

KEYNOTE LECTURE

by Professor Jean Comaroff, Harvard University

// 3 November from 16.30 - 18.00 // online webinar



AFTER LABOR: THE SECRET LIFE OF WORK, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

Concern has been steadily mounting, across the globe that wage work is disappearing. Yet there is little agreement about how, why, where, or in what measure. Or what might take its place in the future. Why do we – scholars, politicians, people at large – seem unable to think beyond a universe founded on mass employment? After all, capital has always striven to free itself, as far as possible, of a dependency on labor. Further, as is now widely recognized, more people have always been wageless than waged. But if mass employment has always been threatened by erasure, why does it remain so central both to popular and theoretical understandings of life under capitalism – all the more so amidst anxieties about its imminent demise? What exactly is unique about the present moment? As we fail to imagine an age after labor, we seem ever more haunted by nightmares of our own redundancy, by surreal images of a world in which value is produced by other means: not merely by finance or AI, but by workers who are simultaneously human-and-nonhuman, living-and-dead, present-and-absent, What does this tell us about the afterlife of homo faber, About its implications above all for matters of gender and race?? Might we enrich our answers to these questions by moving beyond the Archimedean vantage of Euro-America? The latter may be the source of so much of our theory-work. But a comprehensive grasp of global capitalism surely must embrace the historic engagement of the Euromodern world with its various outsides, often the source of accumulation at its most primitive, and labor in its most precarious. It is a story in which the North seems to be reliving the experience of the South – re the nature of work, as in many other, respects.

The event is free and open to all via the registration

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