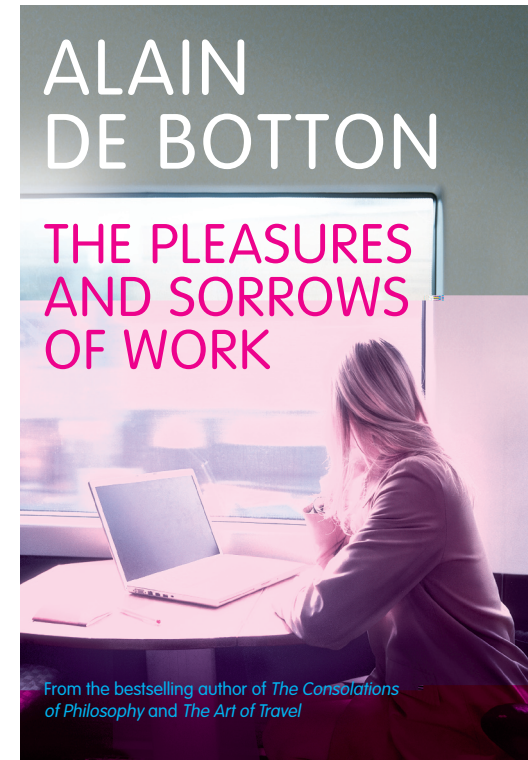


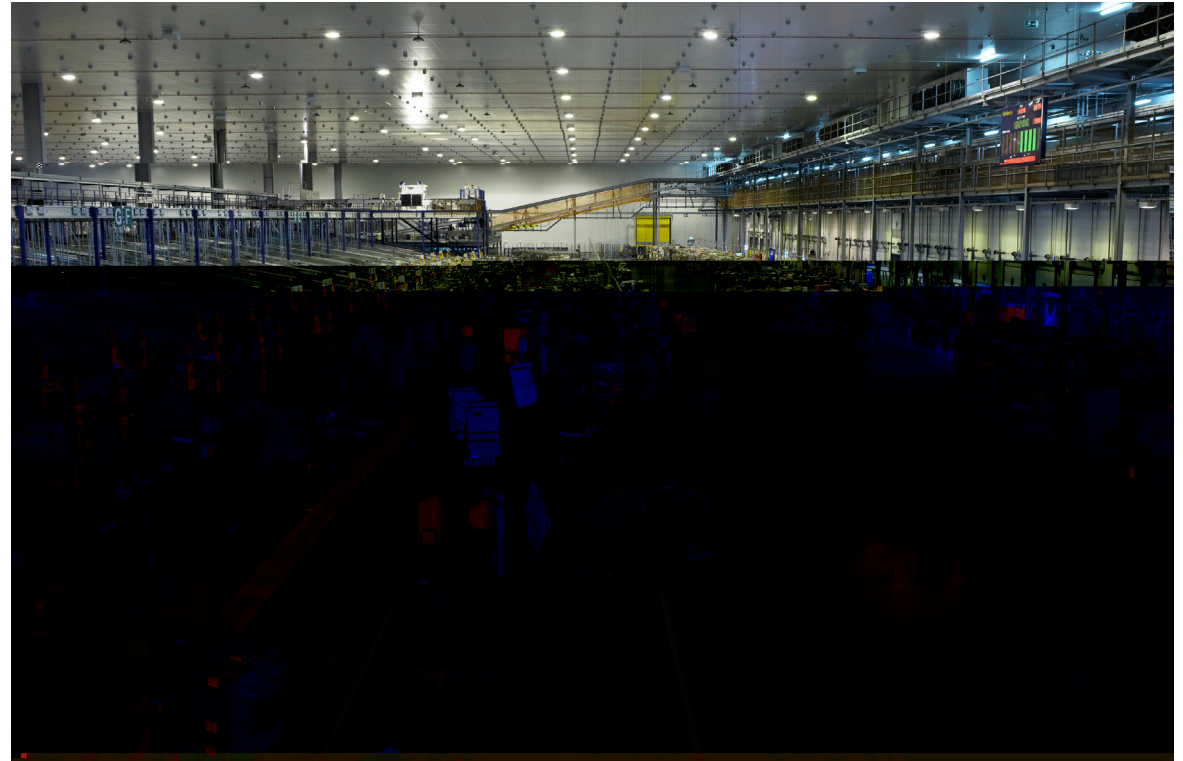
THE MOST TIMELY AND RELEVANT BOOK OF 2009



- A book about the agonies and ecstasies of the workplace.
- A guide to some of the great questions of work:
 - ‘How can I combine money with fulfilment?’
 - ‘What am I trying to achieve?’
 - ‘What should I do with my life?’
- Lyrical and poignant; witty and thought-provoking.
- Well timed to catch the mood of our troubled economy.



[Alain de Botton](#) was born in 1969 and is the author of essays on themes ranging from love and travel to architecture and philosophy. His bestselling books include *Essays in Love*, *How Proust Can Change Your Life*, *The Art of Travel*, *Status Anxiety* and *The Architecture of Happiness*. His work has been published in twenty-five countries. He lives in London and is a founder member of The School of Life.



Where your milk and eggs were last night; Sainsbury's chilled warehouse, 3.30am, Essex



European Space Agency, Satellite Assembly Hall, French Guiana, South America, 2008

Introduction

We spend much of our lives at work – but surprisingly little gets written about what makes work both one of the most exciting and most painful of all our activities.

The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work is an exploration of the joys and perils of the modern workplace, beautifully evoking what other people get up to all day – and night – to make the frenzied contemporary world function. With a philosophical eye and his characteristic combination of wit and wisdom, Alain de Botton leads us on a journey around a deliberately eclectic range of occupations, from rocket science to biscuit manufacture, accountancy to art – in search of what make jobs either fulfilling or soul-destroying.

The book amounts to a celebration and investigation of an activity as central to a good life as love – but which we often find remarkably hard to reflect on properly. As de Botton points out, most of us are still working at jobs chosen for us by our sixteen-year-old selves. Here is the perfect guide to the vicious anxieties and enticing hopes thrown up by our journey through the working world.

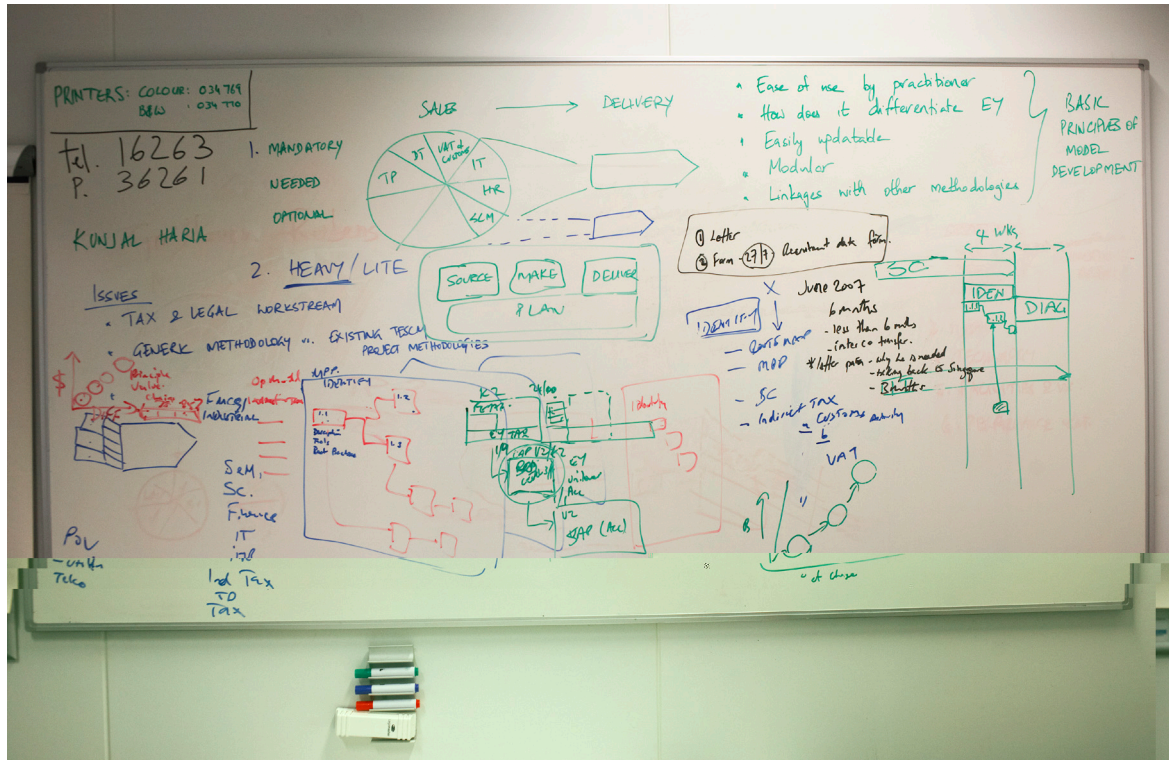
Photography

The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work contains over a hundred original images specially commissioned from the great documentary photographer Richard Baker.

With humour, poignancy and lyricism, Baker captures the distinctive atmosphere of the modern work place. Travelling across the world, from the warehouses of the Thames to the jungles of French Guiana, from the Indian Ocean to the commuter lines of Kent, Richard holds up an artful and moving mirror to our working selves.



The world's largest accountancy firm, London, Monday afternoon, August 25th, 2008



The future of the company, Basingstoke, Tuesday 15th July, 2008



'Rich Belgian chocolate on a crumbly wafer base', United Biscuits factory, eastern Belgium, 2008



How we will fly in 2015: Mitsubishi Industry stand, Paris Airshow 2007



'How to develop your C skills: Confidence, Creativity, Compassion', group exercise, Nottingham, 2008



Launch of a satellite for a Japanese cartoon channel, midnight, French Guiana, August 3rd 2007

Extract from *The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work*

However powerful our technology and complex our corporations, the most remarkable feature of the modern working world is in the end internal, consisting in an aspect of our mentalities: in the widely-held belief that our work should make us happy. All societies have had work at their centre; ours is the first to suggest that it could be something much more than a punishment. Ours is the first to imply that we should seek to work even in the absence of a financial imperative. Our choice of occupation is held to define our identity to the extent that the most insistent question we ask of new acquaintances is not where they come from or who their parents were but what they do, the assumption being that the route to a meaningful existence must invariably pass through the gates of paid employment.

It was not always this way. In the fourth century B.C., Aristotle defined an attitude that was to last more than two millennia when he referred to a structural incompatibility between satisfaction and a salaried position. For the Greek philosopher, financial need placed one on a par with slaves and animals. The labour of the hands, as much as of the mercantile sides of the mind, would lead to psychological deformation. Only a private income and a life of leisure could afford citizens adequate opportunity to enjoy the higher pleasures gifted by music and philosophy.

Early Christianity added to Aristotle's notion the still darker doctrine that the miseries of work were an appropriate and immovable means of expiating the sins of Adam. It was not until the Renaissance that new notes began to be heard. In the biographies of great artists, men like Leonardo and Michelangelo, we hear the first references to the glories of practical activity.

While this re-evaluation was at first limited to artistic work and even then, only to its most exalted examples, it came in time to encompass almost all occupations. By the time we reach the bourgeois thinkers of the eighteenth century, Aristotle's formula has been turned on its head: satisfactions which the Greek philosopher had identified with leisure were now transposed to the sphere of work, while tasks lacking in any financial reward were drained of all significance and relegated to the haphazard attentions of dilettantes. It now seemed as impossible that one could be happy and idle as it had once seemed unlikely that one could work and be human.

Aspects of this evolution in attitudes towards work had intriguing correlatives in ideas about love. In this sphere too, the eighteenth century bourgeoisie yoked together what was pleasurable and what was necessary. They argued that there was no inherent conflict between sexual passion and the practical demands of raising children in a family unit, and that there could hence be romance within a marriage – just as there could be enjoyment in a job.

We are the victims of these two momentous and strangely optimistic ideas. There is immense unthinking cruelty discreetly coiled within the assurance that everyone can discover happiness through work and love. It isn't that these two entities are invariably incapable of delivering fulfilment, only that they almost never do so. And when an exception is misrepresented as a rule, our individual misfortunes, instead of seeming to us quasi-inevitable aspects of life, will weigh down

on us like particular curses. In denying the natural place reserved for longing and incompleteness in the human lot, the modern world denies us the possibility of consolation for our fractious marriages and our unexploited ambitions, and condemns us instead to solitary feelings of shame for having stubbornly failed to make more of our lives.

Press

The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work is published in hardback on April 2nd in the UK, Australia and New Zealand (Hamish Hamilton, Penguin Books) – and on June 2nd in the US (Pantheon) and Canada (McLelland & Stewart).

Alain de Botton is available to write articles and to be interviewed. He can share fascinating stories of how the book was written – as well as insights on his career to date and his latest role in helping to set up London's most talked-about new educational venture, The School of Life.

All press enquiries should be directed to Anna Ridley, Penguin books: anna.ridley@uk.penguin.com, telephone: 020 7010 3000

All photographs by Richard Baker are available for reproduction in colour or black and white. Please contact: www.bakerpictures.com



The end of work: where airplanes come to die, Mojave desert, California, 2008

