

A Theology of Work
Frank Turner

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Middlemarch (1871)

George Eliot (Mary Anne Evans)

- *[Caleb Garth says something 'deeply religious']*
`You must be sure of two things: you must love your work, and not be always looking over the end of it, wanting your play to begin. And the other is, you must not be ashamed of your work, and think it would be more honourable to you to be doing something else.... No matter what a man is - I wouldn't give twopence for him whether he was the prime minister or the rick-thatcher, if he didn't do well what he undertook to do' (ch. 56).

Simone Weil

(Renault factory, 1930s)

- The very conditions of the work exclude . . . all motivations except those of the fear of being 'bawled out' or fired, of the eagerness to fatten one's pay envelope, and, in some cases, an interest in speed records. . . . No society can be stable in which a whole stratum of the population labours daily with a heartfelt loathing. This loathing for their work colours their whole view of life, all their life.

'Work' and 'Labour'

- 'work'/'oeuvre' – 'labour/travail'
- Hebrew Bible: 'melakha' – 'avoda'

Industrial work, DRC



'Labour', DRC

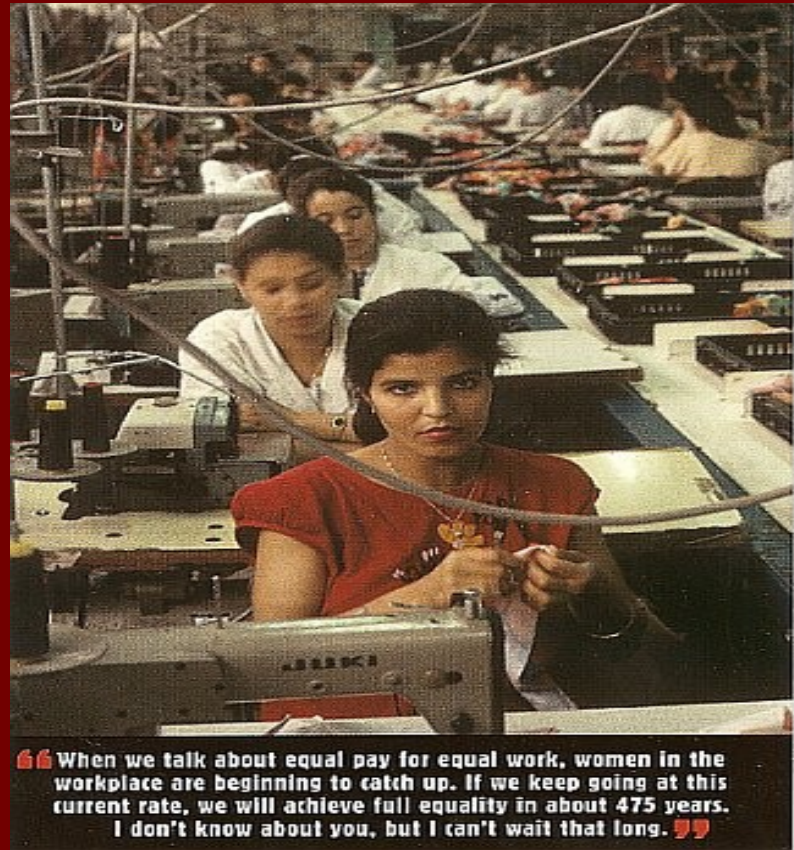


Other work/labour

- 'The job'/'boulot': my banking years . . .
- The 'dirty job' – but someone has to do it . . .
- The anti-social job – does anyone have to do it?

Post-industrial society?

Brick-making, Bangladesh; Garments, Central America



Post-industrial society?

- Re-location of industrial work
- Information economy and service economy
- Increased flexibility – and pressure

Theological Reflection

Double character of work – 'grace' and 'sin'

- Its character as a human activity
- Its distribution: just or unjust
- Partnership, or exploitation (and is the latter worse than being 'out of work'?)
- Is it useful – or the reverse?
- Its balance with other elements of life