

Work as Key to the Social Question

The Great Social and Economic Transformations and the Subjective Dimension of Work



Reflexive Modernity, Ecological Sustainability, and the Worker in a Global Market Place

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ABSTRACT

Ulrich Beck, Claus Offe, and Andre Gorz are among the few who recognize that "modernity" is currently undergoing a series of fundamental transformations. For years now, of course, we have heard much talk of "postmodernity," "late modernity," and even "late capitalism," but Beck, Offe, and Gorz see that talk of "ends" blunts the possibilities for new beginnings. For them, simple or industrial modernization is being replaced by the need for a "reflexive modernization." Reflexive modernization, after all, already informs the development of societies, economies, cultures, politics, and individuals around the world.

Increasingly, modernity demands to be understood in terms of the disembedding and reembedding of the individual worker (as opposed to workers as a class) in the functionally coordinated realities of an increasingly internationalized world and it opposes the functional differentiations of the decreasingly industrialized world of the nation-state.

Flexibility is the watchword of functional coordination because groups of workers have become unstable, as have individual workers, on a number of levels. No sphere of life is immune. Thus, we must increasingly live reflexively, pausing to consider the implications of any particular act for the complex of individual lives occupying the world. In other words, the complexity of the functionally coordinated world demands that we cultivate an ecological, social, and ethical self-limitation because the consequences of any particular act can be so severe and yet so difficult to trace. Unfortunately, the model of flexibility as it has been applied to work and leisure has been implemented simply rather than reflexively. In other words, it has been implemented by capital to serve its own interests thereby renewing functional differentiation even when it is no longer applicable.

Pope John Paul II, writing in the 1980's, assumes the socio-political and economic

rationality of simple modernity, and bases his arguments and conclusions on the first Creation account in Genesis. In that account the worker is identified as exercising domination over nature, implying an ever-widening gulf between humanity and its environment. However, there is no longer any need to emancipate the rationalization process of simple or industrial modernity. This form of modernity has been victorious. Now we must deal with the "side effects" of this victory especially the anomie of the worker and the desolation of nature. We are reading *Laborem Exercens* as an attempt to do just that. We must, in other words, address the emancipation of workers from the work-based constraints placed on them by simple modernity.

A very different perspective arises from a focus grounded in the second Creation account where the moral imperative becomes that of co-operative ownership implying an intimate connection between humanity and the environment. This perspective also presents difficulties precisely in representing a denial of any separation between human beings and their environment. This would lead to a negation of the entire emancipation project of the Enlightenment – something that is inconceivable and untenable in theory and practice.

We envision a solution to this opposition of extremes in the relatively new and growing interest in ecological sustainability, especially given its emphasis on personal independence, social dependence and ecological interdependence. Within this framework of reference the worker retains his / her identity and autonomy while at the same time exhibiting the reflexive capacity necessary for informed ethical choices in pursuit of an informed ethical life.

We have heard plenty of talk in recent years of "postmodernity" and "late modernity." There is certainly little doubt that the "modern" world is currently undergoing a series of fundamental transformations, but "postmodernity" and "late modernity" simply do not adequately capture them. Modernity is not in its last phases as "late modernity" implies, nor have we moved beyond it as implied by "postmodernity." Rather, the *quality* of modernity is being transformed. Ulrich Beck captures this well with his idea that simple or industrial modernization is being replaced by the need for a "reflexive modernization" (Beck 1997). Reflexive modernization already informs the development of societies, economies, cultures, politics, and individuals around the world. Increasingly, modernity demands to be understood in terms of the disembedding and reembedding of individuals (as opposed to *classes* of individuals) in the functionally *coordinated* realities of the increasingly informationalized world of the internationalizing market place rather than in the functionally *differentiated* unrealities of the decreasingly industrialized world of the nation-state.

The implications of this shift in the understanding of modernity are enormous. Hitherto, our interpretation of the role of the human being as an individual and as a member of society has been one of competition and struggle. In order to create and maintain high standards of living for oneself and the one's "own" (whether that is the family, clan, or state), economic considerations and rationalities were placed above all other criteria. What resulted then was an interpretation of all human relations with the environment in terms of

conflict. This is seen in the generally accepted interpretation of the Creation accounts of the Bible and in the dominant capitalist economic system. However, this constant competition has eroded the foundations of human society and of the natural environment.

While we can see the effects of the functionally coordinated new modernity in many spheres of contemporary life, in this paper we will explore it in the lifeworld of work/leisure. Flexibility is the watchword of functional coordination because groups have become unstable, as have individuals, on a number of levels. Classes no longer mean what they once meant and neither do individuals as they have been cut off from social structures of meaning. In the contemporary world, individuals increasingly are understood and understand themselves as "free agents" who must be flexible in order to adapt to the rapid changes that surround them. Unfortunately, the model of flexibility as it has been applied to work/leisure has been implemented simply rather than reflexively. In other words, it has been implemented by capital to serve capital interests thereby renewing functional differentiation where it cannot any longer apply. There is, in other words, no longer any need to emancipate the rationalization process of simple modernity. This form of modernity has been victorious. Now we must deal with the "side effects" of this victory.

With the shift to a "reflexive" understanding of modernization comes the need to reexamine these ecological and social interactions and the need to shore up the eroding structures if not to entirely recreate the identity of the "individual-in-environment." We must, in other words, address the emancipation of individuals from the work-based constraints placed on them by simple modernity. Thus, we must increasingly live reflexively, pausing to consider the implications of any particular act for the complex of individual lives occupying the world. In other words, the complexity of the functionally coordinated world demands that we cultivate an ecological, social, and ethical self-limitation because the consequences of any particular act for ecologies and economies and, therefore, people can be so severe and yet so difficult to trace.

This paper, then, represents a first attempt to address the problems for work and workers in the new modernity of the internationalizing market place. Seeing the internationalizing market place as a new modernity, a reflexive modernity, rather than as the continuation of simple modernity provides us with an opportunity to envision a more just, more sustainable future. Clearly, as we will demonstrate below, failing to see contemporary changes as new and different presents severe problems for the future of human life as it has hitherto been known. The internationalizing market place provides the representation for a shift of cosmic proportions. What is called for in this shift is a new understanding of economic, social, and political systems, as well as of the individuals and subsystems that occupy them. This monumental shift cannot, of course, be entirely addressed in this short paper and so we will use work as a way to cut into and explain the importance of this shift.

SECTION ONE

Identifying the Shift

Changes in the economic and political system

Industrial, or simple, modernization called for the disembedding of the social forms of traditional society and the new embedding (or re-embedding) of the social forms of industrial society (Beck 1994: 2). This disembedding and re-embedding touched off a series of changes that led to new understandings of economies (capitalist rather than feudalist), societies (egalitarian rather than hierarchical), politics (liberal rather than mercantilist), individuals (independent rather than dependent), and the subsystems of society as well (the rationalization of bureaucratic forms of social and economic organization replaced the traditional authority of feudalism). Work changed too, of course. Rather than working in order to fulfill one's role in the social (and even cosmic) totality, work became "class-ified." In other words, one worked in the world of industrial social forms for the sake of one's own livelihood and yet traced one's identity to a particular class within the functionally differentiated social formations of industrial society.

Undergirding all of simple modernity we find the rationalization process in social formations and capital accumulation in economic formations. As such, perhaps the two most important theorists of simple modernity were Max Weber and Karl Marx. Weber saw in simple modernity the requirement that the rationalization process be emancipated from the constraints of traditional authority. The rationalization process would lead to the functional differentiation of all spheres of life. That is, the rationalization process, emancipated from the constraints of traditional authority, would divide up all spheres of life *simply* in terms of their functions (which had the side effect of rendering the systems of simple modernity inflexible).

Impact on definition of work

It would do this because in the industrial realities of the new modern world, real capital accumulation (and with it the accumulation of power) was driving human endeavor. Capital markets, of course, demanded efficiency, exactly the sort of efficiency that the rationalization process promised. This, in combination with the dependence of workers on a wage in order to live, placed severe work-based constraints on the lives of individuals. Individuals, in other words, became class-ified by their work.

For this reason, Marx saw that the major social conflict of simple modernity was a class conflict. A large class of people defined by the fact that they must work for a living confronted a small class of people defined by the fact that they lived (and indeed prospered) off the work of the first class of people. Society benefited from this socio-economic formation since its emphasis on efficiency as well as the massive amounts of fixed investments led to huge and efficient increases in production and rapid advances in infrastructure development. Indeed, Marx predicted that the success of this capital system would eventually lead to the abolition of work-based constraints once the proletariat (those

defined by working for a living) became able to overthrow the dominance of the bourgeoisie (those defined by living off the work of the proletariat). The lives of the masses of individuals in society, in other words, would no longer be characterized by work-based constraints and would instead give way to leisure.

Marx predicted that the life of leisure would follow the collapse of the capital system (understand that the rationalization process is wrapped up in this system) when the latter could no longer solve the crises it presented to itself.

Globalization

And yet we can see today that the capital system has been remarkably resistant to collapse. It has been so resistant, though, in part because it has increasingly been able to count on the state to prop it up. In addition to this, capitalism creates hierarchies of privilege among workers and thus splits the "proletariat." Those on the upper levels of this artificial hierarchy (the "petit bourgeoisie") aspire to climb higher and are convinced that this success is possible only if the system remains in place. This is part of what we are currently witnessing. The capital system is not in danger of collapsing under the weight of crisis. Rather, it is in danger of having run its course. The capital system, in other words, has become a victim of its own success. It has outlived its usefulness. And so now we find ourselves in the midst of the disembedding of industrial social forms and the new embedding (or re-embedding) of reflexive social forms. Simple or industrial modernity, in other words, is currently giving way to reflexive modernity. We can see this shift as a shift to "postmodernity" or "late modernity," but that does little for us if it does not point us in the direction of positive social and political change. If individuals think of themselves as free agents responsible only to themselves we have few prospects for such positive changes. Instead, we must understand that the individual is undergoing important changes and that responsibilities have changed in important ways. However, in order to understand this redefinition of the "individual-in-environment" it is necessary to examine the underpinnings of the original definition. For this we turn to the theological / ecological implications of the interpretation of the Creation accounts in Genesis.

SECTION TWO

The theological / ecological framework underlying the current system

The Book of Genesis has two creation accounts attributed by biblical scholars to different authors. Traditionally, they have been interpreted as complementary, with the second repeating the themes of the first. Richard J. Clifford, S.J., for example, claims that the second account is introduced by a preamble, written by the author of the first account, connecting the two and underscoring their common emphasis on "God's effortless creating of the human race, and their divinely assigned tasks to continue in existence and take

possession of their land” (Clifford 1990: 12).

Common to both accounts is an appeal to order rather than chaos. Primordial chaos gives way, through direct divine intervention, to original order. That order is usually interpreted with respect to the chronology and hierarchy inherent in the first account, and with respect to human dominance, especially male dominance. Underlying that dominance is radical distinction and disconnection, and an appreciation of the person as primarily individual and independent.

The second account is often interpreted with respect to that same human dominance of nature and male dominance of women. It is also interpreted as forging a radical distinction between humanity and nature, and encouraging subjugation of the latter by the former. However, read in isolation from the first account, the second account reflects an order which is neither hierarchical nor chronological. It also suggests an alternative appreciation of human identity, and of the values directing relationships with others and with nature. That is, it offers another interpretation of the right order of things and of the values consistent with that order.

The Jewish business ethicist Moses Pava recommends that alternative perspective and focuses on a critical difference between the two accounts. Pava’s perspective is guided by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik’s analysis of the role of Adam in each of the accounts: “The community-fashioning gesture of Adam the first is...purely utilitarian and intrinsically egoistic and, as such, rules out sacrificial gestures. For Adam the second, communicating and communing are redemptive sacrificial gestures” (Pava 1997: 53-54). For Pava, this distinction raises a serious question about human identity, and about that identity with respect to relationships with other persons and with nature.

Are men and women to dominate the land and the sea and all they contain? The first creation account renders a positive answer to that question:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (RSV: Genesis 1: 26-29).

The charge to “have dominion over” and “subdue” the earth reflects Rabbi Soloveitchik’s appraisal of Adam as “utilitarian and intrinsically egoistic.” His position is one of independence and primacy. He is set apart, exalted above all but God. He’s on top of the world. Everything else exists to serve him.

There is no need of sacrifice on his part. Rather, as Clifford explains, Adam’s dominance is assured by the words of the text. Created “in the image of God” means that

“the human is a statue of the deity, not by static being but by action, who will rule over all things previously created” (Clifford 1990: 11). “Subdue the earth” refers not only to subjugation, but also to force. In Clifford’s words, “the nuance of the verb is ‘to master,’ ‘to bring forcefully under control’” and suggests that “force is necessary at the beginning to make the untamed land serve humans” (Clifford 1990: 11). Force is also necessary at the end, and also during the interim because of the text’s eschatological character: “This serene, beautiful world, in which all is ordered to humans, and humans are ordered to God, is how it will be at the end” (Clifford 1990: 11).

Adam’s dominance is also assured by the inherent logic of the text as well as by its inherent structure. God’s Sabbath underscores the importance of the seventh place as “climactic” in ancient Semitic enumeration, and reflects how “God’s Sabbath is therefore the climax of the story, which is primarily about God, not humans” (Clifford 1990: 10). Within that hierarchical order, the creation of man and woman on the sixth day (and after the animals also created on that same day) and immediately before the Sabbath is a subtle assurance of human dominance.

Consistent with the same logic, the creation of plants on the third day not only places them as lower in significance than birds and animals, but also avails them to both for food (RSV: Genesis, 1:29-30). Clifford interprets this availability of plants for food as an implicit prohibition against bloodshed and also as an implicit injunction to “respect the environment” by not killing for food and treating “all life with respect” (Clifford 1990: 11). He does not explain his understanding of “respect.” Nor does he explain its association with forceful subjugation and dominant control.

This reference to respect is important, though, especially if coupled with the text’s hierarchical distinctions and with its eschatological character. It reflects a moral imperative. The natural order is to be sustained and maintained in the present for the future. Moreover, that order is to be hierarchical and supportive of individual distinction and disconnection as prerequisites for dominance and subjugation. The beauty and serenity of the beginning implies hierarchical distinction and dominance, and that order is also to be sustained to the end. In the words of the Trinitarian doxology prayed daily throughout the world, “as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever and ever.”

Responsibility for maintaining and sustaining that serenity and beauty is invested directly in the person who, in the first and final analysis, is identified as individually distinct and as inherently disconnected from others. As such the human person is ultimately responsible for maintaining and sustaining the natural environment and all that is in it.

From this perspective, the ego-centered utilitarianism of Rabbi Soloveitchik’s interpretation of Adam the first is too extreme. It needs to be qualified by Clifford’s emphasis on respect and responsibility. Even then, the person is identified as primarily independent and disconnected, and human dignity is interpreted primarily with respect to individual self-determination and self-actualization.

That emphasis individual disconnection is moved into secondary significance in the

second creation account. Assuming primacy, as Rabbi Soloveitchik tells us, is a focus on human identity as relational communion and communication. Does this mean that the second Adam plays a different role than the first with respect to the earth, the sea, and all living things? The semantic and structural logic of the second creation account suggests that to be the case. It also suggests a less hierarchical and more participative order and organization.

Structurally, the hierarchical ordering of seven days is absent from the second creation account of the second chapter of Genesis. Even the chronology is less ordered as the sequence of events is confined to one day with an underlying sense of simultaneity and commonality. The earth and the heavens are created at the same time, along with a mist that “went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground” (RSV: Genesis 2:6). Then “man” is “formed of the dust from the ground” (RSV: Genesis 2:7), a garden is planted in an already-existing Eden, (“in the east”), and man is placed in the garden “to till it and keep it” (RSV: Genesis 2:15). There follows the creation of living creatures, including woman:

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man (RSV: Genesis: 2:18-22).

This ordering suggests cooperation rather than dominance, and commonality rather than distinction, especially if read in contrast to the hierarchical ordering of the first account. It also suggests that Adam the second is less dominant, less egotistical, and less utilitarian than Adam the first. He is more cooperative with, and dependent on, the rest of creation. He is ordered towards communion and communication rather than to dominance and subjugation.

This same difference is apparent in the words of the text. Arguing for a connection between the first and second creation account, Clifford interprets Adam’s naming of the animals as an expression of human mastery (Clifford 1990: 12). As compelling as this argument is, we readily detect a critical distinction between the direct forceful, subjugating mastery of the first account and the indirect subtle, intimate mastery of the second. It suggests a nuanced interpretation of mastery which emphasizes communion over domination.

Nevertheless, this domination itself cannot be ignored. Although recognized and acknowledged, human domination is relegated to secondary significance and tempered by an over-riding and underlying commitment to commonality and connection. It is also

reduced to secondary status in the moral order as cooperation assumes primacy over utility.

As the first creation account reflects distinction and disconnection, the second reflects commonality and connection. That commonality and connection becomes even more pronounced with the intimate association of man and earth, i.e., with man created from “the dust of the ground” (RSV: Genesis 2:7) “to till the ground” (RSV: Genesis 2:5). Recognizing that association, Phyllis Tribble argues for the translation of *ha’adam* as “earth creature” rather than as “man” suggesting an original sexual unity differentiated only with the creation of woman fourteen verses later (Clifford 1990:12), and also suggesting an original equality between male and female.

Were we to interpret the creation of woman after the creation of man with respect to the implications of chronology and hierarchy Clifford proposes as so important for the first creation account there would be no question of woman’s superiority. She is created after plants, after animals, after man, and before God’s Sabbath. Her position and her role are preeminent to Adam’s. Adam would be subordinate to her.

Another significant difference noted by Rabbi Soloveitchik is the absence of sacrifice in the first account and the need for sacrifice in the second. That concern is evidenced in the limitations placed on Adam the second to restrain from eating of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” coupled with the consequence of death, “for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (RSV: Genesis: 2:17). This reference to death is a clear and unambiguous reference to human limitation and to human sacrifice, and underscores an appreciation of sacrifice as a necessary dimension of cooperation. It precludes utilitarian egoism by demanding surrender of total independence and dominance. Human dignity would assume the theoretical and practical implications of relational dependence rather than individual independence.

Which emphasis is preferable? Which is to be pursued with respect to human and ecological sustainability? Are we to emphasize an appreciation of the person as individually independent or as relationally dependent? The first is more rational and philosophical. The second more emotional and psychological.

The emphasis on the first provides a warrant for rampant capitalism’s hierarchical distinction between owners and workers, and between owners and the natural environment. It also provides warrant for utilitarianism as the basic moral imperative for sustaining the dominance of the first over the second. Virtually ignored is the eschatological appeal for respect and maintenance.

The moral implications of that exaggerated emphasis become apparent in Mario Puzo’s last novel *Omerta* and his description of Don Raymonde Aprile’s realization of the American Dream:

The Don understood that the glory of America was the emergence of great families, and that the best social class sprang from men who had at first committed great crimes against that society. It was such men who in the

search for fortune had also built America and left evil deeds to crumble into forgotten dust...America had the genius to attract millions of laboring poor from all over the world, to entice them to the necessary hard work of building the railroads, the dams, and the sky-scratching buildings...

Certainly there had been tragedies, but that was part of life. Was not America the greatest cornucopia the world had ever known? Was not a measure of injustice a small price to pay? It has always been the case that individuals must sacrifice to further the advance of civilization and their particular society (Puzo 2000: 27).

Who suffered? The workers, and, by extension, the natural environment, both subjected to the dominance of the owner. Who did not suffer? Puzo tells us that the “great man...does not accept that burden. In some way, criminal, immoral, or by sheer cunning, he will ride the crest of that wave of human progress without sacrifice” (Puzo 2000: 28). To do that, the Don had to become independent and disconnected, removing himself from the lives of his children and from any appreciation of persons, places, and things other than in terms of their utility to his ambitions.

Is there an alternative? Socialism proposes an antidote to exaggerated individualism and utilitarianism. Its emphasis on relational cooperation and dependence has been tried and found wanting. It focuses so intently on cooperative relationships among people that it, too, neglects the environment for the dignity of a common humanity. And, while encouraging cooperation rather than dominance to dissolve the hierarchical distinctions between owners and workers, it has dismissed the positive implications and consequences of promoting individual dignity, especially with respect to any opportunity for self-actualization and self-fulfillment as an independent pursuit.

An emphasis on the second creation account and on Adam the second would provide biblical and theological justification for this second perspective. It, too, appeals to the primacy of the relational community over the independent individual, and encourages an appeal to human dignity with respect to connection rather than disconnection. However, it removes moral responsibility from the individual and transfers it to the common whole. Doing so, it raises the objections contained in the old adage that “if everyone is responsible, no one is responsible.”

The recent media attention on Andrea Yates’ killing of her four children questions the validity of an exaggerated altruism arising from that emphasis on communion. Writing for *Newsweek*, Dirk Johnson claims “she cared too much,” unable to “do enough for her demanding husband,” trying to be “too good a mother” (Johnson 2000: 21). Her own mother describes her as “the most compassionate of my children. Always thinking of other people, never herself. She was always trying to care for everybody” (Johnson 2000: 21)

Clifford’s penchant for interpreting the two accounts and the two Adams as complementary issues from the same interpretative perspective as John Paul II in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, especially in its discussion of “Work and Man,” which

introduces and frames his arguments and conclusions. His references to the Book of Genesis are confined to the first creation account in the first chapter and the description of the original sin of Adam and Eve in the third chapter. There are no references to the second chapter of Genesis or to the second creation account.

Basing his argument on Genesis 1: 27-28, John Paul claims “man is the image of God partly through the mandate received from his creator to subdue, to dominate the earth” (John Paul II 1981: 13). Later, particularly in the section entitled “The Priority of Labor,” he argues that subjugation of the earth becomes actualized through work because “all the visible resources contained in the visible world” are “placed at man’s disposal” and “can serve man only through work” (John Paul II 1980: 53). On this same basis, he immediately asserts the validity of private ownership. “From the beginning there is also linked with work the question of ownership,” he explains, “for the only means that man has for causing the resources hidden in nature to serve himself and others is his work” (John Paul II 1980: 53). He adds:

And to be able through his work to make these resources bear fruit, man takes over ownership of small parts of the various riches of nature: those beneath the ground, those in the sea, on land or in space. He takes over all these things by making them his workbench. He takes them over through work and for work (John Paul II 1980: 53).

Why does John Paul place so much emphasis on human domination? The answer to that question becomes evident in the following section, “Economism and Materialism” where we find John Paul using this same appeal to human domination to assert “the principle of the priority of labor over capital” (John Paul II 1980: 52) and to argue against the priority of capital over labor and the assignation of the worker as a factor of production. John Paul’s emphasis on human domination serves to justify his condemnation of capital domination.

Philosophically, he argues “...labor is always a primary efficient cause, while capital, the whole collection of means of production, remains a mere instrument or instrumental cause” (John Paul II 1980: 52). Theologically, he refers to his earlier interpretation of the first creation account in Genesis to argue against “the error of economism” which reverses that order and asserts “the primacy and superiority of the material, and directly or indirectly places the spiritual and the personal (man’s activity, moral values and such matters) in a position of subordination to material reality” (John Paul II 1980: 60).

Humanity cannot be perceived as an economic factor of production or as an instrumental means to capital’s end, for “man is the master of the creatures placed at his disposal in the visible world” (John Paul II 1980: 59). Neither can it be reduced to dependence, especially in work. “If some dependence is discovered in the work process,” writes John Paul, “it is dependence on the Giver of all the resources of creation and also on other human beings, those to whose work and initiative we owe the perfected and increased possibilities of our own work” (John Paul II 1980: 59).

Basing his arguments and conclusions on the first creation account in Genesis, John Paul, writing in the 1980's, assumes the socio-political and economic rationality of simple modernity. Inherent in that perspective is a distinction between humanity and nature, a hierarchical ordering of humanity above nature, and a utilitarian appreciation of nature. All three serve to foster an ever-expanding gulf between humanity and its environment, and indirectly serve as warrant for destructive ecological practices.

However, there is no longer any need to emancipate the rationalization process of simple or industrial modernity. This form of modernity has been victorious, and humanity has assumed dominance and domination. John Paul assumes that to be the case, and wants to identify its "side effects" and propose solutions for the resulting "fall out," especially the anomie of the worker. Focusing on the role of the worker, and placing so much emphasis on domination of the earth, he does so within the eschatological perspective to which Clifford refers. He attributes the effects of simple modernity, and its moral commitment to utilitarianism, to the absence of an appreciation for human dignity and maintenance of the created order. It is that eschatological perspective which leads him to appeal to an "affirmation" of the "mystery of creation" (John Paul II 1980: 54)

Why, then, does John Paul II not base his appeal to this eschatological dimension in the second creation account, especially in its denial of hierarchical distinction and its approval of cooperative communion? There, the moral imperative assumes an intimate connection between humanity and the environment rather than a radical distinction between the two. All living beings issue forth from the same earth and return to the same earth. Adam the second is placed within the teeming vitality of all created things to cooperate with them rather than to subdue them.

This alternative interpretation of creation is not without far-reaching difficulties. Basically, it would lead to a negation of the entire emancipation project of the Enlightenment—something that is inconceivable and untenable in theory and practice. Humanity would lose its position of centrality, its potential for self-actualization, and its individual moral responsibility for maintaining and sustaining all of creation.

That simple critique would explain, in part, why John Paul II ignores the second creation account and bases his argument on the first. Assuming modernity and its commitment to distinction and differentiation, he would focus on Adam the first rather than Adam the second. He might even interpret the second as consistent with the first as Clifford does. This does not mean, however, that the cooperative emphasis of the second should be rejected or ignored. Neither does it mean that we choose one over the other, or continue modernity's exclusionary appraisal of the two as contradictory.

SECTION THREE

The Disembedding of the Worker from Social and Ecological Structures

In its emphasis on the primacy of dignity of labor and the human person and John Paul II's encyclical becomes uniquely relevant to the current internationalized, free agent individual worker. There is separation of the individual laborer from all her support structures, ecological and social and this enforced separation (often supported by the laborer herself) has led to a number of new challenges. As we will explain below, classes do not mean what they once meant. Going along with this must be a new functional understanding in which the functional *differentiation* of simple modernity gives way to the functional *coordination* of reflexive modernity.

Understanding that the modern world is undergoing a transformation away from simple industrial social forms and toward reflexive post-industrial social forms, then, provides us with an opportunity to understand the relationship between individuals, classes, and work in radically new ways. No longer can the functionally differentiated perspective of simple modernity be effective in helping develop a sociological, political, economic, and cultural understanding of work. What is important now is not simply who is left *out* of the system but also who is working *in* it. Marx, Weber, and Emile Durkheim were all concerned with the effects of exclusion on classes, individuals, and selves. On this view, the functionally differentiated systems created their own enemies by empowering excluded peoples to organize and fight back. For example, Marx's proletariat represented a rival class to the bourgeoisie in much the same way that the bourgeoisie represented a rival class to the aristocrats of the 17th and 18th centuries.

In reflexive modernity, by contrast, no such rival class exists. Instead, the "middle class" works within the system, the "working class" works for the system, while the "underclass" is not only wholly excluded but it completely lacks the power or the motivation to fight back. Rather, the underclass tends to develop a bunker mentality as it focuses on its own identity apart from the system, effectively throwing up its hands and giving up on ever being included (Lash 1994: 129-133). This shifts our attention away from the "system world" and toward the "life world" (Habermas 1984?). In other words, rather than focus our inquiries on the functionally differentiated spheres of the system world, as simple modernity encouraged, we must focus our inquiries on the "side effects" the functionally coordinated system world has on the life world (Beck 1997). The side effects are numerous, but for our purposes here it is enough simply to focus on one: the "progressive freeing of agency from structure" (Lash 1994: 119).

According to Scott Lash, the replacement of inflexible capital accumulation (simple modernity) by flexible accumulation (reflexive modernity) testifies to a shift in patterns of economic growth. In the latter, new economic structures demand that agents become free. In other words, workers (i.e., agents) must be free to innovate in order to satisfy the demands for more specialized consumption. This "encourages firms to produce smaller batches of a given product, on the one hand, and to widen the array of products on offer, on the other" (Lash 1994: 119). This requires rapid innovation and therefore flexibility, especially in the design process, which places a premium on knowledge-intensivity and displaces the material labor process (Lash 1994: 119). This alteration reflects an alteration in economies. Rather than relying on labor intensivity, "new" economies increasingly rely on capital intensivity. But capital is no longer what it once was and neither is labor. "Old"

economies were material (or real) economies, "new" economies are informational (or virtual) economies. In this way, "constant fixed capital" (or hardware) gives way to "constant circulating capital" (or software) (Lash 1994: 129). Productive material economies do not disappear in response to the emergence of informational knowledge economies, though. That is, constant circulating capital does not completely squeeze out constant fixed capital. Rather, constant circulating capital takes precedence as all forms of capital are increasingly informationalized, which significantly alters the character of labor.

This reflexively modern world, then, transforms labor from work in the real material economy to work in the virtual informational economy. In the process, economic growth and productivity become transformed since what is being "produced" increasingly does not refer to material production but instead refers to knowledge production and, more directly, to the production of new value. This means that the "new" economies come increasingly to rely on financial transactions and speculations, which contribute more or less directly to the creation of wealth. This shift, which clearly is beginning to affect the entire world as the market internationalizes, brings with it certain side effects and these side effects affect us most clearly in our life worlds. That is, we increasingly feel these side effects personally, individually, and socially. Many of us are members of the new reflexive working class and we are linked "to the information and communication structures in three ways: as newly individuated consumers; as users of informationalized means of production...and as producers of consumer and producer goods (for example, televisions, fax machines, fibre-optic cable)" (Lash 1994: 129).

Another complication that is increasingly evident is the economic and informational globalization that has broken down the barriers against exploitation that however ineffective, existed with the prescience of the nation-state. Now, capital is free to flow across borders to tap into cheap labor markets impoverishing workers in both the "developed" and the "developing" world. This impoverishment is not just economic, but also ecological and social. Interests in industrialized and capital rich areas now are free to exploit all resources at the global level with little thought to long-term local effects. The penetration of information technology has also led to the generation of "wants" for consumer goods that satisfy few "needs".

Here we can distinguish two classes within the reflexive working class: the new middle class, which works as the experts within the expert systems constructed by new economies; and the more traditional working class, which works outside the expert systems as the producers of their manufactured goods. In this way, then, the "working class and the production of manufacturing goods become...a crucial moment in, though subordinated to, the roundabout production of *informational* goods" (Lash 1994: 129). And still we must recognize that these new "classes" are not at all like the old ones. The new classes are individuated. That is, the individuals occupying these "classes" are not attached to any particular class identity. Rather, they are individuals working within or in support of an internationalizing informational economic structure that seeks to provide for their individuated "needs." Reflexive modernity, then, relates less to class-identity than it does to self-identity (Giddens 1991). We have not yet spoken of another "class" emerging in the wake of the informational economy: the underclass. The members of the new underclass,

who, if they can find work at all, still work in the uninformatized parts of the material economy (real production) are completely excluded from the individuation process of reflexive modernity. They have been abandoned by all of the structural institutions of regulation: "the large industrial trade unions, welfare state agencies victim to cuts in public spending, the church" and so on (Lash 1994: 131).

The contemporary (reflexively) modern world poses new challenges for those concerned with issues of social justice. In the "old" world of simple modernity advocates for social justice could look to the downtrodden and create institutions whose function was to give them aid. In the "new" world of reflexive modernity the downtrodden need more help than ever, but so also does everyone else. The "new" middle and working classes may certainly be the "reflexivity winners" while the "new" underclass may be the "reflexivity losers" (Lash 1994: 130), but the individuated world of reflexive accumulation makes us all "social losers." One side effect of reflexive modernity can be seen in the fact that reflexive modernization makes us all into subjects (Foucault...). Subjectivity (or individuality) is emphasized at the expense of community. Flexibility demands such subjectivization. Insofar as contemporary society is a risk society (Beck 1991), life in society involves the calculation of risks. Economic firms of all sorts engage in such calculation and increasingly subjectivized individuals must do the same thing. We must, in other words, be flexible in any number of ways. But because flexibility is demanded by and for capital interests, subjectivized individuals are increasingly left to their own devices, especially as structural institutions of regulation (which must include class and communal identities) abandon us and give way to the only "institution" of regulation remaining: self-identity.

This atomization of the individual and the concentrated focus on the self has enormous repercussions for the individual's environment – both societal and ecological. Nature, already seen as the arena for incessant battle, is now subjugated to the whims and fancies of individual selfishness. This is a logical progression from seeing "nature" as merely in the service of the human being. With the collapse of societies, the only criterion left is the "good" or the "happiness" or more appropriately the "needs" of the individual. This approach clearly lies at the root of the exhaustion of ecosystems around the world resulting in problems as diverse as global warming and ozone depletion on the global scale and scarcity of drinking water and sanitation on the local level.

But the picture need not be so bleak because while reflexive modernization is being driven by flexible accumulation, focusing on the "reflexive" can provide us with opportunities. If indeed modern society is a risk society then certainly one major risk of modern society is the potential failure to sustain itself. This can be cashed out in ecological terms, certainly, but it must also be cashed out in economic terms. As such, understanding the contemporary world as reflexively modern allows us to consider its impact on individuals, cultures, economies, ecologies, politics, and societies. As the modern world continues to impact the lifeworlds of subjectivized individuals, understanding that the current modernization process is reflexive affords us the opportunity to *reflect* on the quality and quantity of that impact. Because in this paper we are seeking to assess the role of work in the contemporary internationalizing world, we can now ask certain questions: Given reflexive modernization, to what extent are current understandings of work appropriate for

the sustenance of individuals? Can we continue, in other words, to understand work as a confrontation with nature or is it now both possible and necessary to move past that conception? What impact do our understandings of work and nature have on ecology? Is it now necessary for us to cultivate an ethical, ecological, and social self-limitation that will allow for sustainability of life?

John Paul II's solution rests neither in capitalism nor socialism. It rests in another perspective. While emphasizing individual human dignity, he does so only with respect to an eschatological commitment to maintaining and sustaining the beauty and serenity of creation at the beginning, through the interim, to the end. It is this far-sighted and far-reaching moral commitment which underscores the need for a theological interpretation of humanity and nature to augment and inform political and economic interpretations.

The clear implication is that the basic category from which to situate human dignity and human ethics is neither individual independence nor relational dependence, but the integrated interdependence of the whole. Grounded in the eschatological implications of both creation accounts, that interdependence recognizes individual distinction and relational cooperation, but also something else. It recognizes an underlying unity of all things, and fosters that integrated totality as the basis for assessing human dignity and human morality.

The new and growing interest in ecological sustainability recommends a solution analogous to John Paul's. Ecological sustainability proposes a solution to this opposition of extremes by proposing a simultaneous focus on personal independence, social dependence, and ecological interdependence. Within this frame of reference the worker retains her/his identity and autonomy while, at the same time, reflecting the reflexive capacity necessary for informed moral choices in pursuit of an informed moral life with a similar long-term and far-reaching perspective.

SECTION FOUR

Alternative Perspectives

A very different perspective arises from a focus grounded in the second Creation account where the moral imperative becomes that of co-operative ownership implying an intimate connection between humanity and the environment. This perspective also presents difficulties precisely in representing a denial of any separation between human beings and their environment. This would lead to a negation of the entire emancipation project of the Enlightenment – something that is inconceivable and untenable in theory and practice.

We envision a solution to this opposition of extremes in the relatively new and growing interest in ecological sustainability, especially given its emphasis on personal independence, social dependence and ecological interdependence. Within this framework of reference the worker retains his / her identity and autonomy while at the same time exhibiting the reflexive capacity necessary for informed ethical choices in pursuit of an informed ethical

life.

Given the changing structures of the economy and socialism, the disembedded individual / worker is faced with two stark choices. The individual could continue with the old attitudes of competition and dominance. In that case she can try her survival skills as a “free agent” or ally herself with corporate interests to create a semblance of community. While the free agent position is very difficult to maintain given the cut throat competition, even the corporate alliances have a sting in their tail. Corporations, in essence, have no loyalties either to the individual or the community. While the *raison d’etre* of the state could be said to be the protection of the citizen, the corporation exists solely to maximize profit. Workers then are interchangeable and “individuality” is a liability. Further, the dictates of corporate choices leave little if any room for expensive and long term environmental protection measures. What the corporation then demands is the maximization of short term profit in order to satisfy current shareholders’ interests with little if any thought for the future. Thus the individual may gain some immediate breathing room but society must necessarily pay the price.

The second, more long term and more immediately painful choice is “reflexivity” in social choices leading to a sense of community and of social responsibility. Here sustainable development takes into account not only the immediate gratification of desires, but also long term inter-generational interests. Work then becomes a means, not of individual enrichment, but that of promoting the community interests. While theories of communism and socialism see a portion of this community consciousness, they address merely the economic and not the ecological component. It is no longer a question of “from each according to his necessity and to each according to his need.” The new reflexivity must take into account the needs of the surroundings both in the immediate present and in the future.

What this shift in attitude towards “sustainable development” entails is a reassessment of “needs” and a redefinition of “wants”. Unlike the capitalist approach of unlimited growth fuelled by advances in technology, the new theoretical framework demands that we work to fulfill ourselves and learn to depend on society to take care of the larger picture. Of course, as part of society, we are intrinsic to the care taking process. It is the exact antithesis of individualized capitalism where the person needs to claw her way over animate and inanimate beings alike in order to “survive.” This idea of sustainable development allows for the protection of human dignity.

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