

11.3 | *Labor*

Labor, or what is sometimes called “work” and sometimes called “toil,” is considered in most of the texts here quoted as that form of human activity which is productive of wealth—either consumable goods or the means of production. Some writers explicitly distinguish it from, as well as relate it to, such other modes of activity as play or recreation and the creative pursuits of leisure that have nothing to do with the production of economic goods.

Beginning with the famous passage in Genesis, in which Adam, expelled from Eden, is condemned to live by the sweat of his brow, the pain of toil or labor is discussed by a succession of Christian writers as one of the punishments for sin. This is balanced by another line of texts in which the satisfactions of work and the dignity of labor are emphasized. But labor is nowhere praised as the be-all and end-all of human

life. The need to alleviate the fatigues, if not the pains, of toil are acknowledged, and for this therapeutic purpose play or recreation is recommended.

The division of labor and its effect on increased efficiency in the production of wealth is a favorite theme of modern economists, but there are anticipations of it in earlier writers, even as far back as Plato.

The economists, as well as others, are also concerned with the wages of labor and with the special role that labor plays in the creation of economic value. The passages quoted here from Marx, which state his “labor theory of value,” i.e., that labor is the sole productive source of wealth, should be contrasted with the passages quoted from Locke in Section 11.1 above, which state his “labor theory of property,” i.e., that labor is the indispensable condition of a rightful acquisition of wealth.

The reader will find the tripartite distinction of work, play, and leisure more fully discussed in certain passages included in

Section 9.8 on HAPPINESS. The conception of work as a punishment for sin will be found in Section 20.13 on SIN AND TEMPTATION.

1 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.

Genesis 3:19

2 Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.

Psalms 104:23

3 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:

Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,
Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

Proverbs 6:6-11

4 I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:11

5 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

Ecclesiastes 9:10

6 Still on the sluggard hungry want attends;
The scorn of man, the hate of Heaven impends;
While he, averse from labour, drags his days,
Yet greedy on the gains of others preys;
E'en as the stingless drones devouring seize
With gluttony the harvest of the bees.

Love every seemly toil, that so the store
Of foodful seasons heap thy garner's floor.
From labour, men returns of wealth behold,
Flocks in their fields, and in their coffers gold:
From labour shalt thou with the love be bless'd
Of men and gods; the slothful they detest.
Not toil, but sloth, shall ignominious be;
Toil, and the slothful man shall envy thee;
Shall view thy growing wealth with alter'd sense,
For glory, virtue, walk with opulence.

Hesiod, Works and Days

7 *Amasis*. Bowmen bend their bows when they wish to shoot; unbrace them when the shooting is over.

Were they kept always strung they would break, and fail the archer in time of need. So it is with men. If they give themselves constantly to serious work, and never indulge awhile in pastime or sport, they lose their senses, and become mad or moody.

Herodotus, History, II, 173

8 *Socrates*. We are not all alike; there are diversities of natures among us which are adapted to different occupations.

Adeimantus. Very true.

And will you have a work better done when the workman has many occupations, or when he has only one?

When he has only one.

Further, there can be no doubt that a work is spoiled when not done at the right time?

No doubt.

For business is not disposed to wait until the doer of the business is at leisure; but the doer must follow up what he is doing, and make the business his first object.

He must.

And if so, we must infer that all things are produced more plentifully and easily and of a better quality when one man does one thing which is natural to him and does it at the right time, and leaves other things.

Plato, Republic, II, 370A

9 *Socrates* says that a state is made up of four sorts of people who are absolutely necessary; these are a weaver, a husbandman, a shoemaker, and a builder; afterwards, finding that they are not enough, he adds a smith, and again a herdsman, to look after the necessary animals; then a merchant, and then a retail trader. All these together form the complement of the first state, as if a state were established merely to supply the necessities of life, rather than for the sake of the good, or stood equally in need of shoemakers and of husbandmen. But he does not admit into the state a military class until the country has increased in size, and is beginning to encroach on its neighbour's land, whereupon they go to war. Yet even amongst his four original citizens, or whatever be the number of those whom he associates in the state, there must be some one who will dispense justice and determine what is just. And as the soul may be said to be more truly part of an animal than the body, so the higher parts of states, that is to say, the warrior class, the class

engaged in the administration of justice, and that engaged in deliberation, which is the special business of political common sense,—these are more essential to the state than the parts which minister to the necessities of life. Whether their several functions are the functions of different citizens, or of the same,—for it may often happen that the same persons are both warriors and husbandmen,—is immaterial to the argument.

Aristotle, *Politics*, 1291^a11

- 10 Let us consider trade and other occupations. Which ones befit a gentleman and which are beneath him, we have generally been taught as follows. First, any occupation is to be rejected if it incurs public ill-will, such as tax-collecting and usury. Also unfit for gentlemen are those jobs done by hired workmen, whom we pay for manual labor only and not for artistic skill. Their very wage is a token of their slavery. We also consider vulgar those who buy from wholesale agents to sell at retail. They would make no profit without a good deal of outright lying. And there is nothing more base than misrepresentation. Mechanics also pursue a common calling, because there can be nothing liberal about a workshop. . . .

But those professions that call for a higher level of intelligence and which confer some benefit on society, such as medicine and architecture, are proper for those whose social position they become. Commerce on a small scale is contemptible. But a wholesale business on a large scale, importing great quantities of goods from all over the world and purveying them without deceit, cannot be disparaged. It may, in fact, deserve the highest respect, if those who engage in it, when they have made their fortune, forsake the harbours for a country estate, just as they have often gone from sea to port. But of all occupations by which gain is secured, none is better than agriculture. None is more profitable, delightful, or becoming a free man.

Cicero, *De Officiis*, I, 42

- 11 Then saws were toothed, and sounding axes made;
(For wedges first did yielding wood invade);
And various arts in order did succeed,
(What cannot endless labour, urged by need?)
Virgil, *Georgics*, I

- 12 The laborer is worthy of his hire.

Luke 10:7

- 13 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Ephesians 4:28

- 14 Yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you.

II Thessalonians 3:7-8

- 15 One of the greatest and highest blessings Lycurgus procured his people was the abundance of leisure which proceeded from his forbidding to them the exercise of any mean and mechanical trade. Of the money-making that depends on troublesome going about and seeing people and doing business, they had no need at all in a state where wealth obtained no honour or respect. The Helots tilled their ground for them, and paid them yearly in kind the appointed quantity, without any trouble of theirs. To this purpose there goes a story of a Lacedaemonian who, happening to be at Athens when the courts were sitting, was told of a citizen that had been fined for living an idle life, and was being escorted home in much distress of mind by his condoling friends; the Lacedaemonian was much surprised at it and desired his friend to show him the man who was condemned for living like a freeman. So much beneath them did they esteem the frivolous devotion of time and attention to the mechanical arts and to money-making.

Plutarch, *Lycurgus*

- 16 He who labors as he prays lifts his heart to God with his hands.

Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ad Sororem*

- 17 Not everyone sins that works not with his hands, because those precepts of the natural law which regard the good of the many are not binding on each individual, but it suffices that one person apply himself to this business and another to that; for instance, that some be craftsmen, others husbandmen, others judges, and others teachers, and so forth.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 187, 3

- 18 Being is something we hold dear, and being consists in movement and action. Wherefore each man in some sort exists in his work.

Montaigne, *Essays*, II, 8, Affection of Fathers

- 19 *Prince*. If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work.

Shakespeare, *I Henry IV*, I, ii, 227

- 20 No kind of men love business for itself but those that are learned; for other persons love it for profit, as an hireling, that loves the work for the wages; or for honour, as because it beareth them up in the eyes of men, and refresheth their reputation, which otherwise would wear; or because it putteth them in mind of their fortune, and giveth them

occasion to pleasure and displeasure; or because it exerciseth some faculty wherein they take pride, and so entertaineth them in good humour and pleasing conceits toward themselves; or because it advanceth any other their ends. So that as it is said of untrue valours, that some men's valours are in the eyes of them that look on; so such men's industries are in the eyes of others, or at least in regard of their own designments: only learned men love business as an action according to nature, as agreeable to health of mind as exercise is to health of body, taking pleasure in the action itself, and not in the purchase: so that of all men they are the most indefatigable, if it be towards any business which can hold or detain their mind.

Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*,
Bk. I, II, 5

- 21 Whereas many men, by accident inevitable, become unable to maintain themselves by their labour, they ought not to be left to the charity of private persons, but to be provided for, as far forth as the necessities of nature require, by the laws of the Commonwealth. For as it is uncharitableness in any man to neglect the impotent; so it is in the sovereign of a Commonwealth, to expose them to the hazard of such uncertain charity.

But for such as have strong bodies the case is otherwise; they are to be forced to work; and to avoid the excuse of not finding employment, there ought to be such laws as may encourage all manner of arts; as navigation, agriculture, fishing, and all manner of manufacture that requires labour.

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, II, 30

- 22 *Eve. Adam*, well may we labour still to dress
This Garden, still to tend Plant, Herb and Flour.
Our pleasant task enjoyn'd, but till more hands
Aid us, the work under our labour grows,
Luxurious by restraint; what we by day
Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind,
One night or two with wanton growth derides
Tending to wilde. Thou therefore now advise
Or hear what to my mind first thoughts present,
Let us divide our labours, thou where choice
Leads thee, or where most needs, whether to wind
The Woodbine round this Arbour, or direct
The clasping Ivie where to climb, while I
In yonder Spring of Roses intermixt
With Myrtle, find what to redress till Noon:
For while so near each other thus all day
Our task we choose, what wonder if so near
Looks intervene and smiles, or object new
Casual discourse draw on, which intermits
Our dayes work brought to little, though begun
Early, and th' hour of Supper comes unearn'd.

Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IX, 205

- 23 It [is not] so strange as, perhaps, before consideration, it may appear, that the property of labour should be able to overbalance the community of

land, for it is labour indeed that puts the difference of value on everything; and let anyone consider what the difference is between an acre of land planted with tobacco or sugar, sown with wheat or barley, and an acre of the same land lying in common without any husbandry upon it, and he will find that the improvement of labour makes the far greater part of the value. I think it will be but a very modest computation to say, that of the products of the earth useful to the life of man, nine-tenths are the effects of labour. Nay, if we will rightly estimate things as they come to our use, and cast up the several expenses about them—what in them is purely owing to Nature and what to labour—we shall find that in most of them ninety-nine hundredths are wholly to be put on the account of labour.

Locke, *II Civil Government*, V, 40

- 24 It is labour . . . which puts the greatest part of value upon land, without which it would scarcely be worth anything; it is to that we owe the greatest part of all its useful products; for all that the straw, bran, bread, of that acre of wheat, is more worth than the product of an acre of as good land which lies waste is all the effect of labour. For it is not barely the ploughman's pains, the reaper's and thresher's toil, and the baker's sweat, is to be counted into the bread we eat; the labour of those who broke the oxen, who digged and wrought the iron and stones, who felled and framed the timber employed about the plough, mill, oven, or any other utensils, which are a vast number, requisite to this corn, from its sowing to its being made bread, must all be charged on the account of labour, and received as an effect of that; Nature and the earth furnished only the almost worthless materials as in themselves. It would be a strange catalogue of things that industry provided and made use of about every loaf of bread before it came to our use if we could trace them; iron, wood, leather, bark, timber, stone, bricks, coals, lime, cloth, dyeing-drugs, pitch, tar, masts, ropes, and all the materials made use of in the ship that brought any of the commodities made use of by any of the workmen, to any part of the work, all which it would be almost impossible, at least too long, to reckon up.

Locke, *II Civil Government*, V, 43

- 25 No labour is so heavy but it may be brought to a level with the workman's strength, when regulated by equity, and not by avarice. The violent fatigues which slaves are made to undergo in other parts may be supplied by a skilful use of ingenious machines. . . . Possibly there is not that climate upon earth where the most laborious services might not with proper encouragement be performed by freemen. Bad laws having made lazy men, they have been reduced to slavery because of their laziness.

Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, XV, 8

26 The machines designed to abridge art are not always useful. If a piece of workmanship is of a moderate price, such as is equally agreeable to the maker and the buyer, those machines which would render the manufacture more simple, or, in other words, diminish the number of workmen, would be pernicious. And if water-mills were not everywhere established, I should not have believed them so useful as is pretended, because they have deprived an infinite multitude of their employment, a vast number of persons of the use of water, and great part of the land of its fertility.

Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, XXIII, 15

27 *Pangloss*. When man was placed in the garden of Eden, he was placed there, . . . to cultivate it; which proves that mankind are not created to be idle.

Voltaire, *Candide*, XXX

28 From the moment one man began to stand in need of the help of another; from the moment it appeared advantageous to any one man to have enough provisions for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, work became indispensable, and vast forests became smiling fields, which man had to water with the sweat of his brow, and where slavery and misery were soon seen to germinate and grow up with the crops.

Rousseau, *Origin of Inequality*, II

29 Equality might have been sustained, had the talents of individuals been equal, and had, for example, the use of iron and the consumption of commodities always exactly balanced each other; but, as there was nothing to preserve this balance, it was soon disturbed; the strongest did most work; the most skilful turned his labour to best account; the most ingenious devised methods of diminishing his labour: the husbandman wanted more iron, or the smith more corn, and, while both laboured equally, the one gained a great deal by his work, while the other could hardly support himself. Thus natural inequality unfolds itself insensibly with that of combination, and the difference between men, developed by their different circumstances, becomes more sensible and permanent in its effects, and begins to have an influence, in the same proportion, over the lot of individuals.

Rousseau, *Origin of Inequality*, II

30 What if I should undertake to show humanity attacked in its very source, and even in the most sacred of all ties, in which fortune is consulted before nature, and, the disorders of society confounding all virtue and vice, continence becomes a criminal precaution, and a refusal to give life to a fellow-creature, an act of humanity? But, without drawing aside the veil which hides all these

horrors, let us content ourselves with pointing out the evil which others will have to remedy.

To all this add the multiplicity of unhealthy trades, which shorten men's lives or destroy their bodies, such as working in the mines, and the preparing of metals and minerals, particularly lead, copper, mercury, cobalt, and arsenic: add those other dangerous trades which are daily fatal to many tilers, carpenters, masons and miners: put all these together and we can see, in the establishment and perfection of societies, the reasons for that diminution of our species, which has been noticed by many philosophers.

Rousseau, *Origin of Inequality*, Appendix

31 It is allowed that vocations and employments of least dignity are of the most apparent use, that the meanest artisan or manufacturer contributes more to the accommodation of life than the profound scholar and argumentative theorist, and that the public would suffer less present inconvenience from the banishment of philosophers than from the extinction of any common trade.

Johnson, *Rambler No. 145*

32 *Johnson*. "Why, Sir, you cannot call that pleasure [that is, labor] to which all are averse, and which none begin but with the hope of leaving off; a thing which men dislike before they have tried it, and when they have tried it." *Boswell*. "But, Sir, the mind must be employed, and we grow weary when idle." *Johnson*. "That is, Sir, because, others being busy, we want company; but if we were all idle, there would be no growing weary; we should all entertain one another. There is, indeed, this in trade:—it gives men an opportunity of improving their situation. If there were no trade, many who are poor would always remain poor. But no man loves labour for itself." *Boswell*. "Yes, Sir, I know a person who does. He is a very laborious Judge, and he loves the labour." *Johnson*. "Sir, that is because he loves respect and distinction. Could he have them without labour, he would like it less." *Boswell*. "He tells me he likes it for itself."—"Why, Sir, he fancies so, because he is not accustomed to abstract."

Boswell, Life of Johnson (Oct. 26, 1769)

33 The greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which it is anywhere directed, or applied, seem to have been the effects of the division of labour. [These] effects . . . in the general business of society, will be more easily understood by considering in what manner it [labour] operates in some particular manufactures. . . . To take an example, therefore, from a very trifling manufacture; but one in which the division of labour has been very often taken notice of, the trade of the pin-maker; a

workman not educated to this business (which the division of labour has rendered a distinct trade), nor acquainted with the use of the machinery employed in it (to the invention of which the same division of labour has probably given occasion), could scarce, perhaps, with his utmost industry, make one pin in a day, and certainly could not make twenty. But in the way in which this business is now carried on, not only the whole work is a peculiar trade, but it is divided into a number of branches, of which the greater part are likewise peculiar trades. One man draws out the wire, another straightens it, a third cuts it, a fourth points it, a fifth grinds it at the top for receiving the head; to make the head requires two or three distinct operations; to put it on is a peculiar business, to whiten the pins is another; it is even a trade by itself to put them into the paper; and the important business of making a pin is, in this manner, divided into about eighteen distinct operations, which, in some manufactories, are all performed by distinct hands, though in others the same man will sometimes perform two or three of them. I have seen a small manufactory of this kind where ten men only were employed, and where some of them consequently performed two or three distinct operations. But though they were very poor, and therefore but indifferently accommodated with the necessary machinery, they could, when they exerted themselves, make among them about twelve pounds of pins in a day. There are in a pound upwards of four thousand pins of a middling size. Those ten persons, therefore, could make among them upwards of forty-eight thousand pins in a day. Each person, therefore, making a tenth part of forty-eight thousand pins, might be considered as making four thousand eight hundred pins in a day. But if they had all wrought separately and independently, and without any of them having been educated to this peculiar business, they certainly could not each of them have made twenty, perhaps not one pin in a day; that is, certainly, not the two hundred and fortieth, perhaps not the four thousand eight hundredth part of what they are at present capable of performing, in consequence of a proper division and combination of their different operations.

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I, 1

- 34 In the first fire-engines, a boy was constantly employed to open and shut alternately the communication between the boiler and the cylinder, according as the piston either ascended or descended. One of those boys, who loved to play with his companions, observed that, by tying a string from the handle of the valve which opened this communication to another part of the machine, the valve would open and shut without his assistance, and leave him at liberty to divert himself with his play-fellows. One of the greatest improvements that has been made upon this machine, since it was first invented, was in this manner the discovery of a boy who wanted to save his own labour.
- Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I, 1
- 35 When the division of labour has been once thoroughly established, it is but a very small part of a man's wants which the produce of his own labour can supply. He supplies the far greater part of them by exchanging that surplus part of the produce of his own labour, which is over and above his own consumption, for such parts of the produce of other men's labour as he has occasion for. Every man thus lives by exchanging, or becomes in some measure a merchant, and the society itself grows to be what is properly a commercial society.
- Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I, 4
- 36 Great labour, either of mind or body, continued for several days together, is in most men naturally followed by a great desire of relaxation, which, if not restrained by force or by some strong necessity, is almost irresistible. It is the call of nature, which requires to be relieved by some indulgence, sometimes of ease only, but sometimes, too, of dissipation and diversion.
- Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I, 8
- 37 Custom everywhere regulates fashion. As it is ridiculous not to dress, so is it, in some measure, not to be employed, like other people. As a man of a civil profession seems awkward in a camp or a garrison, and is even in some danger of being despised there, so does an idle man among men of business.
- Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I, 9
- 38 There is one sort of labour which adds to the value of the subject upon which it is bestowed: there is another which has no such effect. The former, as it produces a value, may be called productive; the latter, unproductive labour. Thus the labour of a manufacturer adds, generally, to the value of the materials which he works upon, that of his own maintenance, and of his master's profit. The labour of a menial servant, on the contrary, adds to the value of nothing. . . . The labour of the latter, however, has its value, and deserves its reward as well as that of the former. But the labour of the manufacturer fixes and realizes itself in some particular subject or vendible commodity, which lasts for some time at least after that labour is past. It is, as it were, a certain quantity of labour stocked and stored up to be employed, if necessary, upon some other occasion. That subject, or what is the same thing, the price of that subject, can afterwards, if necessary, put into motion a quantity of labour equal to that which had originally produced it. The labour of the menial servant, on the contrary, does not fix or realize itself

in any particular subject or vendible commodity. His services generally perish in the very instant of their performance, and seldom leave any trace or value behind them for which an equal quantity of service could afterwards be procured.

The labour of some of the most respectable orders in the society is, like that of menial servants, unproductive of any value, and does not fix or realize itself in any permanent subject; or vendible commodity, which endures after that labour is past, and for which an equal quantity of labour could afterwards be procured. The sovereign, for example, with all the officers both of justice and war who serve under him, the whole army and navy, are unproductive labourers. They are the servants of the public, and are maintained by a part of the annual produce of the industry of other people. Their service, how honourable, how useful, or how necessary soever, produces nothing for which an equal quantity of service can afterwards be procured. The protection, security, and defence of the commonwealth, the effect of their labour this year will not purchase its protection, security, and defence for the year to come. In the same class must be ranked, some both of the gravest and most important, and some of the most frivolous professions: churchmen, lawyers, physicians, men of letters of all kinds; players, buffoons, musicians, opera-singers, opera-dancers, etc. The labour of the meanest of these has a certain value, regulated by the very same principles which regulate that of every other sort of labour; and that of the noblest and most useful, produces nothing which could afterwards purchase or procure an equal quantity of labour. Like the declamation of the actor, the harangue of the orator, or the tune of the musician, the work of all of them perishes in the very instant of its production.

Both productive and unproductive labourers, and those who do not labour at all, are all equally maintained by the annual produce of the land and labour of the country. This produce, how great soever, can never be infinite, but must have certain limits. According, therefore, as a smaller or greater proportion of it is in any one year employed in maintaining unproductive hands, the more in the one case and the less in the other will remain for the productive, and the next year's produce will be greater or smaller accordingly; the whole annual produce, if we except the spontaneous productions of the earth, being the effect of productive labour.

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, II, 3

39 In the progress of the division of labour, the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labour, that is, of the great body of the people, comes to be confined to a few very simple operations, frequently to one or two. But the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments. The

man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects are perhaps always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. The torpor of his mind renders him not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life. Of the great and extensive interests of his country he is altogether incapable of judging, and unless very particular pains have been taken to render him otherwise, he is equally incapable of defending his country in war. The uniformity of his stationary life naturally corrupts the courage of his mind, and makes him regard with abhorrence the irregular, uncertain, and adventurous life of a soldier. It corrupts even the activity of his body, and renders him incapable of exerting his strength with vigour and perseverance in any other employment than that to which he has been bred. His dexterity at his own particular trade seems, in this manner, to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual, social, and martial virtues. But in every improved and civilised society this is the state into which the labouring poor, that is, the great body of the people, must necessarily fall, unless government takes some pains to prevent it.

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, V, 1

40 The brethren [of the ancient monasteries] were supported by their manual labour; and the duty of labour was strenuously recommended as a penance, as an exercise, and as the most laudable means of securing their daily subsistence. The garden and fields, which the industry of the monks had often rescued from the forest or the morass, were diligently cultivated by their hands. They performed, without reluctance, the menial offices of slaves and domestics; and the several trades that were necessary to provide their habits, their utensils, and their lodging, were exercised within the precincts of the great monasteries.

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, XXXVII

41 All trades, arts, and handiworks have gained by division of labour, namely, when, instead of one man doing everything, each confines himself to a certain kind of work distinct from others in the treatment it requires, so as to be able to perform it with greater facility and in the greatest perfection. Where the different kinds of work are not distinguished and divided, where everyone is a jack-of-

all-trades, there manufactures remain still in the greatest barbarism.

Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Pref.

- 42 There is no real wealth but the labor of man. Were the mountains of gold and the valleys of silver, the world would not be one grain of corn the richer; no one comfort would be added to the human race.
- Shelley, *Queen Mab*, Notes
- 43 The means of acquiring and preparing the particularized means appropriate to our similarly particularized needs is work. Through work the raw material directly supplied by nature is specifically adapted to these numerous ends by all sorts of different processes. Now this formative change confers value on means and gives them their utility, and hence man in what he consumes is mainly concerned with the products of men. It is the products of human effort which man consumes.
- Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 196
- 44 The universal and objective element in work, on the other hand, lies in the abstracting process which effects the subdivision of needs and means and thereby *eo ipso* subdivides production and brings about the division of labour. By this division, the work of the individual becomes less complex, and consequently his skill at his section of the job increases, like his output. At the same time, this abstraction of one man's skill and means of production from another's completes and makes necessary everywhere the dependence of men on one another and their reciprocal relation in the satisfaction of their other needs. Further, the abstraction of one man's production from another's makes work more and more mechanical, until finally man is able to step aside and install machines in his place.
- Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 198
- 45 When a regular division of employments has spread through any society, the social state begins to acquire a consistency and stability which place it out of danger from particular divergencies.
- Comte, *Positive Philosophy*, VI, 5
- 46 When a workman is unceasingly and exclusively engaged in the fabrication of one thing, he ultimately does his work with singular dexterity; but at the same time he loses the general faculty of applying his mind to the direction of the work. He every day becomes more adroit and less industrious; so that it may be said of him that in proportion as the workman improves, the man is degraded. What can be expected of a man who has spent twenty years of his life in making heads for pins? And to what can that mighty human intelligence which has so often stirred the world be applied in

him except it be to investigate the best method of making pins' heads? When a workman has spent a considerable portion of his existence in this manner, his thoughts are forever set upon the object of his daily toil; his body has contracted certain fixed habits, which it can never shake off; in a word, he no longer belongs to himself, but to the calling that he has chosen. It is in vain that laws and manners have been at pains to level all the barriers round such a man and to open to him on every side a thousand different paths to fortune; a theory of manufactures more powerful than customs and laws binds him to a craft, and frequently to a spot, which he cannot leave; it assigns to him a certain place in society, beyond which he cannot go; in the midst of universal movement it has rendered him stationary.

In proportion as the principle of the division of labor is more extensively applied, the workman becomes more weak, more narrow-minded, and more dependent. The art advances, the artisan recedes. On the other hand, in proportion as it becomes more manifest that the productions of manufactures are by so much the cheaper and better as the manufacture is larger and the amount of capital employed more considerable, wealthy and educated men come forward to embark in manufactures, which were heretofore abandoned to poor or ignorant handicraftsmen. The magnitude of the efforts required and the importance of the results to be obtained attract them. Thus at the very time at which the science of manufactures lowers the class of workmen, it raises the class of masters.

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*,
Vol. II, II, 20

- 47 All work, even cotton-spinning, is noble; work is alone noble.
- Carlyle, *Past and Present*, III, 4
- 48 Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works: in Idleness alone is there perpetual despair.
- Carlyle, *Past and Present*, III, 11
- 49 The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it.
- Carlyle, *Past and Present*, III, 11
- 50 Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of Labour, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony, the instant he sets himself to work! Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse, Indignation, Despair itself, all these like helldogs lie beleaguering the soul of the poor dayworker, as of every man: but he bends himself with free valour against his task, and all these are stilled, all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The man is now a man. The blessed glow of Labour in

him, is it not as purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made bright blessed flame!

Carlyle, *Past and Present*, III, 11

- 51 When I go into my garden with a spade, and dig a bed, I feel such an exhilaration and health that I discover that I have been defrauding myself all this time in letting others do for me what I should have done with my own hands.

Emerson, *Man the Reformer*

- 52 Every man who removes into this city with any purchasable talent or skill in him, gives to every man's labor in the city a new worth.

Emerson, *Wealth*

- 53 The crime which bankrupts men and states is job-work—declining from your main design, to serve a turn here or there.

Emerson, *Wealth*

- 54 Labor is the curse of the world, and nobody can meddle with it without becoming proportionately brutified.

Hawthorne, *American Notebooks*
(Aug. 12, 1841)

- 55 Most men would feel insulted if it were proposed to employ them in throwing stones over a wall, and then in throwing them back, merely that they might earn their wages. But many are no more worthily employed now.

Thoreau, *Life Without Principle*

- 56 The aim of the laborer should be, not to get his living, to get 'a good job,' but to perform well a certain work; and, even in a pecuniary sense, it would be economy for a town to pay its laborers so well that they would not feel that they were working for low ends, as for a livelihood merely, but for scientific, or even moral ends. Do not hire a man who does your work for money, but him who does it for love of it.

Thoreau, *Life Without Principle*

- 57 I found that the occupation of a day-laborer was the most independent of any, especially as it required only thirty or forty days in a year to support one. The laborer's day ends with the going down of the sun, and he is then free to devote himself to his chosen pursuit, independent of his labor; but his employer, who speculates from month to month, has no respite from one end of the year to the other.

In short, I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship but a pastime, if we will live simply and wisely; as the pursuits of the simpler nations are still the sports of the more artificial. It is not necessary that a man should earn his living

by the sweat of his brow, unless he sweats easier than I do.

Thoreau, *Walden: Economy*

- 58 If we except the *light* and the *air* of heaven, no good thing has been, or can be enjoyed by us, without having first cost labour. And, inasmuch [as] most good things are produced by labour, it follows that [all] such things of right belong to those whose labour has produced them. But it has so happened in all ages of the world, that *some* have laboured, and *others* have, without labour, enjoyed a large proportion of the fruits. This is wrong, and should not continue. To [secure] to each labourer the whole product of his labour, or as nearly as possible, is a most worthy object of any good government.

Lincoln, *Fragments of a Tariff Discussion* (Dec. 1, 1847)

- 59 If at any time all *labour* should cease, and all existing provisions be equally divided among the people, at the end of a single year there could scarcely be one human being left alive—all would have perished by want of subsistence.

So again, if upon such division, all that *sort* of labour, which produces provisions, should cease, and each individual should take up so much of his share as he could, and carry it continually around his habitation, although in this carrying, the amount of labour going on might be as great as ever, so long as it could last, at the end of the year the result would be precisely the same—that is, none would be left living.

The first of these propositions shows, that universal *idleness* would speedily result in universal *ruin*; and the second shows, that *useless labour* is, in this respect, the same as idleness.

I submit, then, whether it does not follow, that *partial idleness*, and *partial useless labour*, would, in the proportion of their extent, in like manner result, in partial ruin—whether, if *all* should subsist upon the labour that *one half* should perform, it would not result in very scanty allowance to the whole.

Lincoln, *Fragments of a Tariff Discussion* (Dec. 1, 1847)

- 60 Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration. Capital has its rights, which are as worthy of protection as any other rights. Nor is it denied that there is, and probably always will be, a relation between labor and capital, producing mutual benefits. The error is in assuming that the whole labor of community exists within that relation. A few men own capital, and that few avoid labor themselves, and, with their capital, hire or buy another few to labor for them. A

large majority belong to neither class—neither work for others, nor have others working for them.
Lincoln, *Annual Message* (Dec. 3, 1861)

- 61 There is not, of necessity, any such thing as the free hired laborer being fixed to that condition for life. Many independent men everywhere in these States, a few years back in their lives, were hired laborers. The prudent, penniless beginner in the world, labors for wages awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself; then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This is the just, and generous, and prosperous system, which opens the way to all—gives hope to all, and consequent energy, and progress, and improvement of condition to all. No men living are more worthy to be trusted than those who toil up from poverty—none less inclined to take, or touch, aught which they have not honestly earned.

Lincoln, *Annual Message* (Dec. 3, 1861)

- 62 Labour power can appear upon the market as a commodity only if, and so far as, its possessor, the individual whose labour power it is, offers it for sale, or sells it, as a commodity. In order that he may be able to do this, he must have it at his disposal, must be the untrammelled owner of his capacity for labour, that is, of his person. He and the owner of money meet in the market and deal with each other as on the basis of equal rights, with this difference alone, that one is buyer, the other seller; both, therefore, equal in the eyes of the law. The continuance of this relation demands that the owner of the labour power should sell it only for a definite period, for if he were to sell it rump and stump, once for all, he would be selling himself, converting himself from a free man into a slave, from an owner of a commodity into a commodity.

Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, II, 6

- 63 Nature does not produce on the one side owners of money or commodities, and on the other men possessing nothing but their own labour power. This relation has no natural basis, neither is its social basis one that is common to all historical periods. It is clearly the result of a past historical development, the product of many economic revolutions, of the extinction of a whole series of older forms of social production.

Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, II, 6

- 64 Within the process of production . . . capital acquired the command over labour, i.e., over functioning labour power or the labourer himself. Personified capital, the capitalist takes care that the labourer does his work regularly and with the proper degree of intensity.

Capital further developed into a coercive rela-

tion, which compels the working class to do more work than the narrow round of its own life-wants prescribes. As a producer of the activity of others, as a pumper-out of surplus labour and exploiter of labour power, it surpasses in energy, disregard of bounds, recklessness, and efficiency, all earlier systems of production based on directly compulsory labour.

Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, III, 11

- 65 If we consider the process of production from the point of view of the simple labour process, the labourer stands in relation to the means of production, not in their quality as capital, but as the mere means and material of his own intelligent productive activity. In tanning, e.g., he deals with the skins as his simple object of labour. It is not the capitalist whose skin he tans. But it is different as soon as we deal with the process of production from the point of view of the process of creation of surplus value. The means of production are at once changed into means for the absorption of the labour of others. It is now no longer the labourer that employs the means of production, but the means of production that employ the labourer. Instead of being consumed by him as material elements of his productive activity, they consume him as the ferment necessary to their own life process, and the life process of capital consists only in its movement as value constantly expanding, constantly multiplying itself. Furnaces and workshops that stand idle by night, and absorb no living labour, are "a mere loss" to the capitalist. Hence, furnaces and workshops constitute lawful claims upon the night labour of the workpeople. The simple transformation of money into the material factors of the process of production, into means of production, transforms the latter into a title and a right to the labour and surplus labour of others.

Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, III, 11

- 66 The foundation of every division of labour that is well developed and brought about by the exchange of commodities is the separation between town and country. It may be said, that the whole economical history of society is summed up in the movement of this antithesis.

Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, IV, 14

- 67 It is a result of the division of labour in manufactures that the labourer is brought face to face with the intellectual potencies of the material process of production, as the property of another, and as a ruling power. This separation begins in simple co-operation, where the capitalist represents to the single workman the oneness and the will of the associated labour. It is developed in manufacture which cuts down the labourer into a detail labourer. It is completed in modern industry, which makes science a productive force distinct from

labour and presses it into the service of capital.
Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, IV, 14

- 68 Every kind of capitalist production, insofar as it is not only a labour process, but also a process of creating surplus value, has this in common: that it is not the workman that employs the instruments of labour, but the instruments of labour that employ the workman. But it is only in the factory system that this inversion for the first time acquires technical and palpable reality. By means of its conversion into an automation, the instrument of labour confronts the labourer, during the labour process, in the shape of capital, of dead labour, which dominates and pumps dry living labour power. The separation of the intellectual powers of production from the manual labour, and the conversion of those powers into the might of capital over labour, is, as we have already shown, finally completed by modern industry erected on the foundation of machinery. The special skill of each individual insignificant factory operative vanishes as an infinitesimal quantity before the science, the gigantic physical forces, and the mass of labour that are embodied in the factory mechanism and, together with that mechanism, constitute the power of the "master."

Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, IV, 15

- 69 The whole system of capitalist production is based on the fact that the workman sells his labour power as a commodity. Division of labour specializes this labour power, by reducing it to skill in handling a particular tool. So soon as the handling of this tool becomes the work of a machine, then, with the use-value, the exchange value of the workman's labour power also vanishes; the workman becomes unsaleable, like paper money thrown out of currency by legal enactment. That portion of the working class thus by machinery rendered superfluous (that is, no longer immediately necessary for the self-expansion of capital) either goes to the wall in the unequal contest of the old handicrafts and manufactures with machinery, or else floods all the more easily accessible branches of industry, swamps the labour market, and sinks the price of labour power below its value. It is impressed upon the workpeople, as a great consolation, first, that their sufferings are only temporary ("a temporary inconvenience"), secondly, that machinery acquires the mastery over the whole of a given field of production only by degrees, so that the extent and intensity of its destructive effect is diminished. The first consolation neutralizes the second. When machinery seizes on an industry by degrees, it produces chronic misery among the operatives who compete with it. Where the transition is rapid, the effect is acute and felt by great masses.

Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, IV, 15

- 70 The more the productiveness of labour increases,

the more can the working day be shortened; and the more the working day is shortened, the more can the intensity of labour increase. From a social point of view, the productiveness increases in the same ratio as the economy of labour, which, in its turn, includes not only economy of the means of production, but also the avoidance of all useless labour. The capitalist mode of production, while on the one hand enforcing economy in each individual business, on the other hand begets, by its anarchical system of competition, the most outrageous squandering of labour power and of the social means of production, not to mention the creation of a vast number of employments, at present indispensable, but in themselves superfluous.

The intensity and productiveness of labour being given, the time which society is bound to devote to material production is shorter, and, as a consequence, the time at its disposal for the free development, intellectual and social, of the individual is greater, in proportion as the work is more and more evenly divided among all the able-bodied members of society, and as a particular class is more and more deprived of the power to shift the natural burden of labour from its own shoulders to those of another layer of society. In this direction, the shortening of the working day finds at last a limit in the generalization of labour. In capitalist society, spare time is acquired for one class by converting the whole lifetime of the masses into labour time.

Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, V, 17

- 71 In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed—a class of labourers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital. These labourers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market.

Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labour, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack that is required of him. Hence, the cost of production of a workman is restricted almost entirely to the means of subsistence that he requires for his maintenance and for the propagation of his race. But the price of a commodity, and therefore also of labour, is equal to its cost of production. In proportion, therefore, as the repulsiveness of the work increases, the wage decreases. Nay more, in proportion as the use of machinery and division of labour increases, in the same proportion the burden of toil also increases, whether by prolongation of the working hours, by increase

of the work exacted in a given time, or by increased speed of the machinery, etc.

Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, I

- 72 In bourgeois society living labour is but a means to increase accumulated labour. In Communist society accumulated labour is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the labourer.

Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, II

- 73 The workingmen have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got.

Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, II

- 74 Intellectual speculation must be looked upon as a most influential part of the productive labour of society, and the portion of its resources employed in carrying on and in remunerating such labour, as a highly productive part of its expenditure.

Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, Bk. I, II, 8

- 75 The number of persons fitted to direct and superintend any industrial enterprise, or even to execute any process which cannot be reduced almost to an affair of memory and routine, is always far short of the demand; as is evident from the enormous difference between the salaries paid to such persons, and the wages of ordinary labour. The deficiency of practical good sense, which renders the majority of the labouring class such bad calculators—which makes, for instance, their domestic economy so improvident, lax, and irregular—must disqualify them for any but a low grade of intelligent labour, and render their industry far less productive than with equal energy it otherwise might be.

Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, Bk. I, VII, 5

- 76 Hitherto it is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day's toil of any human being. They have enabled a greater population to live the same life of drudgery and imprisonment, and an increased number of manufacturers and others to make fortunes. They have increased the comforts of the middle classes. But they have not yet begun to effect those great changes in human destiny, which it is in their nature and in their futurity to accomplish. Only when, in addition to just institutions, the increase of mankind shall be under the deliberate guidance of judicious foresight, can the conquests made from the powers of nature by the intellect

and energy of scientific discoverers, become the common property of the species, and the means of improving and elevating the universal lot.

Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, Bk. IV, VI, 2

- 77 The Bible legend tells us that the absence of labor—idleness—was a condition of the first man's blessedness before the Fall. Fallen man has retained a love of idleness, but the curse weighs on the race not only because we have to seek our bread in the sweat of our brows, but because our moral nature is such that we cannot be both idle and at ease. An inner voice tells us we are in the wrong if we are idle. If man could find a state in which he felt that though idle he was fulfilling his duty, he would have found one of the conditions of man's primitive blessedness.

Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, VII, 1

- 78 Tom said to himself that it was not such a hollow world, after all. He had discovered a great law of human action, without knowing it—namely, that in order to make a man or boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to attain. If he had been a great and wise philosopher, like the writer of this book, he would now have comprehended that Work consists of whatever a body is *obliged* to do, and that Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do. And this would help him to understand why constructing artificial flowers or performing on a treadmill is work, while rolling tenpins or climbing Mont Blanc is only amusement. There are wealthy gentlemen in England who drive four-horse passenger-coaches twenty or thirty miles on a daily line, in the summer, because the privilege costs them considerable money; but if they are offered wages for the service, that would turn it into work and then they would resign.

Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer*, II

- 79 Leisure, though the propertied classes give its name to their own idleness, is not idleness. It is not even a luxury: it is a necessity, and a necessity of the first importance. Some of the most valuable work done in the world has been done at leisure, and never paid for in cash or kind. Leisure may be described as free activity, labor as compulsory activity. Leisure does what it likes: labor does what it must, the compulsion being that of Nature, which in these latitudes leaves men no choice between labor and starvation.

Shaw, *Socialism and Culture*

11.4 | Money

Most of the passages quoted in this section are concerned with the conception of money as a common measure or universal medium of exchange. In the background of this discussion lies the distinction between a money economy and a barter economy in which goods are exchanged directly without the use of money. One profound difference between these two economies, observed by a number of writers, is that where money is not in use, spoilage and waste exert a restraining influence on the accumulation of goods that is not present when coin can be acquired through trade and then stored away indefinitely.

Some of the passages deal with the borrowing and lending of money, and this leads

into a discussion of usury, debt, and credit. Though money is seen to be useful in a variety of ways, it is generally agreed that it is useless in itself, which leads certain writers to call it "artificial wealth" as contrasted with the natural wealth of consumable goods and instruments of production.

The passages that enunciate or comment on the theme that the love of money is the root of all evil might have been placed in Section 11.2 on WEALTH AND POVERTY; but since they use the word "money" instead of the word "wealth" they are included here. The reader should consult that section and also Section 11.1 on PROPERTY and Section 11.5 on TRADE, COMMERCE, AND INDUSTRY for the treatment of other contexts.

1 All things that are exchanged must be somehow comparable. It is for this end that money has been introduced, and it becomes in a sense an intermediate; for it measures all things.

Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1133^a 18

2 There are two sorts of wealth-getting. . . . One is a part of household management, the other is retail trade: the former necessary and honourable, while that which consists in exchange is justly censured; for it is unnatural, and a mode by which men gain from one another. The most hated sort, and with the greatest reason, is usury, which makes a gain out of money itself, and not from the natural object of it. For money was intended to be used in exchange, but not to increase at interest. . . . Of all modes of getting wealth this is the most unnatural.

Aristotle, *Politics*, 1258^a38

3 One has a duty to make money, but only by honorable means. It is also one's duty to save money and increase it by diligence and thrift.

Cicero, *De Officiis*, II, 24

4 Are you ignorant of what value money has, what use it can afford? Bread, herbs, a bottle of wine may be purchased; to which [necessaries], add [such others], as, being withheld, human nature

would be uneasy with itself. What, to watch half dead with terror, night and day, to dread profligate thieves, fire, and your slaves, lest they should run away and plunder you; is this delightful? I should always wish to be very poor in possessions held upon these terms.

Horace, *Satires*, I, 1

5 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

I Timothy 6:10

6 It is the higher accomplishment to use money well than to use arms; but not to need it is more noble than to use it.

Plutarch, *Coriolanus*

7
The loss of money is awful,
Such a terrible thing that no one can counterfeit mourning,
No one be content with merely rending his garments,
Rubbing his eyes to produce crocodile tears. If your money
Is gone, you will really cry with genuine lamentation.

Juvenal, *Satire XIII*