

In Memoriam
Frank Cunningham
1940-2022

Introduction

Samir Gandesha and Morgan Young

This introduction to *Contours* 11, on “Art and Work,” was written as we near the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as the newest coronavirus variant, Omicron, is spreading rapidly across the globe. In British Columbia, where the Institute for the Humanities is located, the past year was also a year of climate catastrophe, where we endured an unprecedented heat dome and the razing of entire towns by fire, followed by massive flooding that blocked all land routes out of our largest metropolitan area. It has been challenging and isolating, at times terrifying, and thoughts of this new year are tinged with anxiety: will it be another year like the last one? What will we be facing, and what do we do next?

This issue contains a collection of essays with themes or threads that may help us to think differently about how we can proceed in a world that feels like a slow-motion collapse. The pandemic has shown us the importance of care work, as well as the viability of a variety of alternatives in the way we approach work, from remote options to the implementation of some form of universal basic income (UBI). The re-envisioning of work, practically and aesthetically, has emerged as a prominent aspect of what we initially thought might be a post-pandemic world. With the prospective endemicity of COVID-19 and the deepening of climate change, the realization that there is no post, no beyond, no escape, requires a reorientation to the realities of the present as continuing, and in this context, alternatives move from experiments to strategies.

We begin the first section, on “Art, Work, and Care,” with an essential contribution from Frank Cunningham regarding the idea of a care economy in “Why Care: Philosophical Defences.” Frank was a student of C.B. Macpherson and an important political philosopher and teacher in his own right. He was a man of the democratic socialist left and a good friend of the Institute for the Humanities, where he spoke on several occasions over the years. He passed away on February 4, 2022, shortly before the publication of this issue. “Why Care” provides philosophical arguments and support for a proposed “Care Economy Statement” which outlines ways in which care could be incorporated as a fundamental part of Canada’s economy and infrastructure. This was Frank Cunningham’s last written work, and we at *Contours* are honoured to feature it in this issue, which we dedicate to his memory.

Continuing this section, in “The UBI-Subject: The New Proletariat or Forgotten Rabble?” Duane Fontaine considers utopian aspects of the future of the worker and the role of UBI (universal basic income) in the redefinition of work, and argues for a conception of work as aesthetic play. In “Mapping Artistic Labour in Sheila Heti’s *How Should a Person Be?*” Ed Graham explores the dynamics of art, gender, and labour, contextualizing Heti’s novel in relation to crises of social reproduction. Morgan Young begins with Thomas More’s *Utopia* to envisage the foundations and paths of utopian thinking in “On a Road to Nowhere: Reconsidering Utopia,” with utopian demands such as UBI put forward as part of a larger Blochian utopian consciousness. Emile Ike, in “The Limits of Post-Operaist Marxism: Automation as Elephant in the Room,” examines the influence of post-operaism, specifically Antonio Negri’s reading of Marx’s *Grundrisse* in *Marx Beyond Marx*, on post-work possibilities in accelerationist thought, and highlights automation as a blind spot in Negri’s ideas of living labour and the general intellect. Johan Hartle, in “A Marxian

Version of Free Association,” outlines Marx’s discussions of free association as a form of self-regulation, arguing that it has aesthetic dimensions.¹

The final section, on Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, includes an introduction by Johan Hartle, “The Project of Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge in the History of Contemporary Critical Theory,” as well as an interview with Negt by Hartle on “Critical Theory’s contexts of cooperation.” Lioudmila Voropai examines Negt and Kluge’s conception of the public sphere in relation to their critique of public-service television in “Against the Public “Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie”: The Project of an Emancipatory Critique of Television in *Public Sphere and Experience*.” We conclude with Stewart Martin’s analysis, in “Negt and Kluge’s Alternative Collective Worker and Synthetic Apperception,” of Negt and Kluge’s overlooked discussion of the collective worker and synthetic apperception in *History and Obstinacy*, considering the utopian and emancipatory potential of the alternative collective worker.

¹ This section includes several contributions, including the essays by Fontaine, Graham, Young, and Hartle, derived from the 2018 “Symposium: Art, Labour and the Future of Work,” organized by Samir Gandesha, which took place at the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, BC. *Contours* would like to acknowledge the fine copy-editing work done by Morgan Young and the vital technical assistance of Huyen Pham.