Industrialism & Domestication

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In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the rise of capitalism was met by bitter and intense resistance. Its establishment was only effectuated by the imposition of the factory system as a method of social control. The result was a tamed working class and a degradation of labor which lives today at the core of the marxist conception of socialism.

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The modern definitions of division of labor, progress, ideology, and the workers' movement were inscribed by the coming of industrial capitalism and the factory system. The dynamics of what Hobsbawn termed "the most fundamental transformation of human life" in written history—specifically the reasons why it happened—explain the legacy and value of these institutions. Not surprisingly, much at the core of Marx's thought can also be evaluated against the reality of the Industrial Revolution.

Eighteenth-century England, where it all began, had long since seen the demise of feudalism; capitalist social relations, however, had been unable to establish a definitive hegemony. Gwyn Williams (*Artisans and Sans-Culottes*) found it hard to find a single year free from popular uprisings; "England was pre-eminently the country of the eighteenth-century mob," he wrote. Peter Laslett (*The World We Have Lost*) surveyed the scene at the beginning of the century, noting the general consciousness that working people were openly regarded as a proletariat, and the fact, as "everyone was quite well aware," that violence posed a constant threat to the social order.

Laslett further noted that enclosure, or the fencing off of lands previously pastured, ploughed, and harvested cooperatively, commenced at this time and "destroyed communality altogether in English rural life." Neither was there, by 1750, a significant land-owning peasantry; the great majority on the land were either tenant-farmers or agricultural wage laborers. T.S. Ashton, who wrote a classic economic history of 18th century England, identified a crucial key to this development by his observation that "Enclosure was desirable if only because rights of common led to irregularity of work," as was widely believed. Britain in 1750, in any case, engendered a number of foreign visitors' accounts that its common people were much "given to riot," according to historian E.J. Hobsbawm.

The organization of manufacture prevailing then was the domestic, or 'putting out' system, in which workers crafted goods in their own homes, and the capitalists were mainly merchants who supplied the raw materials and then marketed the finished products. At first these craftsmen generally owned their own tools, but later came to rent them. In either case, the relationship to the 'means of production' afforded great strategic strength. Unsupervised, working for several masters, and with their time their own, a degree of independence was maintained. "Luddism," as E.P. Thompson (*The Making of the English Working Class*) reminds us, "was the work of skilled men in small workshops." The Luddites (c. 1810–1820), though they belong toward the end of the period surveyed here, were perhaps the machine-breakers par excellence—textile knitters, weavers, and spinners who exemplify both the relative autonomy and anti-employer sentiment of the free craftsman.

Scores of commentators have discussed the independence of such domestic workers as the handloom weavers; Muggeridge's report on Lancashire craftsmen (from Exell, *Brief History of the Weavers of the Country of Gloucester*),

for example, notes that this kind of work "gratifies that innate love of independence… by leaving the workman entirely a master of his own time, and the sole guide of his actions." These workers treasured their versatility, and their right to execute individual designs of their own choosing rather than the standardization of the new factory employment (which began to emerge in earnest about 1770). Witt Bowden (*Industrial Society in England Towards the End of the Eighteenth Century*) noted that earlier processes of production had indeed often "afforded the workers genuine opportunities for the expression of their personalities in their work," and that-in these pre-specialization times craftsmen could pursue "artistic conceptions" in many cases.

A non-working class observer (Malachy Postlewayt, c. 1750), in fact, expressed the view that the high quality of English manufactures was to be attributed to the frequent "relaxation of the people in their own way." Others discerned in the workers' control over time a distinct threat to authority as well as to profits; Ashton wrote how "very serious was the almost universal practice of working a short week," adding a minister's alarum (1752) that "It is not those who are absolutely idle that injure the public so much as those who work but half their time." If anything, Ashton understated the case when he concluded that "…leisure, at times of their own choice, stood high on the workers' scale of preferences."

Work Builds Character

William Temple's admonition (1739) that the only way to insure temperance and industry on the part of laborers was to make it necessary that they work all the time physically possible "in order to procure the common necessaries of life," was a frequent expression of ruling-class frustration. Temple's experience with the turbulent weavers of Gloucestershire had thus led him to agree with Arthur Young's "everyone but an idiot knows that the lower classes must be kept poor or they will never be industrious" dictum.

Among the craftsmen of cloth, the insistence on their own methods—(including, at times, the ingenious sabotage of finished goods)—was matched by another weapon, that of embezzlement of the raw materials assigned to them. As Ashton reports, "A survey of the measures passed to suppress embezzlement and delay in returning materials shows a progressive increase in penalties." But throughout the 18th century, according to Wadsworth and Mann (*The Cotton Trade and Industrial Lancashire, 1600–1780*), "the execution of the anti-embezzlement acts…lagged behind their letter. Their effectiveness was limited by the 'resentment of the spinners and workpeople,' which prosecutors incurred and by the difficulty of detection without regular inspection." James' History of the Worsted Manufacture echoes this finding: "Justices of the Peace…until compelled by mandamus, refused to entertain charges against or convict upon proper evidence, embezzlers or false reelers."

Wadsworth and Mann perceived in the embezzlement issue the relationship between the prevailing 'work ethic' and the prevailing mode of production:

"The fact is simply that a great many…have never seen eye to eye with their employers on the rights and sanctity of ownership. The home worker of the eighteenth century, living away from the restraints of the factory and workshop and the employer's eye, had every inducement [to try] to defeat the hard bargain the employer had driven."

The independent craftsman was a threatening adversary to the employing class, and he clung strongly to his prerogatives: his well-known propensity, for instance, to reject "the higher material standard of the factory towns," in Thompson's phrase, to gather his own fruits, vegetables and flowers, to largely escape the developing industrial blight and pollution, to gather freely with his neighboring workers at the dinner hour. Thompson noted a good example of the nature of the domestic worker in 'the Yorkshire reputation for bluntness and independence" which could be traced to what local historian Frank Peel (early 19th century) saw as "men who doffed their caps to no one, and recognized no right in either squire or parson to question or meddle with them."

Riots, Tumults and Disorders

Turning to some of the specifics of pre-factory system revolt in England, the following from Ashton provides a good introduction:

"Following the harvest failure of 1709 the keelmen of the Tyne took to rioting. When the price of food rose sharply in 1727 the tin-miners of Cornwall plundered granaries at Falmouth, and the coal-miners of Somerset broke down the turnpikes on the road to Bristol. Ten years later the Cornish tinners assembled again at Falmouth to prevent the exportation of corn, and in the following season there was rioting at Tiverton. The famine of 1739–40 led to a 'rebellion' in Northumberland and Durham in which women seem to have taken a leading part: ships were boarded, warehouses broken open, and the Guild at Newcastle was reduced to ruins. At the same time attacks on corn dealers were reported from North and South Wales. The years 1748 and 1753 saw similar happenings in several parts of the country; and in 1756–7 there was hardly a county from which no report reached the Home Office of the pulling down of corn mills or Quaker meeting-houses, or the rough handling of bakers and grain dealers. In spite of drastic penalties the same thing occurred in each of the later dearths of the century: in 1762, 1765–7, 1774, 1783, 1789, 1795, and 1800."

This readiness for direct action informs the strife in textiles, the industry so important to England and to capitalist evolution, where, for example, "discontent was the prevalent attitude of the operatives engaged in the wool industries for centuries," said Burnley in his *Historys of Wool and Woolcombing*. Popular ballads give ample evidence to this, as does the case of rioting London weavers, who panicked the government in 1675. Lipson's *History of the Woollen and Worsted Industries* provides many instances of the robustness of domestic textile workers' struggles, including that of a 1728 weavers' strike which was intended to have been pacified by a meeting of strike leaders and employers; a "mob" of weavers "burst into the room in which the negotiations were taking place, dragged back the clothiers as they endeavored to escape from the windows, and forced them to concede all their demands." Or these additional accounts by Lipson:

> "The Wiltshire weavers were equally noted for their turbulent character and the rude violence with which they proclaimed the wrongs under which they smarted. In 1738 they assembled together in a riotous manner from the villages round Bradford and Trowbridge, and made an attack upon the house of a clothier who had reduced the price of weaving. They smashed open the doors, consumed or spoiled the provisions in the cellar, drank all the wine they could, set the casks running, and ended up by destroying great quantities of raw materials and utensils. In addition to this exploit they extorted a promise from all the clothiers in Melksham that they would pay fifteen pence a yard for weaving…Another great tumult occurred at Bradford (Wiltshire) in 1752. Thirty weavers had been committed to prison; the next day above a thousand weavers assembled, armed with bludgeons and firearms, beat the guard, broke open the prison, and rescued their companions."

Similarly, J.P. Kay was driven from Leeds in 1745 and from Bury in 1753, as outbreaks of violence flared in: many districts in response to his invention, the flying shuttle for mechanizing weaving.

Wadsworth and Marin found the Manchester Constables Accounts to have reported "great Riots, Tumults, and Disorders" in the late 1740s, and that "After 1750 food riots and industrial disputes grow more frequent," with outbreaks in Lancashire (the area of their study) virtually every year. These historians further recount "unrest and violence in all parts of the country" in the middle to late 1750s, with Manchester and Liverpool frequently in alarm and "panic among the propertied classes."

After sporadic risings, such as Manchester, 1762, the years 1764–68 saw rioting in almost every county in the country; as the King put it in 1766, "a spirit of the most daring insurrection has in divers parts broke forth in violence of the most criminal nature." Although the smashing of stocking frames had been made a capital offense in 1727, in a vain attempt to stem worker violence, Hobsbawm counted 24 incidents of wages and prices being forcibly set by exactly this type of riotous destruction in 1766 alone.

Sporadic rioting occurred in 1769, such as the anti-spinning jenny outbursts which menaced the inventor Hargreaves and during which buildings were demolished at Oswaldthistle and Blackburn in order to smash the hated mechanization. A whole new wave began in 1772. Sailors in Liverpool, for example, responded to a wage decrease proposal in 1775 by "sacking the owners' houses, hoisting the bloody flag, and bringing cannon ashore which they fired on the Exchange," according to Wordsworth and Mann.

The very widespread anti-machinery risings of 1779 saw the destruction of hundreds of weaving and spinning devices which were too large for domestic use. The rioters' sentiments were very widely shared, as evidenced by

arrest records that included miners, nailmakers, laborers, joiners—a fair sample of the entire industrial population. The workers' complaint averred that the smaller machines are "in the Hands of the Poor and the larger 'Patent Machines' in the Hands of the Rich," and "that the work is better manufactured by small [textile machines] than by large ones."

This list, very incomplete as it is, could be easily extended into the many early 19th century outbreaks, all of which seem to have enjoyed great popular support. But perhaps a fitting entry on which to close this sample would be these lines from a public letter written by Gloucestershire shearmen in 1802: "We hear in Formed that you got Shear in mee sheens and if you Don't Pull them Down in a Forght Nights Time we will pull them Down for you Wee will you Damd infernold Dog."

The Factory and Social Control

This brief look at the willfulness of the 18th century proletariat serves to introduce the conscious motivation behind the factory system. Sidney Pollard (*The Genesis of Modern Management*) recognized the capitalists' need of "breaking the social bonds which had held the peasants, the craftsmen and the town poor of the eighteenth century together in opposition to the new order." Poltaud saw too the essential nature of the domestic system, that the masters "had to depend on the work performed in innumerable tiny domestic-workshop units, unsupervised and unsupervisable. Such incompatibility," he concluded, "was bound to set up tensions and -to drive the merchants to seek new ways of production, imposing their own managerial achievements and practices in the productive sector."

This underlying sense of the real inadequacy of existing powers of control was also-firmly grasped by David Landes (*The Unbound Prometheus*): "One can understand why the thoughts of employers turned to workshops where the men would be brought together to labour under the watchful overseers, and to machines that would solve the shortage of manpower while curbing the insolence and dishonesty of the men." According to Wadsworth and Mann, in fact, many employers definitely felt that "the country would perish if the poor—that is, the working classes—were not brought under severe discipline to habits of industry and docile subordination."

Writing on the evolution of the 'central workshop' or factory, historian N.S.B. Gras saw its installation strictly in terms of control of labor: "It was purely for purposes of discipline, so that the workers could be effectively controlled under the supervision of foremen." Factory work itself became the central weapon to force an enemy character into a safe, reliable mold following the full realization that they were dealing with a recalcitrant, hostile working class whose entire morale, habits of work, and culture had to be broken. Bowden described this with great clarity: "More directly as a result of the introduction of machinery and of large-scale organization was the subjection of the workers to a deadening mechanical and administrative routine."

Producer and Consumer

Adam Smith, in his classic *Wealth of Nations*, well understood that the success of industrial capitalism lies with nothing so much as with the division of labor, that is, with ever-increasing specialization and the destruction of versatility in work. He also knew that the division of labor is as much about the production and allocation of commodities. And certainly the new order is also related to consumption as to the need to guarantee control of production; in fact, there are those who see its origin almost strictly in terms of market demand for mass production, but who do not see the conscious element here either.

In passing, Bishop Berkeley's query of 1755, "whether the creation of wants be not the likeliest way to produece industry in a people?" is eminently relevant. As Hobsbawn pointed out, the populace was definitely not originally attracted by novelties or standardized products; industrialization gradually enabled production "to expand its own markets, if not actually to create them." The lure of cheap, identical goods succeeded essentially due to the enforced absence of earlier pleasures. When independence and variety of pursuits were more possible, a different kind of

leisure and consumption was the norm. This, of course, was in itself a target of the factory system, "the tendency, so deplored by economists, to work less when food was cheap," as Christopher Hill put it.

Exports, too, were an obvious support of the emerging regime, backed by the systematic and aggressive help of government, another artificial demand mechanism. But the domestic market was at least as important, stemming from the "predisposing condition" that specialization and discipline of labor makes for further 'progress,' as Max Weber observed.

Richard Arkwright (1732–1792) agreed completely with those who saw the need for consciously spurring consumption, "as to the necessity of arousing and satisfying new wants," in his phrase. But it is as the developer of cotton spinning machinery that he deserves a special word here; because he is generally regarded as the most prominent figure in the history of the textile industries and even as 'the founder of the factory system.' Arkwright is a clear illustration of the political and social character of the technology he did so much to advance. His concern with social control is very evident from his writings and correspondence, and Mantoux (*The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century*) discerned that "His most original achievement was the discipline he established in the mills."

Arkwright also saw the vital connection between work discipline and social stability: "Being obliged to be more regular in their attendince on their work, they became more orderly in their conduct." For his pioneering efforts, he received his share of appropriate response; Lipson relates that in 1767, with "the news of the riots in the neighborhood of Blackburn which had been provoked by Hargreaves' spinning jenny," he and his financial backer Smolley, "fearing to draw upon themselves the attention of the machine-wreckers, removed to Nottingham." Similarly, Arkwright's Birkacre mill was destroyed by workers in 1779. Lipson ably summarizes his managerial contribution:

"In coordinating all the various parts of his vast industrial structures; in organising and disciplining large bodies of men, so that each man fitted into his niche and the whole acted with the mechanical precision of a trained army. in combining division of labour with effective supervision from a common centre…a new epoch was inaugurated."

Andrew Ure's *Philosophy of Manufactures* is one of the major attempts at an exposition of the factory system, a work cited often by Marx in *Capital*. Its revealing preface speaks of tracing "the progression of the British system of industry, according to which every process peculiarly nice, and therefore liable to injury from the ignorance and waywardness of workmen, is withdrawn from handicraft control, and placed under the guidance of self-acting machinery." Examining the nature of the new system, then, we find, instead of domestic craft labor, "industrial labor…[which] imposes a regularity, routine, and monotony…which conflicts…with all the inclinations of a humanity as yet unconditioned into it," in the words of Hobsbawm. Factory production slowly supplanted that of the domestic system in the face of fierce opposition (discussed below), and workers experienced the feeling of daily entering a prison to meet the new "strain and violence" of work, as the Hammonds put it. Factories often resembled pauper work-houses or prisons, after which they had actually often been modeled; Max Weber saw a strong initial similarity between the modern factory and the Russian serf-labor workshops, wherein the means of production and the workers themselves were appropriated by the masters.

The Hammonds' *Town Labourer* saw "the depreciation of human life" as the leading fact about the new system for the working classes: "The human material was used up rapidly; workmen were called old at forty." Possibly just as important was the novel, "inhuman" nature of its domination, as if all "were in the grasp of a great machine that threatened to destroy all sense of the dignity of human life," as the Hammonds described it. A famous characterization by J.P. Kay (1832) put the everyday subjugation in hard to forget terms:

"Whilst the engine runs the people must work—men, women and children are yoked together with iron and steam. The animal machine—breakable in the best case, subject to a thousand sources of suffering—is chained fast to the iron machine, which knows no suffering and no weariness."

Resistance to industrial labor displayed a great strength and persistence, reflecting the latent anti-capitalism of the domestic worker who was "the despair of the masters" in a time when a palpable aura of unfreedom clung to wage-labor. Lipson tells us, for example, of Ambrose Crowley, perhaps the very first factory owner and organizer (from 1691); that he showed an obsession with the problem of disciplining his workers to "an institution so alien in its assumptions about the way in which people should spend their lives."

Lewis Paul wrote from his London firm in 1742 that "I have not half my people come to work today and I have no fascination in the prospect that I have to put myself in the power of such people." In 1757 Josiah Tucker noted that

factory-type machinery is highly provocative to the populace who "never fail to break out into Riots and Insurrections whenever such things are proposed." As we have seen, and as Christopher Hill put it, "Machine-breaking was the logical reaction of free men…who saw the concentration of machinery in factories as the instrument of their enslavement."

A hosiery capitalist, in admitting defeat to the Committee on Woollen Manufacture, tells us much of the independent spirit that had to be broken:

"I found the utmost distaste on the part of the men, to any regular hours or regular habits…The men themselves were considerably dissatisfied, because they could not go in and out as they pleased, and go on just as they had been used to do…to such an extent as completely to disgust them with the whole system, and I was obliged to break it up."

The famous early entrepreneurs, Boulton and Watt, were likewise dismayed to find that the miners they had to deal with were "strong, healthy and resolute men, setting the law at defiance; no officer dared to execute a warrant against them."

Wedgwood, the well-known pottery and china entrepreneur, had to fight "the open hostility of his work-people" when he tried to develop division of labor-in his workshops, according to Mantoux. And Jewitt's The Wedgwoods, exposing the social intent of industrial technology, tells us "It was machinery (which) ultimately forced the worker to accept the discipline of the factory."

The Threat of Job Security

Considering the depth of workers' antipathy to the new regimen, it comes as no surprise that Pollard should speak of "the large evidence which all points to the fact that continuous employment was precisely one of the most hated aspects of factory work." This was the case because the work itself, as an agent of pacification, was perceived 'precisely' in its true nature. Pollard later provides the other side of the coin to the workers' hatred of the job; namely, the rulers' insistence on it for its own (disciplinary) sake: "Nothing strikes so modern a note in the social provisions of the factory villages as the attempts to provide continuous employment."

Returning to the specifics of resistance, Sir Frederic Eden, in his *State of the Poor* (1797), stated that the industrial laborers of Manchester "rarely work on Mein-day and that many of them keep holiday two or three days in the week." Thus Lire's tirades about the employees' "unworkful impulses," their "aversion to the control and continuity of factory labor," are reflected in—such data as the fact that as late as 1800, spinners would be missing from the factories on Mondays and Tuesdays. Absenteeism, as well as turnover, then, was part of the syndrome of striving to maintain a maximum of personal liberty.

Max Weber spoke of the "immensely stubborn resistance" to the new work discipline, and a later social scientist, Reinhard Bendix, saw also that the drive to establish the management of labor on "an impersonal, systematic basis" was opposed "at every point." Ure, in a comment worth quoting at length, discusses the fight to master the workers in terms of Arkwright's career:

> "The main difficulty [he faced was] above all, in training human beings to renounce their desultory habits of work, and to identify themselves with the unvarying regularity of the complex automaton. To devise and administer a successful code of factory discipline, suited to the necessities of factory diligence, was the Herculean enterprise, the noble achievement of Arkwright. Even at the present day, when the system is perfectly organized, and its labour lightened to the utmost, it is found nearly impossible to convert persons past the age of puberty, whether drawn from rural or from handicraft occupations, into useful factory hands."

We also encounter in this selection from Ure the reason why early factory labor was so heavily comprised of the labor of children, women, and paupers threatened with loss of the dole. Thompson quotes a witness before a Parliamentary investigative committee, that "all persons working on the power-loom are working there by force

because they cannot exist any other way." Hundreds of thousands clung to the deeply declining fortunes of hand-loom weaving for decades, in a classic case of the primacy of human dignity, which Mathias (*The First Industrial Nation*) notes "defied the operation of simple economic incentives."

What Hill termed the English craftsmen's tradition "of self-help and self-respect" was a major source of that popular will which denied complete dominion by capital, the "proud awareness that voluntarily going into a factory was to surrender their birth-right."

Thompson demonstrates that the work rules "appeared as unnatural and hateful restraints" and that everything about factory life was an insult. "To 'stand at their command'—this was the most deeply resented indignity. For he felt himself, at heart, to be the real maker of the cloth…"

This spirit was why, for example, paper manufacturers preferred to train inexperienced labor for the new (post-1806) machine processes, rather than employ skilled hand paper makers. And why Samuel Crompton, inventor of the spinning mule, lamented, relatively late in this period,

> "To this day, though it is more than thirty years since my first machine was shown to the public, I am hunted and watched with as much never-ceasing care as if I was the most notorious villain that ever disgraced the human form; and I do affirm that if I were to go to a smithy to get a common nail made, if opportunity offered to the bystanders, they would examine it most minutely to see if it was anything but a nail."

The battle raged for decades, with victories still being won at least as late as that over a Bradford entrepreneur in 1882, who tried to secretly install a power-loom but was discovered by the domestic workers. "It was therefore immediately taken down, and placed in a cart under a convoy of constables, but the enraged weavers attacked and routed the constables, destroyed the loom, and dragged its roller and warp in triumph through Baildon." Little wonder that Ure wrote of the requirement of "a Napoleon nerve and ambition to subdue the refractory tempers of work-people."

Mental Mutilation

Without idealizing the earlier period, or forgetting that it was certainly defined by capitalist relationships, it is also true, as Hill wrote, "What was lost by factories and enclosure was the independence, variety and freedom which small producers had enjoyed." Adam Smith admitted the "mental mutilation" due to the new division of labor, the destruction of both an earlier alertness of mind and a previous "vivacity of both pain and pleasure."

Robert Owen likewise discussed this transformation when he declared, in 1815, that "The general diffusion of manufactures throughout a country generates a new character…an essential change in the general character of the mass of the people." Less abstractly, the Hammonds harkened back to the early 19th century and heard the "lament that the games and happiness of life are disappearing," and that soon "the art of living had been degraded to its rudest forms."

In 1819 the reformer Francis Place, speaking of the population of industrial Lancashire, was pleased to note that "Until very lately it would have been very dangerous to have assembled 500 of them on any occasion…Now 100,000 people may be collected together and no riot ensue." It was as Thompson summarized: gradually, between 1780 and 1830, "the 'average' English working man became more disciplined, more subject to the productive tempo of the clock, more reserved and methodical, less violent and less spontaneous."

A rising at the end of this period, the "last Labourers' Revolt" of agricultural workers in 1830, says a good deal about the general change that had occurred. Similar to outbreaks of 1816 and 1822, much rural property had been destroyed and large parts of Kent and East Anglia were in the rebels' control. The Duke of Buckingham, reflecting the government's alarm, declared the whole country as having been taken over by the rioters. But despite several weeks' success, the movement collapsed at the first show of real force. Historian Pauline Gregg described the sudden relapse into apathy and despair; they were "unused to asserting themselves," their earlier tradition of vigor and initiative conquered by the generalized triumph of the new order.

The Proletariat Emerges

Also concerning this year as marking a watershed, is Mantoux's remark about Arkwright, that "About 1830 he became the hero of political economy." Absurd, then, are the many who date the "age of revolution" as beginning at this time, such as the Tillys' Rebel Century, 1830–1930. Only with the defeat of the workers could Arkwright, the architect of the factory system, be installed as the hero of the bourgeoisie; this defeat of authentic rebellion also gave birth to political ideology. Socialism, a caricature of the challenge that had existed, could have begun no other way.

The German businessman Harkort, wrote in 1844 of the "new form of serfdom," the diminution of the strength and intelligence of the workers that he saw. The American Colman witnessed (1845) nothing less than "Wretched, defrauded, oppressed, crushed human nature, lying in bleeding fragments all over the face of society." Amazing that another businessman of this time could, in his Condition of the Working Class, glory that the "factory hands, eldest children of the industrial revolution, have from the beginning to the present day formed the nucleus of the Labour Movement." But Engels' statement at least contains no internal contradiction; the tamed, defeated factory operative has clearly been the mainstay of the labor movement and socialist ideology among the working class. As Rexford Tugwell admitted in his Industrial Discipline and the Governmental Arts: "When the factory came into existence…work became an indignity rather than a matter for pride… Organized labor has always consented to this entirely uncreative subjection."

Thus "the Character structure of the rebellious pre-industrial labourer or artisan was violently recast into that of the submissive industrial worker," in Thompson's words; by trade unionism, the fines, firings, bearings, factory rules, Methodism, the education system, the diversion known as ideology—the entire battery of institutions that have never achieved unchallenged success.

Thompson recognized the essentially "repressive and disabling" discipline of industrialization and yet, as if remembering that he is a Marxist historian, somehow finds the process good and inevitable. How could the Industrial Revolution have happened without this discipline, he asks, and in fact finds that in the production of "sober and disciplined" workers, "this growth in self-respect (!) and political consciousness" to have been "one real gain" of the transformation of society.

If this appears as insanity to the healthy reader, it is wholly consistent with the philosophy of Marx. "Division of labor," said the young Marx, "increases with civilization." It is a fundamental law, just as its concomitant, the total victory of the capitalist system.

In Volume I of *Capital*, Marx described the inevitable and necessary "movement of the proletariat":

> "In the ordinary run of things, the worker can be left to the action of the natural laws of production, i.e. to his dependence on capital, a dependence springing from, guaranteed, and perpetuated by the very mechanism of production."

Until, as he says elsewhere, on the day of the Revolution the proletariat will have been "disciplined, united, and organized by the very mechanism of production." Then they will have achieved that state whereby they can totally transform the world; "completely deprived of any self activity" or "real life content," as the young Marx prescribed.

To back-track for a moment, consider the conservative historian Ashton's puzzlement at such workers as

> "the west-country weavers who destroyed tenter frames, or of the colliers who frequently smashed the pit gear, and sometimes even set the mines on fire: they must have realized that their action would result in unemployment, but their immediate concern was to assert their strength and inflict loss on stubborn employers. There seems to have been little or no social theory in the minds of the rioters and very little class consciousness in the Marxist sense of the term."

This orthodox professor would certainly have understood Marx's admonition to just such workers, "to direct their attacks, not against the material instruments of production, but against the mode in which they are used." Marx understood, after all, that "the way machinery is utilized is totally distinct from the machinery itself;" as he wrote in 1846! Similarly, Engels destroyed the logic of the anarchists by showing that the well-known neutrality

of technology necessitates subordination, authority and power. How else, he asks, could a factory exist? In fact, Marx and Engels explain worker resistance to "scientific socialism" largely in terms of the survival of artisan-type jobs; those who are the more beaten and subordinated resist it the least. It is historical fact that those closest to the category artisan ("undeveloped") actually have felt the most capacity to abolish the wage system, precisely because they still exercise some control of work processes.

Marx Preserves Degradation of Labor

Throughout nearly all his writings, however, Marx managed to return to the idea that, in socialist society, individuals would develop fully in and through their work. But by the third volume of Capital his attitude had changed and the emphasis was upon the "realm of freedom" which "only begins, in fact, where that labor, which is determined by need and external purpose, ceases," lying "outside the sphere of material production proper." Thus Marx admits that not even under socialism will the degradation of labor be undone. (This is closely related to the Marxist notion of revolutionary preservation, in which the acquisitions and productivity of the capitalist economic system are not disturbed by proletarian revolution.) The free creation of life is hence banished, reduced to the marginalia of existence much like hobbies in class society. Despite his analysis of alienated labor, much of the explicit core of his philosophy is virtually a consecration of work as tyranny.

Durkheim, writing of the late 19th century, saw as the main social problem the need for a cohesive social integration. Much like Marx, who also desired the consolidation and maturation of capitalism, albeit for different reasons, Durkheim thought he found the key in the division of labor. In the need for coordination engendered by the division of labor, he discerned the essential source of solidarity. Today this grotesque inversion of human values is recognized rather fully; the hostility to specialization and its always authoritarian expertise is strongly present. A look at the recent opinion polls, or articles like *Fortune's* "The Senseless War on Science" (March, 1971) will suffice.

The perennial struggle against integration by the dominant system now continues as a struggle for disintegration, a more and more consciously nihilist effort. The progress of 'progress' is left with few partisans, and its enemies with few illusions as to what is worth preserving.

fifth estate

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Industrialism & Domestication
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https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/287-october-28-1977/industrialism-domestication
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