The Hydra of Artificial Intelligence: Labor Devaluation and Erosion of Human Agency

Abstract: AI is a shapeshifting beast that assumes different configurations according to context and audience, creating a barrier to the development of unified opposition strategies. Its polymorphic nature recalls the mythical Hydra of Lerna, whose multiple heads regrew when severed, symbolizing the impossibility of definitively neutralizing the threat through conventional approaches. Prof. Sarah T. Roberts analyzes AI not as neutral technological innovation but as a systematic mechanism for labor devaluation. Within capitalism, the primary objective of this technology consists in progressively reducing labor costs toward zero, utilizing automation as its main instrument. This tendency inscribes itself within broader dynamics of marginalization affecting millions, categorized as migrants, refugees, and minorities, excluded from formal labor markets and progressively criminalized. The present state of AI generates a fundamental structural contradiction: while the technology promises to replace human labor, its implementation simultaneously requires an enormous workforce of content moderators, data cleaners, algorithmic adversarial trainers, and human feedback providers. These workers represent the system's core paradox. The Hydra that should eliminate human labor feeds precisely on such labor to perpetuate its existence. This contradiction raises critical questions about the potential for resistance within AI systems themselves. Does the mass of workers necessary for AI operation constitute both the system's material base and its possible dialectical negation? Can the material conditions of AI production generate forms of organized opposition capable of transcending the sectoral and geographical fragmentation that characterizes contemporary digital labor?

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