Introduction to “Labor and Capital in the Twenty-First Century”

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In this issue's *Perspectives* section, a second article appears commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the 1974 seminal publication of Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (Monthly Review Press). (The first article acknowledging Braverman's significant contributions was published in the September 2014 issue). In this superbly and smartly written article, Dr. Jeffrey Sallaz, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Arizona, argues that *Labor and Monopoly Capital* is an essential volume for comprehending the capitalist labor process. Nevertheless, Sallaz points out that there are omissions in Braverman's analysis which are crucial for analyzing work in the twenty-first century. First, Braverman neglected to understand that the process of deskilling is constrained, especially with regards to service industries which have come to dominate US employment in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Second, Sallaz contends that Braverman remained unwilling to acknowledge that states could deliver “material welfare” to workers which could afford them with safeguards from labor market dependency. Finally, Sallaz addresses Braverman's view of the future of work as being “unnecessarily pessimistic.” He argues that while Braverman is correct in arguing that standardization and automation can lead to the degradation of work, Sallaz maintains that the surplus created during the production of goods and services “can potentially expand human freedom.”

If any of the journal's readers are interested in responding to any essays published in the “Perspectives” Section or would like to write articles on any topics in the field of employee relations, please do not hesitate to contact me with your proposal. I welcome both practitioner-based and scholarly-based articles written from any one of a variety of theoretical perspectives. I hope that you enjoy this article and find it most illuminating.

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