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Anonymous
Against the Production Ethic
and the States and Bosses who wield it
02-01-2022

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# Against the Production Ethic

## and the States and Bosses who wield it

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If we wish to rest when we decide to rest, and to rise only when we are ready to rise.

We must attack that which forces the framework of productivity upon us.

We must attack the institutions of colonialism.

We must attack the institutions of white supremacy.

We must attack the institutions of ableism.

We must attack the institutions of cisheterosexism.

We must attack the institutions of anti-blackness.

We must torch the mechanisms of capitalism so thoroughly that even the state-communists cannot turn them against us.

There is no place for class-reductionism in this attack. Such reductionism only serves to reinforce the oppression inherent to the production ethic and must be denounced as such.

I attack because I refuse to be sacrificed on the factory floor; The Boss's, The People's, or otherwise.

I ask only that you attack in the ways that you are able, whenever you are able. You deserve better than what this world can ever give you. You deserve so much better.



This is for those who are tired of the exhaustion enforced on them by an unfeeling, uncaring world.

This is for those who cry out in the night for respite knowing they must rise in the morning to put food on their table.

This is for those who are told they are unworthy of care, of support, told that their life is a necessary sacrifice.

This is for those taken from us too soon, for too long.

This is for those who refuse to be made stone in defiance of this world, who yearn for something more.

This is for all those who fight back.

I see you.

This is for you.

It is February 2022. The US has now entered its third calendar year of being ravaged by a global pandemic. 3,579 people died yesterday in the US alone. These lives were not lost through some tragic accident as nearly all media coverage would lead us to believe.

No, these lives were taken, sacrificed by those with power who stood to gain from the pandemic. Sacrificed in service of the production ethic.

Even when actions are taken with the ostensible goal of curbing mass death, the framing of those actions is rarely about prioritizing people's health. Instead, the actions are taken to "help us get back to normal" as soon as possible, to get us back to producing.

How else could Bezos increase his net worth by over $50,000,000,000 since January 2020, or Musk increase his by over $100,000,000,000 in the same time.

In this perpetual "return to normalcy" we have seen a massive number of people quitting their jobs, refusing to put up with the conditions that have been imposed upon this world since the advent of capitalism, and the chattel slavery and colonization that served it; heightened and highlighted by the pandemic.

This zine does not attempt to offer an explanation of why people are quitting their jobs now, or even posit the meaning of this cur-

rent situation. There are as many reasons to refuse work as there are people.

We are not yet two years removed from a sustained Black rebellion that demonstrated the meaning of possibility in a torched cop shop and a thousand other daring acts across the country.

I have no desire to explain that which intentionally evades characterization. No desire to paint a collection of moments as a prescriptive movement.

This intro is only to serve as context for the world in which I am writing, the world I wish to make dust. The world dominated by the production ethic.

## What is the Production Ethic?

The production ethic is the system of value by which actions that are deemed to be "productive" are considered good, and those that are either neutral or deemed "unproductive" are considered bad. Similarly, individuals who exhibit "productive" behaviors are considered to be good, and those who are "unproductive" are considered bad.

The value of a person comes to be defined by their alleged productivity. This ethic is a consequence of, or response to, the capitalist mode of production. This ethic is intentionally constructed, propagated, and enforced by those who stand to gain from the capitalist mode of production in order to reinforce their power.

Individuals who are considered productive are considered deserving of being rewarded; socially, financially, spiritually. Those who are considered unproductive are deserve to be punished. This system permeates all aspects of our lives. It not only affects us where we work, but it is first beaten into us (either metaphorically or far too often literally) at school and within our own families.



Through this worship of technology, the state-communist takes what was ostensibly (in their own theory) a means to an end, a temporary measure on the road to a stateless communist society and venerates it as the end itself. The goal is no longer to create a communist world where individuals are free to develop meaningful relation as they desire, but rather to venerate the consequences of the state as well. These consequences are often not even considered necessary evils, instead they are signs of success, signs of "progress".

There is no untangling the production ethic from white supremacy, from cis-heteropatriarchy, from colonialism, from ableism. And there is no disentangling the state from the production ethic.

## Anti-Work Thought as Attack

There is a recognition of the danger of anti-work thought to projects interested in state building. Because the state requires the myth of a hegemonic, benevolent goal the possibility of large numbers of people rejecting to work towards that goal threatens the myth, and therefore the state. Work refusal is a threat to, but not directly an attack on, the production ethic. If we wish to do away with the system of domination imposed upon us through the capitalist mode of production it is not enough to refuse work, or prioritize individual rest and leisure. Individual lifestyle choices will never be enough.

We must attack.

In order to directly attack the production ethic, we must attack the institutions of oppression that are fundamental to it.

If we wish to live in a world where we are free to develop meaningful relation to one another and to the communities we live in.

If we wish to live without the imposition of a value based upon the alleged productive capabilities of our bodies.

existence of the production ethic. Outsized power will still be held by those who decide what counts as a "legitimate" disability and how that decision process is used to punish those who struggle to meet the demand of the production ethic or refuse it altogether.

Colonization still exists within the communistic state. Land is still seized and turned over to those who will "use it more productively" except now instead of that productivity being based around the accumulation of capital for wealthy business owners, it's to accumulate resources for the state. People are still displaced from their lands, relocated at the whims of the state's thirst for resource extraction. They are still "reeducated" to better serve the state. Some will say that a communist state will be kinder in its displacement, relocation and reeducation, that such acts are necessary in order to ensure an economy that can care for "the masses". This is apologia for colonization, plain and simple. There is no kind displacement, no kind ethnocide.

*Note this thought is also present in white-anarchist tendencies that seek the establishment of communes or autonomous zones on stolen land as a means by which to "re-establish" some connection to land that was never ours to begin with. These currents are dangerous in their own right and should be understood as misguided at best. This is not to say all communes are inherently colonial, but any such white-led structure in the US almost certainly is.

The belief that somehow a "communist" state would be able to function without the dehumanization of people and extraction of resources from land amounts to the worship of technology we see from every tech bro who believes in crypto currency as a revolutionary force. The only difference in this case is that the state-communist supplants the worship of capital with the worship of the state. Both are a worship of technology as savior and both rely on the capitalist mode of production. Any attempt to rehabilitate the production ethic is doomed to fail, if by fail we mean do away with the consequences of that ethic.



We internalize the ethic to cling to existence within this meat-grinder of a system and so the ethic infects our relationships with others, with space and time, and with ourselves.

Anyone who has ever worked a service job and had their boss get pissed at them for taking too long of a smoke break or taking five minutes to compose themselves during a particularly rough shift understands that their role is to be productive first, person second.

Inherent to this system is the fact that "productiveness" and "unproductiveness" are entirely subjective categories that are bent and molded in order to serve the existing power structures of white supremacy, antiblackness, cisheteropatriarchy, colonialism, and ableism. Actions are always racialized and gendered within the context of these systems. Both the characterization of "unproductive" and the consequences of being deemed "unproductive" will be born most intensely by the disabled, the Black, the targeted nonwhite, the queer, the indigenous.

Ironically, the proponents of the production ethic claim the opposite. Those with the power to define someone or something productive will claim to be focusing solely on the actions themselves, claiming a "color-blind" view of the individual taking those actions. They claim not to consider the contexts that informed these actions.

The teacher claims they're writing up the student solely because they refused to pay attention in class and were always falling asleep. That teacher doesn't give a shit that the student is falling asleep because they don't have the luxury to rest after school because they need to work at the local gas station to help pay the rent.

The production ethic serves, and is, in turn, served itself, by systems of power it operates within. There is no separating the production ethic from white supremacy and antiblackness, from colonialism, from any and all systems of oppression.

## Foundations and Consequences

Beyond simply serving existing systems of domination, the production ethic extends these forms, reproducing them as ever more specified and intimate oppressive structures.

Foundational characteristics of the production ethic become indistinguishable from its consequences as any system of domination that serves the production ethic is in turn served by the production ethic.

The following are brief summaries of some of these foundational characteristics, consequences, and combinations of the two.

### Ableism

Given that, under the production ethic, our value is defined solely by our ability to produce, and that since production for most people is defined by their ability to labor, ableism is inherent to the production ethic. Calling it a consequence would be a bit of a misnomer, as that implies the ableism is an unfortunate afterthought, rather than a foundational instrument of reinforcing the ethic. Ableism forms the basis on which value is defined.

The prescriptive category of disabled (meaning that which the state ascribes to individuals as a characterization as opposed to that which individuals can claim for themselves as identity) perpetually remains a moving target. As the goals of production change people move in and out of being valuable to, and valued by, the production ethic. Similarly, the category can be narrowed or expanded depending on how desperately the system requires more sacrifices on a given day.

The ever-shifting CDC guidelines on who is at risk during this pandemic and what is required to "safely" re-enter the workplace demonstrates how disability as prescriptive category will always conform to the desires of the bosses and the state. When the bosses can make due without your labor, the state may allow you the pre-



## "Communism" with Capitalistic Characteristics

You might be tempted to say that the problem is not with the production ethic, but rather with capitalism. Perhaps, you think, if the state were of the communist variety, comprised of a dictatorship of the proletariat, the production ethic might even be a good thing.

My response is simple: There is no rehabilitating the production ethic. There is no state without the capitalist mode of production. There is no capitalist mode of production without the ordering of society in accordance with the production ethic. There is no production ethic without its foundations and consequences.

Whether your state claims to serve capital or "the masses" it is reliant on a production ethic to function. In order to maintain legitimacy, the state needs to sell the myth of a hegemonic, benevolent purpose. The production ethic is what underlines the supposed purpose of the state as it offers a cohesive goal for all socalled citizens to strive towards.

None of the underlying foundational characteristics or consequences, the underlying racialization and gendering of production, discussed previously are meaningfully affected by this transition from a capitalistic state to a "communistic" one. Individuals are still dehumanized, valued by their ability to produce. There is still the ever-present creep of the production ethic into our daily lives; rest and leisure are still in service of our productivity. Punishment is certainly still present for those who either reject the production ethic or are unable to keep up with its demands.

Ableism still exists as the backbone of the state-communist production ethic, with able-bodied individuals serving as the hegemonic myth of the proletarian worker and the disabled individual being either abandoned (did Lenin not say "he who does not work, neither shall he eat"?) or tokenized in order to justify and reify the

take on riskier actions in order to survive, actions that are then criminalized by the very system that forced their existence.

If the system decides such actions warrant more explicit violence, the individual ends up in the modern system of slavery, prison. Here, all of the punishments mentioned above are enforced to a stricter and harsher degree with the additional punishment of the further restriction of autonomy. In a truly cruel irony, prisons enforce yet another punishment in the form of forced labor, forced productiveness. The system of the production ethic is determined to extract everything it can from the individual, whether it deems them valuable or not.

The knowledge that such punishment awaits those of us who ever become (or are deemed to be) unproductive serves to keep us working. Even our ability to envision a world outside of this system of productivity is curbed by the knowledge that spending time in such fantasies would risk our productiveness in the here and now.

There are many, many other consequences that are created or worsened by the production ethic. These are just brief summaries of some such consequences.

Because of the relationship between the production ethic and the systems of white supremacy, anti-blackness, cisheteropatriarchy, colonialism, and ableism, the consequences described above will be far more acute for those who are impacted by the intersecting oppressions theses systems enforce.

There is no untangling the consequences of the production ethic from the consequences of any other system of oppression. These systems must be understood in conjunction with one another.

There is no way to consider the production ethic from strictly a class-based lens as I have seen many white radicals attempt to do. To make such an attempt is to miss the point entirely about how we might actually free ourselves from this system.



scription of “disabled”. When the bosses begin losing money from a lack of employees to exploit suddenly the category of “disabled” becomes more heavily scrutinized and constrained.

## Colonization

The production ethic necessitates colonization because of its evaluation of all space and time in terms of potential productive utility. This means that land also falls within the jurisdiction of being either “productive” or “unproductive”. More specifically, land is considered a resource to be given to those who will use it most productively. Within a white supremacist system this inherently means that white people are considered, by the production ethic, to be the most productive and therefore hold providential claim to all land. Land that is not serving the institutions of white supremacy can never be considered productive and therefore must be made to do so.

So, through the frame of production, the forced seizure of land, the displacement of the people indigenous to that land, and the establishment of settlements of people who will “be more productive” on that land are justified. These settlements can be literal towns and cities, or they can be mines, logging camps, and pipelines.

This colonization extends beyond land and turns again towards people. Slavery is built into the bedrock of the production ethic. Service to the white supremacist machine, in regards to both material profits of capital and the psychological profits of white individuals, is the standard by which all productivity is measured. Therefore, those unwilling or incapable of being “productive”, by that standard, of their own accord are objectified, reduced to property rather than person, and utilized by the white supremacist machine (through the actions of white individuals).

## Dehumanization and Alienation

Seen most clearly through the system of slavery, in which the violent recontextualization of person as property is made explicit, the production ethic relies upon the dehumanization of all people forced to labor. We become nothing more than a means to an end, pieces of machinery meant to serve production. Our value is drawn from our utility, our utility from our productiveness. We become solely the labor our bodies and minds are capable of. All of the things that make us who we are as people are stripped of any meaning beyond what traits make us, or others, productive. The artist is only useful as such if they inspire us to work harder. The healer is only useful if they get us back to work faster. The dancer only useful if they distract us from our ordeal long enough for us to walk back into work the next day.

The dehumanization becomes more intense when even the actions expected of us are not deemed to have value (or at least not worth compensation). The relationship between gender and valued labor demonstrates this most clearly. Within the framework cisheteropatriarchy, women are expected to perform certain actions as an extension of their being without any value being ascribed to those actions. Childcare, housework, emotional labor, are all examples of such actions that are expected and understood as necessary yet are given no value in the form of compensation. Do not misunderstand this as a call to simply append a wage to previously unwaged labor. Such action can only serve to bring previously unwaged labor into the fold of the leviathan that is wage labor writ large.

We suffer not only from the work-related consequences of the production ethic. We suffer in all facets of our lives. This is because all facets of our lives are wrenched from our control. This is the constant creep of production. There is no such thing as being "off the clock". There are no "non-working hours".



Rest and leisure become framed as time for us to "recharge" for the sake of being more focused and productive at work the next day. Whether rest is understood as literal sleep or as time spent in distraction of a movie or album, it is always defined against the specter of the next day's work.

Even the ways we love are valued by their productivity. Those of us who develop romantic relationships outside of the white supremacist and cisheterosexist frameworks of a cis man marrying cis woman are deemed "unproductive" at an existential level. Our sex is "unproductive" because we cannot promise the 2.5 children expected of us to be raised as good workers who will in turn serve production themselves one day.

Under the production ethic we are not free to live according to our own needs, our own wants, our own desires. Time is made a scarce resource we must ration. Of this resource production always takes the lion's share, leaving only rancid scraps for us to salvage for some sad chance at self-realization. We are allowed no space to develop relation with one another beyond that of survival. No space to develop relation to the communities we live in or the land around and under us. All soil is barren, capable only of growing that which serves those who made it so.

## Punishment

Take one too many sick days from your retail job and your boss tells you to not bother coming in next week. Take advantage of promised maternity leave and come back to find your hours cut. Get injured off the clock and good luck explaining to your manager why you need to move slower.

Those who are deemed unproductive (or even less productive), regardless of whether they intended to be or not, are punished. They are stripped of their jobs, their source of income, their ability to keep a roof over their head and food on their table. They lose access to social spaces, and leisure activities. They are pushed to