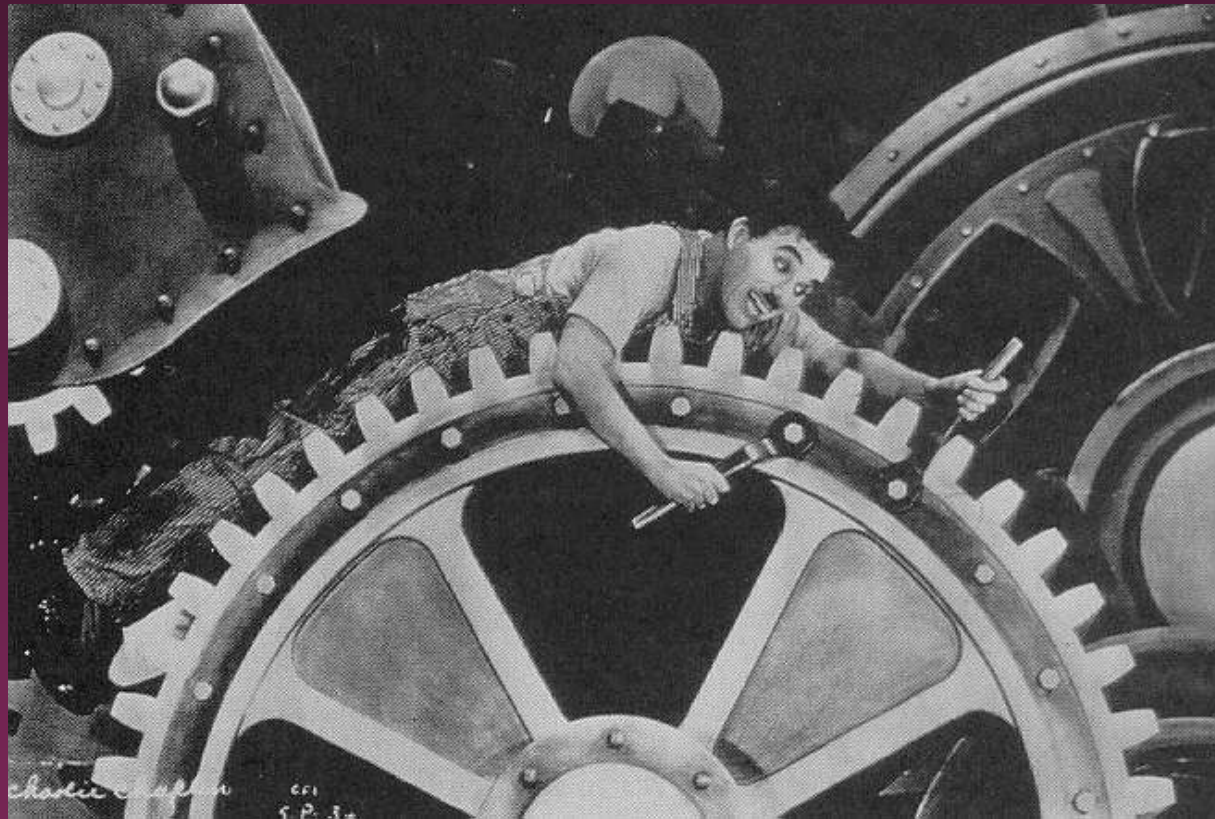


Industrial Division of Labor



As told by Dr. Frank Elwell

Marx on the Division of Labor

- The work process has been thoroughly transformed under industrialization.
- Karl Marx characterized humans as Homo Faber, Man the Worker.



Marx on the Division of Labor

- Human are most distinctive, he thought, in that they produce their own means of subsistence.
- Only humans act on their physical environment and transform it according to their own purposes.

Marx on the Division of Labor

It is true, of course, that bees build hives, beavers build dams, and birds build nests. Yet these animals are not engaged in productive labor in the Marxian sense. Their actions follow directly from instinct, from biological programming rather than from intent.

Marx on the Division of Labor

Marx said that what distinguishes the worst architects from the best of bees is that the architect raises his structure in his imagination before he constructs it in reality.



Marx on the Division of Labor

Given that humans are most characterized by their capacity for productive activity, it followed for Marx that work must be more than a mere means to an end.

Marx on the Division of Labor

- It must be a means by which humans gain meaning and satisfaction in life. In performing the labor that they have already conceptualized, humans realize their true nature and feel fulfilled and gratified.
- In fact, for Marx, work was not simply one means among others of achieving meaning and purpose.

Marx on the Division of Labor

For Marx, work was the principal means by which humans achieved meaning and fulfilled their true nature. (Now you can see why he has been damned for all time!)

Marx on the Division of Labor

Whether humans will actually be able to realize their human nature through their labor, Marx goes on to say, depends on the organization of the production process.

Marx on the Division of Labor

Marx believes that throughout most of history people have actually lived under conditions in which they could work in a self-fulfilling way.



Marx on the Division of Labor

Under primitive communism (H & G!), hunters, stalking and killing their game and bringing it back to camp to divide for all, are fulfilled workers. Horticultural workers, working the land, making their tools and clothing, are also achieving their basic nature.

Marx on the Division of Labor

The basic nature of work activities among hunter-gatherers, horticulturists, and pastoralists are simple and unspecialized with high levels of self-direction involved.

Marx on the Division of Labor

- In H&G societies the distinction between work and leisure is not one which is possible to draw.
- Work and non-work are inextricably confused...work is not regulated by the clock, but by the requirements of the task at hand.

Marx on the Division of Labor

Even typical peasants, despite their oppression and exploitation, are fulfilled workers in a very basic sense. They work in harmony with nature and the seasons, have considerable self-determination in their work activities, and live off what they produce.

Marx on the Division of Labor

Of course, slaves in agrarian societies were undoubtedly not fulfilled workers. Their human nature being deformed by their conditions.



Marx on the Division of Labor

But, Marx maintained, such workers would generally be exceptions to the rule in the pre-capitalist world.



Marx on the Division of Labor

The close relationship between the agricultural cycle and the liturgical year, with its blessings and processions, shows that the association between work and ritual was still very close, just as do the ceremonies of the craft guilds with their oaths and initiations.

Alienation

When social conditions do not permit humans to realize their nature through work, Marx maintains, a pathological condition of alienation comes to exist.



Alienation

When workers are alienated, they do not receive meaning and gratification from their work, but find only frustration and emptiness. They are in the strictest sense, dehumanized workers.



Alienation

Marx seemed to regard industrial capitalism as that economic system most productive of alienated labor.

Alienation is characteristic under industrial capitalism because of the peculiar character of the division of labor.



Alienation

This division of labor involves a marked separation between the conceptualization and execution of work. Typical industrial workers carry out tasks conceptualized by others. In addition, the work process is broken down into separate, isolated steps, and workers perform only one of these steps.

Alienation

Under industrial capitalism, workers lose control over the production process, the tools and procedures of work, and the products they make, these products being owned by someone else and sold by their owners in a market.



Alienation

Because of these aspects of the organization of work, workers can feel no identification with the products they help make nor any truly meaningful participation in the work process. Their work produces sadness, frustration, and a sense of meaninglessness instead of fulfillment.



Extreme occupational specialization has been characteristic of industrial societies: woman processing poultry.

Taylorism

- Since the late 19th century a central concern of bureaucratic-industrial managers has been to gain control over the workforce and the work process.
- Scientific management has spread as a form of work effort that attempts to maximize efficiency.

Taylorism

They have done this primarily through the implementation of the brainchild of Frederick Winslow Taylor, and the organizational system known as scientific management.



Taylorism

Scientific management in one mode or another still guides the organization of industrial and bureaucratic work--and in fact does so even more pervasively with each passing year.



Taylorism

- Basic Principles:
 - » Separation of work process from skills
 - » Separation of conception from execution
 - » Management monopoly over knowledge



Separation of work process from skills

The work process is to be organized so that it does not depend on the knowledge and craftsmanship of the workers. The practices of management, and not the abilities of workers, determine how work is done.



Separation of conception from execution

This principle demands that all possible brain work should be removed from the shop and centered in management.



THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

Management monopoly over knowledge

Management specifies not only what is to be done, but how it is to be done and the exact time allowed for doing it.



The Worker

Modern workers are inevitably alienated by a system that destroys craftsmanship, reduces work to a few small, highly repetitive and routinized actions, and makes it impossible for them to think out the performance of their tasks.





The Worker

Workers lose their basic humanity and become automatons. The dehumanization of the work process has not only been occurring in regard to factory work, but has invaded most forms of office work as well.



The Worker

Studies reveal that industrial and bureaucratic workers do feel this sense of alienation, and the degree to which this is felt depends on the freedom, variety, and skills they are allowed to bring to their jobs.



The Worker

While Marx maintains that alienation is a product of capitalism, numerous social scientists have argued that alienation is actually the result of modern industrial and bureaucratic techniques of workplace organization.



The Worker

These techniques are just as characteristic of various forms of socialism as they are of capitalism.



Junebug Clark, Photo Recherche

The Worker

Max Weber, for instance, thought that a future socialist society could not abolish alienation since this condition was a product of bureaucracy and rationalization, and socialism would require even more bureaucracy than capitalism.

The Worker

Evidence suggests that this is the case. State socialist societies (as well as Democratic Socialism) have adopted Taylorist methods of workplace organization as thoroughly as have the capitalist societies.



The Worker

The persistence of significant levels of alienated labor in state socialist societies is just one more difference between state socialism and the classic Marxian notion of socialism.



James A. Sugar, Photo Research

The Worker

- Marx thought that alienation would disappear under socialism because there would be a radical change in the specialization within the division of labor.
- Although specialization by type of work would exist, workers would become "jacks of all trades," sharing thoroughly in the most and least pleasant forms of work.

The Worker

- Work was to lose its character as a commodity, and workers would be compensated according to their needs.
- Such qualities are scarcely characteristic of state socialism, democratic socialism, or capitalism. Alienated labor seems to be determined when a society adopts industrialization as its mode of production.

Alienation

Alienation is closely linked to the nature of technology and bureaucracy in industrial societies.



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Specialization

Specialization goes hand in hand with industrialism and bureaucracy.



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Specialization

Looked at from the standpoint of the social system, the aim of specialization is to see that the responsibilities of government, medicine, engineering, education, and so on are given into the hands of the most skilled, best prepared people.

Specialization

The difficulties do not appear until we look at specialization from the standpoint of the individual. We then see that specialization prevents personal wholeness.



Specialization

The first, and best known, hazard of the specialist system is that it produces specialists--people who are elaborately and expensively trained for one thing.

Specialization

More common are inventors, manufacturers and salesmen of devices who have no concern for the possible effects those devices may have on the environment or on the people who use them.

Specialization

- Specialization can be seen as a way of institutionalizing, justifying, and paying for a scattering-out of the various functions of character: workmanship, care, conscience, and responsibility.
- In hyper-industrial society, everything becomes a component of the expanding machine, including human beings.

Specialization

“The average American citizen now consigns the problem of food production to agri-businessmen, the problem of health to doctors, the problems of education to school teachers, the problems of conservation to conservationists, the problems of government to elected officials and bureaucrats. . .and so on.

Specialization

“From a public point of view, the specialist system is a failure because, though everything is done by an expert, very little is done well. Our typical industrial or professional product is both ingenious and shoddy.” --Wendell Berry

Specialization/Whole

According to Durkheim (and Berry), what happens under the rule of specialization is that, though society becomes more and more intricate, increasingly interdependent, there is less and less common bond. It becomes more and more organized, but less and less orderly.

Specialization/Whole

The community disintegrates because it loses the necessary common bond.

Specialization/Whole

The rule among specialists is never cooperate, but rather to follow one's interest as far as possible. Checks and balances are all applied externally by opposition, never by self-restraint.

Specialization/Whole

- The good of society as a whole is rarely a consideration because it is never thought of; our culture now simply lacks the means for thinking of it.
- But it is by looking at the social whole that we can see the destructiveness of specialization. Specialization produces narrow minds.

Specialization

It produces the kind of mind that can introduce a production machine to increase "efficiency" without thinking about its effects on the environment, on workers, on the product, on consumers, or on the community.

Specialization

Specialization produces the kind of mind that can justify the selling of infant formula in Third World nations even though it causes the death of many of these infants.

Specialization

Specialization produces the kind of mind that can manufacture and dump toxic waste without concern for even their own children.

Specialization

The kind of mind that can applaud the "obsolescence" of the small family farm and not hesitate over the possible political, cultural, and environmental impact.

Specialization/Rationalization

For cultural patterns of responsibility and cooperation we have substituted moral ignorance, which is the hallmark of a hyper-industrial society.