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Budd, John W. *The Thought of Work*. Ithaca, NY: ILR/Cornell University Press, 2011. 247 pp. \$24.95 (paperback).

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As defined by John W. Budd, work is “a purposeful human activity involving physical or mental exertion that is not undertaken solely for pleasure and has economic or symbolic value” (2). Anyone who tackles John W. Budd’s ambitious *The Thought of Work* quickly realizes what a conceptual book of this nature is not about: these are the almost invisible people who work with their hands. Nor is there a focus on sweated, dangerous, or unskilled trades.

Instead the ruling idea is the visibility of occupation. A key chapter, reflecting the subtext of the book as a whole, is “Occupational Citizenship.” Decoding the term, Budd explains it as an activity undertaken by citizens with inherent equal worth who are entitled to certain rights . . . irrespective of . . . the market . . .” (15). Yet in a decade often defined as the end of entitlements, such words as “union,” “solidarity,” “mass organizing,” “collective bargaining,” and, most of all, “working-class consciousness” are referred to in passing. Nor do they appear in the index. Further backgrounding a classed scrutiny is Budd’s bow to unionism. It is only one of many institutions to achieve “workers’ rights” (15). Within that context, workers have battled “coercion by other humans” (31).

The problem again, however, is the inability to separate “labor” from “work.” “These terms are used interchangeably” (29). Certainly they were for Marx, yet his “workers of the world” *were* its labor. This elision is also the cornerstone of labor and working-class studies, books on the making of class, the rise of unions, and the future of working people. In Budd’s book, unions are represented in passing by one British example. In the chaos of environmental degradation, people all over the world who endanger their lives on the construction site, the fishing boat, the assembly line, and the toxic mine fields, are given short shrift.

There is also a halting quality to the summary of work done “just” to earn a living. The chapter “Disutility,” for instance, sums up the idea as “a lousy activity tolerated only to obtain goods and services” (78). Despite the neutrality of the book, Budd’s subtext is a denigration of something undertaken for money and support. Not only does he use “lousiness” instead of a sustained definition. There is nothing of the lofty language in the book as a whole. This vernacular also undercuts the stance of neutrality: real work, Budd is convinced, cannot be dirty or oppressive.

Within the conceptual fields of the book, however, Budd is masterful at moving easily from one trope to another. He is adroit at providing a set of crucial theories of work. Such theorizing, furthermore, is not as arbitrary as it sounds. Budd makes a good case for selecting philosophers, economists, psychologists, and others. It is they who have wrestled with epistemological questions from ancient to Industrial Revolution to postmodern times. Nor are these myriad ideologies restricted to the West: a balance is provided by a range of references, from the broad outlines of early Confucianism to the geopolitical South-Asian

Indus world of 2200 BCE to the worship of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism.

The very disconnectedness of his targeted ideologies empowers his anti-chronological approach. The structure of the book is daring. Budd makes a good case for ten seminal ideas of work. In this order, the chapter headings are curse, freedom, commodity, occupational citizenship, disutility, personal fulfillment, social relations, caring for others, identity, and service. As the author explains, “These ten conceptualizations . . . individually . . . provide the keys to understanding diverse disciplinary perspectives. Moreover the thought of work shapes the nature of work in practice” (185). Certainly the essay-chapters are innovative after so many scholars, public intellectuals, and others have published dry discussions of work concepts through the ages. Budd’s approach is just as logical and far more stimulating than a neat historical progression of work theories.

An additional boon is the author’s erudition. A few gems: early Mesopotamia etched job titles on clay tablets. Cicero found vulgarity in waged work. A postmodern guitarist was fulfilled by performing rock ‘n’ roll. Buddhists decry laziness thus: “One day of no work, one day of no food” (21).

A range of excellent observations also abounds. A Christian God who created the heavens and earth demonstrated the importance of work. The factory system marked the change from doing to having jobs. Hannah Arendt, with her love of controversy, scorned labor because it left nothing of lasting worth. It was only work that was creative.

The joyful music man excepted, such lofty thinkers enhance *The Thought of Work*, whatever their real contributions, fantasies, objections, or scorn. In its entirety, the book argues for the fatiguing responsibility of a BCE king (!), the acuity of the intellectual worker, Adam Smith, the job of today’s nonunion electrician, and, to quote the 2012 Republican presidential candidate, of the “corporation . . . that [is] people, my friend.”

Budd’s conceptual brilliance is not the centrality of socioeconomic class but of pto-management’s Human Resources department:

Not only do organizational leaders [workers of the business world] need to find ways to respect the deep importance of work for individuals, but they must find ways to confront the possibility that different employees will think of work differently and therefore be motivated differently (183).

**Laura Hapke** teaches writing at the New York City College of Technology/CUNY. A frequent reviewer in these pages, she includes among her books *Sweatshop: The History of an American Idea* (Rutgers University Press, 2004). E-mail: Lhapke@citytech.cuny.edu.

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Seifert, Roger, and Sibley, Tom. *Revolutionary Communist at Work: A Political Biography of Bert Ramelson*. London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 2011. 384 pp. £25.00 (paperback).

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Bert Ramelson certainly had what one can truly call an “eventful” life. He was in charge of the British Communist Party’s industrial organization at a