

GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT

AN ESSAY ON THE NATURE OF WORK

by Gabriela J.M. Felten
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I. ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to bring about a discussion on the centrality of gainful employment in our lives. Gainful employment is the single most important factor when trying to identify the social rank of a person as a 1st or 2nd class citizen. People are judged for their qualities by the type of work they do and the salaries they earn. 'Employment' and 'job' are misleading umbrella terms that obscure the operation of a hierarchical economic system which at present ranks the value of an individual based on their salary and profession or lack thereof.

Since employment is the single most important factor used to gauge the quality of well-being in a person's life, it is important to ask how employed people see themselves as well as how others see them when they take time off from work through leisure. It is equally important to ask how unemployed people are seen and how they perceive themselves, when involuntary free time becomes a reality due to unemployment, with underlying reasons such as disability, illness, redundancy-based layoff, or unwillingness to work.

II. INTRODUCTION: WORK EXPERIENCE

There is a clash that occurs between being a financially independent individual and a student of the arts. Over the years, I've grown accustomed to financing my studies and my artistic practice with income from short-term menial jobs. These jobs provided me with a reliable salary, while the profession I was learning through my studies required patience and diligence from my part, but held no guarantee of an income in the future. This reality has made it difficult to prioritize one thing over the other, since a menial job guarantees income but an educational trajectory in the arts leads to self-development.

When I graduated with honors from the Illustration department at the California College of the Arts in 2005, I went straight to work as a server at a salad bar based in Berkeley. At the same time, I got a job at a non-profit organization aimed at preparing teenage music lovers to vote for the Democratic party in the 2008 US elections. I found I had to make a choice between these two very different jobs. The salad bar was close to my home in Oakland, while the NGO was in a gentrified, formal industrial area of San Francisco, right across the bay from where I lived. Since the NGO did not cover my travelling costs, the choice was easy. I forfeited a more prestigious, lower-pay NGO job for a menial service industry job which paid cash-in-hand.

Around this time, my F-1 Student visa expired and I joined the ranks of illegal worker migrants. To be honest, this is the richest I've ever been in my life but my financial stability came at a very dear price. As an illegal worker, I could not practice the profession that cost me 5 years and \$159,250.00 to learn. As an illegal worker I had no right to participate in civic life as a voter, a taxpayer or as a receiver of certain infrastructural guarantees. Since I held a European passport, I decided to repatriate to the Netherlands, via Canada. In Toronto I took a job updating the contacts-database for the cultural attaché at the Dutch Consulate. The most artistic thing I did at this job was to hand-write over 100 invitations to the infamous expat Queen's Day reception, in the best mock-calligraphy I could muster.

Once in the Netherlands, I landed a sales job at a chain of fancy national department stores, and a receptionist job at a popular computer reseller in Den Haag. Disappointed with my social life in Den Haag, I moved to Amsterdam and became a tour guide. Overwhelmed by the cost of living in Amsterdam, I moved back to Den Haag. Slowly but surely, my life was slipping into apathy and stagnation.

Through my jobs as a department store clerk, a receptionist and a tour guide, I was able to make myself financially independent. Standard 1-year job

contracts gave me access to the private housing market, to commercial goods and services, to a higher quality of material life and to a certain degree of self-worth, derived solely from my salary. What I did not gain access to was self-development. At no point were my thoughts or input influential to the menial jobs I held. Only a strict but charismatic adherence to the sales pitch script was rewarded. Something about the repetition of this script, tailored to the desires of each individual customer, became tiresome and redundant.

Redundancy is also part of the package in a menial job. As a worker I was completely replaceable, at any time. This became obvious when in December of 2012, the owner of the fancy jeans shop I worked for, cut all contact with us (his 6 employees) and disappeared without paying our last salaries. The shop was bankrupt, and had been taken over by a curator. Some weeks after the final liquidation sale, my colleagues and I found ourselves at the Dutch unemployment center, the UWV. The UWV was taking over the payment of our last salaries, as well as re-directing us toward new employment. Each of us had an individual interview to help us find new jobs. I had already found an opening as a receptionist at a hair salon, but the interviewer insisted that I go through the official UWV vacancy listing: a bleak and desolate repository of ill-fitting job offers. Within a week I had scanned my new 6-month contract and emailed it to

my interviewer, and I was free of any obligation to go through the listing. Within 9 months, I was let go from my position at the hair salon: there wasn't enough money to keep me on board and I was not creating any significant revenue for the franchise.

By this time it felt like I was leading a double life, that I was both an artist and a menial worker, trying to exert the same amount of effort on two separate life trajectories. Neither trajectory was winning out against the other. There was no moment in which my aspirations as an artist became financially viable, giving me the freedom to quit my menial job and focus on developing my practice. It is an exhausting way to live, and also a default way to live, because I am surrounded by people who do the same.

My question about the centrality of jobs in our lives comes from this experience. Having had so many menial jobs has made it clear to me that me that my role and my personality are not defined by serving salads, pinning trouser hems, or pointing out historical buildings I learned about only the night before. What these jobs made me realize is that most employers want to single out the appropriate characteristics needed to make sales and refine it to the point that it fully represents the personality of the worker. I think about the answers I've given when someone casually asks me what I do in a social situation.

I apologetically mention my current job and then quickly add what it is that I really do as an artist. That sounds like I am a professional at one thing and an amateur at the other, while what I'm really trying say is that I would like to make a profession out of my hobby. However, bills need paying and the only way I've experienced financial independence is through menial jobs.

I am not alone in this experience and fortunately my research has lead me to writers who have dealt with this topic in various ways. In their writings, Hannah Arendt, Thorstein Veblen, Bertrand Russell, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels question the role of hierarchy in the creation of culture. They explore the differences between work and labor as well as the creation of a 1st and 2nd class citizenry. Viktor E. Frankl, Burrhus F. Skinner, Jonathan Rifkin and Rutger Bregman meditate on the idea of a society based on meaningful self-development instead of toil. Max Weber explains how our judgemental attitude towards employment and unemployment can be traced back to the Calvinist belief in predestiny. Jelle Brandt Corstius shows us how to be a smart traveller when visiting difficult countries in our free time, while Lucy R. Lippard sheds a critical light on the hidden economies behind leisure travel, and the duplicitous hierarchies created by this economy.

In this thesis I strive to show the difference between work and labor, in addition to highlighting the important role

leisure plays in shaping us as interdependent individuals. I also discuss the need for a specific type of motivation for being gainfully employed as well as for deliberate self-development, stemming from finding meaning and purpose in one's own life.

III. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORK AND LABOR: HOW THIS DIFFERENCE IS DISSIMULATED BY THE UMBRELLA TERM GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT.

“Este es un sistema en que cualquiera puede ser rico. Ojo, no todos; cualquiera.”

(“This is a system in which anyone could be rich; anyone, nota bene, not everyone.”)

- *“NO” (Pablo Larraín, 2012)*

Being employed is an extremely human activity. Our youth is spent preparing us to become competent, capable individuals who contribute to society on an individual and collective level. Extensive time and energy are spent pinpointing the intellectual, emotional, and physical strengths and weaknesses of a person so that individuals can enjoy their own talents while simultaneously benefiting from the talents of others through employment. Humans are the only animals that have domesticated the instinct of survival into a daily routine, creating history and culture in its wake. Often, the words ‘work’ and ‘labor’ are used interchangeably but both refer to being employed. However, it is important to make a distinction between ‘work’ and ‘labor’ for the purpose of this essay.

Work and labor both refer to a fundamental activity that takes up most of the time in our day and is practiced invariably. 'Labor' refers specifically to the activity of keeping oneself alive in order to continue surviving to the next day. 'Labor' refers to the human strategy of subsistent, hand-to-mouth activity and is cyclical in nature because it happens over and over until the end of a life span is reached. One labors to live, to reproduce and to provide fuel for the next round of labor. Aristotle compared the practicing of labor by humans to the lives of non-human animals. Let us take the example of a fox.

A fox is representative of all foxes, in that it is born, hunts, eats, reproduces, and dies. It makes a den for its young and they, in turn, leave the nest to start the cycle anew. All foxes do this, and all foxes have done this since the organism 'fox' has existed. There has been no variation in the being of a fox in history and yet we know very well that a fox has specific fox characteristics which make it a fox, and not a fish, or a mouse. Yet the thing that connects all living organisms on this planet is the cyclical nature of a specific set of behaviors that provide the essential platform for survival. For most animals, this cycle is a-historical: it happens outside of history and is forgotten as soon as the the fruits of labor have been consumed.

Work, on the other hand, is an activity that can only exist if the platform for survival has been solidly built and consistently upheld by the practice of labor. When the practice of labor produces a surplus of time by managing survival efficiently, work can be done. Unlike instinct, work steps outside the cycle of birth and death to transmit human ideas across time. Work is linear in nature, in that it has a beginning and an end, and adds to the human artifice: it adds to the collection of human things. Work creates a pause in the life cycle to recollect facts, remember events and create history. Work also enables the recognition of an individual; labor does not.

In her book *The Human Condition* (1958), philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) uses two terms which describe the relationship between work and labor in a hierarchical way. She names the practitioners of labor 'Animal Laborans' and the practitioners of work 'Homo Faber.' The use of the word Animal (beast) is in contrast to the word Homo (human), and implies a relationship of dominion in which a beast of burden is guided by one who holds the reins. 'Animal Laborans' is the laboring human, the anonymous force caught in a cycle of toil in order to provide a platform for survival. 'Homo Faber' is the 'creating man,' the recognized individual who can reach across time with his or her work, the protagonist and shaper of both culture and history.

Both labor and work fit into the category of employment, and people who practice labor or work for remuneration are said to have a job. The act of being employed means receiving a salary for services rendered, whether that is in the category of labor or work. Employment is an act of validation for both an employee who provides a service, and a society that benefits from the result of the service rendered: the individual and the community mutually reinforce each other. By having acquired a skill through education, or by having no skill but still putting oneself to the service of an employer, one contributes to society actively. The level of the contribution to society and the level of self-worth one feels, can arguably be measured through the payment that one receives for a skill learned. Unskilled employees for example, in construction or the garment manufacturing industry must yield a high quantity of services before receiving a very low salary, often not enough to eke out a living. Yet skilled employees, such as a dentist for example, can charge €12.50 per 5 minutes of teeth cleaning for their services because of the skill level they have achieved after an investment in education.

Through the use of the umbrella term 'job,' an illegally contracted migrant construction worker in Qatar and a computer programmer at Google fall into the same category of being gainfully employed. Their proof is the remuneration received which contributes to their survival.

The word 'job' is a term that artificially equalizes the economically polarized situations that different citizens experience. This artificial equalizing factor encourages the interchangeable use of the words work and labor and validates the unofficial but evident hierarchical structure that divides a population into 1st and 2nd class citizens.

In 1948 B.F. Skinner (1904-1990), a psychologist and behaviorist, published a book named *Walden Two* (1948). In this book he explores in theory the workings of a utopian society whose citizens have undergone a significant behavioral re-education. By establishing a system of rotation between necessary labors and sought-after work, the community of *Walden Two* manages to erase the hierarchy responsible for the relationship between 1st and 2nd class citizens, while creating shorter workdays and more leisure time. Through the character of Dr. Frazier (a psychologist, founder and resident of the community of *Walden Two*), Skinner voices his criticism of education. He states that education works randomly: while many individuals are schooled, few receive the benefits. Education is like a shotgun spray, in which the target may or may not be hit. This characteristic of education divides the population into those who can absorb knowledge efficiently and those who can't.

In the community of Walden Two, it is not necessary to be an expert in anything to gain access to a specific kind of labor or work. People who have certain knowledge apply it and teach it to others who are willing to learn. They are also allowed to experiment and innovate. Ideally, the community of Walden Two eradicates the idea of a platform of labor provided by expendable people to uphold a community in charge of culture and the human artifice, represented only by a small few. In the book things run smoothly and Walden Two is a utopia, and it seems like only the closed minded characters are unwilling to see its potential. In the 1960's and 1970's however, communities based on Walden Two often failed, largely due to internal conflict or failure to provide the economic means necessary to keep the community running without resorting to outside income. Other communities however, have been running smoothly for some time, but because they live in relative privacy we don't hear much about them.¹

The opposite of this kind of thinking is the idea of 'natural slavery.' Ancient Greek philosophers² Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC) and Plato (428/427 or 424/423 BC – 348/347 BC) had some strong views about this. Though they had many philosophical disagreements, they agreed that slavery was a natural and normal condition of some human beings. Aristotle argued that the souls of slaves were not fully formed and that slaves depended

on a master to make decisions for them and help them to be useful to society by using slaves as a tool toward a greater good. Plato argued that nature itself was a template of hierarchies that people emulated without even trying, saying that the weak would always be ruled by the strong and that the examples of cases like these were manifold in the 'neutral' theatre of nature. Christian philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and St. Augustine (354-430) also agreed that slavery was a necessary condition, but their justification of was that slavery was a kind of Christian penance. In spite of their valuable contribution to the human artifice, these philosophers justified the idea of slavery: the condition of a person who becomes the property of another. Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) specifically states that the practice of slavery is illegal: "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms." It can be said that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that no person is 'a natural inferior' lacking their own will. No person should be governed by the will and authority of another in order to have a meaningful existence and no person should be relinquished to toil without remuneration or dignified treatment for the sake of the well-being of a wealthier social class. Through the false equality of terms like 'jobs' and 'employment,' it is possible to dissimulate the technical legality of Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We know

for a fact that slavery is still practiced widely, frequently under the guise of employment, taking advantage of refugees and other people in difficult situations to fill positions of menial labor.

There have been movements that tried to equalize the polarization between citizens enforced by the idea of natural slavery and its counterpart; divine right. With their ideal version of Communism, Karl Marx(1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) would have elevated the value of labor by instilling dignity to professions such as factory assembly-line workers and agricultural laborers. The point was to show the immense task at hand in the shape of toil and labor, and to eradicate the anonymity that came with such a job by showing this workforce the systematic gratitude of the nation. By centralizing government, re-distributing private property and providing free education to all children (among other things), Marx and Engels sought to vanquish class differences between the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, and the proletariat. This revolution was an altruistic one, with the goal of civil progress through common well-being at its center. However, Marx and Engels unwittingly created the conditions for a real-time experiment in social behaviorism. They could never have imagined that the that the rift of power created between politicians and population through the communist experiment could be so vast. Corruption, spin-doctoring and inequality became

rampant; much worse than the conditions that Marx and Engels originally tried to overrun. In the years to come, the power of Communist elites would prove harder to overthrow than the bourgeoisie, resulting in despotic mutations such as the Khmer Rouge and the Soviet Union under Stalin. Other movements in which a majority laboring class sought to overthrow traditional hierarchical relationships were the three Servile Wars in ancient Rome (1st: 135 BC - 132 BC, 2nd: 104 BC - 100 BC, 3rd: 73 BC - 71 BC), The French Revolution (1789–1799), The African American Civil Rights Movement (1896 - 1954), and Bolshevism (1903 - 1952).

The main motivator for laboring is to avoid poverty. In order to increase the chances of overcoming the vicious cycle of subsistence living and enter a life of meaningful work, one must be educated. While in principle education is available equally for all who seek it, there are hindering factors such as high tuition fees and age limits that may rule education out for anyone struggling with financial issues that can only be resolved over time. Criminal activity may guarantee quick money but there are multiple legal and ethical repercussions to take into account. Other jobs found in the informal economy that are less blatantly illegal are usually low-skilled and can easily disappear from the market, offering no safety-net when the service is no longer in popular demand. The correlation between existing educations and the job

market itself is not very strong. Education is marketed as a product, in which ‘following your passion³’ would be the key to a financially stable future and a complementary feeling of self-worth. Institutions of learning are modelled after the Platonic Academy, which began as a place of leisure where free-born Greek men could develop interests and engage in public discourse in a meaningful manner.⁴ Contemporary higher education degrees are supposed to do the same. The actual job market curbs expectations of further personal development through the use of “reality checks,” disassociating knowledge gained in academia from “the real world,” sending the contrary message that the importance survival outweighs the marketing slogan of following of one’s passion.

It is common to attribute success or failure directly to an individual without investigating possible causes in the social context in which he or she participates. The importance of the individual in society has grown so much in the last 30 years that redefining the globalized world and the intimate relationships of dependence created between nations by the free market is not as important as redefining the individual to fit the needs of the free market. Attaching a sense of false dignity and nobility to practitioners of menial jobs does not patch up the chasm of inequality experienced by those who labor or work, and those who are free to spend their time in whatever way they want, without ever engaging in survival

activities, because of their extreme wealth. These are demographics that barely come into contact with each other, other than to propagate the supply and demand of consumer goods and services.

IV. GOALS, PURPOSE AND MEANING: HOW OUR LIVES ARE SHAPED SPIRITUALLY BY FINDING THE RIGHT JOB.

The activity of employment belongs to both the secular realm and the spiritual realm. A job is secular because it deals with worldly things: it provides food, shelter and civil benefits. It also has a spiritual side: a job consumes so much of our time that, ideally, it leads to something greater than ourselves. In our Western capitalist democratic countries, there is the idea that one should serve the needs of the state as well as the self, no matter what social class one belongs to. This act of being useful serves a greater purpose than that of subsistence: meaning is added to the life of those who, in being employed, keep society from crumbling into chaos. However big or small the task, each contributes to maintaining a certain balance in the world. Finding our professional calling as citizens is of the utmost importance, and finding our place in the job market is a marker of personal success, communal validation, and of a goal achieved.

In the Netherlands, there is a strong tendency to streamline the education of every citizen toward the job market. In kindergarten and elementary school, all students belong to the same pool of potential. In their

12th year of life, students get separated into 3 distinct learning trajectories⁵ according to their motivation, intellectual and physical capabilities for the duration of high school. These trajectories are VMBO, HAVO, and VWO, which can loosely be translated as vocational high school, polytechnic high school, and academic high school respectively. It is possible to upgrade from VMBO to HAVO, and from HAVO to VWO, but it largely depends on the motivation of the students. Once high school is completed, the optional but strongly recommended trajectory towards higher education can be described as follows: VMBO students attend an MBO institution for further vocational training. HAVO students can get into a HBO institution; a bachelor-level degree can be obtained. VWO students can get into WO (the universities of the country). Unfortunately, the separation of students into vocational, technical and academic groups at different schools foster behaviors that encourage the segregation of social classes: even the neighborhoods in our cities are categorized by agglomerations of the types of people who live there, i.e.; working class neighborhood. However, the Dutch educational system also instills meaning to the life of its citizens, by creating a specific bank of knowledge within the individual that he or she can use for the duration of their lifetime.

By creating and absorbing such a bank of knowledge, the life of an individual is suffused with a plethora of meaning and purpose: one is equipped with specific skills, which in turn are needed by others in order to complete a task such as building a road or treating a disease. Skills give value and a sense of self-worth to an individual, especially when these skills are exercised and compensated. Whether on purpose or accidental, a streamlined school-to-job-market system such as the one found in the Netherlands creates a secularized spiritual dimension to the life of a citizen. To find life worthwhile through exercising one's chosen profession is commonplace and desirable.

A side effect of having a streamlined school-to-job-market system is a large group of misplaced individuals; people who follow an educational trajectory only to find that one is not psychologically or physically suited to the vocation trained for. As the decision to what trajectory to follow is made at the age 12 in the Netherlands, it is not difficult to see why schooling is so difficult for many, as some students end up absorbing a bank of knowledge that they have no intention to exercise. Psychologist and writer Viktor E. Frankl explores this phenomenon in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* (1946). In his book, Frankl explores the matter of spirituality, and the act of creating meaning for one's life through one's own pursuits. Failure to do so results in an existential crisis, in which

Frankl describes the presence of a frustration associated with the inability “...to find a concrete meaning in in personal existence, that is to say, the will to meaning.” Frankl describes the experience of not finding meaning in one’s life as a leading cause of a specific type of neuroses, namely noögenic neuroses, which pertain to the realm of human intellect. These are different than psychological neuroses, which come from the realm of human emotion. The feeling of fulfillment experienced when one’s job is meaningful is spiritual in nature. Feelings of inadequacy, emptiness, and self-doubt associated with having a meaningless job can also inspire a type of soul searching in a person, a term which also points to the spiritual.

The Department of Surplus Person Affairs was a project I started in 2011 to address the weak correlation between the expectations of basic-to-advanced educated youngsters and the reality of job market offers. As the title of the work suggests, the inefficient correlation between educational marketing towards youngsters and the reality of available jobs on the market results generations of discarded minds, whose limited options include practicing unskilled professions in order to obtain a small salary without any further developments. Using a survey of 20 questions and presenting myself as a Surplus Person, I interviewed people under the age of 40 who were struggling to match personal development

with earning money, people who were unemployed in spite of being educated with an acquired ability, and people involved in the Arts. My findings conclude that it is precisely the initiative of getting money that prevents people from developing in an altruistic and social manner, though the latent tendency to do so is present.

My starting point for this project was the research of Dr. J.B. Calhoun⁶, in which the effects of overpopulation were studied in mice during an experiment called Universe 25. The most noteworthy result of his experiment was the discrepancy noted between mice who kept on behaving normally despite the overcrowding of their living space and those who refused to eat, over-groomed themselves, killed their young and led otherwise solitary lives. Calhoun saw Universe 25 as a small-scale, real life reflection for the effects that humans would suffer if overpopulation became a widespread phenomenon. For the purposes of my artwork, I chose to focus on the mice that displayed erratic behavior and, like Calhoun, drew a parallel to the human world.

It was part of my research to be able to categorize certain people under the title of 'Surplus Person.' I looked for those who were not able to follow a successful educational trajectory into the job market, whose existence does not contribute to pumping up our economy, and those who experience hopelessness and

frustration at a glass ceiling between a fixed station in life and social mobility. Not only is the notion of 'surplus' absolutely necessary in a Capitalist Democratic society, as it is the very definition of profit, it also characterizes the treatment of things and people that become obsolete or unnecessary. People who are illiterate or have a limited education and people who earn so little income that apart from subsistence they have no purchasing power are literally 2nd class citizens. People who cannot find an appropriate job placement despite an extensive educational trajectory are also 2nd class citizens.

With this artwork, my aim was to make visible the elusive demographic of unsatisfied people in our world, and encourage them to take on the identity of a Surplus Person. I travelled to Madrid, where the youth unemployment rate is very high, and set up an office in which I could conduct a 30 minute long survey-conversation with visitors. The use of a survey helped the visitor and myself reach a deep level of engagement very quickly, in which existential worries and doubts were addressed. Once the status of Surplus Person was established, one could begin to think of oneself not as useless, but as an untapped resource, but not necessarily in a Capitalist way. The survey can be found in my publication *The Department of Surplus Person Affairs*.

Sociologist Max Weber has an explanation for the way in which we feel a spiritual affinity with our jobs, or characterize them as soulless, soul crushing or mediocre. In his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-5) Weber forms a hypothesis to explain the meaning-infused nature of doing business in this part of the world, where everyday secular ethics are informed by a strong Protestant past. Calvinism, Pietism, Methodism and Baptism-Based Protestant faiths rely on the dogma of 'predestiny.' These religions become rival forces to the Catholic church in England, the Netherlands and France in the mid to late 1500's: Protestant converts begin to live their lives and conduct business according to the new oppositional teachings.

In Protestant Christianity, 'predestiny' is the idea that all events -past, present and future- have been pre-orchestrated by God. In this line of thinking, the earth is already populated on one hand by those who are selected to go into heaven and be saved, and on the other hand, by those who are doomed to eternal hellfire. According to John Calvin, the founder of Calvinism, there is absolutely no way of telling which of our fellow humans have fallen in or out of God's favor. The mystical bond in which a sinner can approach God through the clergy in order to plead (or pay) for mercy and receive forgiveness is excised by the dogma of predestiny. Before the term existentialism was ever coined, Calvin's

teachings alienated humankind from the communal bond with their god and fellow worshippers. However, unlike the existentialists, early Protestantism was not absurd and devoid of meaning. In fact, the world had only one purpose: to glorify the existence of God. Whether one did or did not believe in predestiny was of no consequence: a new standard had been set and much like the Capitalist Democratic system in which we live, everyone was expected to conform to the standard.

Calvin claimed that the doomed and the saved would only discover their fate in the afterlife on Judgment Day, but his followers insisted on looking for clues in their earthly lives that they would ultimately gain access to heaven. Even Calvin himself did not doubt he was chosen. He felt he was a vehicle of God's will. However, in accord with the dogma of predestiny he could not know for sure so he compensated for his doubts by being a zealot. Merchant Calvinists of the middle class took his cue, and individually examined their lives to see if they matched up the the (unknown) criteria of being a 'chosen one.' Did their work feel like it was a channel for God's will? Was it easy to obey austere Calvinist commandments? Then surely they must be chosen for heaven. Was it difficult to keep up with the demands of the faith? Was one troubled and doubtful? Then surely, they must be doomed to hell. Nevertheless, all were expected to praise God for the sake of it, and maybe expectations could be dispelled.

Zealotry and rebellion made it possible for Protestantism to subdue large amounts of the population of Northern Europe. Calvinist authority was characterized principally by imbuing the lives of those who did not have a purpose with their own Calvinist purpose: that of incessantly praising God. Calvinists believed that one had only oneself to thank for the misfortunes or fortunes that befell them. The reasoning for why orphans, illegitimate children, unwed mothers, addicts, homeless people, the chronically ill and the poor were suffering was because they had fallen from grace. As a result, those who could not help themselves to a better life were criminalized. When a citizen of a society is defined by having or lacking a strong sense of purpose, it follows that those with a lack of purpose are governed by those who do not doubt themselves. Authoritarianism was the solution for the issue: Calvinist politics condemned the criminalized poor to the anonymity and meanness of forced labor. This marks the dubious birth of poorhouses, workhouses, national healthcare systems and welfare states all over Northern Europe. The charitable purpose of these places was obscured by a judgemental atmosphere that was supposed to encourage rehabilitation.

As the dogma of predestiny worked its way into political life, it created a climate of total and irrevocable dichotomy. It seemed natural that the world should be

divided into 1st and 2nd class citizens and that, contrary to Catholic and Lutheran beliefs, there could be no reversal of this fate through confession and penitence. Second class citizens such as non-believers and the criminalized poor did not have access to social or economic mobility. Instead, they had to make do with a fixed station in life.

Although the Protestant revolution has long given way to secularized thinking in the 20th and 21st century, it is not difficult to draw parallels between ideologies that circulated in the 16th century and now. Many Protestant practices have become stripped of their religious overtones to become contemporary secular thinking. For example, criminalizing the poor and homeless, despite social welfare infrastructure, is still practiced. In Hungary, a set of laws systematically put in place since 2011 is making homelessness a punishable crime.⁷ Several cities in the the United States of America⁸ have also been passing similar laws since 2006. Besides causing a nuisance by occupying public space, homeless people are deemed unfit to take care of themselves, and are forced to make a choice between prison and rehabilitation through a system that values education and gainful employment as the sole contribution to society. Though there is no official criminalization of the poor in the Netherlands, there is a social stigma attached to people who experience extended periods of illness

or unemployment and become dependent on social welfare. In order for a person to apply and receive a social welfare stipend, one must prove that they are actively looking for employment. Unfortunately, the UWV (Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen: the social welfare institution in the Netherlands) offers a mediocre listing of job placements that one must apply to periodically. People on the dole want to bounce back as soon as possible: it is considered shameful to receive financial support from welfare. There is a feeling of guilt connected with receiving money for 'free,' even though it is barely enough to make ends meet, and the receiving party has always paid taxes during previous periods of employment. Applying for jobs through the ill-researched listing of job placements is a patronizing procedure in which the agency of using one's own networking skills is taken away, and replaced with the will of a national institution that 'knows best.' Negative associations are made with individuals who find themselves financially dependent of the UWV, and not with the institution itself for instilling the individual with guilt and shame.

There are other, milder methods of using this secularized, derived-from-protestantism method of imposing purpose on someone else's life. Recently, the city council of Amsterdam put some certified alcoholic patrons of Oosterpark to work by paying them in beer.⁹ Paying them a salary was deemed inappropriate, since their

earnings would eventually be spent on alcohol anyway. So instead of leaving them to loiter aimlessly in Oosterpark, causing a nuisance to its more respectable patrons, the alcoholics were given a goal: clean up the park for steady supply of beer.

On the other side of the spectrum, there is the segment of well-to-do citizens, who through privileged birth circumstances or extraordinary bouts of ambition also subscribe to the secularized Protestant notion of being 'chosen ones.' The educational system and the job market exerts some pressure to find the "right" kind of work for oneself by following or cultivating one's passion. When one is trapped in a vicious cycle¹⁰ of making ends meet, there is no time to follow one's pursuits. If one is not stressed by financial needs, one is able to perform better in cultivating a passion. In having found a passionate thread and developing it as a skill, one is likely to experience more satisfaction, self-worth, and proper remuneration. Like Calvinism, the false proof of being on the right track spiritually is in the amount of satisfaction you feel in your profession, how much money you get for it and how easily working within this system feels to you. Once achieved, this standpoint makes it easy to look down upon those who are not able to make surplus income with their profession.

In the 1500's it was easy to be a Catholic: you were born into the religion. Becoming a Calvinist was an active choice. The cultish status of financial and personal success to be achieved only by 'those who have chosen correctly' is an undeniable parallel to Calvinist sectarian thought. A willing convert's public and private behavior was heavily scrutinized for months, subjected to a tryout period of faith. The convert was only accepted to the fold if they passed all the tests satisfactorily. Only then did they have access to the Calvinist community, its business networks, the financial benefits and support system within the cult. Our contemporary equivalent of this rite is the passing of numerous tests regarding our intelligence, our social standing, our purchasing power, our ability to influence or to be influenced by others before becoming a decent citizen in adulthood. The goal of these tests is to help us find what makes us happy, but only within a certain framework. The purpose of our happiness is to help us become contributing members of society: one we participate in using indirect means such as democratic voting and purchasing power. The meaning we find in our personal contribution to society is the spiritual satisfaction of being accepted as a valuable individual, but if we cannot find that, we are subjected to infinite rehabilitation therapies, under the notion that there are no alternatives to the social structure we live in now.

V. LEISURE AND FREE TIME: WHO WE ARE WHEN WE'RE NOT WORKING.

“Modern methods of production have given us the possibility of ease and security for all; we have chosen, instead, to have overwork for some and starvation for others.”

- Bertrand Russell, “In Praise of Idleness.”

Many people, though not all, identify themselves with the kind of work they do. It is also a very normal and social question to ask at social gatherings and few people hesitate to answer the question. Who are we in our free time when we are not practicing a profession? Many people revert to hobbies, socializing with friends and family, and to travelling. In the Netherlands, most people earn a salary which enables them to plan for leisure activities. When I was employed by different sized corporate employers, I would enjoy holiday bonuses twice a year, once in summer and once in winter, and was able to afford a modest vacation at the very least. As a counterbalancing measure to work, leisure is encouraged in our workplaces so that everyone has the ability to experience some extended period of non-work in whatever way they choose.

Like work and labor, leisure has developed some

trademarks of its own and is also seen as an opportunity to create jobs to support the necessary infrastructure for leisure. For leisure to occur, it is necessary for a financial surplus to result from a person's earnings. Savings are the financial surplus which enable an individual to plan leisure ahead of time, instead of staying in the cyclical mode of survival. It is difficult to think of leisure without the component of spending money. When one books a vacation, travel and accommodation must be paid for. The food consumed at the destination must be accounted for. Visits to cultural institutions such as museums or social settings such as clubs or bars must also be paid. Even a casual walk through a nature reserve is often preceded by the purchasing of special footwear and a camera.

In countries like the Netherlands, leisure time is integrated into our lives: we take for granted that everyone has a right to take time off from their official job. Time to do what exactly? Sociologist and economist Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) defines leisure as being a 'non-productive consumption of time,' in opposition to work or manual labor. Both of which produce either a good or service, be it cultural or substantial. In 1899, Veblen published a book called *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. In this book he explores the relationship of financial well-being with the ability to experience leisure. In fact, he argues that leisure itself can stem only from a position of extreme wealth passed down from generation to generation, not

only because toil is an all consuming activity with little to no recompense but because of a traditional hierarchical relationship of dominion and servitude between those who have wealth and those who don't. In Veblen's opinion, consuming time without the result of a useful product does result in an intangible product. Veblen's example of European nobility employing a small army of servants to tend to all the productive tasks leaves the masters with time to cultivate their tastes, refine their manners, become experts in decorum and occupy themselves with pastimes that Veblen described as 'quasi-artistic' and 'quasi-scholarly'. We know the 'quasi' nature of cultural pastimes to be hobbyism or amateurism because it is done solely for pleasure and not for financial gains.

Veblen was writing at the turn of the century, when industrialization had established itself irreversibly in the Western world. In industrial terms, a product was very much a consumable good produced purposefully for the private or public sphere. In his analysis of leisure, the wealthy classes had to take pains to demonstrate publicly that they were not working but engaging in leisure. Hobbies and amateurism do result in a certain kind of product, however intangible; experiences and knowledge. Engaging in an activity out of one's own interest causes a change to the banks of knowledge within oneself. Though Veblen spoke strictly of the wealthiest classes during the turn of the century, this internal change applies to anyone

who develops interests outside of their official profession regardless of their socioeconomic standing.

In her book *The Human Condition* (1958), Hannah Arendt analyzes the Marxist claim that communism as a governmental system would abolish the slavish reality that accompanies labor. Using a quote from Marx and Engels' *Deutsche Ideologic*, (1846) she says:

“In communist or socialist society, all professions would, as it were, become hobbies: there would be no painters but only people who among other things spend their time also on painting; people, that is, who ‘do this today and that tomorrow,’ who hunt in the morning, go fishing in the afternoon, raise cattle in the evening, are critics after dinner, as they see fit, without for that matter ever becoming hunters, fishermen, shepherds or critics.” Under this utopian reasoning, work and labor would become a pleasurable way to occupy one’s time, enriching one’s own life and the lives of others by losing its definition of being an obligation or a duty. Ideally, under communism, all goods and services are shared equally amongst the public: subsistence and supporting a wealthy authoritarian class would not be the norm. Similarly, the wealthy authoritarian class would not be able to partake in expensive displays of leisure, because in order for communism to come into being the opulent rich too must become dilettantes in the quasi-knowledge of labor. This ideology reduces all obligation and duty to hobbyism

and amateurism, lending an air of leisure to activities connected to survival. The 20th century has shown us how communism could go horribly wrong, causing famine, genocide and despotism instead of an egalitarian utopian society.

The English aristocrat Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) was everything that Thorstein Veblen described in his "Theory of the Leisure Class." Interested in the changing social climate caused by industrialization, Russell was a dilettante in politics and academics but not need to earn a living with a profession because his noble birth procured him with lifelong financial security, Russell was an advocate for extending leisure to the laboring classes. In 1932 Russell wrote "In Praise of Idleness," an essay written in simple but precise language so that a person of any literate level could read it, about the benefits of leisure. He playfully defends laziness and idleness as sources of great pleasure, because of his wealth, he had experienced this first hand. He acknowledges the existence of a "Slave State," in which hordes of anonymous people serve a small population of opulently rich and bourgeois people in order to retain their own livelihoods. Russell described these anonymous laborers as conditioned by religion and deep-set morality to sincerely believe that the rich are better and more deserving of grace than themselves. They believed they should be grateful to find gainful employment with

such refined people, resigning themselves to a station in life with no possibility of social mobility. It is true that through spending conspicuous amounts of money, small rich families were able to support whole communities by employing every member to their service. In defense of generating this kind of employment, Russell says “what a man earns he usually spends, and in spending he gives employment,” acknowledging a reciprocal albeit lopsided relationship of mutual dependency. These jobs however, are in the service of the wealthy family and do little in the way of personal enrichment for the labor force, such as leisure or self-employment can provide. Russell also admires industrialist Henry Ford’s (1863-1947) corporate employment model: by granting factory employees shorter work days and shorter work weeks, Ford was able to increase factory productivity. As a result of allowing the employees time to themselves, Ford showed leisure to be a key component to a person’s life. By counterbalancing slavish drudgery with rest and the pursuit of one’s own interests outside of work, the employee would benefit the company by way of increased profits.

One of the dreams of Russell and socialism / communism was to reduce working hours in a week to about 15 instead of around 70, releasing laborers from their tiresome obligations and granting them access to the freedom of cultivating themselves as they saw fit.

In an article titled *The Solution to Almost Everything: Working Less* of *De Correspondent*, Dutch journalist Rutger Bregman (1988) makes use of the 1962 cartoon series *The Jetsons* to illustrate the collective dream of achieving shorter work weeks in order to spend more time in leisure. The cartoon is set in the year 2062 where all distasteful household and public labor is taken over by technology, leaving only meaningful professions to be occupied by humans and plenty of time for leisure. There are some blind spots that *The Jetsons* could not predict in all its imaginings of the future, such as the permanent inclusion of women in the workforce. In reality, this change in social structure led to the creation of more jobs, the use of more people as an intellectual resource for the making of profit, and less leisure time for all. In his article “*The Solution for Everything*,” Rutger Bregman demonstrates how working hours indeed diminish throughout the 1960’s and 70’s, making an abrupt turnaround in the 80’s so that during the 90’s working hours began to increase again, crossing the threshold into the 21st century with widespread working-person malaises such as stress and burnout. Opposite to what Bertrand Russell, B.F. Skinner and *The Jetsons* predicted, it is precisely the advancement of technology that blurs the lines between obligation and leisure with obligation engulfing all possibility of leisure as the consumption of technology by the general population increases.

Technology is not only an object of consumption but also one of substitution. One accurate prediction of the future by many science fiction writers such as Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke and Aldous Huxley is that technology would indeed substitute human beings in practicing some unskilled professions. Ironically, this substitution leads to a forced leave from labor in the form of unemployment and underemployment instead of leisure. Professions in the military, specialized personal care, stock market analysis, legal counsel and household maintenance are being taken over by technological advances. A human workforce requires rigorous occupational health and safety standards which can be costly. By investing in specialized technology, companies can substitute health and safety regulations with periodical updates of software and routine maintenance of task-specific machines, creating an opportunity to maximize profits.

In his book *The End of Work* (1996), economist Jeremy Rifkin (1945) goes into detail about the repercussions of being forced into idleness through unemployment as opposed to experiencing leisure as a voluntary pastime. His analysis predicts two different outcomes produced by the two different scenarios of voluntary leisure or involuntary indolence. In the case of voluntary leisure, Rifkin (like Russell, Skinner and Bregman) predicts a utopian scenario in which quasi-artistic and quasi-scholarly pursuits enrich the lives of people as a result

of diminished working hours and more harmonious workplaces. In the case of involuntary indolence, caused either by unemployment or underemployment, Rifkin predicts a dystopian scenario in which protest movements voice the discontent of citizens around the world. Protest movements have indeed been the protagonists of news media in the first two decades of the 21st century. In places such as Spain, Greece, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, the United States and Venezuela where unemployment rates and government corruption are high, protests and civil unrest are a daily occurrence. High unemployment rates and government corruption obstruct the ability of working citizens to provide a livelihood for themselves and to find dignity in self-regulated leisure activities. Unemployment and corruption are key factors in reducing the lives and talents of citizens to a state of hand-to-mouth survival, dissolving the possibility of social mobility and self-development to nothing.

As a positive outcome to the state of forced idleness, Rifkin proposes to add a 'third' sector to the already existing sectors of 'public' (politics and government, non profit) and 'private' affairs (corporations and citizen-owned business, for profit) that have defined the production of revenue in our society so far. He names this third, alternative sector the 'independent sector.' This sector is driven by altruism and volunteerism between members of communities that can no longer count on the

public or private sector for support in an act of self-sufficiency. Rifkin concentrates mainly on situations within the United States, where populations of cities such as Detroit have been decimated by the collapse of the automobile industry and massive layoffs. American history is rich in 'Do It Yourself' (DIY) movements, including neo-liberal politics that encourage the disengagement of government with all things social. According to this line of thinking it would seem like a logical move to create a third option for citizen welfare based on unaided self-motivation and self-regulation. It does however leave a large unregulated margin of error which may span for generations while the independent sector gets on its feet.

In the spirit of the independent sector, I made an artwork called *Self-Congratulatory Toast* (2013). The work was shown in a group exhibition at Nest Den Haag, under the theme *Me, Myself and I*. Though the exhibition dealt primarily with narcissism, I used my artistic license to use the theme as an incentive to perform an autonomous act. The work is a performance accompanied by an art object. I placed a neatly pressed pair of trousers onto a white plinth. The trousers were stuffed with colorful confetti, and weighted down by 2 bricks that I selected from the street. Tied to one of the trouser belt loops was a yellow helium balloon with a circumference of 1.50 meters. The balloon was partially sponsored by a company so that I did not have to finance my own

work out of pocket. My performance on November 14th 2013 consisted of inviting everyone to raise their glass in a toast to me, urging others to welcome me into the art world, using what I imagined to be the standpoint of a naive and hopeful art academy undergraduate in the current political climate. I asked a friend to 'do the honors' after my toast and lift the bricks from the trousers. The helium balloon shot up to the ceiling, yanking the trousers along with it, spraying colorful confetti all over the crowd and floor. This is the text of the toast:

Self Congratulatory Toast

Colleagues! Friends! Peers! Please join me! I would like to make a toast! Thanks are in order, to you for attending, to the artists, who give us their work to contemplate, and to NEST for creating this occasion. I would also like to thank my personal sponsor, de ballonnenwinkel.nl, for providing me with the financial means to make my artwork. Obviously, I would like to congratulate my peers, for being a part of this exhibition, but most of all, I would like to congratulate myself. I think my presence at this exhibit will help me find my personal brand of authenticity as an artist. I believe I'll have a long career of critical self-reflection, failures that ultimately lead to triumph, and finally, to the financial independence I deserve just for being myself. If you have glass, please raise it! Edd, could you do the honors? (Edd lifts brick from the trousers) May I forever be able to hold

up my own trousers! Cheers and Thank you!

At this time, the Netherlands is facing budget cuts to the cultural sector. Artists who formerly relied on subsidies and grants to make work are asked to find the commercial value of their practice in order to “hold up their own trousers.” This statement spoken by Dutch populist politician Halbe Zijlstra became the foundation for the balloon lifting the trousers during Self-Congratulatory Toast. When the profession I am learning is neither fully supported by the non-profit sector, and does not always fit into the for-profit market, I can choose to take a step in the direction of the independent sector, supporting active self-development for myself and others.

In 2013, citizens in Switzerland proposed a referendum¹¹ backed by 100,000 signatures to instate a nationwide fixed-income for every adult at 2,500 francs. The idea is to regulate the highest incomes in the country so that they would not exceed a ratio of 1:12, making it possible for everyone to make a living wage and consider the personal question of engaging in meaningful life activities rather than to be caught in a loop of hand-to-mouth living. The initiators of the movement want to instigate a change to the dynamics of social relations through which Rifkin’s proposed independent sector can come into being but with the benefit of government backing and guidance.

Altruism, community-based action and self-development are of course the most optimistic outcome of making leisure a basic human right for all. However, there are counter-arguments that would disqualify citizens from being responsible enough to motivate themselves into actively participating in the independent sector. In response to the fixed income initiative, economist and former social democrat member of Swiss parliament Rudolf Strahm believes that “there would be no incentive for young people to learn a job or study.” 82 years ago, Bertrand Russell quoted an unnamed duchess in his *In Praise of Idleness* article as saying “what do the poor want with holidays? They ought to work.” In the 20th and 21st century, those who are financially well-off and in positions of power still believe Aristotle’s 2500+ year old thesis of Natural Slavery: struggling individuals can only find meaning and motivation in life if it is imposed upon them by an inflexible, iron-willed authoritative class. An authoritative class that dictates that the only motivation to pursue an education is a salary.

The only known fixed income experiment that ever took place was in the small Canadian town of Dauphin. From 1974 to 1980, the residents of Dauphin could apply to supplement their income with \$1,200 CAD per year through the *Mincome* program. During this time data was collected by sociologists and anthropologists, but never

analyzed, as the advent of the 1980's was heralded by a right wing government which stopped all funds to the Mincome¹² project and any research attached to it. It was not until 2009 that Evelyn Forget, a professor of health sciences at the University of Manitoba, gained access to the boxes of data for analysis. Her findings were surprising. People did not drop their jobs; they kept working. Teenagers chose to dedicate more time to studying than getting work on the side. New mothers used the extra income as a maternity leave. There were less sick people waiting to be treated in hospitals. People who were stressed by unemployment received the temporary support they needed in order to find permanent jobs.

One of the chief arguments against a fixed income program in the 21st century is that if more leisure time is available because of structural changes to working hour policy, it would lead to increasing boredom and crime. However, if leisure is bought by our hard-earned savings, the effect would be exactly the opposite: we would be stimulated by our free time, becoming revitalized. Vacations are the kind of leisure one can buy to take a distance from one's usual surroundings. Lucy R. Lippard (1937), author of *On the Beaten Track: Tourism, Art, and Place* (1999) describes the act of purchased travel in this manner: "We don't 'tour' to exercise our brains. A vacation is literally emptying out, a voiding of daily experience and responsibility. Vacations are supposed to

be fun, but then some of us get off on critical thinking. It raises questions about other people's lifestyles and about our own. At best, it shakes up belief and value systems and opens us up to reciprocity with nature and with unfamiliar cultures, even as we reinvent them for our own pleasure."

Travel is a form of temporary escapism, a utopian situation one can pay for. By getting away from the daily grind, we can come back in contact with ourselves. Jelle Brandt Corstius' (1978) book *Universal Guidebook for Difficult Countries* (2013) is a humorous and sadly truthful depiction of the well-off western traveller who looks for adventure in countries affected by poverty and political difficulties. Written from Corstius' point of view as a Dutchman who is 'addicted' to travelling, he gives advice on how to haggle, how to get lost safely, drinking etiquette and how to connect with locals. Though the advice is meant in the best way possible, it is a guide for the one-way pleasure of the foreigner with means. A traveller with an itinerary of coming into contact with oneself by using the landscape and population of a place considered other is by definition a consumer, but one who seeks to go off the 'beaten track.' As opposed to 'tourism,' 'travelling' implies an act of pioneerism, taking the first steps to creating a beaten path and an adventurer's pedigree of not being counted among the throngs of tourists. The act of pioneerism gives the

pioneer the 'right to report back' to those in his or her native country, adding value to achievements made in another place, which could not have been achieved at home, because of the ordinary status of the traveller at home.

Tourists are looked down upon by travellers, because tourists often travel to places that use a transparent marketing strategy veiling the reality of the destination in order to propagate the mythical otherness of the destination that is so attractive to tourists. Think of (I)AM ()STERDAM or MAD(about you)RID, the city marketing campaigns of Amsterdam and Madrid which seek to include the tourist in its national identity. The touristic approach to escapism, in which the destination redefines its own mythology so that the tourist will not only want to consume it but will want to exclusively buy into the fabricated myth, is a form of reciprocity. It is an honest agreement to suspend disbelief, such as one would experience when going to see a fantasy film. The location offers itself in the form of a mythical destination to the tourist. Through location branding, advertising campaigns and local infrastructure provided specifically for tourists, the locality creates and presents a consumable version of itself. The tourist in turn feels drawn to the destination because the destination strategically offers what is familiar; think of Irish pubs and folk dances, Mexican food and Kenyan safari parks. The fact that

the landscape, climate and language are different than the tourist's own may trigger the feeling of a break with a normal routine, and an opportunity to do some self-reflection. In this the traveller and the tourist do not differ: the consumption of another place to benefit the self is the goal. It is only the manner in which the traveller is willing to put oneself through difficult situations while the tourist seeks comfort that distinguishes the traveller from the tourist.

Travel for leisure can be a learning experience, therefore it falls into the category of self-development by choice. However, there are structures hidden within the idea of leisure which keep the world divided into 1st and 2nd class citizens. Major international travel for leisure is the right of those who have gainful employment, can save the surplus of their salary to spend on a vacation, and have the appropriate passport from a privileged country. There are migrants who, through costly and lengthy bureaucratic processes, obtain a visa and leave their country in order to make a better living elsewhere. When a migrant arrives to their chosen destination, their intention is to live there, and to form a permanent part of the economy in their new home. Almost invariably, the migrant will always be regarded as a foreigner, but one who has been assimilated: an expat. Illegal migration is yet another form of travel, but this has nothing to do with leisure, and much more with necessity. Arguably,

escaping difficult circumstances in one's home country is an act of self-development, but it is one driven by a motivation to survive. Illegal immigrants cannot rely on the infrastructure of their own country, nor of the country they have been smuggled to, which in itself is a dangerous and costly act. Illegal immigrants must remain invisible to the government, operating in a hidden economy in which they have no rights, in order to obtain a precarious salary. Refugees are the ultimately the most unfortunate travellers. Circumstances in their own land are so unstable that they cannot remain there without suffering enormous personal repercussions. Neither are they particularly welcome in the country to which they flee. There are also those citizens who stay to face the dire circumstances at home and are unable to leave. These are stationary citizens, and they are in the least privileged position of all.

Only the leisure traveller for leisure, and after a certain amount of time, the expatriated migrant belong to the ranks of the 1st class citizen. The illegal immigrant, the refugee and the stationary citizen who have neither the will or the means to escape their own country are all 2nd class citizens. Their movement around the globe has to do with self-preservation. Renzo Martens' work *Enjoy Poverty* (2008) is an accurate illustration of the complex relationship that 1st world citizens (who have the right and the means to travel for self-development) have to

2nd class citizens (who often do not have the rights or the means to travel but are forced to relocate because of intolerable circumstances). In his film, Martens travels to conflict areas in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo. He goes there to install an artwork: a delicate configuration of neons that spell the words 'Enjoy Poverty.' With hired local helpers and his film crew, he transports his artwork in heavy protective cases through forests, rivers and warzones. The work that he installs in a small village in the east of the DRC is curiously regarded by the villagers. Most of them do not speak English, so Martens tells one of his transporters in French what it says and the French speaker translates to Swahili, one of the five languages of the DRC. The benefit this artwork brings to the village is unclear but the benefit to western audiences brought by this film is clearer. First of all, it rewards the artist's effort with prizes, critical acclaim, and financial gains. Second of all, western audiences are confronted with a reality that is other than theirs and are compelled to consider the situation of poverty depicted in art differently.

In the sociopolitical climates such as that of the Netherlands, having a steady job is the norm. Vacation and leisure time facilitated by a salary is a way to reach the utopian version of oneself by detaching from the norm but only temporarily. Being excluded from the norm through unemployment and barred from leisure because

of lack of funds creates a climate of criticism and guilt in which the individual doubts the value of their life, unravelling into the dystopian version of oneself. In the utopian version of oneself, one can experience a higher degree of freedom by engaging in lifelong interests just to please oneself. In the dystopian version of oneself, one experiences displacement, doubt, shame and guilt in one's own existence for not being able to achieve status within the parameters of the norm. In countries where large numbers of the population cannot achieve the norm of gainful employment because of government corruption, warfare or economic crisis, a dystopian feeling of powerlessness and outrage informs a psychological state in which life is perceived as meaningless, and the individual perceives themselves as worthless. People in this state of being are in a vulnerable position as they are desperate enough to let go of their personal ideals in exchange for the norm. Gainful employment is the gateway to accessing freedom based on personal purchasing power. People who are not in this vulnerable position are more likely to use their ideals as a springboard for achieving 'normality,' in which accessing freedom based on personal purchasing power seems like a natural consequence of investing and developing those ideals.

VI. CONCLUSION

There is a well known phenomenon that many arts and humanities students experience when they leave the experimental environment of the academy; it is called the 'black hole.' Upon graduation, students are faced with being streamlined into the job market and whether they do so in the arts or in another sector is of no consequence. Temping at an office job, becoming a supermarket clerk or sales assistant in a shop are all jobs that recent graduates gravitate toward in order to finance their artistic practice. Michelle Kasprzak, curator at V2 Institute for the Unstable Media, says that a recent graduate should give themselves a grace period of 2 years to find avenues in which one's artistic practice has the chance to develop. Yet, during those two years, rent, insurance, groceries and other costs must be covered and it is sometimes downright easier to get a salary for a service that has nothing to do with the arts. My experience has been that work which provides a salary is the work that ends up consuming most of one's time, thoughts, and energy.

A children's book called *The Very Busy Spider* (1984), written by Eric Carle (1929), tells the story of a spider who is constantly asked by farm animals to join them for some fun. The spider doesn't answer them, because she is too busy building her web. At the end of the day, she

catches a fly, goes to sleep, and misses the compliment of a passing owl. In this childrens story the rewards of work are bigger than any of the fun things the spider could have done with its fellow farm animals. Building something useful, alone, for one's own use is the reason why the spider ignores the other animals and keeps on working. Work is an inherent part of being a human being. The solving of problems, the creation of comfort and culture, the act of being busy with some kind of project whether it is farming or medicine or organization is something that we would do regardless of a salary. Unemployed people have routines and to-do lists too.

Self-development is tendency that we all have. Mostly we develop our knowledge out of necessity but if time and money allow, we do it out of sheer curiosity. I would argue that self-development without financial stress should be a right for everyone but I, for one, find it difficult to imagine a world that isn't made up of an authoritative 1st class and a struggling 2nd class citizenry. I perceive my life as being a series of acrobatic acts through which I am constantly trying to jump the fence from being a have-a-little to being a have-it-all. Despite my philosophical ruminations, it is an excruciating exercise to imagine the value of my life in any other terms than financial, in which salaries of years to come determine the quality of my life as it currently is and a pension determining the quality of my life from 67 years of age until my death. Life

satisfaction seems to depend on how I do professionally.

Because I am a product of my time, it is difficult to shed light on the blind spots that may, in hindsight, be obvious hindrances to the creation of a society in which the entrepreneurial spirit of producing knowledge-for-profit is not the assumed structural framework of our lives. To make a simplified analogy, the advantages of a society in which all morality stems from the ability to make profit could be compared to problem of mining and using asbestos as a wonder-material: there is an enormous hazard present that we are prepared to overlook because of the favorable conditions we could find ourselves in if we were to work hard enough. The temptation of belonging to the 1st class citizenry is irresistible and keeps me returning to thought processes that are invisible to me which propagate the reality of my paycheck-to-paycheck existence. Despite these fallacies, I would still argue that removal of financial obstacles would make for more focused, well-rounded, critical and conscious people with no other purpose than to better ourselves. I would still argue that the closing of the gap between 1st and 2nd class citizens is essential for this to take place. As to how this should take place; I would need to invest my time in self-development to meditate on an answer for that.

VII. FOOTNOTES

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