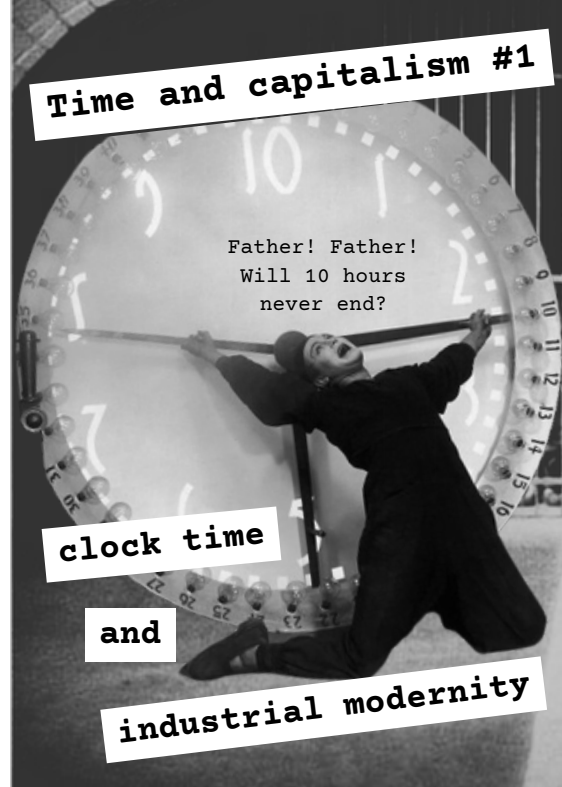




**Reading:**  
 E.P. Thompson (1993) *Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism*.  
 Z. Bauman (2005) Chpt. 3 in *Work, Consumerism, and the New Poor*.  
 Film stills: *Metropolis* (1927)

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 insta: @m0ral.panic



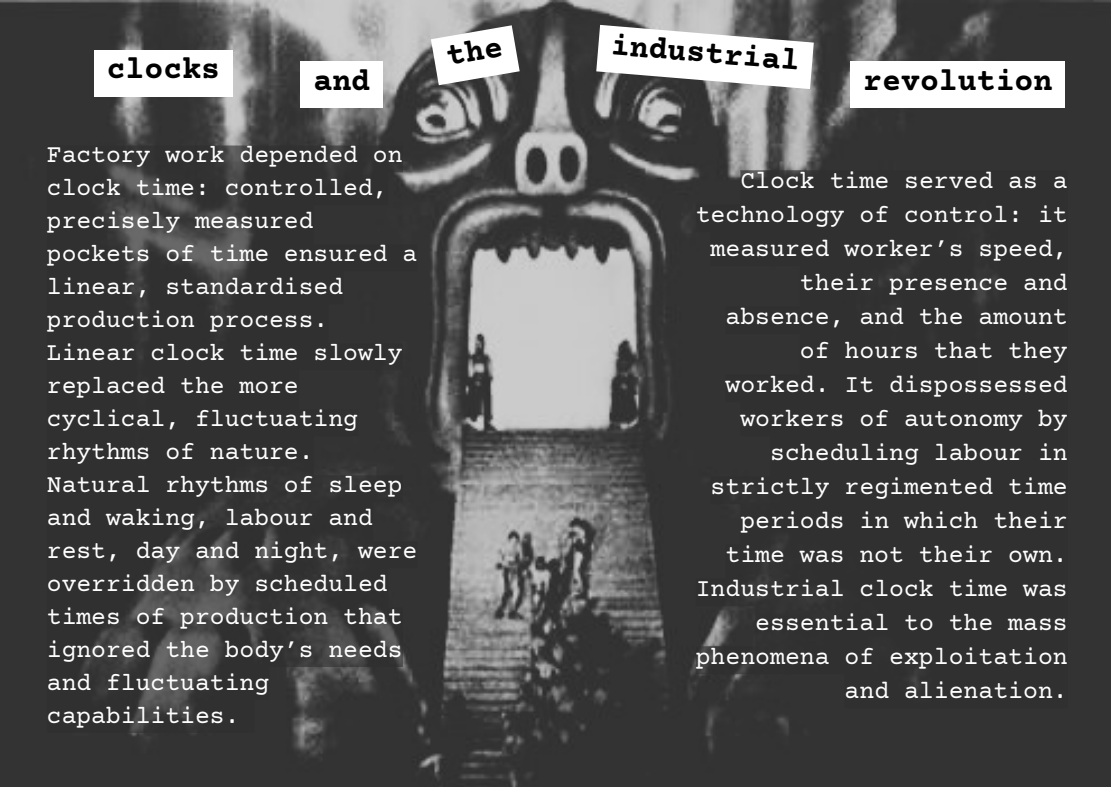
**Time and capitalism #1**

Father! Father!  
 Will 10 hours  
 never end?

**clock time**

**and**

**industrial modernity**



**clocks and the industrial revolution**

Factory work depended on clock time: controlled, precisely measured pockets of time ensured a linear, standardised production process. Linear clock time slowly replaced the more cyclical, fluctuating rhythms of nature. Natural rhythms of sleep and waking, labour and rest, day and night, were overridden by scheduled times of production that ignored the body's needs and fluctuating capabilities.

Clock time served as a technology of control: it measured worker's speed, their presence and absence, and the amount of hours that they worked. It dispossessed workers of autonomy by scheduling labour in strictly regimented time periods in which their time was not their own. Industrial clock time was essential to the mass phenomena of exploitation and alienation.



The future is not defined by progress: capitalism depends on the mass dispossession and exploitation of humans and nature. It has borrowed from the future in the name of endless progress. The increasingly depleted biosphere will now determine that future.

Time is not a linear progression. It seems closer to an unknowable fluctuation, a formless entity that can't be controlled, only experienced.

Such accusations of laziness and uselessness were usually leveled at the poor and those who resisted wage labour.

In modern thinking, time is always linear. It inevitably leads to progress in the future. The steady development of technology will doubtlessly lead to the steady improvement of human life.

But this uncritical view of technology in relation to the passage of time is a narrow, simplified narrative. Technology is not always progressive: its perceived liberating qualities often turn into new forms of control.

Our experience of time is still intensely moralised. We live under near constant pressure to optimise our time. Am I allowed to rest? Am I a bad person for being "unproductive"? But what counts as productive, and who gets to decide this?

Time had a distinct utilitarian purpose, and one could betray this purpose by wasting it on "useless" frivolities.

Time itself became a currency. It had to be optimised for maximum economic output. Time could now be "spent", just like money, but also "wasted".

