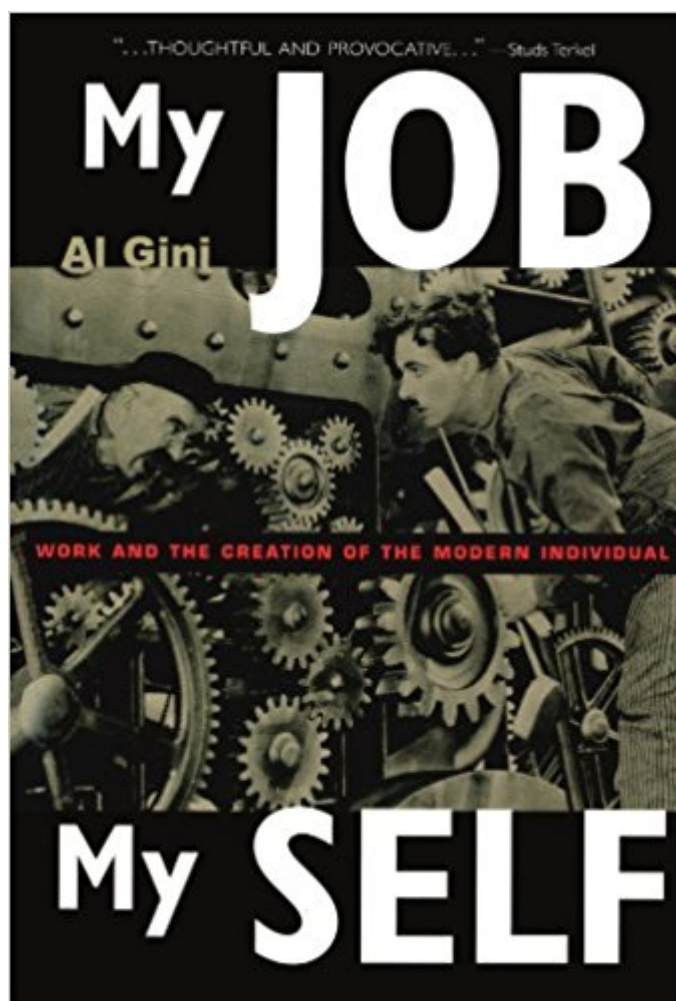


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# My Job, My Self: Work And The Creation Of The Modern Individual



## Synopsis

In *My Job My Self*, Gini plumbs a wide range of statistics, interviews with workers, surveys from employers and employees, and his own experiences and memories, to explore why we work, how our work affects us, and what we will become as a nation of workers. *My Job, My Self* speaks to every employed person who has yet to understand the costs and challenges of a lifetime of labor.

## Book Information

Paperback: 280 pages

Publisher: Routledge; 1 edition (May 18, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 041592636X

ISBN-13: 978-0415926362

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 8.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #66,029 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #45 in [Books > Business & Money > Economics > Labor & Industrial Relations](#) #46 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Labor & Industrial Relations](#) #175 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Philosophy > Ethics](#)

## Customer Reviews

In this entertaining and thoughtful meditation on the nature of work in human life, Gini (a Loyola University philosophy professor) careers between the philosophical (quoting Pope John Paul II and Pope Pius XII as well as G.K. Chesterton) and the practical (ruminating on social philosopher Jeremy Rifkin's contention that computers and the "third industrial revolution" will mean the end of work in the future). At the heart of his book is the complex relationship between human behavior, social organization and the need to practice meaningful work. In a sprightly chronology, he traces attitudes toward work throughout Western history from the Greeks, who looked down on physical labor as antithetical to philosophy, to the Protestant work ethic invented by Luther and Calvin, to the 18th-century Luddites who destroyed machines in protest against losing their jobs, and the robber barons who quoted scripture to justify inhumanely long work hours before deftly turning to contemporary U.S. attitudes. Drawing upon such diverse sources as labor statistics about women in the workplace, publications of Workaholics Anonymous, nationwide polls about job satisfaction and the writings of William James, Gini paints a nuanced and scholarly portrait of Americans' response

to the place of work in their lives, acknowledging that as the nature and meaning of work changes, people still need "a vision that recognizes and honors the precept that, minimally, work must do two things: maintain life and add to it." (June) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"[An] entertaining and thoughtful meditation on the nature of work in human life".-- Publishers Weekly

After finishing this book, all I can say is "wow." Mr. Gini is clearly one of the more knowledgeable people on the subject of work and its changing role in modern society. This book is masterfully well written and demonstrates a sound knowledge of the subject matter, which is presented in a very well thought out and logically presented manner. The scope of the subject matter being very broad, the author's ability to envelope it and treat so many aspects of it in such depth was really remarkable. There is an amazing amount of information presented within the book, a plethora of footnotes, and yet the book is not imposing - it is in fact rewarding because of all it. While the entire book was fascinating, I thought that there were four chapters in particular that were outstanding. Chapter 7 "Women in the Workplace", Chapter 8 "Squeezing Time", Chapter 10 "Work Spend and Debt Syndrome", and Chapter 12 "The End of Work, is Rifkin Right?" all cover enough detail to be books of their own, Mr. Gini references many other books which do just that. "Women in the Workplace" explores the many remarkable facets of how the increasing penetration of women into the workforce has changed our society, and how society has driven those changes. "Squeezing Time" talks of the incredible shrinking of free time in modern society compared to those of years gone by. The author sees this as a natural extension of the Industrial Revolution, and has the data to back up this view. "Work Spend and Debt Syndrome" talks about the shift in society to one of people with lives to one of people as consumers. The similarities between this and "Bobos in Paradise" by Brooks is startling. Mr. Gini demonstrates qualitatively and quantitatively how we have become a consumer society, and shows us what exactly that means. "The End of Work, is Rifkin Right?" is an amazing chapter (partly because I agree with his points very strongly) in which the author looks at some of the questions posed by Mr. Jeremy Rifkin and Mr. Robert Heilbroner in their 1996 book. Their main point had been that the increase in productivity caused by the personal computer had yet to fully ripple through the workplace, and that as it did so we would see waves of greater and greater unemployment. Mr. Gini takes a look at this view four years later, and is cautious to not deliver an aggressive verdict. One of the more interesting things I found about this

book, other than the points that the author brought forth and the views of society that he projected, was that it almost had a self-help aspect to it. There is an amazing amount of comfort behind statistics in which "85% of all workers felt \_\_\_", especially when the blank is filled in with something you feel as well. In that manner, there were parts of this book that evoked similar themes to "A Man's Search for Meaning" by Viktor Frankl, something that completely surprised me. This is by no means a central tenement to the text, but its effect was certainly worth noting, and really added strongly to the value of the book. I couldn't recommend this book anymore strongly. It would be of great value to anyone who is working, trying to figure out what they should be doing with their lives, or is looking to do research on the changing role of work within society. This is an outstanding book.

For most of us work as a means to an end (namely, consumerism) has displaced the notion of work as a pleasure. Etymologically, the words "work", "job", or "labor" denote pain, sorrow, or heavy, burdensome tasks. Thus, in "My Job, My Self" Al Gini wonders: "So why, given our poverty of time and the burdens of work, haven't we traded our prosperity for leisure?" (p. 141). One answer provided by Gini in this thorough expose on everything "job/work", is that most of us no longer work out of a sense of duty, necessity, or utilitarian pleasure; nor hunger or the satisfactions of craftsmanship or pleasures of a job well done. Sadly, we no longer seem capable of knowing what exactly to do with our free-time, and find ourselves more often than naught, bored, wanting, and desiring things only more money can buy. We have become a nation of culture consumers: "Emo, ergo sum"/"I shop, therefore I am", (p. 140). The main thrust of "My Job, My Self" is not to propose some vague utopian elimination of work altogether, but rather to acknowledge the importance that modern society places on work, and to show how we have come to identify ourselves through our jobs. If our jobs are so vital to who we are, then we really ought to pay more attention to what exactly we're getting out of them. Gini admits that, "Work will never be completely free of disappointment, drudgery, and toil, but all work should, at least, offer the possibility of purpose and hope" (p.224). "My Job, My Self" is an enlightening journey through a subject many readers read books to escape from in the first place! Yet, our jobs consume so much of our time and lives that only a straight-forward examination of what we do, and why we do it, can be therapeutic - and quite possibly life-changing. "My Job, My Self" is rounded off with insightful chapters on subjects such as race, women in the workplace, time and stress issues related to workaholism, and the importance of ethics and leadership. In general, it contains sound socio-economic discussion related to the nature of work itself, and the worker's relation to it in an increasingly technologically driven economy. Read, reflect, and arm yourself with your new-found revelations, for "without love, work is servitude"

(p.224).

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