly, that Hardt and Negri are really most interested in more highly paid forms of knowledge work, especially involving computers, and that many aspects of the low-wage service sector do not fit comfortably with Hardt and Negri’s analysis of immaterial labor. Though this theory has an ambition of being very totalistic, it also tends to privilege some aspects of immaterial labor over others.

First, I will try to sketch an outline of the theory of immaterial labor as presented by Hardt and Negri, particularly as they develop it in *Multitude*, which is probably their most worked-out and systematic account. They define immaterial labor

27 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 110.

28 Suzanne Schultz, “Dissolved Boundaries and ‘Affective Labor’: On the Disappearance of Reproductive Labor and Feminist Critique in *Empire*,” trans. by Frederick Peters, *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 17:1 (2006): 77-82.

as labor which has an immaterial product, using the term to refer to labor “in two principle forms:”

The first form refers to labor that is primarily intellectual or linguistic, such as problem solving, symbolic and analytical tasks, and linguistic expressions. This kind of immaterial labor produces ideas, symbols, codes, texts, linguistic figures, images, and other such products. We call the other principle form of immaterial labor “affective labor.” Unlike emotions, which are mental phenomena, affects refer equally to body and mind.... Affective labor, then, is labor that produces or manipulates affects such as a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion. One can recognize affective labor, for example, in the work of legal assistants, flight attendants, and fast food workers (service with a smile). One indication of the rising importance of affective labor, at least in the dominant countries, is the tendency for employers to highlight education, attitude, character, and “prosocial” behavior as the primary skills employees need. A worker with good attitude and social skills is another way of saying a worker adept at affective labor.

Most actual jobs involving immaterial labor combine these two forms.²⁹

The two basic forms of immaterial labor can be broadly defined as “intellectual” or “symbolic” and “affective.” It is worth saying that many actual jobs combine not only these two forms, but also some aspects of traditional or “material” labor, and this is particularly true when we look not just at individual workers’ labor, but at the total labor required to deliver a given service or largely symbolic product. Food service requires the labor of both “front of the house” workers whose work is primarily affective and symbolic as well as “back of the house” workers, cooks and cleaning staff. Cooks’ labor involves a mix of affective, symbolic, and physical elements – surely as much as an auto worker, cooks transform physical raw materials into completed products – but the final presentation is at least as much about

29 Hardt and Negri, 108.

engagement with the customer's affects and a presentation (artful, in a high-end restaurant; standard, in a fast food restaurant) which involves a great deal of symbolic content.

Hardt and Negri are interested in this idea of immaterial labor because they believe it is in some way becoming a dominant part of global capitalist economic activity.

In any economic system there are numerous different forms of labor that exist side by side, but there is always one figure of labor that exerts hegemony over the others. This hegemonic figure serves as a vortex that gradually transforms other figures to adopt its central qualities. The hegemonic figure is not dominant in quantitative terms but rather in the way it exerts a power of transformation over others.³⁰

Immaterial labor ... is today in the same position that industrial labor was 150 years ago, when it accounted for only a small fraction of global production and was concentrated in a small part of the world but nonetheless exerted hegemony over all other forms of production. Just as in that phase all forms of labor and society itself had to industrialize, today labor and society have to informationalize, become intelligent, become communicative, become affective.³¹

Where Marx saw industrialization as the central locus of capitalist development and industrial labor as its pivotal contradiction, Hardt and Negri will see the network form of organization and immaterial labor as central developments for contemporary capitalism. Like Marx, Hardt and Negri see these new forms as bearing within them the seeds of their own most crucial oppositions, although here the parallels are not perfect; Marx seems to see industrial capitalism very much as a phase of capitalism which will generate oppositions within itself (perhaps sweeping away, as it comes, older "utopian" forms of popular opposition), while Hardt and Negri see immaterial

30 Hardt and Negri, 107.

31 Hardt and Negri, 109.

labor and the network form sometimes as developments of capitalism, sometimes more as developments of workers which are (mostly) within capitalism but not completely so, and not necessarily of it. Also in parallel, Hardt and Negri posit a new historical subject, the multitude, as a successor to the Marxist category of the working class (which constitutes a development of the category “proletariat;” their positive balance sheet on this latter term seems hard to square with their clear indication of a supercession of the former).

What I find insightful about Negri and Hardt’s approach, which the theory of subjective labor attempts to preserve, largely has to do with an analysis of the scope of changes in the organization of work under capitalism and seeing the locus of these changes as having to do with changes in the labor process and types of work. A lot of sociological and anthropological work about contemporary work suggests that there might be some overarching changes in this regard, but doesn’t try to theorize it explicitly. Theories of flexibilization and precarity, while useful to this overall picture, focus more upon the changes to how work is structured rather than its internal dynamics.

There are several major problems with the theory of immaterial labor that ultimately make it too flawed to rework. First, calling it “immaterial” is simply incorrect. Some aspects of subjective labor are very embodied and physical-material, as the analysis of bodily and sexual labor should make clear. The physicality of labor’s products is also a strange metric to define the materiality of the labor process. The social relations of subjective labor are entirely material, and it is this social

materiality that constitutes our primary subject-matter. The immateriality of some products is really a secondary feature of some kinds of affective and symbolic labor. Finally, some forms of labor that fit with subjective labor, like cooking, have at least partly material objects.

Second, Negri and Hardt are not as attentive as they might be to the nuances of how different types of subjective labor operate. Too much of their argument operates at the level of generality characterizing all of immaterial labor, where they tend to mistake a part (especially symbolic labor of highly autonomous symbolic workers, especially working with computers, usually men) for the whole.

Third, and partly following on this, Negri and Hardt's account of immaterial labor is too optimistic in seeing liberatory, autonomous, self-organizing tendencies at play in the network form of immaterial labor. They fail to take account of counter-tendencies: new forms of alienation which take greater shape under subjective labor, new forms of management which are deepened within laboring subjectivity, lean reproduction which commodifies caring work and tends to exacerbate a scarcity of caring in society, and the back-breaking, physical nature of contemporary bodily labor. Immaterial labor in Negri and Hardt's theory looks like a new social order being born within the shell of the old, but subjective labor in reality, while certainly exhibiting some new features of social organization which may be common as well to new, liberatory forms of praxis, also exemplifies contemporary forms of social control which are deepened: a proliferation of subjectivity without agency.

3.2) Marxist Critics of Immaterial Labor

While responses to Hardt and Negri's theories of empire have been many and variegated, responses to the theory of immaterial labor have been few and sharp. The fact that so few interlocutors have taken up the question of immaterial labor is interesting, given that it is a central part of Hardt and Negri's theories. In part, I think this reflects the fact that the past ten years have seen huge shifts in the global economic, political, and military order, and theorists have taken these questions up with a certain fervor, led, to some extent, by Hardt and Negri's audacity. This has been a site for a fruitful cross-pollination of Marxist and poststructuralist theories which did not seem to have been greatly desirable in a previous period, and thinkers from both sides of this traditional divide have quickly worked through a lot of the space that was opened (or, more correctly, re-opened) by Hardt and Negri. Theory of labor has been a relatively dead field during this same time period, except for somewhat suspect cheerleading for the "new economy" which chiefly reflects the crystallization of human resources logic on a philosophical level. There have not been many recent entrants in the conversation between this, on the one hand and, on the other, those interlocutors who see themselves as defending the Marxist orthodoxy of the labor theory of value (and, along with this, a defense of the centrality of industrial labor in advanced capitalist countries). The principle responses I have found to the theory of immaterial labor seem to emanate from this quarter.

These accounts have in common a certain argumentative structure: Hardt and Negri draw our attention to certain real changes in the economy, but imprecisely,

using a fundamentally flawed conceptual framework; a more traditional Marxist framework would provide a better understanding of the same phenomena. However, there has been little work done to suggest how such a framework could be expanded or shifted to address what is novel in these phenomena, if we believe they constitute a significant development within capitalism in advanced capitalist countries, rather than merely more of the same. This “traditionalist Marxism” often identifies the broadly intuitive notion that the rise of the service and information economies constitutes a significant shift in capitalism with poststructuralist vagary and a refusal of careful political economy. I would like to hold on to this intuitive notion, and see what remains of it once we take into account some of the critiques of Hardt and Negri’s robust version of this theory; this will take the form of a dual immanent critique – an immanent critique of the theory of immaterial labor as well as an immanent critique of the traditionalist Marxist critics of immaterial labor, whose critiques end up being entirely external but which point to a space which neither they nor Hardt and Negri successfully theorize.

One of the most careful engagements with the theory of immaterial labor is David Camfield’s “The Multitude and the Kangaroo: A Critique of Hardt and Negri’s Theory of Immaterial Labor.” I will use this piece to indicate the basic structure of the critique, adding a few points from Charles Post’s “A Critical Look at Empire” which amplify and develop certain aspects of Camfield’s critique. A third critique, Sean Sayers’s “The Concept of Labor: Marx and His Critics” helpfully tries to redefine the debate in terms of the Hegelian roots of the Marxian concept of labor. Unfortunately,

between the mechanical instinct of making Marx the last word on everything and a strange mixture of critique and utopianism about contemporary labor practices, Sayers's critique does not succeed in rearticulating the debate sufficiently; however, I will argue that his premises, attached to a more audacious revisiting of Marxian and feminist labor theory, could point us in the right direction.

The direct critiques of Hardt and Negri's concept of immaterial labor fall into three basic categories: 1) critiques of the concepts of immaterial labor and "hegemonic figures of labor," 2) critiques of the idea that industrial labor has lost its hegemony, a hegemony which has now passed to immaterial labor, and 3) disputes with the political and intellectual consequences of the theory of immaterial labor.

Camfield critiques both the specific conceptual structure of immaterial labor as well as the category into which it fits, that of a (newly) hegemonic figure of labor. It is worth examining Camfield's approach to this problem. His most serious challenge to the idea of a "hegemonic figure of labor" comes at the end of his discussion of it:

[T]heir hegemonic figure of labor can be seen as a further example of the common practice in the autonomist tradition of thinking in terms of a stylised worker (craft, mass, socialized). This kind of theorizing is an enormous obstacle to understanding classes as complex and heterogeneous formations, and to recognising the diverse forms of 'free' and unfree labour that capital, hierarchically structured through combined and uneven development, exploits on a world scale."³²

In a footnote, he suggests another possible generalization (which Hardt and Negri do not themselves use)— "globally-dominant forms of capitalist accumulation," rather

32 David Camfield, "The Multitude and the Kangaroo: A Critique of Hardt and Negri's Theory of Immaterial Labor," *Historical Materialism* 15 (2007): 38.

than “hegemonic figures of labor” – which he thinks might be somewhat more defensible. However, this removes us too far from what is interesting about Hardt and Negri’s formulation: the attention to the question of how different “social-technical” configurations of labor relate to one another in a given historical system of labor organization, and how patterns of labor configuration may become common within a given economic framework.

Camfield’s attempt to “cast doubt on the notion of industrial labour’s hegemony”³³ in the late 19th and early 20th centuries seems to me underdeveloped. Bourgeois as well as Marxian accounts of 19th and 20th century political economy confirm the (very intuitive) idea that industrial labor achieved a key, leading position and economic weight during this period in the developed capitalist economies, and that while industrial workers always remained a numerical minority even in the most advanced economies, *some* characteristics of industrial labor were generalized (and are still being generalized, in fields such as agriculture) to other types of labor. It is not necessary to argue that *all* characteristics of industrial labor were generalized evenly, to all other forms of labor, to admit that this constitutes a meaningful hegemony which is worth understanding.

Camfield also criticizes Hardt and Negri for defining labor “in terms of its *products* rather than in relation to the labour process, social relations and class antagonism.”³⁴ I mostly agree with this criticism. It is important to remember that Hardt and Negri themselves offer the term “immaterial labor” a bit ambivalently:

33 Camfield, “The Multitude and the Kangaroo,” 37.

34 Camfield, “The Multitude and the Kangaroo,” 32 (emphasis in original).

The labor involved in all immaterial production, we should emphasize, remains material – it involves our bodies and brains as all labor does. What is immaterial is *its product*. We recognize that *immaterial labor* is a very ambiguous term in this regard. It might be better to understand the new hegemonic form as “biopolitical labor,” that is, labor that creates not only material goods but also relationships and ultimately social life itself.... Biopolitics, however, presents numerous additional conceptual complexities, and thus in our view the notion of immateriality, despite its ambiguities, seems easier to grasp initially and better at indicating the general tendency of economic transformation.³⁵

Camfield also argues that symbolic labor (intellectual and linguistic work) constitutes the core of the concept of immaterial labor, owing its framework to the ideas about immaterial labor developed in the *Futur Antérieur* milieu, and that affective labor is an ill-fitting addition to this framework, which still “implicitly gave a privileged place to highly-qualified knowledge workers.”³⁶ This is an important critique which seems to explain some of the confusing connections Hardt and Negri make. It is not clear to me that it is true across the board; in fact, Hardt and Negri have given particular, focused attention to the “affective labor” part of immaterial labor in articles such as “Affective Labor” (Hardt) and “Value and Affect” (Hardt and Negri). However, Camfield’s related observation that “many fast growing occupations do not have a high degree of intellectual-linguistic content”³⁷ belies Hardt and Negri’s frequent claim that affective labor is causing all work “to informationalize, become intelligent, become communicative, become affective.”

Camfield correctly points out that many growing occupations in the areas of service and information broadly defined involve “ ‘low levels of discretion and

35 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 109 (emphasis in original).

36 Camfield, 33.

37 Camfield, 42.

analytical skill.”” The speed with which the early creativity of the internet has been brought under the aegis of corporate priorities should underline the fact that even for more highly-skilled knowledge workers, there are forces which not only restrict autonomy, but look suspiciously like “proletarianization” or alienation at work. At times Hardt and Negri want to make work which is considered lower-skilled and is certainly lower-paid and very non-autonomous central to their analysis of immaterial labor, but at other times they slide over into the kind of focus Camfield describes without enough analytic rigor.

In short, Camfield points out a number of very serious problems with Negri and Hardt’s construct of immaterial labor, and between his critique and several materialist feminist critiques, it does not seem to me that this construct per se is really analytically rigorous or salvageable. Despite these flaws, it did contain some real insights into dynamics within contemporary capitalism which are worth attempting to preserve; the theory of subjective labor tries to do this.

Marxists who are “traditionalists” about labor also argue that much apparent growth in the service and information economies does not in fact constitute growth of a new area of economic activity:

Most investment and employment in the “service sector” is not in the provision of personal services (restaurants, hair and nail salons, etc.) but in “business services” – legal and financial operations that facilitate industrial production.

Similarly, most of the growth of the “information sector” over the past twenty years has taken the form of the application of computer technology to industrial production (regulating inventories, controlling complex machinery, etc.).³⁸

38 Post, “A Critical Look at *Empire*,” *The Real World of Production*.

As we've seen, however, personal services, healthcare, and education are large and burgeoning sectors of the economy.

There is one additional critique of Hardt and Negri's theory of immaterial labor which is particularly instructive for its rendering of the question into philosophical form. Sean Sayers takes issue with the need for a theory of something like immaterial labor; his argument, that Marx's theory of labor still provides an adequate, illuminating account of contemporary labor processes is unsatisfying and surprisingly un-Marxist. It is hard to imagine Marx arguing that nothing of note has changed in 150 years of labor practices, and hard to imagine that such a conclusion could arise from an application of Marxian methods. While Sayers's attempt to resolve the problematic in this regard is intellectually conservative and muddled, his initial posing of it is extremely lucid and helpful.

Sayers frames his discussion of Marx's approach to labor in terms of Hegelian philosophy, particularly the Hegel's understanding of labor as "a distinctively human ('spiritual') activity,"³⁹ in which we "duplicate" ourselves in the world in a mediated fashion through the transformation of an external object.

One of Hegel's most fruitful and suggestive ideas is that subject and object change and develop in relation to each other. He thus questions the enlightenment idea that a fixed and given subject faces a separate and distinct external world. As the activity of the subject develops, so the object to which the subject relates develops and changes too.

This is the organizing principle of Hegel's account of labor. Hegel conceives of different kinds of labor as different forms of relation of subject to object (nature). In characteristic fashion, moreover, the different forms of labor are arranged on an ascending

39 Sean Sayers, "The Concept of Labor: Marx and His Critics," *Science and Society* 71:4 (2007): 434.

scale according to the degree of mediation that they establish between subject and object (nature).⁴⁰

Sayers argues that this mode of treating the shifting relationships between and constitutions of subjects and objects of labor is an essential part of Marx's approach to labor. Sayers argues that Marx has a parallel "ascending scale according to the degree of mediation" for different forms of labor as well. The least-mediated form of labor is direct appropriation of nature, essentially hunting and gathering. It is a form of labor, and " 'formative' activity in that it separates the object from nature."⁴¹ Agriculture, the next stage historically, "involves a more mediated and developed relation of subject and object."⁴² Craft work involves yet a higher level of mediation; "the worker uses his or her own skills to form the object from raw materials that are themselves the products of previous labor."⁴³ In manufacturing, "the labor process itself is altered.... The relation of subject and object is changed.... In industrial production, the tool is taken out of the worker's hands and operated by machine."⁴⁴ "The labor process ceases to involve the direct transformation of the object on the part of the worker."⁴⁵

This historico-philosophical account is quite abstract, but at the level at which it operates it is clear and there is much to be said for it – so far, so good. However, when Sayers tries to account for the contemporary service and information economies within this framework, the account becomes strangely jumbled. He refers to a

40 Sayers, 435.

41 Sayers, 437.

42 Sayers, 438.

43 Sayers, 439.

44 Sayers, 440.

45 Sayers, 441.

category of “ ‘universal’ work,” which includes commercial, administrative, and other kinds of service work. For Hegel, this work refers mainly to the work of a “separate ‘universal’ class of civil and public servants.” On the plus-side, here, at least Sayers implicitly is acknowledging here that the advent of this kind of work is theoretically significant for the kind of philosophical account of labor he has given. Sayers cites a passage from *Capital* in which Marx imagines “the detail-worker of to-day” replaced by “the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labours ... giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers.”⁴⁶ This passage refers to the contradiction between industry’s social character and capitalist form, a contradiction which for Marx leads logically to a post-capitalist, industrial form of social organization - socialism. In identifying contemporary service and symbolic work with “universal” work, Sayers goes far beyond Hardt and Negri in espousing a utopian potential to these kinds of work which is not reflected in reality. Hardt and Negri merely suggest that immaterial labor is in some sense external to capitalism, but still preyed upon by it parasitically and brought back within its ambit; Sayers goes so far as to identify this type of labor with non-alienated, post-capitalist labor! Trying to save us from the errors of Hardt and Negri by returning to Marxian orthodoxy, he actually compounds one of their worst errors, a failure to see that subjective labor is a development of and a refinement of the organization of labor within capitalism. Like other forms of labor within capitalism before it, it may open up some new possibilities in workers’ self-organization even as it seems to close others, or at least make them more difficult. We need to enumerate these possibilities more precisely. But it certainly does not help to

46 Sayers, 451.

suggest that this form of labor itself constitutes a break from capitalism or a transcendence of its drudgery when, as Post and others point out, it actually goes hand-in-hand with lean production: speedup, use of part-time instead of full-time workers, and insecure conditions.

In fact, by constructing his argument as a very un-Marxian defense of Marxian orthodoxy, Sayers misses the most radical and creative implications of his own philosophical setup. The rise of a contemporary economy of subjective labor is not something that was foreseen in Marx's theory of labor, but we can indeed use Marx's general methodological approach to think about this labor. (I am not as sure as Sayers that Hardt and Negri's approach constitutes a big departure from Marx's approach at this level of abstraction, but this is mostly beside the point.) Subjective labor – by which I mean service work, affective labor within capitalist exchange relations, and informational / symbolic work – constitutes a type of labor which involves a higher level of mediation in the subject-object relation than industrial work. In industrial work, an external object is being directly transformed through labor, albeit with the mediation of machines. In subjective labor, the worker's own subjectivity is her primary workplace and in many cases her primary product, or at least an integral part of it. Far from a liberated form of labor in which workers can give free scope to their abilities, it constitutes (as Hardt and Negri suggest at one point) a deepening, more radical form of alienation. Alienation in industrial labor is itself mediated, a result of the worker's eventual non-relationship with the object of her labor. It has damaging consequences for the subject, but it does not happen directly within the subject. In

fact capitalism traditionally has had nothing to say about the subjectivity of the productive worker; the productive worker was seen as a subject (of the state and of an economic despotism, albeit with contractual consent) without subjectivity in the sense of agency and a subjective cipher psychologically. In subjective labor, capitalism is extremely concerned with the subjectivity of the productive worker. In a restaurant, it's "service with a smile," perhaps accessorized with "flair," various buttons and adornments placed on the worker's body. In emotional work, it's about the worker's own emotional resources and the performance of caring labor such that the patient or client feels cared for. In symbolic / information work, the aspect of the worker performing labor *par excellence* is not her physical or her affective capabilities, but her intellect. In all of these cases, if the subjective worker's work is alienated, then this alienation occurs in the first place within a split subjectivity.

5) The Mood Disorder, a New Category; Mood, a Problem to Manage

Mostly coinciding with the rise of subjective labor discussed in the last chapter, the post-World War II to the present period saw several large, successive shifts in the categorization and treatment of depression, both as a set of specialized areas within psychology and psychiatry and as a generalized problematic in society. Depression in particular and the larger rubric into which it was absorbed, the management of ostensibly disordered, everyday moods, attentiveness, and anxiety has reverberated in many social areas, including family life, schooling, and, of particular emphasis here, labor and working life. This chapter will examine these shifts on several levels: the emergence of the category of the mood disorder as an umbrella category including depression and the significance of this category; the treatment of normal or normal-range conditions in contemporary psychiatry and psychology; and mood management, both as an approach within psychology and as broader set of social and cultural techniques. Instead of pathologization and the treatment of depression as an abnormality which characterized the modern reception of melancholia and depression, the second half of the 20th century little by little began to treat depression and other mood, attention, and anxiety disorders as a normal set of

states which need to be managed in various ways. This conceptual shift is accompanied by a sharp rise in the prevalence of these states, their diagnosis, or both. The management of these medicalized affective conditions converges with a profusion of non-medicalized, work-related affective blockages which are also seen as being in need of being managed, such as burnout, care fatigue, writers' block, procrastination, time theft, ennui and lack of productivity in the office, etc.

Across a range of disciplines and institutional positions, we could find a great deal of agreement that we are living in an age of depression. Depression is the malady of the age, a condition that has become especially ubiquitous across society seemingly in contradiction of the methodological individualism of its diagnosis. It seems to be both a widespread cultural phenomenon and a medical epidemic. I'll examine some of the broader, cultural ramifications of the idea that we are living in an age of depression later in the chapter. The wide profusion of depression as a specific condition which is now widely considered to be a medical one will occupy us first.

Evidence of the explosion of depression is undeniable. "According to the World Health Organization, depression ranks 4th among the 10 leading causes of the global burden of disease and is expected to rise to 2nd within the next 20 years."¹ The lifetime frequency of moderate to severe depression is around 20%, and at any given time, frequency rates for depressive symptoms such as feeling sad for most of the day are even higher.² "For the past several decades, each successive birth cohort has

1 Dan G. Blazer, *The Age of Melancholy: "Major Depression" and Its Social Origins* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 3.

2 Blazer, 20.

reported more depressive disorders than previous generations showed.”³ Absolute numbers and percentages of the population in treatment for depression in the US have grown explosively.⁴ Antidepressant medications, chiefly selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs) like Prozac and Paxil, are the second most commonly prescribed class of medication by prescription and are in the seventh position by spending.⁵ (Pharmaceutical companies are making less money from antidepressants now than they were earlier in the 2000s, because many drug patents have expired and generics are now being prescribed with greater frequency.)

How to interpret these high rates of depression is another question. Michael Norden argues that our lifestyle, environment, and cultural evolution, especially over the last 100 years, have exacerbated stresses that have led to an epidemic of depression and that we live in “serotonin-depleting times.”⁶ Norden’s cure is individualist; most of us, he suggests, could benefit from boosting our serotonin, even if we don’t meet the diagnostic criteria for depression. A popular graphic circulated in the aftermath of the Occupy movement posed this as a political problem instead:

“Feeling Sad and Depressed? Are you Anxious? Worried about the future? Feeling isolated and alone? You might be suffering from capitalism.”⁷ Some studies suggest

3 Allan V. Horwitz and Jerome C. Wakefield, *The Loss of Sadness: How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow into Depressive Disorder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4.

4 *Loss of Sadness*, 4.

5 “The Use of Medicines in the United States: Review of 2010 Report,” IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics (2010), http://timewellness.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/ihii_useofmed_report.pdf

6 Michael Norden, *Beyond Prozac: Brain-Toxic Lifestyles, Natural Antidotes, and New-Generation Antidepressants* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 11.

7 Diogenes of Sinope, “Suffering from Capitalism?” *Dystopia Earth* (Blog) (7 March 2012), accessed 11 August 2013, <http://www.dystopiaearth.com/?p=976>

that only one-third of people who suffer from major depression seek treatment, that people who seek wait on average ten years to do so, and that many of those who seek treatment receive inadequate care.⁸

On the other hand, several critics both from inside and outside the field of psychiatry feel that what we have is an explosion in the diagnosis and treatment of depression rather than any change in the thing itself. Sociologist Allan Horwitz and professor of social work and conceptual foundations of psychiatry Jerome Wakefield have dedicated an entire book to this thesis:

We argue that the recent explosion of putative depressive disorder, in fact, does not stem primarily from a real rise in this condition. Instead, it is largely a product of conflating the two conceptually distinct categories of normal sadness and depressive disorder and thus classifying many instances of normal sadness as mental disorders.⁹

It's difficult to evaluate this argument in part because there is no clear baseline for rates of actual depression in past historical moments. Melancholia and depression have usually been stigmatized conditions for the vast majority of the population, even though a more positive notion of melancholia as being tied to creativity and wisdom has occasionally arisen in relation to intellectuals and artists who are in or appended to leading social groups. Furthermore, treatment for depression was never very widely available before the late 20th century unless one had both available money and available time. (Of course, the asylum in the 18th and 19th century treated poor people, but the mental conditions it treated were intended to be only the more severe cases,

8 Mental Health America, "Ranking America's Mental Health: An Analysis of Depression across the States" (November 2007), accessed 11 August 2013, <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/state-ranking>

9 *Loss of Sadness*, 6.

though the relationship between madness or lunacy and poverty in some phases of the asylum was complicated, as I discuss in chapter 3). If rates of depression appear to be higher today than ever before, part of the reason may lie in a lack of successful human adaptation to the exigencies of late capitalism, part may lie in changing diagnostic categories that classify a larger portion of the ongoing human experience as depression, and part may lie in a change from historic underreporting due to stigmatization and lack of available care. Media and cultural attention to depression as a problem today may also encourage people to interpret their experiences in the framework of depression, when they might not have done so in a previous era in which depression was not only less discussed but stigmatized. Additionally, the “age of depression” as a cultural moment may have an interpretive importance greater than the sum of the parts of all of these separate, largely individual-oriented factors.

I won’t try to resolve this problem or weigh these factors conclusively. The tension among them is part of what’s interesting about depression as a contemporary phenomenon; we know we’re living in an age of depression, but we don’t know exactly what’s at stake in that, and each of these explanations seems to make sense to some intuitive and logical extent. I will argue that an additional missing factor to these frequently discussed is the relationship between depression and trends in the social organization of labor in late, advanced capitalism. The techniques of managementality of labor, both in adhering to external norms and in internalized forms, turn out to overlap substantially with the techniques of self-care and care of others that arise out of the explosion of the diagnosis and treatment of depression and

the understanding of depression as a mood disorder.

A second overarching meta-question concerns mood as an analytical category in relationship to affect theory and other analytic categories such as structure of feeling and categories such as attention. All of these terms are somewhat contested.

Does mood treat something different from affect or emotion, and how do different theories of affect bear on this? Silvan Tomkins, in writings that have been brought into critical theory mainly via Eve Sedgwick, views affects as the simplest building blocks of feeling which have a biological base. Proponents of the Spinoza-Deleuze-Brian Massumi tradition are careful to stress the differences between affect and emotion; they define affect as a prepersonal exchange of intensity that passes from one body to another and involves an enhancement or reduction of the second body's ability to act. In psychology, it is common to understand "affect" as the external projection as observed by others of an internal feeling. In fact, the term "mood disorder" in the DSM was chosen after an initial proposal of "affective disorder," with the understanding that the former referred more to internal states, the latter more to states as they were observed externally.

All of these approaches to affect have something to say to the topic at hand; the external observation of affects vs. the internal experience of a mood has something to say, for example, to the prized nature of emotional authenticity in the workplace, and in late capitalist culture, notions of disorder often turn upon ability or inability to act. There may be something particularly important for the analysis of contemporary capitalism in the Spinoza-Deleuze-Massumi tradition. Mainstream

literature on mood for managers refers to “generative and degenerative moods,” a framework that maps neatly onto the Spinozan tradition.¹⁰ Activity vs. passivity might also prove to be one way in which this literature synthesizes the question of mood with the questions of attention and motivation. That said, I don’t find the firm distinction between affects and emotions very useful, since in practice theorists very rarely stick to it, instead frequently slipping into discussing emotions and feelings in a common-sense manner as affects or as affective. Therefore, my own use of “affect” tends to be closest to the Tomkins-Sedgwick tradition, and I sometimes use “affect” or “affective” to refer to the question of feeling in a broad, pre-theorized or being-theorized sense.

I also use the term “affective structures” in a similarly pre-theoretical or *in medias* theoretical sense which can be seen as relating back to Raymond Williams’s notion of “structures of feeling.” Williams’s notion might be said to be a more materialist, instantiated or striated version of the old *zeitgeist* or “spirit of the age.” In this chapter, I view depression as an affective structure which is articulated in different ways whether we are talking about pathology and nosology, a profusion of techniques for managing it, or how it is experienced by different individuals and in different culturally and historically defined social groups. Acedia is also an affective structure which is viewed as a struggle or a sin and which functions somewhat differently in various monastic contexts, in a secularized late medieval or early renaissance context, in literary, modern contexts, or in late modern revivals. Both of

10 Chris Majer and Chauncey Bell, “The Silent Killers of Productivity and Profit: New Wastes for a New World,” *T+D*, February 2011, 64.

these affective structures and others I discuss elsewhere, such as laziness, neurasthenia, and melancholia can appear as completely individualized disorders, as generalizations or stereotypes about populations, or as shifting but broad, maladies of the age which serve a hermeneutic function in relation to a given historical conjuncture. At times they are pathologized or medicalized within particular discourses of psychiatry or medicine, and at times the experience of these conditions or common-sense understandings of them do not fit with or escape these knowledge structures of expertise and pathology.

Both mood and the mood disorder seem to fit with this broad sense of the affective or emotional but also to sit at cross purposes with it in some respects. Social psychologist Joseph Forgas defines moods as “low-intensity, diffuse and relatively enduring affective states without a salient antecedent cause and therefore little cognitive content,” and observes that “moods, even though less intense [than emotions], will often have a more insidious and enduring influence on people's thinking and behaviors.”¹¹ The modern notion of a mood as “a prevailing but temporary state of mind or feeling” seems to have originally applied mainly to anger, grieving, or collective or impersonal moods such as the “mood of the crowd” or the “moods of nature.”¹² The sense of mood as a ubiquitous, variegated set of states for each individual seems to be a much more modern sensibility. Even the *Oxford*

English Dictionary's first citation for mood in the generic sense of “bad mood” does

11 Joseph P. Forgas, “Managing Moods: Toward a Dual-Process Theory of Spontaneous Mood Regulation,” *Psychological Inquiry* 11, No. 3 (2000): 172.

12 “mood, n.1,” OED Online, June 2013, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/121878?result=1&rskey=t9sLYU&> (accessed August 21, 2013).

not appear until 1929. Along with Forgas's intuition that there is something "insidious" about mood, I will note that already in this sense of the ubiquity of moods there is something about them which seems unruly and in need of management. Anger and grieving are traditionally understood as natural emotional states which pass after a period of time, both of which have the potential to become disordered or excessive to what is considered socially and culturally proper. The notion that an individual is always subject to some kind of mood suggests that there is a constant succession of conditions which, like anger or grieving, are normal emotional conditions but which have the potential of being disordered or excessive, and therefore should be surveilled and possibly managed by the well-disciplined individual.

Emily Martin points out that DSM descriptions of mood disorders do not fit squarely with common-sense notions of moods or emotions. For example, the DSM description of major depression cites "depressed mood" but does not necessarily explain what this constitutes or describe any particular mood states, though it mentions "feelings of worthlessness" and "inappropriate guilt" without further description.¹³ Martin argues that DSM descriptions of manic depression correspond more closely to "everyday understandings of motivation" than to mood.¹⁴ She sees descriptions of depression as involving an absence of motivation and descriptions of mania as involving an excess of motivation. I see DSM symptomatic clusters as more disarticulated from everyday common sense, involving elements (in the account of

13 Emily Martin, *Bipolar Expeditions: Mania and Depression in American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 44.

14 Martin, 49.

depression) of mood, motivation / attention / focus, and somatic symptoms like change in appetite or weight, insomnia or hypersomnia, psychomotor agitation or retardation, etc.

The construct of the mood disorder is something of an artificial nosological tool which is slightly deemphasized in DSM-5, though the importance of mood as a nosological tool is not deemphasized. Nevertheless, the articulation of categories like the ubiquity of mood and the mood disorder provide a set of culturally available interpretations which change people's experiences of the conditions themselves.¹⁵ Thus, I would argue that a ubiquitous, changing set of individual moods which invite the question of a need for the management of mood / attention / motivation isn't something that is only imposed from institutions of power such as psychiatry, the pharmaceutical industry, and business; it is articulated and rearticulated over time as people interpret their lives within and around these categories.

These categories of mood, motivation, and attention sit in an uneasy relationship as well, both in regards to contemporary changes in psychology and to social problematics. While depression may have achieved a greater breadth as a mass condition, a related explosion has happened in attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Contemporary subjective labor and schooling practices might be analyzed, as well, as turning nearly as much or even more so on questions of attentiveness as to questions of mood. The questions of attentiveness, attention, and motivation may be taken to some extent as relating to a history of ennui and acedia as carelessness, while questions of mood and depression have a history which can be

¹⁵ See Martin, 193.

traced back to earlier accounts of depression, melancholia, and acedia as loathing of the self and the brethren, loss, fantasy, and torpor.

In any case, managers of subjective labor are interested both in attentiveness and mood, and this is a relationship I'll attempt to parse going forward. First, I will unpack some of what is at stake in these transformations.

1) Depression, Mood Disorders, and the DSM

Beginning with the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III), which was developed during the mid 1970s and released in 1980, depression has been grouped, along with bipolar and substance abuse disorders, under the then-new category of the mood disorder. DSM-III constituted or initiated a radical paradigm change in the classification and treatment of mental illness. I will argue that the marketing of SSRIs and the cultural changes that embraced them built off of changes in the conception of depression that were instituted with DSM-III and the notion of a mood disorder. A lot of work has been done that shows the radical nature of DSM-III and some of its implications, but the organizing category of the mood disorder has received less attention. I will argue that defining depression as a mood disorder along with the creation, marketing, and promulgation of techniques for managing mood disorders constitutes a broad, cultural problematic in which mood is a problem to be managed.

The major changes inaugurated by DSM-III include its conception of itself. DSM-I and -II were small, administrative codebooks, rarely used by mental health practitioners, as opposed to DSM-III which is today regarded as the “psychiatric

bible.”¹⁶ Because of this, the revolution of DSM-III took many psychiatrists by surprise. Many political, business, and disciplinary tensions had contributed to the push for a redefinition of psychiatry’s diagnostic practices, however, so once the DSM-III revolution was complete it became essentially irreversible.

Under DSM-I and -II, psychiatric conditions were defined in essentially psychodynamic terms deriving ultimately from Freudian theory which saw the roots of most emotional conflict in early childhood experiences and a failure of coping mechanisms which generated neuroses, in the conflict between conscious expectations and intents and unconscious wishes. By the 1970s, psychodynamic theories were still prominent, but a number of other schools of psychiatry with very different frameworks were coming to the fore; one of the most enduringly prominent was behaviorism, which was mostly uninterested in getting to the roots of a patient’s conflict. One of the motivations for creating DSM-III was to create a theory-neutral guide that could be used by practitioners espousing these many different approaches.

In moving away from the causative theoretical basis of DSM-II, central members of DSM-III’s task force including Robert Spitzer and close allies who came out of the psychiatry department at Washington University turned instead to an approach based in the thinking of late 19th-century German psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin. Mayes and Horwitz cite Allan Young to explain three major tenets of Kraepelin’s thought:

that mental disorders are best understood as analogies with physical

16 See Rick Mayes and Allan V. Horwitz, “DSM-III and the Revolution in the Classification of Mental Illness,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 41, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 261.

diseases; that the classification of mental disorders demands careful observation of visible symptoms instead of on inferences based on unproven causal theories; and that empirical research will eventually demonstrate the organic and biochemical origins of mental disorders.¹⁷

The neo-Kraepelinian credo came to include some additional elaborations of these beliefs, including:

Psychiatry treats people who are sick and who require treatment for mental illness.
There is a boundary between normal and sick....
There are discrete mental illnesses....
The focus of psychiatric physicians should be particularly on the biological aspects of mental illnesses....
There should be an explicit and intentional concern with diagnosis and classification....
Diagnostic criteria should be codified, and a legitimate and valued area of research should be to validate such criteria by various techniques....¹⁸

The University of Washington “young turks” approach “replicated the positivistic drive in the behavioral sciences towards operational definitions of concepts.”¹⁹ While the entire DSM task force voted to modify and soften Spitzer’s controversial claim that “mental disorders are a subset of medical disorders,”²⁰ this neo-Kraepelinian thinking significantly shaped DSM-III. This sensibility created a professional, philosophical authority that eventually served to authorize a series of common-sense propositions about depression, such as: depression is a (medical) disease; the basis of depression is biochemical; and depressed individuals have a biochemical imbalance.

17 Mayes and Horwitz, 260.

18 Gerald Klerman, cited in Bradley Lewis, *Moving beyond Prozac, DSM, and the New Psychiatry: the Birth of Postpsychiatry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 113. Note: Klerman’s list includes nine points; I’ve excerpted six of them here which are relevant for the discussion at hand.

19 Mayes and Horwitz, 260.

20 Cited in Mayes and Horwitz, 260.

In identifying these propositions as contentious, I don't mean to suggest that the opposite is true, and that the biochemical basis of depression is insignificant or unworthy of research or unlikely to be a point of interest in any alleviation of human suffering. Nevertheless, this set of propositions has committed society to a view of depression which is one-sided and which tends to close off other important causative factors and approaches to care. (I'll argue below that the analogy between physical and mental pathologies is mistaken; the position that there are discrete mental illnesses also does not seem to be substantiated by the evidence.) This one-sided view has had consequences in terms of what kinds of mental healthcare are available and how society views the problem; the ascendancy of the biological, medical model has contributed to a decline of social psychology, psychoanalysis, and (relatively speaking) of long-term, psychodynamic therapy.²¹ Beyond this, the ascendancy of the biomedical model and the notion of depression as a widespread disease has led to the profusion of a range of techniques of self-care and the management of others which have a double-edged nature. On the one hand, many people may be able to use these techniques to alleviate persistent suffering and to lead more satisfying lives. On the other hand, the cultural profusion of these techniques may strongly suggest their general use, so that suffering seems less like a meaningful or acceptable part of the human condition and more like something to "get over" as soon as possible so that one can get on with the task of being (or at least projecting oneself as) a happy,

21 For analysis of the decline of social psychology in relation to these changes, see Blazer. For the decline of psychoanalysis, see Edward Shorter, "How Prozac slew Freud," *American Heritage* 49, no. 5 (September 1998), <http://www.americanheritage.com/content/how-prozac-slew-freud>

productive part of society.

Shifting towards a symptom-based, biochemical notion of mental disorders in which mental disorders are seen as analogous to physical diseases were important consequences of the DSM-III revolution which are tied to the Kraepelinian framework. A couple of less heralded but perhaps equally important shifts concern psychiatry's relationship with the insurance industry and the tension between diagnostic reliability and validity. During the 1960s, insurance companies had begun to cover psychotherapy as a partially reimbursable expense. Though the extent of these reimbursements was small compared to today, insurance companies considered psychotherapy a "financial 'bottomless pit'"²² and pressed for greater accountability and well-defined diagnoses.

[S]everal of those intimately involved in the design of the DSM-III later acknowledged that the manual's structure was "strongly influenced by the need for diagnoses for which insurance companies could provide reimbursement and that could be reliable for researchers" requesting federal money (Healy, 2000).²³

The principle of discrete mental illnesses defined as clusters of symptoms fit the Kraepelinian theoretical presupposition of many of the authors of DSM-III, but it also fit with this concern to conform psychiatry to the impulses of the insurance industry.

Partly due to this concern for administrative and insurance clarity, Spitzer and other principle designers of DSM-III placed a premium on reliability, the idea that different clinicians would see the same patient and reach the same diagnosis, over validity, the idea that the diagnostic category represents a "true," naturally coherent,

22 Mayes and Horwitz, 253.

23 Mayes and Horwitz, 262.

existing, discrete disorder entity. Spitzer himself admitted this in the negative; “[T]o the extent that a classification system of psychiatric disorders is unreliable, a limit is placed on its validity for clinical research or administrative use.”²⁴ Priority was to be placed on research needs (including obtaining funding) and administration (including insurance billing), and that meant focusing on reliability. Jerome Wakefield argues that DSM-III sacrifices validity for reliability, arbitrarily excluding from diagnostic criteria any criteria which would necessitate a clinician making a complicated value judgment.²⁵ Wakefield cites the example of the bereavement exception for depression, in which a person is considered depressed if “the disturbance is not a normal reaction to the death of a loved one.”²⁶ He points out that the same kinds of symptoms that happen in response to bereavement happen in response to many other losses,

... such as receiving a terminal medical diagnosis, suffering a disfiguring injury, or having a loved one terminally ill. It seems that the only reason for limiting the exemption to bereavement is that clinicians would otherwise be forced to evaluate the meanings of various real losses in their patients’ lives and to assess whether the losses are sufficiently deep to make depressive symptoms part of a normal mourning and adjustment process, which would decrease reliability.

The Loss of Sadness cites this same problem with the depression diagnostic scheme to argue that DSM criteria erroneously medicalize normal sadness. Psychiatrist Bradley Lewis goes even farther:

The validity critique of the manual has been so strong that *DSM* science scholars (both insiders and outsiders) express serious doubts as

24 Cited in Jerome C. Wakefield, “Disorder as Harmful Dysfunction: A Conceptual Critique of *DSM-III-R*’s Definition of Mental Disorder,” *Psychological Review* 99, no. 2 (1992), 241.

25 “Disorder as Harmful Dysfunction,” 242.

26 Cited in “Disorder as Harmful Dysfunction,” 242.

to whether there is any meaningful connection between the diagnoses of the *DSM* and the “real world” of human mental suffering.²⁷

Thus, while DSM is inspired by the ethos of positivism and has gained prestige from the idea that it constitutes some kind of condensation of up-to-date science and medical clarity in regards to mental health, it is scientifically flawed even before we get into the medical model and the notion of discrete mental illnesses.

Within the redefinitions of DSM, the category of the mood disorder constitutes a significant shift in the classification of depression. One small part of the initial impetus for DSM-III was to bring the US classification scheme in line with The International Statistical Classification of Diseases (ICD). The ICD uses the term “mood (affective) disorder,” and the term “mood disorder” in the DSM was adopted after an original proposal of “affective disorder.” (“Mood” was thought to refer to an underlying state, while “affective” was thought to refer to the external expression of this mood observed by others.) One result of the mood disorder scheme is that diagnosing depression now involves a description of symptoms within a rubric rather than an account of a patient’s condition that includes not only the patients symptoms but relational and social factors in the patient’s life.²⁸ The symptoms themselves are enough to establish the patient’s disordered state.

Since DSM-III, the DSM has had two full new editions: DSM-IV, published in 1994, and DSM-5 (now identified with an Arabic rather than a Roman numeral), released in May 2013. Both are consistent with the general approach pioneered by

²⁷ Lewis, 104.

²⁸ See Blazer, 40-1 for a striking pairing of hypothetical diagnostic formulations for a patient with the same complaint seeking care from a psychiatrist in 1963 and 2003.

DSM-III. Major changes were predicted for DSM-5, but at the level of overall philosophy and diagnostic approach, these changes did not really materialize, though several disorders were fundamentally reconceptualized. A few significant changes have affected the diagnoses for depressive disorders. The centrality of mood for defining depression hasn't changed; in fact other conditions are subdivided and specified by characterizations like "adjustment disorder with depressed mood" or schizoaffective disorder as "major depressive or manic mood disorder concurrent with primary symptoms of schizophrenia." However, the category of mood disorders has now been divided into two chapters on "Bipolar and Related Disorders" and "Depressive Disorders."²⁹ It seems unlikely that this will constitute a major change, but it may mean a subtle shift away from seeing the question of mood as centered on depression and bipolar to diagnosing mood-related problems throughout the spectrum of mental health.

Additionally, "DSM-5 contains several new depressive disorders, including disruptive mood dysregulation disorder and premenstrual dysphoric disorder."³⁰ The former diagnosis is intended to move "children up to age 18 years who exhibit persistent irritability and frequent episodes of extreme behavioral dyscontrol" out of the bipolar category; critics have complained that these changes will pathologize tempter tantrums and PMS. The bereavement exclusion from major depressive

29 American Psychiatric Association, "The Organization of DSM-5," last modified 17 January 2013, <http://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Practice/DSM/DSM-5/Organization-of-DSM-5.pdf>

30 American Psychiatric Association, "Highlights of Changes from DSM-IV-TR to DSM-5," last modified 2 May 2013, <http://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Practice/DSM/DSM-5/Changes-from-DSM-IV-TR--to-DSM-5.pdf>

disorder has been removed from DSM-5, in one of the more controversial changes. Supporters argue (adopting part but not all of Wakefield's argument) that depression following bereavement isn't clearly different from depression following other major losses or, sometimes, depression following no clear loss. They say that depressive complications beyond normal grieving may exacerbate the grieving process, and that clinicians should be able to discern this and provide help without medicalizing normal grief. Detractors argue "that [the bereavement exclusion's] removal will medicalize normal grief; label and stigmatize bereaved people; and lead to harmful, inappropriate, and injudicious use of pharmacologic interventions for normal sadness."³¹ (Wakefield and Horwitz argued that the lack of a difference between depression after bereavement and depression after other losses was a reason to do the exact opposite of what DSM-5 has done, and to extend the bereavement exclusion into essentially an exclusion for all normal loss reactions.)

It's clearly too soon to tell what the impact of DSM-5 will be on mental health and the treatment of depressive disorders in particular, but the trend seems to be in the direction of introducing yet more disorders at the normal end of the spectrum which raise the concern of pathologizing normal loss, developmental stages in life, and cultural differences. This edition of the DSM has received more critical publicity than previous editions, with some psychiatrists calling for an outside review. The National Institute of Mental Health, the primary US government agency that deals with mental health research, announced just before the formal release of DSM-5 in May that it

31 Sidney Zisook, MD, and M. Katherine Shear, MD, "Guest Editorial: This Issue: Bereavement, Depression, and the *DSM-5*," *Psychiatric Annals* 43, no. 6 (June 2013): 252-254.

considered the symptomatic clusters which constitute DSM diagnoses as basically arbitrary.

[T]he NIMH is launching the new Research Domain Criteria (RDoC) project as a possible replacement diagnostic tool sometime in the future and as “a first step towards precision medicine.” It will incorporate genetics, imaging, and other data into a new classification system.

In addition, the organization noted that it “will be re-orienting its research away from DSM categories.”³²

This move on the part of NIMH does not mark a step away from the main positivist assumptions that undergird the DSM, namely the hypothesis of a biomedical root as primary determinant of a mental disorder, the idea that mental disorders are discrete entities, and the notion that physical diseases provide the best analogy to understand mental disorders (or even that mental disorders are just physical disorders we can’t pinpoint yet). In fact, NIMH seems to be chiding DSM for not being positivist enough, and to image a scenario in which mental disorders can be classified not from symptoms but from neuroscience.

It’s far too soon to tell what fruits RDoC will bear; the more immediate impact of this departure will be to weaken the hegemony of DSM, which has had almost unchallenged leadership of psychiatric diagnosis for more than 30 years. A statement from the British Psychological Society went even further, calling for “a paradigm shift away from an outdated disease models, towards one which gives much more weight to service user experience and psychosocial approaches.”³³ While *Psychiatric*

32 Deborah Brauser, “NIMH, APA Clash Over Upcoming DSM-5,” Medscape Medical News, 7 May 2013, <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/803752>

33 Division of Clinical Psychology, British Psychological Society, “DCP Position Statement on Classification: Time for a Paradigm Shift in Psychiatric Diagnosis,”

Times thought that the more radical aspects of a previous BPS statement on DSM-5 could be too easily dismissed as “ ‘antipsychiatry’ broadsides,” it called for continued “sustained outside criticism” of the DSM.³⁴ The fact that such a view criticizing the psychiatric establishment of the past 33 years could get such a serious hearing suggests that alternatives to the current DSM will be explored that may diverge greatly from its approach. The polar opposite nature of the BPS statement and the NIMH statement suggest how little agreement there may be on how to improve on or move beyond DSM.

2) Techniques of Mood Management

To see how the treatment of depression has changed under the category of the mood disorder, we need to look beyond the changes in DSM to see how the introduction of new techniques for managing mood, particularly the new generation of antidepressants beginning with Prozac in 1987, have further contributed to this shift away from treating depression as a relational, social, and biological complex towards a question of mood management. DSM-III created a new paradigm through which mental illness, including depression, was understood. It institutionalized a biological, medical pathology model in which depression was understood as a cluster of symptoms. Diagnostic reliability and administrative clarity for insurance purposes took precedence over correctly analyzing the nature of mental disorder. With

May 2013, http://dcp.bps.org.uk/dcp/the_dcp/news/dcp-position-statement-on-classification.cfm

34 Allen Frances, MD, “The British Psychological Society Condemns DSM-5,” *Psychiatric Times*, 25 July 2011, <http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/dsm-5-0/british-psychological-society-condemns-dsm-5>

psychoanalysis and social psychology pushed to the side, relational and social forces in patients' lives took a back seat to symptom clusters and biochemical balance. But to create a new economy of mood management, a new set of techniques had to be introduced, and some old techniques had to be refurbished.

These techniques include the use of psychotropic pharmaceuticals, psychotherapeutic techniques (some of which, especially cognitive-behavioral therapy [CBT], are often practiced in a short-term, problem-solving mode), and alternative techniques like mindfulness, meditation, yoga, and stress reduction. I use the term "mood management" to refer to the ensemble of these techniques, all of which are used to treat common quotidian psychological symptoms like mood, anxiety, and attention which are present throughout a variety of disorders and not-yet-medicalized conditions.

It should be noted that the term "mood management" has a couple of specific, related meanings within psychology which are narrower than how I'm using the term. First, in the mid-late 1980s, Dolf Zillman and Jennings Bryant worked on this problem starting from an idea of people's selective exposure to media such as choices in television and music.³⁵ Zillman went on to develop a theory of mood management in media choice, based on the idea that people hedonistically strive to alleviate or avoid bad moods and enhance good moods and "arrange internal and external stimulus conditions" to effect this.³⁶ A theory of mood management and a debate over

35 Dolf Zillmann and Jennings Bryant, "Affect, Mood, and Emotion as Determinants of Selective Exposure," in *Selective Exposure to Communication*, Zillman and Bryant, eds., (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1985): 157-190.

36 Dolf Zillmann, "Mood Management Through Communication Choices,"

this theory has been developed which has gone on to discuss why people might, for example, counter-intuitively to the initial model of the theory, choose to watch a sad movie when they are feeling sad; it has also discussed gender differences in this mood-based choice of media exposure.

This mood management theory has not primarily concerned itself with why people turn to specific pharmacological, therapeutic, and alternative techniques to manage their moods. It is interesting that this question of mood management was articulated in the late 1980s out of a set of theories of selective exposure which had previously only considered boredom and stress. The idea of the ubiquity and wide range of mood as a background condition that people might seek to manage came to be a common-sense proposition; most of the mood management debate concerns the details and mechanisms of mood choice and cases that didn't fit with the original model, not the premise of a ubiquitous, wide range of moods which people would seek to manage. In a contribution to this literature, Joseph Forgas defines moods as "low-intensity, diffuse and relatively enduring affective states without a salient antecedent cause and therefore little cognitive content," and observes that "moods, even though less intense [than emotions], will often have a more insidious and enduring influence on people's thinking and behaviors."³⁷ To this description, I'd add that the worry about moods being insidious goes along with a concern that there is something unruly about them; inherently in defining them as ubiquitous and wide-ranging seems to be the notion that they need to be managed.

American Behavioral Scientist 31 (1988): 328.

- 37 Joseph P. Forgas, "Managing Moods: Toward a Dual-Process Theory of Spontaneous Mood Regulation," *Psychological Inquiry* 11, No. 3 (2000), 172.

A second, more recent use of the term “mood management” has been to describe an aspect of CBT or CBT-related techniques for managing mood; here the term seems to be used in a fairly non-technical (or at least non-boundary-marking) way to describe something the techniques are supposed to achieve. I would contend that in addition to CBT and other problem-solving forms of psychotherapy, pharmaceutical antidepressants are also a form of mood management under the DSM, since disorders are defined in terms of symptomatic clusters and SSRIs treat the symptoms. Yoga postures, mindfulness practices, and meditation do not directly work on mood, but when they are used as part of a mood management, stress reduction, or mental wellness program, they are part of an overall program which is concerned with mood management and the cultivation of subjects who are attentive to their own moods and capable of managing them.

The return to neuroscience as a core preoccupation of psychiatry didn’t start with Prozac; Edward Shorter sees the current dominance of neurochemistry as reaching back to a resurgence of research in the 1920s, when Otto Loewi isolated the first neurotransmitter, 1930s research which led to the introduction of chlorpromazine (Thorazine) in the 1950s, and benzodiazepines and Valium in the 1960s.³⁸ Widespread psychiatric use of medication was the norm by the late 1970s, spurred in part by psychiatrists’ need to treat an influx of deinstitutionalized patients who were not responsive to talk therapy.³⁹ However, the success of Prozac spurred a new profusion of research into psychotropic pharmaceuticals which continues today, suggesting that

38 “How Prozac Slew Freud.”

39 Mayes and Horwitz, 255.

Shorter's blunt triumphalism is not completely misplaced: "In the past hundred years psychiatry has come full circle: psychoanalysis lost; medicine won."

Today antidepressants are widely prescribed by primary care doctors – "four out of five prescriptions for psychotropic drugs are written by physicians who aren't psychiatrists."⁴⁰ This is a bit of an irony, since one of the concerns that led to DSM-III was psychiatrists' concern that their practice was being undermined by an influx of other mental health professionals offering talk therapy at cheaper rates, such as psychologists, social workers, and lay counselors.⁴¹ While psychiatry has kept its place as the gatekeeper of mental health, psychiatrists do not control the dispensation of psychotropic drugs, though psychiatrists and psychologists worry that primary care doctors may prescribe them improperly in many cases.

A great deal of literature has been written about Prozac and other SSRIs; much of the early literature was extremely optimistic, while the mid-late aughts saw the appearance of more critical pieces. Along with a common concern about the medicalization of sadness and the cultural consequences of trying to deal with negative emotions through taking a pill, concerns have been raised about the efficacy of SSRIs. While SSRIs have more tolerable, less dangerous side effects than the previous generation of antidepressants, such as monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) which were developed in the late 1950s, most studies have shown that SSRIs are no more effective than MAOIs, and some studies suggest that MAOIs and

40 Brendan L. Smith, "Inappropriate Prescribing," *Monitor on Psychology* 43, no. 6 (June 2012), <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/06/prescribing.aspx>

41 Mayes and Horwitz, 257.

electroconvulsive therapy were much more effective.⁴² Some evidence suggests that much of the positive effect of SSRIs as they are actually used comes from the placebo effect.⁴³

Even with the effectiveness of SSRIs and the hegemony of the DSM model in question, use of pharmaceutical antidepressants remains extraordinarily important both economically and culturally, perhaps the most prominent of the new techniques of mood management. Of course in some sense, humans have always altered their moods chemically, but what's new is that this is sanctioned by the medical establishment, that the drugs involved are designed for long-term use and mood stabilization, not just short-term enhancement, and that in many countries these drugs are available to a broad swath of the population at an affordable cost. If melancholia in the the 19th century was usually only treated for the few with disposable time and income or in extreme cases involving hospitalization, and depression in the early 20th century was still a stigmatized condition, today, while some of that stigma remains, at the same time a culture of confessing about depression has arisen, and today getting an SSRI for depression from a primary care doctor in the US is a democratic experience.

Of course SSRIs and antidepressants more generally are not the only technique of mood management; increasingly, especially with mental health parity laws in the US though also preceding them, insurance plans are paying for some

42 Gordon Parker et al, "Assessing the Comparative Effectiveness of Antidepressant Therapies: A Prospective Clinical Practice Study," *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 62 (2001):117-125.

43 "Inappropriate Prescribing."

psychotherapy, usually a limited number of visits per year. This means that psychotherapy is available to many more people than had access to it in previous eras. This availability once again is double-edged, since due to insurance and other factors, the kinds of therapy which are available and reimbursable today have changed.

The reasons for this are complex. Psychoanalysis and psychodynamic therapy have suffered a decline for a number of reasons. They rely on hypotheses about the relationship between our conscious mind and unconscious thoughts and wishes, an approach which flies in the face of the disease-oriented, positivist model. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) in contrast describes itself as “evidence based.” Psychoanalysis can take a long time to work, and even then there are no guarantees for the success of a given patient/therapist relationship. CBT holds up the promise of some improvement even in the short term.

Insurance companies in the era of managed care seem to prefer CBT, to some extent, of course, due exactly to its potentially limited nature. Philip Cushman and Peter Gilford argue that the suitability of CBT for the managed care moment goes beyond this. First, managed care descriptions of psychological phenomena tend to be offer simplistic views of psychological disorders, though these are split between a medicalized, biochemical view and an anecdotal, behavioral view.⁴⁴ Second, CBT is “particularly helpful in ensuring that the patient complies with treatment recommendations, homework assignments, and other aspects of the therapy that increase the likelihood of a positive outcome.”⁴⁵ These elements of psychological

44 Philip Cushman and Peter Gilford, “Will Managed Care Change Our Way of Being?” *American Psychologist* 55, no. 9 (September 2000): 987

45 M. A. Tompkins, “Case Formulation in Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy,” in R. L.

simplicity and compliance are used to configure the patient, along with “a third element: a belief that symptoms constitute psychological life.”⁴⁶ CBT fits well with this aspect of managed care as well, since it is particularly oriented towards symptom-reduction. We’ve already seen these first and third elements operating more generally in the dominant conception of mental disorders in the DSM. Cushman and Gilford’s critique suggests that in the context of managed care, this goes even farther, and compliance, simplicity, and the symptom idea translate into a substantive norm of compliance and adaptation in the patient’s life.

Thus, patient behavior is defined as a problem when it interferes with work or prevents individuals from acting and achieving like their peers. “The objective in all cases,” Bennett (1989, p. 352) explained, “is to mitigate the obstacles to adaptation.”⁴⁷

Overall the picture Cushman and Gilford paint of psychotherapy under managed care, which tends to use CBT techniques more often than not, is that it can be deeply involved in a manipulative, normalizing project. Of course, CBT is not always complicit with such a troubled agenda in every case; the patient herself sets goals for the therapy along with the therapist, and those goals could include distancing oneself from previously accepted value systems as well as normalizing oneself with them. But I think it’s probably correct that a psychotherapy that privileges compliance over conflict, adaptation over self-realization, and following a scheme instead of building a relationship is a model of psychotherapy which is particularly well suited to the impetus of neoliberal capitalism. It tends to promote a

Leahy (Ed.), *Practicing Cognitive Therapy: A Guide to Interventions* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997), 97, cited in Cushman and Gilford, 988.

46 Cushman and Gilford, 988.

47 Cushman and Gilford, 988.

form of individuality in which moods are close to the surface and present in one's affective states, but those moods and affective states should be able to be changed more or less at will.

Psychoanalysis constitutes a small “market share” of the overall therapeutic world today – 1-2% depending on the account.⁴⁸ However, it remains intellectually important, “the paradigm of thought from which all others have emerged, do battle, and measure their success.”⁴⁹ Ilene Philipson argues that the therapeutic practices of psychoanalysis themselves have changed significantly from the days of Freud in what constitutes a significant feminization of the field. Psychoanalytic psychotherapists today are much less likely than in the past to be both male and psychiatrists, and the constituency of psychoanalysis has changed its gender composition towards a more feminized one as well. This has in turn influenced the thematic emphases of psychoanalytic practice.

[S]ince the 1970s, psychodynamic theory and practice have been characterized by a shift away from drives to interpersonal relationships, from the goal of autonomy to that of "mature dependence" (Fairbairn) or a "lifelong need for self-objects" (Kohut), from the salience of oedipal to pre-oedipal phenomena, from countertransference as exception to countertransference as norm, from emphasis on interpretation to a focus on empathy and the real relationship between therapist and patient.⁵⁰

Thus, while CBT has introduced a model which is in many ways less relational and

48 See “How Prozac Slew Freud,” and Lorna Martin and Edward Helmore, “Now, Don't Tell Me about Your Parents,” *The Observer*, 18 February 2006, accessed 13 August 2013,

<http://www.theguardian.com/science/2006/feb/19/medicineandhealth.theobserver>

49 Ilene Philipson, *On the Shoulders of Women: The Feminization of Psychotherapy*, Chapter 5, “Reupholstering the Couch: Women and the Refashioning of Psychoanalysis,” (manuscript in possession of the author), 1.

50 Philipson, 3-4.

more oriented towards the surface manifestations of moods than other forms of therapy, psychoanalysis and psychodynamic therapy have evolved towards a more relational model. Both models have mostly dethroned the traditional therapist as authority figure, but the CBT model tends to see the patient's moods as a project and be a "businesslike" relationship, while contemporary psychoanalytic practice is highly attuned to transference and countertransference in the relationship between therapist and patient.

Much contemporary practice of psychotherapy does not adhere clearly to one of these two major schools of thought which in some sense represent opposite poles of an approach to psychotherapy. Much of the psychotherapy available in the US today uses an integrative, holistic, or eclectic approach involving elements of cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic, relational, Gestalt, and even somatic therapy as well as approaches deriving from attachment theory. This should also be taken into account in examining the ostensible decline of psychoanalysis, as the percentages of patients receiving psychoanalytic therapy do not include patients who are receiving weekly, integrative psychotherapy that is informed by some psychodynamic ideas as well as other modalities. Most therapy and counseling in the US today are provided by psychologists, social workers, and other counselors; psychiatrists, who were debating whether to try to hold onto a particular authority in talk therapy before DSM-III, have now mostly given up the field, as insurance reimbursements have forced most psychiatrists to limit their sessions to 15 minutes. Therapy itself is by no means becoming outmoded, but patients managing their mental health using

prescription drugs and no talk therapy is increasingly common: “In 1996, one-third of patients taking antidepressants also received therapy. By 2005, only one-fifth of patients did.”⁵¹

Alternative techniques of self-care are becoming increasingly prominent which are often tied to the benefits of mood management and stress reduction. While these techniques are “new” in relationship to this kind of use in North America and Western Europe, some of them, like mindfulness, which derives from Buddhist traditions, meditation, and yoga are of course far from new. Many contemporary forms of stress reduction, relaxation, and counseling incorporate elements of these techniques, in clinical, non-clinical, and extra-clinical settings. A great deal has been written about the efficacy and promise of these techniques, over the past 10-15 years, but even in comparison to CBT there is very little critical literature on this subject in relation to other social dynamics. An exception, a 2007 paper by sociologist Kristin Barker, critiques mindfulness as a therapeutic construct for replicating the individualism and personal responsibility ethic of biomedicine despite its “alternative” ethos. Mindfulness also suggests a contradictory relationship with the project of modern self-management:

On the one hand, mindfulness opposes excesses of a rationalized life. On the other hand, mindfulness is a disciplinary practice (Foucault 1977) that brings the level of required surveillance down to an ever smaller increment of time: moment-to-moment or breath-to-breath.⁵²

51 “Inappropriate Prescribing.”

52 Kristin Barker, “Self-Healing in Late-Modernity: The Case of Mindfulness,” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, New York, New York City, 11 August 2007, http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p185095_index.html.

Barker also suggests that mindfulness's cultivation of attention bears a relationship to a culture which has seen an explosion of Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; some practitioners see themselves as engaged in work that counters "an entire society" suffering from ADD.⁵³

Yoga and meditation, similarly, are mobilized in opposition to the excesses of materialism, overwork, and the stress of modern life. But what kind of self do these techniques mobilize when used by themselves or in an integrated fashion in contemporary therapeutic or wellness settings?⁵⁴ The individualism associated with these forms is not fundamentally new in comparison with the biomedical model. The novelties here are its insinuation into sub-medical forms of self-care and the notion that there is something new and alternative about these forms which allow people practicing them to escape the stresses of modernity, when in fact under most circumstances these forms of self care allow a person to manage the stresses of modernity, privately, and more efficiently reproduce oneself as a ready and well-adjusted worker, student, or community-member under the context of lean reproduction. Beyond this, the attentive, mindful, meditative self is also a self who has been trained to internalize not only surveillance but a calming impulse, smoothing out mood extremes, focusing oneself voluntarily on the present, and letting go of

53 Barker, 8.

54 Mindfulness, yoga, meditation, and stress reduction are often part of corporate wellness programs, which themselves have been critiqued as "blaming the victim" and encouraging an individual, private response to work-related forms of stress and speedup. See Jane Slaughter, "Coercive Wellness Programs Create Headaches," Labor Notes, 7 January 2013, accessed 13 August 2013, <http://www.labornotes.org/2013/01/coercive-wellness-programs-create-headaches>

anxieties.

I've emphasized the aspects of the cultural diffusion of techniques of mood management which are imbricated with managementality, both on the job narrowly speaking and writ large in other aspects of society. These techniques also enhance people's autonomy, self-determination, health, and contentment. Some people who could hardly face life's problems and/or their own internal problems without antidepressants take them and find either that they "feel like themselves again" or feel better than they ever did before, however they may define that. Psychotherapy can help people in many different ways, from facing and solving problems that feel insoluble to dealing with deep-seated conflicts and traumas. Yoga and mindfulness techniques can help to integrate body and spirit, and meditation even when used sporadically can have a surprisingly profound, positive somatic impact.

However, we must recognize a double-edged nature to the diffusion of these techniques in the context of late capitalism. They are not becoming widely available due only to society finally casting aside some of the stigmas of mental illness or a beneficent response to a bottom-up popular demand. And though the pharmaceutical industry clearly has a lot to do with the wide availability of psychotropic drugs, they are not the only source driving the cultural availability of these techniques either; in fact there are some cultural trends to break away from over-medication and towards the use of other (short-term therapeutic or alternative) techniques. Overall, we've moved from a form of capitalism that didn't care about most people's moods to one which is extraordinarily concerned with the ability of subjective workers and students

to create very particular affective states. The cultural impetus to be able to manage one's mood is a factor in the wide profusion of these techniques, and their broad, cultural effect is marked by this managementality even if they are used in many cases for autonomy- and health-enhancing effects.

For the purpose of brevity and historical narrative I've focused the clinical part of my analysis here on depression and mood disorders, narrowly speaking. My analysis of these alternative techniques has shown that they provide routes for managing not only mood, but quotidian anxieties and attention-related problems. A more complete account of contemporary trends in the medication and treatment of "normal," everyday affective problems would look more carefully at the medicalization and therapeutic treatment of anxiety disorders, ADD and ADHD, and other conditions, some of which have been newly added to the DSM.

But what is this "normal" that seems to concern contemporary psychiatry, psychology, wellness programs, managed care, and alternative forms of treatment?

3) The New Normal in Mental Health

The distinction between the normal and the abnormal or pathological is a key, longstanding organizing principle of both physiological medicine and mental health; it has been a particularly vexing question in the latter arena. The normal / abnormal divide still plays an important role in contemporary psychiatry and mental healthcare, but I will argue that the nature of this divide and what psychology and psychiatry see themselves as treating has shifted significantly. In nosological terms, DSM categories are categories of the abnormal, disorders which put a person's mental or emotional

functioning outside of a desired, healthy-functioning norm. Yet the practice not only of the DSM but to some extent of previous, postwar forms of psychiatry as well has been to use these pathologized or medicalized categories increasingly to treat people who overall would be considered fairly highly functioning and in that sense “normal,” though they might have been considered neurotic by post-WWII psychiatry. The normal gets redefined from an absence of disorder or neurosis to managing disorder or neurosis. Combining these categorical shifts with the widespread availability of mood management techniques and the sense that they ought to be widely available, self-management of one’s own moods comes to be understood as a new normal with which psychiatry, psychology, social work, and alternative forms of mental health are concerned. Instead of being concerned with the abnormal, mental health becomes concerned with the fine tuning of the person towards greater productivity and an optimum normality.

Another way to put this might be to say that the categorization of normal and abnormal persons moves away from the categorization of normal and abnormal states. In the old, abnormal psychology, a person with an abnormal condition was considered to be psychologically abnormal, and this person was alienated, as Foucault argues, in the sense of being treated as an other outside of the domain of reason. States that might be considered either abnormal and psychotic or semi-abnormal and neurotic, like melancholia or hysteria, were still heavily stigmatized. In contemporary society, the stigmas have not disappeared, but they have slackened, and there is a corresponding profusion of conditions which are diagnostically considered abnormal

and are pathologized from a medical standpoint but which go hand-in-hand with being a normal, high-functioning person. Being normal becomes the management of all of one's disordered conditions and the project of resolving them and moving towards an optimum normalcy rather than the absence of disorders.

The tradition of philosophy of science and genealogy of scientific knowledge represented by Foucault and his mentor, Georges Canguilhem, tended to focus on the abnormal as an interpretive key for a given medical or psychological context.

Canguilhem argued that understanding the given theory of the abnormal was key for understanding the articulation of a norm:

The abnormal, as ab-normal, comes after the definition of the normal, it is its logical negation. However, it is the historical anteriority of the future abnormal which gives rise to a normative intention. The normal is the effect obtained by the execution of the normative project, it is the norm exhibited in the fact. In the relationship of the fact there is then a relationship of exclusion between the normal and the abnormal. But this negation is subordinated to the operation of negation, to the correction summoned up by the abnormality. Consequently it is not paradoxical to say that the abnormal, while logically second, is existentially first.⁵⁵

Canguilhem is primarily concerned with the articulation of the normal and the abnormal in physiology, though he also discusses these categories in regard to mental health and rejects the idea that physiological disease would be “capable of a superior empirical precision, of a better-defined standardization.”⁵⁶ He argues that physiological health is relative to how it is experienced in a doctor-patient relationship, a conception of health that is commonplace in regards to mental health,

55 Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 243.

56 Canguilhem 118.

while physiological health is often incorrectly thought to be more precise.

Canguilhem's description of the existential primacy of the abnormal applies to psychiatry and mental health, since these technologies trace their origin to the asylum, which was exclusively concerned with the abnormal.

Canguilhem sees an apparent unity in the categories of physiological illness and mental illness in that neither can be stated without reference to a patient's sense of his own functioning, and that physiological medicine cannot really function as positivistic science even though it sometimes seems to have that ambition. Thus, he compares physiological medicine to mental illness in its intersubjective quality.

Foucault went on to problematize this relationship between the categories of mental illness and physiological illness in the first section of his later-disavowed thesis, *Mental Illness and Psychology*.

So one can accept at first sight neither an abstract parallel nor an extensive unity between the phenomena of mental pathology and those of organic pathology; it is impossible to transpose from one to the other the schemata of abstraction, the criteria of normality, or the definition of the individual patient. Mental pathology must shake off all the postulates of a "metapathology": the unity that such a metapathology provides between the various forms of illness is never more than facetious; that is to say, it belongs to a historical fact that is already behind us.⁵⁷

This is, in fact, part of the inspiration for the project that would eventually turn into *The History of Madness*, to "determine the conditions that have made possible this strange status of madness, a mental illness that cannot be reduced to any illness."

HOM is in a sense a history of the abnormal, in that the divisions he analyzes between

57 Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 13.

sanity and madness, Reason and Unreason (with the latter as well as madness as an ongoing point of reference) in some way presage later divisions between “healthy or sick, normal or abnormal” in realms of sexuality and mental health.⁵⁸

Freud is often credited with helping to take psychiatry out of the asylum and into the private clinic. As we’ve seen in chapter 3, the move towards the private clinic predates the wide influence of Freud, and was already underway with neurologists, physicians, and psychiatrists treating conditions like neurasthenia.⁵⁹ However, the success of psychoanalysis greatly increased the popularity of the private psychiatric clinic and especially the so-called “talking cure.” In dealing with people who were well enough (and well-to-do enough) that they did not need to be hospitalized for their conditions, doctors like Beard, Weir Mitchell, and Freud had already taken psychiatry or mental healthcare, still in their infancy, somewhat away from the abnormal of institutionalized insanity and towards normal-range conditions that impaired but did not destroy their clients ability to function in society. But psychological theory was still concerned largely with the abnormal. Many of Freud’s most famous case studies are concerned with individuals who, while not mostly institutionalized, were affected by debilitating conditions which were considered abnormal. Early psychoanalysis seems to conform reasonably well to the Canguilhem model, in which the abnormal is existentially prior even if logically and eventually also practically secondary to normal-range neuroses.

58 Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London: Routledge, 2006), 89.

59 Barbara Sicherman, “The Uses of a Diagnoses: Doctors, Patients, and Neurasthenia,” *Journal of the History of Medicine* 32 (1977), 43.

Post-WWII psychiatry took another step towards a concern with normal-range conditions. According to Mayes and Horwitz, this broadening was so extensive that it contributed to worries that psychiatry was too subjective and broad to be a science:

“Postwar psychiatric thinking,” the historian Gerald Grob points out, “reflected an extraordinary broadening of psychiatric boundaries and a rejection of the traditional distinction between mental health and mental abnormality” (Grob, 1987, p. 417). The downside of this expansive view of mental illness, however, was that it poorly separated healthy from sick individuals. Between 1900 and about 1970, the focus of dynamic psychiatry broadened from the treatment of neuroses to more generalized maladaptive patterns of behavior, character, and personal problems. Its clients came to be people who were dissatisfied with themselves, their relationships, their careers, and their lives in general. Psychiatry had been transformed from a discipline that was concerned with insanity to one concerned with normality....⁶⁰

The extent to which psychiatry in the 1970s was concerned with normality needs to be tempered somewhat by the class nature of the enterprise:

[I]t appeared that psychotherapists preferred clients who were young, attractive, verbal, intelligent, and successful – what came to be labeled the YAVIS syndrome. Psychotherapy was described as the purchase of friendship. Psychotherapists were accused of creating demands for services from those who were not really ill, but were merely discontent – the worried well – and neglecting the more needy.⁶¹

Thus, if psychiatry was concerned largely with the normal rather than the abnormal, and indeed psychiatrists often referred formerly institutionalized patients with more severe problems to psychologists and social workers,⁶² psychiatry was still not concerned with the mental conditions of the working classes, but those of leading social groups. Insurance reimbursement for psychotherapy was a very new practice in

⁶⁰ Mayes and Horwitz, 250.

⁶¹ Stuart Kirk and Herb Kutchins, *The Selling of DSM: The Rhetoric of Science in Psychiatry* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1992), 19, cited in Mayes and Horwitz, 254.

⁶² Mayes and Horwitz, 255.

this time period, which only covered a small portion of the total costs, and available antidepressant pharmaceuticals had too many potentially harmful side effects and dangerous interactions with foods for their consumption to become a mass phenomenon. Psychiatry was no longer oriented towards the abnormal, but it had not yet reached its democratic phase.

DSM-III attempted to re-establish a firm dividing line between the normal and the abnormal and to affirm that psychiatry treats the abnormal. Two tenets of the neo-Kraepelinian credo held by the chief framers of DSM-III were, “Psychiatry treats people who are sick and who require treatment for mental illness” and “There is a boundary between normal and sick.”⁶³ Indeed, the maximum program of the neo-Kraepelinians was to treat mental disorders as medical diseases under a positivistic framework. However, this intent cuts against another project which seems to be happening in DSM-III, which is to provide a plausible nosological justification for the wide scope of psychiatry and even to expand that scope further. Thus, the “generalized maladaptive patterns of behavior, character, and personal problems” that were the subject-matter of much of psychiatry in the 1970s were not written out of DSM-III; instead, they were rendered symptomatically and codified as mood disorders, anxiety disorders, attention disorders, etc. Indeed, one criticism levied at DSM-5 is that it has continued to define new disorders that expand the scope of what is considered a mental disorder to include conditions which may describe some aspect of many or most people’s daily functioning.

Partial destigmatization is another aspect of this progression towards a

⁶³ See note 18.

concern with the normal. Sicherman argues that one of the advantages of neurasthenia was that it was a less stigmatizing diagnosis than, say, insanity, hypochondria, or hysteria. Psychiatry since then has moved in fits and starts even closer towards the normal and has attempted to articulate theories of what it treats that both stand up under intellectual scrutiny and are relatively destigmatized. While the intellectual rigor of DSM-5 may finally be falling under serious criticism, the project of destigmatization is now well underway for many of the normal-range disorders. The addition of premenstrual dysphoric disorder as a full-fledged condition in DSM-5 raised a worry that it could medically pathologize PMS, but there seemed to be little worry that this classification would socially stigmatize PMS. Today “coming out” with a mood disorder, anxiety disorder, or attention disorder would earn additional scrutiny for a serious presidential candidate, but in a potential CEO or Congressperson it might hardly elicit notice depending on other factors. This is a marked change from the early part of the 20th century or the 19th century, though it would be worthwhile to trace the pattern of destigmatization more exactly, including how it has backtracked and conditions still considered more severe or abnormal that are entirely or partially excluded from this dynamic.

Thus, mental healthcare in the era of DSM-III through -5, SSRIs, and mood management engages in a certain slight of hand in relationship to the normal and the abnormal. It defines quotidian, common behaviors as mental disorders, defines mental disorders as mental illnesses, and treats these as sicknesses which it is the job of psychiatry (and allied fields of mental health) to cure. One could argue that this

means that the dividing line of the normal and the abnormal no longer exists for contemporary psychiatry, but this is not quite accurate in at least three senses. First, however this is theorized, there is still in practice a division between how more severe psychoses are treated and how more normal-range conditions of mostly functional / socialized people are treated. Of course, even here the dividing line has become fuzzy and interesting; disorders such as bipolar disorder and borderline personality disorder, predecessors of which were treated essentially as psychoses and subsets of insanity, are now being treated more like normal-range conditions, though they still involve a level of stigma that has mostly evaporated for conditions that are considered more normal. Second, psychiatry still treats the disorders of basically normal people as sicknesses to be cured, and CBT treats them as a set of problems to be solved. The old idea of normalcy as a lack of disorder and (for the working classes) affective flatness and reliability is mostly outmoded. In its place, there is a new idea of the normal in which normalcy itself is seen as a site of many possible disorders, and these disorders are sicknesses or problems to be managed. Third, the line between the normal and the abnormal repeatedly appears as a problem for critics of the current system of diagnosis and treatment. This is clear in the persistent worry that DSM categories and contemporary mental health practice are pathologizing normal emotional states, as in Horwitz and Wakefield's *The Loss of Sadness*.

The precise nature of this new normal needs to be specified. The person suffering from a mental disorder is not necessarily outside the boundaries of what is considered normal, healthy social functioning; he may simply be understood as not

functioning in an optimum, productive manner. This is related to the proliferation of categories such as mental health and wellness as positive, preventative categories which in their ambition at least go beyond the pathologization and cure of specific disorders. Instead of flat, empty normality, we get an image of well-tuned, affectively engaged, optimum normality and a personality that is enhanced for productivity.

Canguilhem cites Ey, via Minkowski:

This normal man is not a mean correlative to a social concept, it is not a judgment of reality but rather a judgment of value; it is a limiting notion which defines a being's maximum psychic capacity. There is no upper limit to normality.⁶⁴

Canguilhem himself continues:

we find it sufficient to replace 'psychic' with 'physical' in order to obtain a very correct definition of the concept of the normal which the physiology and medicine of organic diseases use every day without caring enough to state its meaning precisely.

The problem of the "upper limit of normality" in psychology had really only been suggested when Minkowski wrote this in the 1930s. Only in the contemporary era has the upper limit of normality become a central preoccupation of psychiatry and mental healthcare in general, a problem which is now being extended to broader and broader ranges of society.

It is hard not to be reminded here of Frederick Winslow Taylor's "fair day's work," a phrase which Braverman argues Taylor "gave a crude physiological interpretation: all the work a worker can do without injury to his health, at a pace that can be sustained throughout a working lifetime."⁶⁵ Pre-WWII capitalism was

64 Canguilhem 119.

65 Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 97.

concerned with these kinds of crude, physiological maximums in the areas of both industrial management and medicine. And contemporary capitalism, having taken a turn for the subjective and the affective especially within the work-life of advanced capitalist countries, is now articulating a kind of psychological Taylorism. To view mood management from this angle is to see it, metaphorically, as a kind of time-motion study which studies normality, identifies all of the dysfunctions, blockages, and disorders within it, and seeks to eliminate them in the names of productivity and wellness.

The new normal suggests the emergence of a late modern form of selfhood with the following principles:

- 1) Mood is a ubiquitous, diverse, and insidious aspect of everyone's experience.
- 2) Everyone's mood needs to be regulated or managed.
- 3) Everyone should take responsibility for regulating or managing her own mood.
- 4) Techniques of mood management such as pharmaceuticals, psychotherapy, and alternative forms of stress reduction and meditation are legitimate, non-stigmatized tools of mood-regulation.
- 5) Everyone (who's anyone) should have access to these techniques.
- 6) A corollary: there is no difference *in kind* between normal people whose moods are regulated or self-regulated without these specific tools and normal people whose moods are regulated / self-regulated with these tools. The binary becomes redefined as: those who are able, with the use of whatever tools at

their disposal, to be regulated / to self-regulate and achieve a baseline state of normalcy or functionality, who are able to and should continue to progress toward optimal normalcy, vs. those who are not able to achieve a state of baseline functionality, whose dysfunctions rise to the level of psychosis or debilitation.

In the current profusion of techniques of self-care, a series of modifications to normality occur which are not directly conditioned by a relationship with abnormality. To be sure, the specter of the abnormal will have already constituted a field of the normal. But the possibility of mental and emotional disorders and, in turn, mental and emotional health, which beyond a mere lack of disorder now become a positive terrain for the pursuit of excellence in a quasi-Aristotelian sense, means that the normal becomes a terrain of manipulation, self-care, and management.

Despite the democratic premise of this new normalcy, it is articulated very differently across a spectrum of social groups. At the top end, a normative class⁶⁶ constitutes mental wellness as a pursuit of excellence. For symbolic and affective workers in the mid-range of autonomy and authority, some use of these same techniques of self-care is suggested, with all the ambiguities the notion of suggestion

66 See the fascinating suggestions of Canguilhem, 246: “It could be said in another way by trying to substitute an equivalent for the Marxist concept of the ascending class. Between 1759, when the word “normal” appeared, and 1834 when the word “normalized” appeared, a normative class had won the power to identify – a beautiful example of ideological illusion – the function of social norms, whose content it determined, with the use that that class made of them.” We might productively consider the specific function of a normative class and normative functions within a broad array of the activity of leading social groups. Or, put another way, what are the relationships in given historic situations between hegemony and normativity?

can contain. And for affective and bodily-subjective workers whose work is largely stripped of autonomy in a form of subjective Taylorism, conformity to a fine-tuned emotional norm is imposed without a great deal of subtlety and with a good deal of coercion.

I have argued that in the period of high, industrial capitalist modernity, social exclusion often relied upon an ideological pathologization of laziness or indolence in subordinate social groups as a justification for the exclusion of an industrial reserve, the colonial subordinated, the racialized excluded, etc. and the division of these from a productive, (white) male working class who are treated as affectively stable and flat or simply as lacking affect. In the contemporary moment this exclusion and pathologization have not vanished by any means, but there is no longer a solid core of workers with more stable, good-paying, non-precarious jobs. Thus, in the place of an absolute line of exclusion / inclusion we tend to get a series of gradations of affective management that I've described very loosely above. At the bottom, below the affectively subordinate direct bodily and affective labor segment of the working class, we find workers in the informal economy and the structurally unemployed. Here affective conditions are still often pathologized at the level of the governance and policing of populations, but the line between these excluded social groups and (both economically and affectively) subordinate social groups in the low-wage service economy tends to be very porous. Given families have members in both categories in racialized, poor communities, and many individuals in those communities often cross back and forth over that line.

For most of the modern era even up through the era of psychoanalysis, depression and the neuroses were considered *private* problems. Much has been made of psychoanalysis as a form of confession, but it is still a private confession. With destigmatization, mood management for the subjective worker, and the notion of the mood disorder as a potentially very widespread problem affecting a significant minority of people if not a plurality over the course of their lives, we get a newly public sense of depression and mood as “public feelings.” Industrial, high modernity’s sense that melancholia and the affects of labor are completely separate domains gives way to a sense that we are dealing with the assemblage of a single problematic.

4) Depression as a Cultural Malady

This problematic of the management of moods, anxieties, and attentiveness within a new normal that aspires towards an optimum normalcy has broad, cultural resonances as well as a particular application in late capitalist managementality and the alienation of labor. While the broader, cultural notion of depression as the malady of our age has implications far afield from labor, I believe it also suggests that there is something particularly important and vexed about this relationship, even if it has so far largely sidestepped the centrality of this mood disorder / labor relationship. I will look at how this relationship appears in a few of these broader, cultural and critical analyses before turning to the particular modalities of managementality and a new alienation.

This cultural / critical discourse around depression and related maladies is in

some ways close to my own project. I will argue that this literature inclines towards contemporary forms of labor in interesting ways without unpacking the relationship between labor and depression. Early, pathbreaking texts in this vein include Elizabeth Wurtzel's *Prozac Nation* (1994), Peter Kramer's *Listening to Prozac* (1993), and Andrew Solomon's *The Noonday Demon* (2001). Kathleen Norris's *Acedia and Me* (2008), which I discussed briefly in chapter 2, is in some ways a parallel, later effort; though it draws a somewhat arbitrary, received border between acedia and depression, it deals with the enmeshed experience of both and considers what it would mean to think in terms of acedia in the modern world. Critical, academic texts which take up a related problematic include Jackie Orr's *Panic Diaries* (2006), Emily Martin's *Bipolar Journeys* (2007), and Anne Cvetkovich's *Depression* (2012). Alain Ehrenberg's *The Weariness of the Self* (French original, 1998, translated in 2010) also looks at the history and cultures of depression; part of his project is to look at depression and depression discourses in the US from an outsider's perspective. It's notable that all of the American texts here mix memoir or personal stories with cultural theory to some extent. Of course there are lots of American books on depression that don't have a memoir aspect to them, but it's notable that so many of the ones that figure heavily in interdisciplinary critical theory and cultural studies do contain an element of memoir.

Prozac Nation is the closest to straight memoir here, being essentially a memoir that incorporates stretches of broader, cultural reflection. Work, especially the work of writing, shows up in some interesting ways in the text. We could call this

memoir the story of a highly privileged symbolic laborer – a writer who has in fact achieved a relatively high degree of celebrity for her writing. Her identity as a writer is often just around the edges of the story, for the most part, except for time she spends working as a journalist in Dallas. Problems with writer's block and other difficulties with writing nevertheless show up repeatedly in her narrative. In one scene, all she wants to do is write a paper for her college Space, Time, and Motion class, while people around her think she needs to be institutionalized.⁶⁷ Her dramatic reiteration of her need to write the paper serves as a bit of humor that points out her disconnection from how desperate she seems to her friends; she can blithely talk about writing the paper while acting like someone who needs to be committed. The need to do work and frustration at an inability to do it, are more central to the phenomenology of depression than how others think about it. Her friends consider her need to write a paper as a non-serious problem with no relation to depression, while for her, it is a central preoccupation. But of course many aspects of life can become preoccupations, and for much of this book she is much more focused on failed relationships than on her work. It is easy for her to talk about how failed relationships make her depressed, while her work as a writer only comes in at the edges.

In another section, Wurtzel talks about resisting the glamor of madness, which is interesting both with respect to writing and a certain sense of the historicity of depression. She counters the Romantic idea of there being a melancholy font of creativity to celebrate; depression is unproductivity. "Pure dullness, tedium straight

67 Elizabeth Wurtzel, *Prozac Nation: Young and Depressed in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 176.

up”⁶⁸ – are we seeing a formulation of a late modern acedia here?

Why must every literary examination of Robert Lowell, of John Barryman, of Anne Sexton, of Jean Stafford, of so many writers and artists, keep perpetuating the notion that their individual pieces of genius were the result of madness? While it may be true that a great deal of art finds its inspirational wellspring in sorrow, let’s not kid ourselves about how much time each of these people wasted and lost by being mired in misery. So many productive hours slipped by as paralyzing despair took over. None of these people wrote during depressive episodes. If they were manic-depressives, they worked during hypomania, the productive precursor to a manic phase which allows a peak of creative energy to flow; if they were garden-variety, unipolar depressives, they created during their periods of reprieve. This is not to say we should deny sadness its rightful place among the muses of poetry and of all art forms, but let’s stop calling it *madness*, let’s stop pretending that the feeling itself is interesting. Let’s call it *depression* and admit that it is very bleak.⁶⁹

There are a couple of interesting things here. In the previous section, I explored the idea that the history of depression appears today as a history of dullness within the normal which is interlocked with but also somewhat counterposed to a history of madness as a history of the abnormal. Wurtzel’s take here suggests such a split. Also, this is an account that naturalizes the notion of depression as historically progressive vis a vis other historical ways of conceptualizing the problem. Other aspects of *Prozac Nation* question the emerging regime of mood management. She worries that there is a “strictly Marxian psychopharmacology, where the material – or rather, pharmaceutical – means determine the way an individual’s case history is interpreted,”⁷⁰ that this leads to many more cases of a disease being diagnosed, and that in the current situation, depression has become a “national joke.”⁷¹

68 Wurtzel, 259.

69 Wurtzel, 260.

70 Wurtzel, 265.

71 Wurtzel, 296.

Writing today is understood as a form of work in which you need to be consistent and productive; depression is the opposite of a productive state. This way of thinking is a commonplace for a contemporary symbolic worker (or symbolic analyst in Reich's terminology). Wurtzel's assertion that this is a timeless truth may not be entirely false, but I suspect that the problematic of productivity was neither articulated as clearly nor felt as strongly for writers and artists during the heyday of poetic melancholia. Writing was not a mass occupation in those times, but for those who could claim it, it often involved a certain amount of leisure and irregular work rhythms rather than the need to produce very regularly on a deadline.

Even though shut-down unproductivity is one of the things Wurtzel hates about being depressed, she's mostly uninterested in the work from the standpoint of depression. One gets the sense that she could have written long, Cassianic descriptions of trying to work and hating herself and cascading into deeper despair, but she doesn't – instead she writes about cascading into deeper despair in the context of romance. So there's a sense in which work is still seen as a quotidian thing that's not really interesting for thinking about depression and radical shifts in mood, even if objectively the work-affect relationship has shifted from the industrial paradigm in which that instrumentalist account of work took hold.

Wurtzel also ties depression to youth culture and, though this is not completely worked out, to something like slacker culture.

And while depression is a problem for any age group, the sense of it as a normal state of mind, as an average part of getting through the day, as so much ho-hum life-sucks-and-then-you-die, does seem unique to people who are now in their twenties and thirties. There is a certain

shading to the dead-end depression of youth culture, some quality of fatalism about it, a resignation that makes it frighteningly banal.⁷²

Here we get a sense of depression as a malady of the age, depression as a normal or average experience in some social groups, and the idea that this notion is something new. Though Wurtzel doesn't talk about work, here, this notion of "dead-end depression" alludes to the notion of a "dead-end job." While her own depression is on the fairly severe side, causing several breakdowns, she connects this experience to a broader culture of depression which seems to shade into something like a slacker sensibility. There's also a relationship which is not fully worked out here between the reality of depression as a deeply debilitating, painful condition which exists for an individual and probably has existed in some form trans-historically and a set of particular cultural conditions under which depression seems to be a growing malady today. There's ambiguity in Wurtzel's account as to whether this is a good thing, because we're finally recognizing depression and giving it the medical treatment it deserves, or a bad thing, because we live in a depressing, dead-end society.

Of course, one of the striking elements of this depression breakout is the extent to which it has gotten such a strong hold on so many young people. The Miltown and Valium addicts of the fifties and sixties, the housewives reaching for their mother's little helpers, the strung out junkies and crackheads who litter the gutters of the Bowery or the streets of Harlem or the skid row of any town – all of these people were stereotyped as wasted, dissipated, and middle-aged or else young and going nowhere fast. What is fascinating about depression this time – what is unique about this Prozac Nation – is the extent to which it is affecting those who have so much to look forward to and to hope for, who are, as one might say of any bright young thing about to make her debut into the world, so full of promise.⁷³

72 Wurtzel, 301.

73 Wurtzel, 298.

Wurtzel analyzes depression explicitly in terms of generational changes here, but the content of the change she sees is articulated as much in terms of class and work as generation per se. Here the emphasis is a bit different than in the subsequent passage: there, the emphasis is on a depressive quality of youth culture which is tied to going-nowhere slacker culture and dead-end jobs, whereas here, depression seems to be posited as a malady of the best and brightest, young professional symbolic-analysts-in-training like herself who ought to have so much to look forward to.

Almost 20 years later, it's tempting to suggest that these trajectories have converged to some extent as the best and brightest themselves look forward to a non-future of dead-end, precarious jobs in the service sector. But it should also remind us that there is a stratified quality to depression which is not new, but which asserts itself now against a sensibility of depression as a universal, democratic malady. The articulations of, say, depression amongst young professionals, depression in slacker culture, and depression in an urban school populated with racialized youth are still quite different. The last case (absent from Wurtzel's account) tends to be characterized by a relatively high level of stigmatization and overt social control, very unlike Wurtzel's case, which has been received in some quarters as a story of a privileged young-adult acting out and finding herself.

In US depression literature since the beginning of the mood management era, *Prozac Nation* stands out as the first widely read, emblematic memoir of the field from a patient's point of view; Peter Kramer's *Listening to Prozac* is widely regarded as something of a manifesto for Prozac from a psychiatrist's perspective. While

Listening to Prozac is not a memoir of an experience of Kramer's own depression, it does have extensive, personal case studies. *Listening to Prozac* is remembered today largely for its early prominence in the Prozac literature and its zeal for the possibility that Prozac could not only alter patients' moods, but change their personalities, making them more assertive. Kramer coined the term "cosmetic pharmacology" to describe the idea that patients could move beyond basic normality to better or socially preferable states; his sense that some of his patients became "better than well" and that even people without any disorders might benefit from a drug like Prozac might be regarded as a rare, direct manifesto for the idea of optimum normalcy.

With regards to work in particular, Kramer's account of Prozac is notable for describing several case studies in which Prozac makes a patient more assertive at work. His first case study in the book involves, Tess, a business executive, who after taking Prozac "responded without defensiveness in the face of adamant union leaders, felt stable enough inside herself to evaluate their complaints critically," and became "less conciliatory, firmer, unafraid of confrontation."⁷⁴ She was rewarded with a raise. Julia, a homemaker and part-time nurse at a nursing home, felt the confidence after taking Prozac to quit her job and work on-call at a hospital, so that she could return to her career path of hospital nursing.⁷⁵ Gail, a physician, wanted to apply for a hospital-department chairmanship but "feared being turned down and had transformed that fear into a belief that the job was beyond her skills and status. On medication, she believed that she could do the job..." and she asked Kramer to increase her dose of

⁷⁴ Peter Kramer, *Listening to Prozac* (New York: Viking, 1993), 8-9.

⁷⁵ Kramer, 28.

Prozac so that she would feel the confidence to apply for the job. She didn't get the promotion, but responded with resilience.⁷⁶ Sally, an entry-level worker at a bank, became "decidedly more assertive at work..." and "negotiated a small promotion and pay raise at a time when the bank was cutting staff" after starting Prozac.⁷⁷ Overall, Kramer suggests that "[m]ost 'good responders' to Prozac say that they think faster and function better at work when they are on the medication."⁷⁸

Of course, Kramer's zeal has rarely been matched by subsequent analysts. Nevertheless, this account of Prozac is striking. I've isolated the work-related effects Kramer cites from his case studies and left out longer, similar accounts of greater assertiveness in interpersonal relationships. Just in the area of work, Prozac appears here as kind of a wonder drug to restore your missing capitalist ethic, a boost of confidence to ask for that big promotion, and – though Kramer doesn't really address the gendered nature of these case studies – an indispensable tool for women looking to break through the glass ceiling. Who wouldn't want it?

If Kramer and Wurtzel are emblematic of the early, exploratory phase of Prozac literature, the first widely read cultural and historical account of the new mood management phenomenon was Andrew Solomon's *The Noonday Demon*. Solomon's book was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, a *New York Times* Bestseller, and a winner of the national book award; Solomon himself became a regular on the lecture and NPR circuit. The book struck a nerve, still early in the mood management era but deeply enough into it that chattering class readers were hungry for some kind of

⁷⁶ Kramer, 94.

⁷⁷ Kramer, 147.

⁷⁸ Kramer, 236.

broader analysis.

The Noonday Demon is a tour de force of popularized science, history of depression, movingly written memoir, and cultural reflection. It set the stage for nuanced, public discussions of depression and also articulated for a broad swath of common sense some opinions about depression that were already playing an important role within the practice of psychiatry. Solomon popularized the notion of depression as a medical illness and as a condition which has a history but which is described by science trans-historically. He suggests that mood management techniques, especially SSRIs and modern psychotherapy, constitute a better and more humane form of treatment than has ever existed at any previous point in history. Thus, while responding to and fueling an urge for critical public discourse of depression, *The Noonday Demon* served a profoundly ideological role, articulating for the chattering class public a progressivist version of psychiatric history in the SSRI era which is friendly to the self-conception of the pharmaceutical industry. (Solomon's father was an executive for Forest Laboratories, which after his son's experience with antidepressants, became the US distributor of Celexa.)⁷⁹

Experiences of work and labor do not play a large role in *The Noonday Demon*. In one chapter, Solomon chronicles several of his own depressive breakdowns, one of which starts out at a book party for his first novel.⁸⁰ Solomon contextualizes this in terms of his lifelong desire to be a writer, but says hardly anything about the specificity of having a breakdown triggered by a work-related

79 Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 13.

80 Solomon, 49.

situation as opposed to, say, a breakup or seemingly nothing at all.

Solomon tries to show how depression is treated differently in different cultures, and in one of his examples, work plays a prominent role. Phaly Nuon, a survivor of a Khmer Rouge camp in Cambodia who setup a psychotherapy practice for other women survivors. She used a formula for how to fight depression:

First, I teach them to forget.... When their minds are cleared of what they have forgotten, when they have learned forgetfulness well, I teach them to work. Whatever kind of work they want to do, I will find a way to teach it to them. Some of them train only to clean houses, or to take care of children. Others learn skills they can use with the orphans, and some begin toward a real profession. They must learn to do these things well and to have pride in them.

And then when they have mastered work, at last, I teach them to love.⁸¹

Solomon presents these sorts of anecdotes with respect but also to some extent as anthropological oddities or windows onto otherness which aren't assumed to have anything to show us, in the US, about our own treatment practices or conception of the problem.

I have already written in chapter 2 about Kathleen Norris's *Acedia and Me*. As I suggested there, one of my main criticisms of Norris is that she tries to define a hard line between depression and acedia, as a sufferer of both, and ends up, like Solomon and to some extent Wurtzel, providing an ideological justification of the medical model of depression under the guise of an open-ended, thoughtful rumination. That said, one of the strong points of her book is her extended reflections on acedia and the work of writing. She connects this to the monastic tradition, seeing acedia as a

81 Quoted in Solomon, 36.

struggle that “can strike anyone whose work requires self-motivation and solitude.”⁸²

Like Wurtzel, Norris questions and criticizes the Romantic notion of poetic melancholia or acedia as an inspiration. She takes the critique further, seeing acedia as linked to vocation, kinds of work that are understood as a calling, the form of creative and existentially committed work including that of monks, artists, writers, and scientists.⁸³ In considering a few different kinds of work and how acedia might manifest in each, Norris moves beyond one of the limitations of memoir which is the primary focus on one’s own work. It is notable that accounts like Wurtzel’s and especially Solomon’s contain a lot of broad, cultural speculation about how depression is experienced in different cultures, racialized groups, and to some extent classes, but the topic of work primarily comes up anecdotally in relation to the author’s own work. Thus, there is no exploration of the manifestation of the relationship of depression to different kinds of work. Norris’s range is somewhat limited – she doesn’t consider the relationship of acedia to healthcare, teaching, or office work, for example, categories of jobs that employ large numbers of people and may have a vocational quality to them, but don’t feature the same degree of solitude as that of artists, writers, and scientists. However, in considering the relationship of acedia to even a few different kinds of work, she suggests something like the unpacking that I am attempting here.

Norris’s critique of the idea of melancholic inspiration suggests that cultures of writing – whether these are particularly modern practices or ones she considers

82 Kathleen Norris, *Acedia and Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer’s Life* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008), 6.

83 Norris, 43.

transhistorical is unclear – involve a problematic celebration of bipolarity.

The poet Donald Hall has said that while “no one can induce bipolarity in order to make poems,” the question remains: “Does the practice of the art exacerbate a tendency? Surely for the artist the disorder is creative in its manic form – excitement, confidence, the rush of energy and invention.” Yet once that energy is expended, exhaustion sets in, and the time that flowed so quickly seems unbearably slow. A restless anxiety stirs within, and acedia can take hold.⁸⁴

I would add here that the phenomenon of writers producing with manic zeal and then battling bouts of unproductive depression may in many cases be a sub-clinical phenomenon; many or even most of these writers would not be diagnosed with a bipolar disorder. Bipolar, as I’ve suggested before, is one of those states that is still liminal between new normalcy and “serious” mental illness, and giving patients a bipolar diagnosis is something clinicians take very seriously – unlike diagnoses for less severe “new normal” diagnoses like unipolar depression, which can be handed out fairly liberally by psychologists and primary care doctors. Bipolar has changed, though, from being a narrow diagnosis to something of a broader cultural idea. It seems possible that the idea of bipolar could be applied by writers and artists who wouldn’t be diagnosed as clinically bipolar to an expanded notion of something like “bipolar artistic production,” an updated version of Romantic melancholia. This kind of idea seems to rely on a background situation of late capitalism as well, because it assumes that mental states are always defined in terms of productivity – either one is in a manic, hyper-productive state or a depressed, unproductive state. I’m not sure that Romantic melancholia was ever figured in quite such productivist terms, even if the idea of a flurry of production driven by a certain kind of melancholic state was

⁸⁴ Norris, 51.

envisioned.

A round of widely read critical, interdisciplinary, and broadly historical academic takes on this era of mood management and new cultures of mental health didn't really start appearing in the US until the late aughts, though of course this work is preceded by many shorter pieces on depression associated with Feel Tank in Chicago, a renewed interest in melancholia in connection with affect studies, and the field of trauma studies. While it doesn't take up depression per se, Jackie Orr's *Panic Diaries* is worth a mention in this regard. Orr sets out to write "a genealogy of panic disorder," and of course, I share with her the sense that affective conditions structured as disorders today deserve a genealogical unpacking. Like several other authors in this arena, both academic and journalistic or popular, Orr mixes memoir and cultural, historical writing. To a greater extent than these other authors, Orr sees this project as a performative one in which academic prose voices her own condition and its subject-matter. She ties her project to Foucault's attempt in *History of Madness* to relate in writing the historical silencing of Unreason, asking, "In a society of unspeakable madness, how does a mad woman tell a history of what has come to be called a 'mental disorder'? And, immersed in a merciless language of non-madness, how will we ever hear her?"⁸⁵ Foucault seems to think that the silencing of Unreason is an almost complete project, and though there might be glimpses of it artistically or metaphorically here and there, his analytic project cannot necessarily show it directly, but only show the space left by its absence. Orr finds that panic can be voiced more

85 Jackie Orr, *Panic Diaries: A Genealogy of Panic Disorder* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 1.

directly:

[P]anic is performed throughout this text as an affective and historical, fictive and real, social theater to which I find myself somewhat repetitiously, rather traumatically, drawn. Here, over and over, in a perpetual present tense that trauma and the space of performance both share, I rewrite a psychic distress in the context of a social dis-ease.⁸⁶

What Foucault describes as the patience, restraint, and documentary accumulation of genealogy is an interesting mix with this present-tense collapsing of historical moments brought about in the project of writing panic performatively. The main title, *Panic Diaries*, and the subtitle, *A Genealogy of Panic Disorder*, sometimes seem to be at odds with one another; a more accurate subtitle might have been, “a genealogy of/in panic.”

Panic Diaries is notable and laudable for its attempt to theorize both collective, political forms of panic and individualized panic disorder. This approach is one which I’m trying to translate to my own work, here, in an attempt to analyze the significance of both depression as a “malady of the age” and depression as an individualized condition / disorder.

Emily Martin’s *Bipolar Expeditions*, similarly, is focused mainly outside of depression, as she focuses her account on the manic aspect of manic depression.⁸⁷ She’s particularly interested in the political-economic resonances of mania, seeing it as an object of both horror and desire in US culture.⁸⁸ New forms of work and capitalism are central to her story.⁸⁹ Her account relates very closely to my interest in

86 Orr, 29.

87 Martin, 9.

88 Martin, 4.

89 Martin, 40.

the management of moods and managementality on the job. She sees late capitalism as taking mania partly as a resource for a particularly contemporary version of the Protestant ethic: “In some settings, specialty firms are *teaching* people how to be manic for the sake of greater productivity; the mania they intend to tap flows from the mind and will go forth, so they hope, to unleash creative potential.”⁹⁰

Martin’s argument illuminates an aspect of what I’ve been calling the move towards a new, “optimum” normalcy. She suggests that normalcy itself may sometimes be tinged negatively – “Who wants to be normal?” asked one support group member.⁹¹ I would argue that this doesn’t mark a wholesale move away from normalcy; even if there is a positive valuing of mild, hypomanic states, as Martin points out, other kinds of mania are still highly stigmatized. I think this might represent another aspect of a “new normal” being articulated: instead of any mania seeming unstable and dangerous, a line being drawn between mild hypomania which might be generative and creative and a “full blown manic break” which would still be treated pathologically.

Martin discusses this historical change in terms of “ideal temperature on the moral thermometer,” referring to an old figure of speech used in the temperance movement and mood charts used in CBT and related techniques today. The ideal moral temperature of high modern capitalism was “temperate,” while the contemporary ideal is “somewhere between ‘passionate’ and ‘hot.’”⁹²

Mania is therefore seen as a resource in late capitalism, especially for

90 Martin, 53.

91 Martin, 187.

92 Martin, 196.

“creatives” within capitalist networks, entrepreneurs, and CEOs. We might see this as an updated version of Weber’s Protestant ethic. Benjamin Franklin’s supposed “hypomania” has even been cited as a reason for his creativity and success.⁹³ But for Weber, the ethic of capitalism was always tempered by rationalism and self-control, so that “the capitalist entrepreneur is a pale reflection of the man with a true vocation.”⁹⁴ Contemporary capitalism seems to place a greater value on “unbridled” passions and risk, though it also sees these as a source of instability and possible ruin.

This new if ambivalent, positive valorization of hypomania, I would argue, is only one aspect of the attempt to chart, navigate, and claim a new, “optimum” normalcy. Martin suggests something similar, citing a doctor who treats Hollywood stars who feels he is “called upon to *optimize* the patients’ moods” and claims that Effexor (a new, post-Prozac generation antidepressant) can help patients “be *better than they were even when they were not depressed*” and enable “*higher degrees of life satisfaction, performance, and functioning*.”⁹⁵ I would also argue here, as with Weber, that somewhat different ethics are encouraged for different social groups with regard to economic function. So, if risk-taking and passion are valued in capitalist “creatives,” entrepreneurs, and potential CEOs, the kind of authenticity prized in the training seminars for flight attendants Arlie Hochschild discusses is another kind of emotional optimization, focused on projecting feelings of care, calm, and relationship. For servers at a high end restaurant or hotel, a combination of cool confidence and deference is often the ideal affective stance.

93 Martin, 207.

94 Martin, 259.

95 Martin, 221-2.

I've already discussed Anne Cvetkovich's *Depression* in chapter 2; in the context of this chapter, I will note her critique of the medical model of depression and the centrality of writing and her academic career to the experience of depression in her memoir chapter. While Cvetkovich doesn't consider different kinds of work, she does consider the vicissitudes of writers' block and depression together in a sustained way. For Cvetkovich, like Norris, the narrative of struggling with depression involves reflecting on a sustained way on writing and the academic life, along with romantic relationships, family, and one's own symptoms and reactions. And Cvetkovich, unlike Norris, calls this depression.

This centrality of writing to depression in Cvetkovich and the reflection on different relationships one can have to writing in different depressive states is unlike Wurtzel and even less like Solomon. I suspect something has changed in the cultural discourse, and that in the 1990s and the early part of the aughts, the explosion of depression onto the cultural scene felt like an endogenous, self-standing phenomenon, whereas now people want to know how this question of depression, which seems to be more than a momentary fad but less than an unambiguous revolution of pharmacological personality enhancement, relates to other cultural questions which may not have always been connected to it.

This question of the new, cultural centrality of depression is central to Alain Ehrenberg's *The Weariness of the Self*. Ehrenberg examines depression from the standpoint of French sociology, which he suggests provides a different vantage point from American anthropologists and sociologists. He notes the recurrence of aspects of

memoir and personal stories that fight stigmas and valorize resilience in American critical literature on depression, claiming that “it would not occur to a French sociologist to lay claim to such a private state in a public forum.”⁹⁶ He observes several other aspects of French public discourse about depression which are different from American discourse. Psychoanalysis is still a robust practice in France, and it has a broad, social ambition unlike what it has ever had in the US. The status of “the subject,” almost exclusively reserved to academics in the US, is a topic public, intellectual discourse in France. And, he argues, French academics are concerned with finding a narrative that unifies social and individualized problems under a single, social rubric,⁹⁷ unlike the American tendency towards dealing with a multiplicity of syndromes and the centrality of a heroic, confessional, or transformational narrative stance.

Ehrenberg himself attempts to provide such an overarching theory that connects individualized, psychic problems and social problems. Simplifying greatly, he argues that the early part of the 20th century was characterized by the centrality of conflict and the sociological success of theories that emphasized conflict, both psychic theories of conflict, such as Freud’s, and social theories e.g. of class conflict. Since around the 1970s, he argues, Western societies have emphasized individual responsibility instead of conflict; depression has achieved a great cultural centrality because it relates to a crisis of responsibility and initiative. The depressed self is one

96 Alain Ehrenberg, *The Weariness of the Self: Diagnosing the History of Depression in the Contemporary Age* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), xx.

97 Ehrenberg, xxii.

who finds himself to be inadequate and incapable of living up to what is expected of him, rather than plagued by latent conflicts expressed in neuroses. This partially explains why “depression” has emerged as the master category of contemporary mental health instead of “anxiety” or “neurosis,” which might have seemed equally promising as sweeping categories shortly after WWII.

He goes on to suggest that depression in this era has become more resistant to cure and has been democratized as a malady in comparison with melancholia, which was a malady of the exceptional human being.⁹⁸ Contemporary depression seems tantamount to “mental diabetes,”⁹⁹ a “recurring disease with chronic tendencies” which is epidemic as a specific mental health condition and in some sense nearly universal as a broader, sub-clinical cultural malady. It is a “manifestation of the *democratization of the exceptional*”¹⁰⁰ in which “nothing is possible,”¹⁰¹ either personally or politically.

While Ehrenberg criticizes many of the underlying presumptions of existing critical literature about depression – for example, the idea that the principle historic bifurcation is between biomedical theories of mental illness and mental theories, or the division between biological reductionism vs. social constructionism in explaining what mental illness is – in many ways his argument fits and expands the argument we are making here. The democratization of depression and its slide towards epidemiological generality is indeed the problem we face, and his argument about the

98 Ehrenberg, 218.

99 Ehrenberg, 192.

100 Ehrenberg, 218.

101 Ehrenberg, 228.

historical success of Freudian theory for the early 20th century is very suggestive.

There is something to Ehrenberg's intuition that feelings of inadequacy and weariness and thinking that nothing can be done – problems of initiative – are central to depression today. Martin suggests something along these lines as well, that the contemporary problem of the mood disorder seems to be less about mood in the common-sense understanding and more about motivation. Martin argues in part from an ethnography of bipolar support groups, whereas Ehrenberg is interested in the history of psychiatric reasoning. It would be interesting to look the discourse of support groups for depression, popular literature of depression, and treatment guidelines for psychologists – I suspect that they might reflect a similar increased focus on motivation and initiative and a lesser focus on depressed moods in common-sense terms, such as feelings of guilt, shame, loss, sadness, etc. Certainly a good deal of this literature addresses “how to cope with” loss and feelings of shame, but it seems to steer away from focusing on the feelings themselves.

What seems to be missing from Ehrenberg's account is ironically part of what is missing from Martin's as well – a carefully striated account of the social reality with which the cultural salience of mood disorders arises and the ethics or ideologies which come out of this. In a US context, it wouldn't make sense to say that there has been a historical progression from an early 20th century dominated by conflict to a late 20th century and early 21st dominated by an ideology of responsibility. I'm not sure whether this would really hold up in a European context either, unless one went by the prevalence of ideologies informed by conflict (socialist, communist, fascist, and

capitalist) rather than actual conflict, which was much more sporadic. In an American context, class conflict never informed broad party identifications except as a one-sided, capitalist affair, and conflict was relatively sporadic. Certainly strikes and unionization have been on the decline in the US, but what is shocking about this is that it is a return to early 20th-century levels.

Perhaps more importantly, the thesis of a rise of a post-1970 ethos of responsibility that plays out in some similar way across various social groups seems very dubious. Certainly “personal responsibility” has been a political theme of renewed importance in the US since at least the Reagan administration, but it is a contested one, hardly strong or universal enough to account for a societal epidemic of depression. To be sure, joblessness, underemployment, and precarity, some of which seems to be related to the economic downturn but some of which seems more or less permanent, has caused a great deal of social anxiety. And cutbacks in the social safety net as well as the enervation of any core of stable jobs with good benefits, along with an ideological attack on both of these, means that an ideology of personal responsibility and relying only on family and friends becomes very powerful. Along with that, there’s a weakening of some traditional family bonds and the ability of affective labor to hold them together and the prevalence of kinds of work within capitalism that require workers to do more, affectively, with less security. All of these factors must be analyzed with some specificity.

This critical and cultural depression literature sees the increasing introduction of work and social problems into the question of depression, but does not unpack the

commonality of the problematic.

5) Managementality, the Management of Self-Management

To understand the cultural significance of depression and new techniques of mood management, we need to look at how mood management is articulated with management in the strict sense. Techniques of mood management are increasingly part of the control of a workforce today, through a set of managerial techniques I will call “managementality.” Techniques of managementality originate most strongly in the management of contemporary subjective labor, but like previous techniques of management like time-discipline, the Babbage principle, Taylorism, Fordism, and lean production, they tend to be applied outside of their area of origin in different kinds of workplaces and in social settings like schools (towards students) and government agencies (towards populations). As I’ve suggested previously, these various historic techniques of management tend to appear in combination with each other in an articulation at a given workplace, company, or industry, and supposedly “outmoded” techniques can be and often are refurbished in combination with others to accomplish a new task. A campaign to increase efficiency or cut costs in a workplace often relies on some combination of these techniques.

The term “managementality” is derived from an application of the Foucauldian theory of governmentality to management and managerial interactions. According to the organizers of a critical management studies conference on the theme of managementality, it:

would relate more directly to mentalities and rationalities of

management rather than government in general. Where, in Foucault's articulation, governmentality has population as its target, managementality would have managers, "human resources," consumers and "stakeholders;" where governmentality draws its knowledge from political economy, managementality would draw it from management and organization studies; where governmentality essentially relies on apparatuses of security, managementality would rely on technologies of control and performance.¹⁰²

Maarten Simons, looking at governmentality in relationship to education and quality management, defines managementality as follows:

However, [the obsolescence of traditional techniques of control and subjection] does not imply that management is becoming more 'human' or 'free'. We can illustrate this by using a formulation from management literature: "the focus on the outside, the external perspective, the attention to the customer, is one of the tightest properties of all. In the excellent companies, it is perhaps the most stringent means of self-discipline." (PETERS/WATERMAN 1982, p. 509) Regarding the worker as an enterprise and positioning her in an environment of customers, inevitably influences the establishment of an individual management 'function'. Referring to FOUCAULT, we could define actual 'managementality' as management of self-management, with the constitution of an economic tribunal as the permanent point of reference.¹⁰³

My use of the term "managementality" is a bit more like Simons's, in that I'm less interested in the management of managers or managers as a target for managementality, and more interested in how attention to customers, patients, clients, students, etc., and the need to manage affective intersubjective relationships or

102 Martin Fougère, Hans Hasselbladh, and Per Skålen, "From Governmentality to Managementality – and Back Again," call for papers for Stream at 6th International Critical Management Studies Conference, last modified 7 May 2008, accessed 23 August 2013, <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wbs/conf/cms2009/streams/governmentality.doc>.

103 Maarten Simons, "Governmentality, Education and Quality Management: Towards a Critique of the Permanent Quality Tribunal," *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* 5, no. 4 (2002), 622.

workers' subjective states relates to "the management of self-management," the relationship between concrete managerial directives and the internalization of self-management. I would provisionally define managementality in the sense I'm using it here as the management of self-management in relation to workers' subjectivities, especially in terms of mood, initiative, and attentiveness, and especially with the object of managing intersubjective relationships with customers, clients, students, and patients or a product that is developed largely within workers' subjectivities.

To see this emergent sense of managementality we can look at how workers' moods are treated in practical management literature. "The Silent Killers of Productivity" (2011), sheds some light on the way in which executives and administrators are being encouraged to think about their employees' moods:

A mood is a predisposition for action. There are two types of moods – generative and degenerative. Moods generate – or do not generate – possibilities for constructive action. Too many organizations today remain within the grip of degenerative moods. A foul mixture of distrust, resentment, resignation, cynicism, arrogance, and complacency is all too often the norm. Degenerative moods are effective foundations for a wide range of unproductive behaviors. People simply cannot or will not perform to their potential when they are stuck in degenerative moods.

Degenerative moods create waste, and yet there is little in contemporary management theory that recognizes the importance of moods and their impact on productivity and profitability.¹⁰⁴

Between the lurid description of this "foul mixture" of affects and the contrast between "generative and degenerative moods," one is under the impression here that the authors are performing a modern update of Cassian or applying Deleuze and Guattari to the workplace. This isn't too far off the mark, since the authors are

104 Chris Majer and Chauncey Bell, "The Silent Killers of Productivity and Profit: New Wastes for a New World," *T+D*, February 2011, 64.

acolytes of Fernando Flores, a Chilean politician and Berkeley philosophy of language PhD who used Heidegger to think about management and workflow.

What Majer and Bell are describing here is very close to a kind of workplace acedia of the “disputes amongst the brethren” rather than isolated variety. These “degenerative moods” have a consequence beyond the productivity of individuals, they suggest, creating a toxic office culture. This notion of a mood as generative or degenerative of possibilities for action is close to Brian Massumi’s definition of affect for Deleuze and Guattari as an enhancement or diminution of a capacity to act; though of course they do not necessarily insist upon moods as “prepersonal,” they do suggest that moods spread in an office via a kind of contagion, which is close to some of the Deleuzian affect theories. While degenerative moods are the clear problem here, their management solution remains vague at least in this piece.

Far less vague are concerns about the possibility of a coercive use of cognitive enhancement or “cosmetic neurology” in the workplace. Bioethicist Jacob Appel suggested in 2008 that such coercive modifications could include medical residents being required to use methylphenidate to improve concentration while working long hours, fast-food workers being required to use SSRIs even if they are not depressed “to keep them ‘affiliative’ when confronted by dissatisfied customers,” and commercial airline pilots being required to use donepezil, an anti-Alzheimer’s drug that has shown positive effects on concentration in a crisis for healthy individuals.¹⁰⁵

Appel considers this scenario more or less inevitable without regulation: “Eventually,

105 J. M. Appel, “When the Boss Turns Pusher: A Proposal for Employee Protections in the Age of Cosmetic Neurology,” *Journal of Medical Ethics* 34 (2008): 617-18.

without protective legislative action, employers will begin to demand that their employees accept neurological enhancement as a condition for employment or promotion – and the working stiffs of the world will not have the financial power to resist.” Appel points out that in schools, the question of mandatory use of mood-altering drugs is already a real one, with battles over whether educators can mandate Ritalin and antidepressants.¹⁰⁶

The topic of required cosmetic neurology gets us into the territory of speculative futurism, but the force of managementality is already in play without there being legal outright coercion. When I told a colleague about this idea of managementality, he told me about a job he had in a store selling rugs before he started graduate school. The manager would bring a bag of uppers to work every day, which my colleague said sales staff took in order to increase their energy for a long day on the floor and to increase their confidence and excitement when going to talk with customers. It became a kind of contest which the workers played with one another. Taking the pills was never mandatory, and not taking them was not discouraged. Nevertheless, a workplace culture developed in which this was how you got psyched up for work, and since salespeople were paid on commission, taking the pills could have a definite effect on your success.

Beyond cosmetic neurology or the pursuit of a work-related “optimum” psychic normalcy, CBT and alternative techniques make their appearance in the workplace as well. Employee wellness programs encourage workers to take advantage of stress reduction to offload work-related stress and speedup onto private,
106 Appel, 617.

work-sponsored reproduction. At the disciplinary end, anger management has long been a staple of office disciplinary culture short of termination, but new job-related stress management and mood management programs expand the scope and reach of this.

How managementality plays out depends a great deal on the kind of workplace, particular demands of a job, and sometimes a particular workplace culture. For fast food workers, managementality may take the shape of more directive and coercive measures which do not reach very deep subjectively. The affective requirements of a fast-food restaurant are often posted right behind the counter, requiring courtesy and friendliness, timed-to-the-second promptness (often using Taylorized techniques of workplace design), and upselling. The fast food worker is not necessarily expected to provide an “authentic” experience of service or caring; in fact, the trope of fast-food workers who make disdain for their own dead-end jobs very apparent is a staple of popular culture. Fast food workers aren’t expected to identify heavily with their jobs, quitting at an inconvenient moment is often the most easily available form of resistance. That said, amongst fast food workers who stay longer and attempt to make a career out of their work, identification with corporate values and a greater identification with customer service are expected. There’s a large gap between a revolving door of short-term customer service workers and longer-term “team members” and managers who are still relatively low-paid by overall societal standards but who are expected to maintain the standards of the restaurant.

Managementality plays out very differently in a hospital setting, where

something like the Babbage principle has been applied several times historically in order to cut costs, resulting in a workforce that is very striated by skill level, pay, autonomy, gender, and usually race and/or ethnicity. The work of highly paid staff, especially doctors and registered nurses, is increasingly subject to something like Taylorism in the reduction of time spent with patients to a time minimum and a basic set of tasks to achieve. This is a somewhat metaphorical use of “Taylorism,” as the immediate causes of speedup and shortened interactions with patients for doctors are not time-motion studies but insurance reimbursements and paperwork; nevertheless, the result is a “Taylorized” medical experience. Speedup creates a situation in which doctors and registered nurses have to project feelings of care and attention for patients without having time for much in the way of actual “bedside manner, while more prolonged caring labor often falls informally to lower-paid workers like nursing assistants who do more one-on-one, physical work with patients. Hospitals are something of an odd case, in that one of their primary affective functions – caring for patients – is increasingly chopped up into so many rounds and procedures that the affective quality of the care often gets picked up informally or slides out of hospital practice entirely.

A high end restaurant or the work of flight attendants may place a premium on feelings of authenticity in the worker’s ability to manage or influence a customer’s affective state by projecting affects of care and attentiveness. Sales work may value a worker’s initiative, boldness, and tirelessness. Teaching tends to ride on teachers’ enthusiasm. Arlie Hochschild points out that not all affective labor relies on positive,

caring affects; bill collectors have to project feelings of discomfort, increasing the pitch of anxiety for debtors. Primarily symbolic, less critically intersubjective or affective kinds of work may turn less on affective projection and more on attentiveness, bold thinking, focus, and stamina as affective qualities. All of these states are part of the domain of managementality.

6) Alienation as Dissociation

Braverman posits that the historical problem of management “presents itself in history as the *progressive alienation of the process of production* from the worker.”¹⁰⁷

I have examined mood management, a set of techniques of self care whose wide social diffusion is involved in the changing societal meaning of depression and mental health, and managementality, the management of self management using these techniques, particularly focused on the realm of subjective labor. How does the managementality of subjective labor appear in the dialectic and experience of the progressive alienation of labor? We must historicize the theory of alienation to be able to account for this.

Alienation of labor in high capitalist modernity was theorized in Marx’s four aspects of alienation:

- 1) Alienation of the worker from the product of the work he produces, the worker relating to “the *product of labor* as an alien object exercising power over him. This relation is at the same time the relation to the sensuous external world, to the objects of nature as an alien world antagonistically opposed to

107 Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 58.

him.”¹⁰⁸

- 2) Alienation of the worker from the work process, the “relation of the worker to his own activity as an alien activity.”
- 3) Alienation of the worker from his species-being. Humans are essentially communal and universal, living in nature. Capitalism reduces both spiritual and natural species property to means for abstract individual existence. Estranges human from his body, nature, spiritual essence.
- 4) Alienation of the worker from other people. It’s somewhat unclear to me whether the form of alienation from other people primary to this account of alienation is alienation from other workers, as many commentators seem to think, or whether the creation of the capitalist: “the worker produces the relationship to this labor of a man alien to labor and standing outside it.”¹⁰⁹ This alienation between people is far more stark than the alienation between workers, but it’s possible that this section is already “further” beyond the four aspects of alienation.

We must consider whether the shift towards subjective labor being at the center of advanced capitalism necessitates a new or different account of alienation.

The labor Marx is considering here appears to be primarily craft or industrial labor, the working-up of nature into physical products. “The worker can create nothing without *nature*, without the *sensuous external world*.” Alienation from the

108 Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988), 75.

109 Marx, 80.

product of work is figured in terms of the product of labor, “congealed in an object,”¹¹⁰ confronting labor as “*something alien*.” Marx understands alienation from the labor process as an intensification of the exhaustion and hatefulness of work which paradoxically leaves the worker weak and impoverished even as the overall, collective power and wealth created by labor grows.¹¹¹ This is the aspect of Marx’s theory that Braverman thinks most needs to be updated; Braverman’s point here can be summarized crudely by saying that techniques of management have been developed since Marx which intensify the exploitation and deskilling of work, increase the power of a managerial apparatus at the expense of workers, and make crude, physical use of the worker for the sake of efficiency, cost-cutting, and this managerial power. This gradual increase of managerial power constitutes a progressive rather than static form of alienation of the work process. Again, we are dealing primarily with industrial labor, though Braverman suggests that closely related dynamics are at work in the clerical and service sectors, which had begun taking off when *Labor and Monopoly Capital* was written, but only barely, from a contemporary standpoint.

Since the third aspect of alienation flows from these first two, we will look at them first. Many aspects of the descriptions Marx gives here seem to hold for subjective labor. For example: as the overall power of labor grows, workers find themselves weakened and impoverished. This is of course highly debated, but it could fit with an account of precarity and the burgeoning low-wage service sector. Even in

110 Marx, 71.

111 Marx, 74-5.

some well-paid occupations at present, as the overall level of knowledge, skill, and technology in a field increases, the people employing this knowledge, skill, and technology find their work suffering from speedup and deskilling, and/or new people entering these professions are unable to find work.

That said, the relationship between a subjective worker and the product of her labor is not primarily based in the sensuous, external world, but in the feeling, thinking internal world or in the touching, communicating intersubjective world. The product of service work, for example the low-paid, low-autonomy symbolic work of cashiers and the symbolic and affective work of servers, is never as clearly congealed in an object as is the product of industrial work. More autonomous, highly paid symbolic work – the work of doctors, nurses, writers, programmers, computer engineers, and professors, for example – may be congealed in a symbolic object such as a book, a program, a network, etc. Typically the symbolic worker identifies with this symbolic product. When this sort of symbolic product confronts the creative symbolic worker as something alien, it comes as a shock. Affective labor tends to center upon the fact that labor is congealed not in an object, but in a relationship, if we may say that it is congealed at all; it may be that in some forms of affective labor, completed work remains fluid.

Late modern symbolic labor does not emerge in a vacuum, but on the basis of a prior phase of industrial capitalism. That industrial base continues to be necessary to capitalism, and subjective labor in its present form would not exist without it. However, due to outsourcing to other countries, outsourcing to rural and politically

“backwards” areas of the advanced capitalist countries themselves, the political weakening of unions, the relative percentage slide in the number of workers doing industrial work in the advanced capitalist countries, and mechanization of some tasks formerly performed by industrial manual labor, industrial labor is not as central to the national-popular of advanced capitalist countries as it once was. Whether alienation in places which are now heavily industrial mostly conforms to the Marxian model, or whether it is a different and hybrid form, is a question for elsewhere.

When the shift towards subjective labor begins to occur, some aspects of the labor relationships that produce alienation change. Promoters of “knowledge work” might argue that it is less alienating in terms of the work process: doesn’t Silicon Valley’s willingness to confuse the lines between play, leisure, reproduction, and work lead to less alienation? For the most highly autonomous and respected workers in this category, there may be a grain of truth to this argument, though the argument gets murkier if we compare these workers to similarly highly autonomous workers in previous eras, for example, machinists or mechanical engineers in the heyday of industrial production before the introduction of computers. The skeptic might reply that the confusion of play, leisure, reproduction, and work takes place always in the interest of the injunction to work and in fact constitutes a sophisticated strategy on the part of the capitalist to extract more work. Extracting more work from a subjective worker at the highly autonomous end of the scale requires something different than speedup in industry – it requires an understanding of the conditions under which the brain is productively engaged in the tasks for which the capitalist buys labor power.

Under this line of reasoning, Silicon Valley has partially recreated the company town, in an environment in which many of your needs are taken care of to the extent that you don't leave. I suspect that this work can feel like play or like unalienated work to the extent that one identifies with it and loses oneself within it, but then it may not take much to find oneself hemmed in and alienated from a workplace that expects total commitment.

Emotional labor and intersubjective labor recast alienation in a different sense. Several of Marx's points on alienation above could be rendered as *separation*: separation of humans from each other, as they are divided into classes and their interests pitted against one another amongst workers; separation of humans from nature as work transforms nature into commodities. The alienated self for Marx is one who finds himself separate from his connection with the product and activity of work, nature and other humans. The challenge is to overcome this alienation in the formation of a "practical-critical," active social subject, a social subject which in some way is already immanent in the sociality of the industrial working class.

Emotional labor and intersubjective labor reconfigure this. Here alienation derives not so much from separation from others, but from a loss of boundaries between self and other and the inculcation of the imperatives of management within the self, managementality. The emotional worker's alienation derives not so much from turning nature into a commodity, but from turning her own "human nature" into a commodity. Her own subjectivity, instead of being separated off from others to be ignored or pathologized, becomes instead a primary site in which the battles of

management and alienation are fought. Instead of alienation as separation, we get an alienation in which the self confronts the terrain of itself as estranged and suspect.

This is alienation as dissociation.

A slightly different loss of boundaries occurs with some professional, affective and symbolic work, in that the worker over-identifies with the product of labor and with the activity of labor as a calling only to hit the limits of her autonomy in a bureaucratic structure, suddenly finding that this over-identification may have been misplaced, creating a sort of “whiplash effect” of alienation. One might object here that this is absolutely nothing new, that it is the same position of that of Weber’s highly skilled craftsmen and entrepreneurs, and that furthermore, it has nothing to do with labor, as this kind of work is professional work, closer to the bourgeoisie, or what used to be called the petit bourgeoisie or even the declassed intellectuals rather than the proletariat. Defining class strata can indeed be tricky, but some of these occupations are mass occupations which are themselves subject to speedup and some aspects of “proletarianization.” This category could include, for example, the symbolic aspect of the work of teachers, nurses, social workers, organizers, engineers, programmers, and freelance writers.

Some subjective labor does not seem to engender anything particularly new in terms of the aspects of alienation as specific forms of work. For example, back-of-the-house food-service work in a large kitchen might be little different from a small factory or a large workshop in terms of alienation.

Another way to consider this would be to ask about the specific social and

affective structures which arise as resistances to subjective labor which seem to be related to the forms of alienation.

Burnout arises in professionalized affective and symbolic kinds of work in which a worker has identified with the career as a calling, only to find himself alienated from his job, his coworkers, and his sense of a calling. Organizers, teachers, social workers, writers, nurses, and internet startup workers have jobs which are defined in terms of this vocational passion. Even some very low-paid affective occupations like childcare and nursing home work may be characterized by something of this sensibility, though here the notion of calling shades over into care. For organizers, teachers, social workers, writers, and artists, the choice of a career / calling may involve some degree of sacrifice. Burnout is the moment at which someone working in one of these professions can no longer see it as a calling and it becomes “just a job” or torture to continue doing, all the more alienating because it this work used to be a source of identity and a mission. This work process and identity confronts the worker as something foreign and alien, something which mortifies the worker’s body and ruins his mind, a self-sacrifice with no hope left of eternal or proximate reward.

Compassion fatigue is a related form of disengagement for workers in caring professions. Whereas burnout may stem from any number of sources of disaffection and may be cumulative over time, compassion fatigue for workers in caring professions (which should be distinguished from compassion fatigue as, for example, a consumer of news) is often seen as a kind of secondary or vicarious trauma in which

caring for other people who are dealing with trauma causes one to take a degree of trauma onto oneself. Here the problem of the boundary between self and other becomes a primary factor.

Parallel to our questions from the beginning of the chapter, we should ask whether there is something about caring labor as formal, paid work under late capitalism which is particularly prone to raising secondary trauma or whether we're talking about compassion fatigue now because there's a language for it which there wasn't historically. There's probably a degree to which caring for people who are experiencing trauma could be secondarily traumatic trans-historically regardless of the social relationships present in the work or whether there is a discourse of trauma and compassion fatigue in that society. Yet, both of these factors can converge to make a condition which was completely unrecognized before WWII seem epidemic in some jobs today. The specific situation of much of this work under late capitalism is that it is devalued, subjected to low pay and neoliberal speedup. Most of this labor is normatively treated as women's work and is subject to additional, gendered societal devaluation. In this instance, the structural alienation inherent to this work in any society, taking on the trauma of another at least partially as one's own, gets magnified by a particularly capitalist form of alienation which fits exactly with the structure of the Marxian account: the more sophisticated the work of caring for survivors of trauma becomes, the more abused and traumatized are the workers.

Writers' block is a problem endemic to highly autonomous, creative forms of work, including not only writing but art both conventional and digital. Writers' block

seemingly has less to do with alienation than many of these other contemporary blockages of work. In most of the others, the work itself becomes an object of dislike or ambivalence; it becomes coerced, forced, and shunned like the plague, or it repeats a trauma, even if in some cases initially that work was chosen for reasons that involved self-expression or care of others. But writers' block is generally characterized by little ambivalence towards the work, but instead, by inability to make oneself do it.

An aspect of alienation which has some relationship with writers' block involves the worker's ability to appropriate the external world as a means of life. Marx says that nature provides labor with the means to life in a double sense: on the one hand, "labor cannot *live* without objects on which to operate; on the other hand, it also provides the *means of life* in the more restricted sense – i.e. the means for the physical subsistence of the *worker* himself."¹¹² Writing is sometimes described in a similar sense. It needs experience or material from life on which to operate, an operation which may feel inadequate when facing writers' block. And writers' block threatens to remove from the writer her means of physical subsistence. The relationship with alienation lies in the writer's conflict not with a capitalist or with nature but with an inscrutable aspect of herself in her inability to obtain the object of labor and the means of subsistence. In writers' block as with alienation, work "becomes a power on its own confronting [the worker]; it means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien."

Procrastination appears as a form of resistance to almost every kind of

¹¹² Marx, 72.

symbolic labor. This ranges from both highly autonomous symbolic work such as that of writers and students to more collectivized symbolic work such as office work of all sorts to mixed forms such as the work of programmers. Its immediate visage is almost too light and whimsical to be a form of alienation. But we should recall Robert Burton's meditation on a type of idle melancholy which presaged modern procrastination, and how the most pleasant of pass-times can transmogrify into negative fantasies, harsh guilt, feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness, and fear.

Here not only work but the impulse to escape work in play confront the worker as something alien and recriminating, eventually threatening one's very ability to work and gain the object of labor. One is alienated here, again, not so much from another person, the capitalist, though other people's real and perceived judgments may play a role in the force of procrastination. The real crux of the alienation is an alienation from oneself.

Of course there are many forms of procrastination which meet with much less angst, particularly in a large, less autonomous workplace where the workers identify less with their work. Here, what presents itself to the worker as procrastination presents itself to the manager as *time theft*. In an office context, we may say that time theft or procrastination appears as one aspect of a larger narrative of what we might call from the perspective of the worker (or worker-oriented dramatizations like *Office Space*) *the deadening ennui of office culture*. To management consultants like Majer and Bell this appears as "a foul mixture of distrust, resentment, resignation, cynicism, arrogance, and complacency."

In office work, the product of labor is not something taken from the external sensuous world and mixed with the worker's labor. In the comic renderings of *Office Space* or Dilbert, or even the quasi-Dantean warnings of Majer and Bell, the individual worker hardly knows what the eventual product is or cares. Everything sensuous or deriving from nature has been alienated away so long ago that no one remembers it. Work is not mighty and the worker doesn't become weaker; instead, the social space of the office acquires a kind of static sameness, permeated with the fear of downsizing or layoffs. Both the work process and the product of work seem to be relational, but instead of caring labor in which inherently humanly valuable work may be commodified by the structure in which it is articulated, in the deadening ennui of office culture the work itself seems to have no point and the relationships are mediated from the start by a sticky, bureaucratic morass. Deadening, bureaucratized relationships are the first aspect of alienation here, rather than the fourth.

Slacker culture also has a relationship with ennui, flat affect, and lack of care. But whereas the deadening ennui of office culture is tinged with anxiety, for the worker, and the power to institute Taylorist schemes and to intensify managementality on the part of management, slacker culture accepts the degraded, pointless toil of labor as a starting place and raises not caring to the point of culture and sometimes inchoate but conscious resistance. The previous forms of resistance to work I've discussed here are characterized by the alienating character of work coming as something of a surprise, which takes work that the worker expects to be humanizing and rewarding and renders it terrible. Sometimes, with the deadening ennui of office

culture, and almost always, in slacker culture, the alienating nature of work is taken as a premise. In slacker culture, the importance of management is minimized. In some cases, slacker culture arises in sections of the economy where there may not be really much management – e.g. the movie *Clerks*, in which the slackers either are the managers themselves with one or two employees or they are employees of an absentee owner. In other cases, slacker culture is presented as a thick psychological and social defense mechanism built up by the workers against managementality; see *Clerks II*, where the manager of a fast food restaurant tries to manage, but is stymied by workers who do what they want to do, and is left with little power but the power to hire and fire. Slacker culture pretty much stops at the border of small acts of resistance by individuals or small groups of friends; since alienation is taken as a given, the possibility of hope for collective action or changing the relationships of production is not really contemplated. Classic slacker culture presumes a cynicism towards work that would extend to collective praxis, though whether this could be refigured for example coming out of the fast food strikes of 2013 is an interesting question.

Burnout, compassion fatigue, and writers' block are forms of resistance to work that tend to be psychological more than political and unconscious more than conscious. Procrastination from autonomous symbolic work involves an initially conscious behavior that takes on an unconscious repetition compulsion. The deadening ennui of office culture and slacker culture begin to involve resistances to work which are “infrapolitical” to use Robin Kelley’s term, resistances in this case

which do not seem to impinge upon building political movements but which nonetheless turn on behaviors which see alienated labor for what it is and consciously reject the work ethic. In an era in which low-wage, service jobs are really the base of working-class employment, there is widespread joblessness and underemployment, and many people's job situations are precarious, these particular cultural forms hardly exhaust the infrapolitics of resistance, work refusal as a "lifestyle,"¹¹³ and the beginnings of a politics of refusing work which takes up the old "The Right to Be Lazy" tradition on the left.

Since the victory of industrial capitalism, a politics of refusing work have never really been articulated in a mass sense, except symbolically in the strike. (It may be objected that some strikes are symbolic and others constitute direct action, but as I'm using the term here, all strikes are ultimately symbolic if they include the possibility, likelihood, and intent of returning to work for the capitalist employer at some point. The only non-symbolic strike would be a general strike to end capitalism or seizing the means of production and operating them as a collective or a council, which would really be more than a strike, anyway.) Voices on the left calling for the articulation of an antiwork politics, or arguing that such a politics is already emerging from the objective developments of contemporary capitalism, have had a renewed resonance since the so-called Great Recession of 2008 and the ongoing malaise of capitalism since then. Whether such an approach might grow into a major aspect of anticapitalist praxis – or become an antiwork, anti-praxis alternative to praxis –

113 See for example *The Idler*, a British magazine founded "in order to explore alternatives to the work ethic and promote freedom and the fine art of doing nothing." <http://idler.co.uk/>

remains to be seen, and probably depends upon the extent of the objective malaise and any further shocks.

Part of what is interesting about these various forms of alienation or resistances to work related to alienation in contemporary capitalism is the emergence of so many phenomena for which we seem to need new language and the profusion of these discourses. The old, high modern capitalist terminology of laziness and the work ethic seems wrong and too thin to describe these phenomena. The language of alienation resonates with these resistances, but it reflects a form of capitalism grounded in the political centrality of industrial and workshop production of material goods, not subjective labor which is at the heart of these contemporary resistances.

Recognizing that the dynamics of subjective labor vary widely amongst different particular kinds of labor and that these contemporary resistances to work which I've briefly examined also bring to bear widely different dynamics, I propose that we might helpfully re-theorize the contemporary dynamics of alienation as involving a fifth aspect in addition to Marx's four, *alienation as dissociation*, a dynamic of alienation in which the primary conflict of alienation takes place within one's own subjectivity or in intersubjective relations with others and which involves a psychological dissociation from the self instead of or in addition to the psychological separation from the product of labor, the activity of labor, nature / human nature, and other people as theorized in Marx's classic account. As variegated as the dynamics of contemporary advanced capitalism are, I propose that this notion of dissociation helps us theorize the real dynamics of alienation that appear within contemporary culture

and work processes. In some cases we may see this dissociation as an additional fifth aspect which adds a dimension to the Marxian analysis; in other cases, considering the primacy of dissociation may cause us to rethink the original four aspects. The four or five aspects are in any case a philosophical abstraction from actual jobs which are useful to the extent that they help us understand the dynamics of capitalism, the relationships between the abstractions of capitalist economic theory, cultural and media representations of work and alienation, lived experiences, and political projects.

In chapter 3, I cited Foucault: “just as the philosophical concept of alienation was taking on historical meaning thanks to the economic analysis of work, the medical and psychological concept of insanity was severed from history to become instead a moral criticism in the name of the compromised salvation of the species.”¹¹⁴ While the medical and psychological concept of insanity remains severed from history, the concept of alienation has now gone roundabout through the notion of broad, social alienation to pick up psychological characteristics, such as dissociation, trauma, anxiety, guilt, and shame. If the philosophical concept of alienation and mental alienation were rendered into separate spheres in high modernity, today the generality of depression and a profusion of techniques of mood management render them an inseparable problematic.

114 *HOM*, 378.

Conclusion

In late capitalism, especially since the 1980s, the diagnosis and treatment of depression, the management of forms of labor which are central to advanced capitalism, and the psychological and political resistances most characteristic of these forms of labor have been integrated into a single social problematic. In high modern, industrial capitalism, the main precursors of these structures were the disease, humor, mental disposition, or neurosis of melancholia, capitalist and productivist work ethics, and the stigmatized or pathologized behavior of laziness. These affective structures had relatively few points of connection, and can in no way be said to constitute a single problematic; if anything, key divisions of modernity and capitalism were constructed along fault lines which are traced by breaks, spaces, and gaps between these structures. In the contemporary world, our social practices and some common-sense discourses point towards the integration of the late modern fields in question. Our broad, theoretical categories for making sense of the human social life have not yet turned towards a way to think the connections between these structures, despite their imbrication. This project has been an attempt to undertake or extend this theoretical work.

The commonality between these fields emerges phenomenologically in the

question of self-management. In subjective labor, a managerial apparatus is developed: managementality, the management of self-management. Managementality is concerned with the affective projection and subjective productivity of workers and the creation of affectively smooth yet dynamic networks. A paradigm of mood management comes to the surface in the development and profusion of new techniques of the care of the self in the face of mood disorders. These techniques reflect the mass, democratic nature of contemporary depression and related mood and other mild-end mental disorders. Instead of suppressing or rendering these disorders invisible in the name of ending them, a greater profusion of disorders appears, against which a new, optimum normalcy is articulated. Mood management treats not only mood in the common-sense understanding, but initiative, somatic energy, and sometimes related questions of attention. It is often concerned with making people more affiliative, assertive, creative, or energized at work. Managementality often makes direct use of the techniques of mood management to offload work-related stress to private reproductive labor or to alter workers' job performance and productivity in some specific regard.

All across society, but with particular density in the areas of mental health, mental wellness, and the contemporary advanced capitalist workplace, a problematic is thrown up which is really a problematic of self-management. It is not just an injunction of the need for self-management or the inculcation of specific, externally defined norms of behavior as with time-discipline in early industrial capitalism. It is an ongoing, pedagogical and hermeneutic relationship developed between self-

management and an external managerial apparatus which is mediated on the one side by the techniques of mood management and on the other side by the techniques of managementality in concert with other concrete, external managerial techniques.

This genealogy, which treats depression and resistances to subjective labor in the present, reaches back not only to melancholia and laziness but to the struggle or sin of acedia in medieval monasticism, a previous construct in which blockages to labor and praxis were part of a single problematic with feelings of loss, fantasies, dejection, and torpor. I have looked at several moments in which the discourse of acedia resonates with contemporary questions or vice versa and examined how this obscure monastic struggle has made something of a comeback in contemporary culture. We may now address the overarching question of in what ways the acedia problematic is relevant to the problematic of self-management.

In some respects the acedia problematic presages contemporary affective blockages to work and (in possibly more limited respects) the monastic regimen of care around acedia presages managementality. Distinctly contemporary affective phenomena resemble acedia in certain senses more than they resemble their high modern precursors or corresponding maladies. Burnout resembles a case of acedia in which a solitary's feelings about his monastic duties have reached a level of disgust more than it resembles laziness. Procrastination resembles the phenomenological, slightly humorous and literary accounts of monks sitting in their cells trying to read or pray and finding their minds wandering more than it resembles laziness or the center of melancholia. The deadly ennui of office culture resembles accounts of acedia that

touch upon relations between the brethren, in which monks seek any distraction with other people but end up quarreling. Are these contemporary blockages to subjective labor more precisely understood as contemporary vicissitudes of a new acedia?

In the treatment of acedia by the “physician of souls” of late antiquity or the medieval monastery, we see (especially in the earliest sources) a relationship between a careful, interior practice of taking stock of the self and one’s own motivations and movements of desire and an exterior, authoritarian order. Exterior, authoritarian orders of various sorts have been articulated time and time again in monasticism, tributary systems, mercantilism, and capitalism. Does the emphasis of this relationship on interiority constitute a rather direct precursor to managementality? Even the introduction of monastic techniques like meditation and mindfulness (albeit from Eastern rather than Western traditions) seems to suggest that disciplined interiority is at the forefront of a problematic for late capitalist modernity.

The novelty and shallowness of theorization around some of these contemporary structures recommends such an orientation. Seeing acedia as the deep structure of these contemporary conditions would allow us to see them not as almost fad-like novelty conditions but as part of a deep, historically variegated but ongoing aspect of human experience. It would also fit with a theoretical relativization of the structural character of Western, industrial capitalism and a predominantly male, industrial workforce that has been undertaken recently. Looking at acedia as an affective blockage to work and at the acedia problematic as a problematic of monastic labor allows us to see continuities and submerged historical strands that have

reappeared instead of predicating too much on a faulty over-totalization of a specific, historical model of industrial capitalism and the norms that derive from it.

That said, trying to revive the category of acedia as an analytical device for major developments in late capitalism and late modern social life has the disadvantage of abstracting from what is historically specific about both acedia on the one hand and managementality and the mood management paradigm on the other. It also may distract from the specific points of fracture in high modernity which have allowed the assembly of this late modern problematic, which I have tried to unpack in chapters 3, 4, and 5. The management of work in contemporary capitalism makes use of a range of techniques, including the management of self-management which is particular to managementality, but also including aspects of Taylorism, lean production (which was primarily developed for late modern industrial workplaces), and sometimes even new rounds of applications of very old principles like the Babbage principle. If aspects of such a system echo the relationship between monastic authoritarianism and interiority, these echoes may be no louder than those we could find, for example between monasticism and the early, industrialist moral totality of Crowley Iron Works.

Additionally, I've used the intentionally broad, diffuse, and imprecise notion of an "affective structure" to look at everything from a demon, thought, or struggle, in the Hellenized theology of Egyptian Christian monasticism of late antiquity, to a sin, for Western medieval Catholicism, to the symptoms of humorism, to neuroses, to "mental style," to stigmatized behaviors, to stereotyped pathologies, to the

symptomatic clusters of modern biomedical mental disorders, to mainstream productivist ethics, to various neologisms for highly psychologized or affective blockages to contemporary work, to political resistance, to the “infrapolitics” of soldiering, slowdowns, and quitting. Managementality and the affective resistances to work of late capitalism may rearticulate aspects of the acedia problematic, but they do not do so as sins or as struggles of people seeking spiritual purification. This series of structures has very little in common and probably no center. Over this long course of human history, emotional life has been understood, pathologized, managed, medicalized, and articulated political identities that could be redeployed using these various categories. The challenge of thinking through this history is not so much finding commonalities and differences, but articulating a framework that doesn’t distort the many movements and positions inherent within it, in its striations. I may not have succeeded in this effort, but I hope to have modeled a way of thinking about the totality of a series of relationships that is capable of being surprised by and interested in elements that contradict overarching narratives, including both traditional narratives and its own.

Phenomenologically, I’ve tried to sketch a genealogy of a series of affective forms through which a relationship between what we would now call depression and resistances to labor unfolds: acedia, laziness, neurasthenia, the work of melancholia, depression, the mood disorder, mood management, and managementality. Philosophically, this same genealogy appears as something like a genealogy of alienation, though in saying this there are indubitable and important gaps which I will

not attempt to fill.

Monastic labor was not alienated in the modern, capitalist sense. It did not involve a strict separation from nature, though it did involve a separation from the former life. Authoritarian leadership of monasteries was established from the start, rather than being progressively intensified in response to a need to increase the rate of exploitation. The question of acedia erupts not with respect to the work process narrowly speaking, but over the entirety of monastic praxis. In joining a monastery, the monk made a choice essentially to alienate his will, to submit to the will of God as specified by a daily routine, the rules of a community, and a spiritual father. The struggle of monasticism represented in acedia involved the question of how to examine one's own, internal will and bring it into line with this external will to which one had voluntarily alienated oneself, in an act of alienation that was understood as an act of freedom. Falling victim to the struggle of acedia implied a negative, secondary alienation following upon the initial, positive alienation: having made the choice of conversion, one is found unwilling or unable to carry it out. One is alienated from the former life and alienated from God, precisely nowhere, stuck. This struggle of acedia may be seen as an antecedent to the alienation of labor, in the sense that in acedia the monastic life confronts the monk as something alien and monstrous. However, monastic acedia does not structuralize or progressively intensify this alienation, which is the essential dynamic of alienation under capitalism, presuming instead that the sufferer can work his way out of this deadly struggle. This cure often involved the very deliberate alienation of the brethren, who were instructed to shun the brother

suffering from acedia until he got better.

In modern, industrial capitalism, alienation appears as the negation of the productivist ethos and as a philosophical name for the internal affective structure of what is stigmatized, from the outside, as laziness. It also appears as a name for a certain kind of madness, which is cast outside of history. Melancholia remains in a strange, liminal stance, sometimes emerging within history as a rarefied condition of greatness and inspiration, at other times variously pathologized and contained as a species of madness. Neurasthenia appears for a while as a condition which recaptures the relationship between the social alienation of modern life, the overwork aspect of alienated labor, and mild, mental alienation, but it collapses relatively quickly under its own breadth.

Only in late capitalism do we get a sustained reanimation of this problematic in which the alienation of labor, especially in light of subjective labor, and some combination of social alienation and mild, mental alienation come together. Depression seems to have this breadth of being a kind of malady of the age, a late capitalist successor of sorts to neurasthenia, in which social alienation and the anxieties of modern life get put together with relatively mild mental alienation. By this perhaps slippery notion of “mild, mental alienation,” I mean a mental otherness that does not render the sufferer radically excluded from the community of reason and control of his own person, as in madness, but instead isolated from human community while functioning within it to a greater or lesser extent. Such a notion of mild, mental alienation has more in common with generalized dysthymia than with major

depressive breakdowns, though even these may be seen as a relative otherness in comparison with the radical otherness which becomes the status of madness or insanity.

On the side of developments in the labor process and the activity of work of advanced, late capitalism, we see the emergence of new modalities of management which appropriate workers' affective and symbolic subjective capacities as a key resource being purchased as part of labor power. The high modern capitalist managerial apparatus was mainly interested in workers' affective states from the standpoint of suppressing a diversity of them under the rubric of the stigma of laziness, stimulating a productivist ethos amongst advancing sectors, or pathologizing them as part of a program of governmentality, moral example, and colonial ideology. In contrast, the late modern capitalist managerial apparatus seeks not so much to suppress affects but to cultivate affective displays and moods, such as, variously, affiliative behavior, service with a smile, creative disorder, an aura of authenticity, or initiative.

From the standpoint of the worker, managementality presents itself as the progressive alienation of the activity of work. Under high modern capitalism, the archetypal worker was engaged in industrial production and alienated labor was a series of separations in which the worker confronted the physical product of her work and the activity of her work as something foreign. Under late advanced capitalism, the product of labor is more likely to be a subjective one, and the work process involves elements of mood management. Thus, instead of a series of separations, the

primary form of alienation a worker faces is often dissociation within her own subjectivity. Alienation as dissociation is irreducibly psychological, and a series of concrete “alienations” appear which are highly psychologized resistances to work, like burnout, compassion fatigue, writers’ block, procrastination, and a foul ennui of office culture. Thus, even as depression appears as an articulation of social alienation and mild, mental alienation which can no longer avoid the question of its relationship with work, the alienation of labor is rearticulated in a psychologized form.

Figure 1: Employment and wages of the largest occupations, May 2011

Occupation	Percent of total employment	Employment	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage	Type of Labor
Retail Salespersons	3.30%	4270550	\$12.08	25130	Affective, Symbolic
Cashiers	2.6	3314870	9.73	20230	Symbolic
Office Clerks, General	2.2	2828140	13.9	28920	Symbolic
Combined Food Prep & Serv Workers, Incl. Fast Food	2.2	2799430	9.03	18790	Affective, Bodily, Reproductive
Registered Nurses*	2.1	2724570	33.23	69110	Affective, Symbolic, Reproductive
Waiters and Waitresses	1.8	2289010	10.05	20890	Affective, Symbolic, Reproductive
Customer Service Representatives	1.7	2212820	15.92	33120	Affective, Symbolic
Janitors & Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeepers	1.6	2068460	11.94	24840	Bodily, Reproductive
Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Hand	1.6	2063580	12.62	26240	Mainly industrial, total bodily, not detailed: gen'l labor
Secretaries & Admin Assts, Except Legal, Med, Exec	1.5	1955570	15.87	33020	Symbolic
General and Operations Managers	1.4	1805030	55.04	114490	Management
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	1.4	1782800	11.66	24250	Symbolic
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1.3	1643470	17.37	36120	Symbolic
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1.2	1508620	19.15	39830	Transit
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants*	1.1	1466700	12.22	25420	Affective, Bodily, Reproductive

From http://www.bls.gov/oes/2011/may/featured_data.htm

Note: all data is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; I have added “Type of Labor” annotations only.

Figure 2: Occupations with the most job growth, 2010 and projected 2020
(Numbers in thousands)

2010 National Employment Matrix title	Employment		Change, 2010-20		Median annual wage, 2010	Type of Labor
	2010	2020	Number	Percent		
Total, All Occupations	143,068.2	163,537.1	20,468.9	14.3	\$33,840	
Registered Nurses	2,737.4	3,449.3	711.9	26.0	64,690	Affective, Symbolic, Reproductive
Retail Salespersons	4,261.6	4,968.4	706.8	16.6	20,670	Affective, Symbolic
Home Health Aides	1,017.7	1,723.9	706.3	69.4	20,560	Affective, Bodily, Reproductive
Personal Care Aides	861.0	1,468.0	607.0	70.5	19,640	Affective, Bodily, Reproductive
Office Clerks, General	2,950.7	3,440.2	489.5	16.6	26,610	Symbolic
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	2,682.1	3,080.1	398.0	14.8	17,950	Affective, Bodily, Reproductive
Customer Service Representatives	2,187.3	2,525.6	338.4	15.5	30,460	Affective, Symbolic
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,604.8	1,934.9	330.1	20.6	37,770	Transit
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	2,068.2	2,387.3	319.1	15.4	23,460	Mainly industrial, total bodily, not detailed: gen'l labor
Postsecondary Teachers	1,756.0	2,061.7	305.7	17.4	45,690	Affective, Symbolic, Reproductive
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	1,505.3	1,807.2	302.0	20.1	24,010	Affective, Bodily, Reproductive
Childcare Workers	1,282.3	1,544.3	262.0	20.4	19,300	Affective, Symbolic, Bodily, Reproductive
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1,898.3	2,157.4	259.0	13.6	34,030	Symbolic
Cashiers	3,362.6	3,612.8	250.2	7.4	18,500	Symbolic
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1,476.5	1,725.3	248.8	16.8	51,660	Affective, Symbolic, Reproductive
Receptionists and Information Clerks	1,048.5	1,297.0	248.5	23.7	25,240	Affective, Symbolic
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	2,310.4	2,556.8	246.4	10.7	22,210	Bodily, Reproductive
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	1,151.5	1,392.3	240.8	20.9	23,400	Bodily, arguably Reproductive
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	1,430.0	1,653.4	223.4	15.6	52,440	Manufacturing sector, w/symbolic characteristics
Construction Laborers	998.8	1,211.2	212.4	21.3	29,280	construction
Medical Secretaries	508.7	718.9	210.2	41.3	30,530	Symbolic, Reproductive
First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	1,424.4	1,627.8	203.4	14.3	47,460	Symbolic/Management
Carpenters	1,001.7	1,197.6	196.0	19.6	39,530	construction
Waiters and Waitresses	2,260.3	2,456.2	195.9	8.7	18,330	Affective, Symbolic, Reproductive
Security Guards	1,035.7	1,230.7	195.0	18.8	23,920	Affective, Bodily
Teacher Assistants	1,288.3	1,479.3	191.1	14.8	23,220	Affective, Symbolic, Reproductive
Accountants and Auditors	1,216.9	1,407.6	190.7	15.7	61,690	Symbolic
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	752.3	920.8	168.5	22.4	40,380	Affective, Symbolic, Bodily, Reproductive
Physicians and Surgeons	691.0	859.3	168.3	24.4	111,570	Affective, Symbolic, Reproductive, Management

Source: Employment Projections program, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_104.htm

Note: all data is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; I have added “Type of Labor” annotations only.

Figure 3: Fastest growing occupations, 2010 and projected 2020
(Numbers in thousands)

2010 National Employment Matrix title	Employment		Change, 2010-20		Median annual wage, 2010	Type of Labor
	2010	2020	Number	Percent		
Total, All Occupations	143,068.1	163,537.1	20,468.9	14.3	\$33,840	
Personal Care Aides	861.0	1,468.0	607.0	70.5	19,640	Affective, Bodily, may be Reproductive
Home Health Aides	1,017.7	1,723.9	706.3	69.4	20,560	Affective, Bodily, Reproductive
Biomedical Engineers	15.7	25.4	9.7	61.7	81,540	Symbolic, Reproductive
Helpers--Brickmasons, Blockmasons, Stonemasons, and Tile and Marble Setters	29.4	47.0	17.6	60.1	27,780	construction
Helpers--Carpenters	46.5	72.4	25.9	55.7	25,760	construction
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	80.2	121.9	41.7	52.0	29,710	Affective, Symbolic; Care of animals reproductive??
Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers	19.1	28.4	9.3	48.6	38,430	construction
Physical Therapist Assistants	67.4	98.2	30.8	45.7	49,690	Affective, Symbolic, Bodily, Reproductive
Helpers--Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	57.9	84.2	26.3	45.4	26,740	construction
Meeting, Convention, and Event Planners	71.6	102.9	31.3	43.7	45,260	Affective, Symbolic
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	53.7	77.1	23.4	43.5	64,380	Symbolic, Reproductive
Occupational Therapy Assistants	28.5	40.8	12.3	43.3	51,010	Affective, Symbolic, Bodily, Reproductive
Physical Therapist Aides	47.0	67.3	20.3	43.1	23,680	Affective, Symbolic, Bodily, Reproductive
Glaziers	41.9	59.6	17.7	42.4	36,640	construction
Interpreters and Translators	58.4	83.1	24.6	42.2	43,300	Symbolic
Medical Secretaries	508.7	718.9	210.2	41.3	30,530	Symbolic, Reproductive
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	282.7	399.3	116.6	41.2	60,570	Affective, Symbolic
Marriage and Family Therapists	36.0	50.8	14.8	41.2	45,720	Affective, Symbolic, possibly Reproductive
Brickmasons and Blockmasons	89.2	125.3	36.1	40.5	46,930	construction
Physical Therapists	198.6	276.0	77.4	39.0	76,310	Affective, Symbolic, Bodily, Reproductive
Dental Hygienists	181.8	250.3	68.5	37.7	68,250	Affective, Symbolic, Reproductive
Bicycle Repairers	9.9	13.6	3.7	37.6	23,660	Symbolic component, but w/manufactured goods
Audiologists	13.0	17.8	4.8	36.8	66,660	Symbolic, Reproductive
Health Educators	63.4	86.6	23.2	36.5	45,830	Affective, Symbolic, Reproductive
Stonemasons	15.6	21.4	5.7	36.5	37,180	construction
Cost Estimators	185.4	252.9	67.5	36.4	57,860	Symbolic, assoc. w/manufacturing and construction
Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists	100.0	136.5	36.4	36.4	76,700	Symbolic, Reproductive
Mental Health Counselors	120.3	163.9	43.6	36.3	38,150	Affective, Symbolic, Reproductive
Pile-Driver Operators	4.1	5.6	1.5	36.0	47,860	construction

Source: Employment Projections program, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_103.htm

Note: all data is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; I have added "Type of Labor" annotations only.

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