

CHAPTER FOUR

JOHN PAUL II: A SCRIPTURAL VISION OF WORK

Pope John Paul II (1978-) has written three major social encyclicals: *Laborem exercens* (1981), *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), and *Centesimus annus* (1991). While all three encyclicals discuss the topic of work, *Laborem exercens* (LE) is the most systematic and comprehensive. In this encyclical, John Paul II's treatment of work is based on the first chapter of Genesis. It is the first truly systematic theology of work in papal social teaching. He also adds a phenomenological flavor to this understanding of work by emphasizing the acting person. Like its predecessors, this encyclical on work also is a response to certain social problems of its time—automation, rising energy costs, depletion of natural resources, and so forth (LE, 1.3). Nonetheless, the major concern in *Laborem exercens* is to provide a systematic reflection on the nature of work. For John Paul II, this reflection on work must begin with a correct understanding of the human person which is derived from the sources of revelation. Although this chapter will discuss other social writings of John Paul II, the focus will center on *Laborem exercens*.

Unlike Leo XIII who understood the key to the social question as wages, John Paul II perceives the key to the social question as the manner in which work is understood (LE, 3.1). Understanding work does not merely mean comprehending its economic or social effects on society. For John Paul II it also means understanding the “human” meaning of work. Work must be seen in light of its original purpose, that is, in terms of the value given it by God from the beginning of creation. John Paul II explains that “At the beginning of man's work is the mystery of creation” (LE, 12.2). The social question, then, for John Paul II is ultimately a religious question. The importance of work is both a conviction of the intellect and a tenet of faith. The Church sees the person not only in light of historical experience and scientific knowledge, but more fundamentally in light of God's revelation. As he stated in a 1979 homily in Poland, the problems of human labor “cannot be fully solved without the Gospel.”¹

Laborem exercens aims to link in a more systematic way scripture and natural law or what John Paul II calls the moral order. It is an attempt to fill out an understanding of work first enunciated in *Gaudium et spes*.² *Gaudium et spes* states that if work is intimately connected to the person, then work can never be

fully understood without the insights of the gospel. This new approach does not isolate or eliminate reason or natural law; rather it places them in an explicit theological framework. For John Paul II, natural law is a theological concept that rests on the framework of revelation. The natural law is not an entity unto its own.³ In *Laborem exercens*, John Paul II continues to rely on natural law arguments of justice, human rights, human dignity, participation, common good, virtue, and so forth, and believes that these principles are accessible to reason for all humanity. But he specifically and explicitly places natural law under the rubric of the doctrine of creation revealed in Genesis. In doing so, John Paul II moves away from a predominant reliance on a natural law methodology to ground his teaching in scripture. Philip Wogaman explains that

The doctrine of creation, in which *Laborem exercens* is largely grounded, can incorporate the basic insights of the natural law tradition while acknowledging that the tradition finally rests on faith claims about the source of all being.⁴

The pope explains that work, as a fundamental dimension of the person, is discoverable through natural sciences such as anthropology, sociology, history, psychology, and so forth. “But the source of the Church’s conviction is above all the revealed word of God, and therefore what is a conviction of the intellect is also a conviction of faith” (LE, 4). For John Paul II, the profound spiritual significance of work can only be revealed.⁵

Four scriptural themes inform John Paul II’s vision of work: 1) Genesis reveals that people are created in the image of God, which makes them distinct from the rest of creation. 2) Because they are made in God’s image, people have been given the divine commission to subdue and have dominion over the earth. 3) Through their dominion, they participate in God’s creative activity through work. People continue the process of creation as co-creators to complete creation by advancing the discovery of resources contained in the depths of the mystery of creation. In their work, people can fulfill God’s will.⁶ 4) People have been given the responsibility to till the earth and care for the gift of creation. Humanity has an obligation of stewardship.

John Paul II maintains that this theological vision of work has significant implications on how one understands the four dimensions of work. From within this theological framework, workers receive dignity precisely from the fact that they are made in God’s image. It mandates a remuneration policy based on common use and justice, a production process that is participatory, and products that contribute to the common good.

The purpose of this chapter is not only to explain John Paul II’s understanding of the four dimensions of work, but also to show how John Paul II integrates revelation and natural law in his understanding of the four dimensions of work. He points out that the Church has a duty “to speak out on work from the viewpoint of its human value and of the moral order...[as well as] to form a spirituality of work which will help all people to come closer, through work, to God.”⁷ Each of the four dimensions described below examines this two-fold task of understanding work as an integral part of God’s revelation, and understanding work as an integral part of the moral order.

1. Formation and *Laborem exercens*

John Paul II believes that one of the fundamental weaknesses of modern society rest in its inadequate view of the person. In Puebla, Mexico, at the beginning of his pontificate he stated:

Without doubt, our age is the one in which man has been most written and spoken of, the age of the forms of humanism and anthropocentrism. Nevertheless, it is paradoxically also the age of man's abasement to previously unsuspected levels, the age of human values trampled on as never before.⁸

The root cause of this mistaken anthropology is the failure to respect the spiritual aspect of the person. John Paul II teaches that a spiritual understanding of the person establishes the right order of priorities in the economic and political order. The failure to understand the spiritual order of the economic arena, particularly of work, is a driving force behind John Paul II's attempts to establish a theological framework of understanding work in *Laborem exercens*. A primary source for understanding this spiritual order is the Book of Genesis.

GENESIS: THE IMAGE OF GOD⁹

Work is fundamentally a religious concept for John Paul II. From the beginning of creation people are called to work. God's first command to humanity was and is today to have dominion over creation through work. The first chapter of Genesis states:

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.' (Gen. 3:19.)

This passage provides the context to John Paul II's vision of work. He explains that the divine command to have dominion over the earth is a command to work. Work is not a consequence of the fall, but a reality of the original creation. Work is a reality before the fall; yet, the fall has made work toilsome, as it has everything else (e.g., childbirth). Nonetheless, the human person still remains an image of God. John Paul II explains that God's image "was not withdrawn or cancelled out even when man, having broken the original covenant with God, heard the words: 'In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread'" (LE, 9.1). In other words, human nature has not been totally corrupted by sin. It is precisely because the person is created in the image of God that work is still so significant.

The term "image of God" found in the first chapter of Genesis contains the key to John Paul II's theological reflection on the human person.¹⁰ Although God created out of nothing with the command "Let there be," there is a sense that God created from God's own being when humanity was created. Of everything God created, only humanity is considered as created in God's image. As Roger Heckel points out in his commentary on *Laborem exercens*, the person made in the image

of God must reflect and in a sense “almost reproduce ‘the substance’ of its Prototype.”¹¹ It is precisely from this qualitative distinction in creation that people are distinguishable from the rest of creation. As John Paul II stated in a general audience: “Man resembles God more than nature.”¹² Because humanity is made in the image of God, humans cannot be reduced or merely understood on the level of the “world.” In other words, the human person as well as those activities that are specifically human, such as work, cannot be understood only in material or corporeal categories, such as science or technology. John Paul II explains that “the original blessing of work” is connected to understanding the person’s reflection of God’s image (LE, 27). Humanity reflects God’s image as the only member of creation who is called to work, that is, called to have dominion. However, the person as an image of God is not completely identified with God. Rather, the person is only a likeness that is darkened and scarred by original sin, which has in turn marred work.

John Paul II maintains that because humanity is made in the image of God, people have dominion over the earth as subjective beings who are in search of self-realization—a self-realization that is actualized when it reflects God’s image (LE, 4.3). Only people can reflect God’s image, that is, his acts, because only they have been given the command to act, that is, to subdue and have dominion over God’s creation. John Paul II’s understanding of work is grounded in the nature of the person—an “acting person” (LE, 24). People, like God, are makers (*homo faber*). Their capacity for innovation, invention, and creativity are reflections or images of God. Unlike God, however, who is pure Act, people are acting persons (*actus personae*). They actuate their potency by becoming who they ought to be, namely, God’s image. For John Paul II, work derives its importance from the way it develops one’s human potential, which is to become more like God.

Ultimately, for John Paul II, the value of work stems from the fact that the one who is doing the work (*homo laborem exercens*) is a person. People are made in the image of God and their work serves as a means to reflect better God’s image. Hence, John Paul II maintains that the basis for evaluating work is neither the kind of work done, nor the product produced, nor the remuneration received, but how the worker is affected, that is, how it furthers the worker’s reflection of God’s image. For John Paul II, the creation story stands as a critique of any workplace that fails to treat the worker as “subject and maker,” and reduces the person to the “same level as the whole complex of the material means of production, as an instrument” (LE, 7.2).

THE MORAL ORDER: THE PRIORITY OF THE SUBJECT IN HUMAN ACTIVITY¹³

While the larger framework of *Laborem exercens* is based on Genesis and the doctrine of creation, John Paul II also stresses the moral structure found in human nature, which can be discovered through experience and reason. From his commentary on Genesis 1:27-28 in *Laborem exercens*, John Paul II precedes to distinguish between the subjective and objective aspects of work. (This has been already discussed in Chapter One.) He explains that the experience of mastering the earth is universal. “Each and every individual, to the proper extent and in an incalculable number of ways, takes part in the giant process whereby man ‘subdues the earth’ through his work” (LE, 4.3). For John Paul II, to subdue the earth is not only a revealed command from the Creator found in Genesis. It is also a natural

experience of humanity. He explains that the universal experience of subduing the earth manifests itself in an objective sense, that is, some object is subdued or mastered which all people participate in. Precisely through the experience of the subject mastering the object, people realize and understand that they are the ones who dominate. They realize that work is a specifically human activity that has a formative effect on the person. The fact, according to John Paul II, “that the one who carries it out is a person, a conscious and free subject, that is to say, a subject that decides about himself,” determines a particular ethical content of work (LE, 6.2). Most notable is the priority of the subject over the object.

John Paul II stresses that work is a specifically human activity. Like love, prayer, and reason, work is unique to humans. Although this distinction is not held throughout this book, in a sense, people work, animals labor. People work for a variety of ends: providing a product or service for a community, achieving personal satisfaction, fulfilling a religious vocation, and making a living. Animals labor for one end: their instinct to survive.¹⁴ John Paul enforces this point in *Laborem exercens*:

Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures, whose activity for sustaining their lives cannot be called work. Only man is capable of work, and only man works . . . Thus work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons. And this mark decides its interior characteristics; in a sense it constitutes its very nature (LE, 0).

For John Paul II is precisely because people work that their personhood is manifested and society itself is changed and realized. The activity of animals in gathering food is rooted in instinct, and is therefore incapable of expressing freedom or reason or establishing social relationships. People, however, rationally participate in work. They are guided not only by instinct, but also their use of freedom and reason in the process of maintaining and accomplishing their survival, personal development, social direction, and spiritual growth. Commenting on *Laborem exercens*, William Gooley points out that “Human acts, such as work, are ‘human’ precisely because they bear the characteristics of rationality and freedom—not simply because they are performed by human beings.”¹⁵ John Paul II states that people work daily to provide for their existence, build their world, and create their history. As a human activity, work manifests the characteristics of human nature—personal and social. These two characteristics are examined below.

John Paul II explains that work has a personal character because “it follows that the whole person, body and spirit, participates in it, whether it is manual or intellectual work” (LE, 24). Work has a transforming effect on the subject who works. As a self-determining being, the activity of work enables the person to strive toward the fulfillment of one’s personhood. Work not only adds value to its object but it is something worthy to do since it adds value to the person. Work corresponds to the person’s dignity and self-esteem, and if people participate in good work, their dignity is affirmed and even increased.¹⁶ The activity of work should not damage the person’s dignity. This does not ignore the fact that much work is physical and mental toil. But it is precisely through the toil that work can be transformative, so long as the person’s human dignity is respected. In other words, human acts have finality, they have a determining character that rests in the

person. They can either enhance or detract from human development. This happens in work, which is partly why it is so important to human nature.

As people perform certain acts they fulfill themselves in that they perform. If they perform mindless work their mind begins to die. As Camus said, “without work all life goes rotten; but when work is soulless, life stifles and dies.”¹⁷ For John Paul II, the self-determining aspect of work should lead to self-actualization which enables one to become “more human” (LE, 9.2). Work is an instrumental means to becoming more human and must reflect a human character. This is not to say that every act of work must somehow be fulfilling and purposeful. But work is not mere activity; rather it is human activity which needs to reflect the human subject and not just the economic aspects of work. Work forms not only the economic and psychological aspects of the person but one’s ethical and spiritual aspects as well. It is for this reason that John Paul II maintains the priority of labor over capital.

For John Paul II, work also brings with it a social characteristic. Most of the significant acts in the life of a person are done in communion with others and toward a social goal. There are two senses in which work has a social character: the effect it has on society and the correlation it has with the social nature of the person. In the very first sentences of *Laborem exercens*, John Paul asserts the social and communal nature of work and the effect it has on society. He states:

Through work man must...contribute to the continual advance of science and technology and...to elevating unceasingly the cultural and moral level of the society within which he lives in community with those who belong to the same family.... Work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons (LE, 0).

Work is by its very nature a communal activity, since the person is by nature social. Commenting on *Gaudium et spes*, Karol Wojtyla states that all people are called to “communion” (*communio*) which means “the actualization of a community in which the individual not only preserves his own nature but realizes himself definitively.”¹⁸ For John Paul II, the interdependency between personal development and the betterment of society cannot be separated.¹⁹ In work, a person cannot achieve personal development without at the same time improving society by working toward the common good. Work is more than the economic or personal fruits that it can attain. It is a social activity that intertwines the social aspect of human nature with the common good of society. Work must contribute to society, that is, to the common good. However, to develop the communal potential of work adequately, the priority of the worker must be respected.

John Paul II recognizes along with the rest of the Catholic social tradition that work has an extremely important formative effect on the development of the human personality. Work not only transforms creation but it also leads to personalization. Hence, John Paul II maintains the fundamental priority of the subject who produces over the object produced. The dignity of work must be primarily sought in the subject not the object. He explains that this priority of the subject does away with the “differentiation of people into classes according to the kind of work done” (LE, 6.5) As James Schall points out “This procedure has the advantage of ‘equalizing as it were, all men and women before God proportionately in ‘what’ they do,

whether king or pauper.”²⁰ This does not mean the object that is created has no moral significance. However, John Paul II believes that in today’s technologically advanced age of super products, the priority of the maker of the products has been clouded.²¹

John Paul II’s emphasis on the subject does not oppose a productive workplace. He believes that the habits and virtues necessary for a productive workplace—honesty, industriousness, patience, deferred gratification, and so forth—are the same virtues necessary for a good person.²² He explains: “The economic system itself and the production process benefit precisely when these personal values are fully respected” (LE, 9). The priority of the subject never detracts from the material success of the workplace. Rather, it is a foundational principle in its long-term success. Why? Because the workplace is a human institution that must be designed in accord with human nature: otherwise, the success of the particular organization is at best in doubt. This is further discussed in section three of this chapter.

2. Remuneration: Dominion and Common Use

The most pervasive theme in *Laborem exercens* is the divine command to “subdue and have dominion” over creation, understood both as a revealed command in Genesis, and as a natural human experience understood through reason (LE, 6). However, as with all of God’s commands, humanity has failed to fulfill God’s will with respect to work. For John Paul II, it is a disconcerting fact that “while conspicuous natural resources remain unused,” millions of people are unemployed or underemployed and suffer the scourges of poverty and the feeling of uselessness (LE, 18.5). Fundamentally, this scourge is a failure to subdue creation correctly. He maintains that this failure is a major reason for misunderstanding work, particularly, the just distribution of resources which work ought to provide. Throughout the encyclical, John Paul II discusses various aspects of subduing the earth. The first part of this section examines the distributive character of this mandate. The second part of this section concentrates on John Paul II’s explanation of the traditional natural law principle of “common use” in its relation to remuneration.

DOMINION AND DISTRIBUTION

According to John Paul II, human beings have been given a superior place in the order of creation. Because they have been made in God’s image, all people have been given the command which is both a right and a duty, to subdue the earth. Quoting *Gaudium et spes*, John Paul II states: “For man, created in God’s image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all that it contains” (LE, 25; see GS, 341). It is this which will enable them to participate in the goodness of creation.

John Paul II defines the expression ‘subdue the earth’ as a human activity that discovers all the resources the earth provides so as to use them for humanity’s own ends. The only way for people to do this is through work. The pope admits that in Genesis 1:28 “subdue the earth” does not directly mean to work. But he argues that

work is an essential means for people to subdue creation (LE, 4.1). It is only through work that people can tap the richness creation has to offer. Humanity's tremendous acceleration of technological advancement through the work of various occupations provides, for John Paul II, "a historical confirmation of man's dominion over nature" (LE, 5.4). Hence, he sees the duty to work ultimately originates from God's command to subdue creation.

John Paul II explains that dominion of creation is a command given within the framework of "the creator's original ordering" (LE, 4.3). He asserts that the right order of work stems from the right order of the Creator and the Creator's commands. The Creator's ordering is "indissolubly linked" with the reality that people who subdue the earth are made in the image of God. The order of creation is violated, however, when the means of dominion (raw material, technology, capital, etc.) are unfairly distributed; that is, they fail to serve the development of the human person (LE, 13.4). For John Paul II work must always respect the dignity of the subject. It is precisely through the subject that work receives its "specific moral value." He explains that

In doing this [focusing on the subject] we must always keep in mind the biblical calling to 'subdue the earth,' in which is expressed the will of the creator that work should enable man to achieve that 'dominion' in the visible world that is proper to him (LE, 9).

For John Paul II, what is proper for humanity is that all the resources of creation which the person subdues are meant to serve all people. Creation through the process of work is placed at one's disposal. Creation is a gift from the Creator which humanity finds "and does not create" (LE, 12.2). He explains that when humanity subdues the earth it is confronted by the gift of creation and hence the mystery of creation.

For John Paul II, then, people enter into two inheritances when they work; 1) what is given by the Creator in terms of natural resources and 2) what is given by others in terms of what has been already developed on the basis of those natural resources (LE, 13.1). Humanity is indebted to both the Creator and other human beings who provide the tools and opportunities to share in the goods of creation.²³ All property and capital, then, including the means of production, are ultimately for the good of all human beings, since creation is a gift for the development of the person. Consequently, any idea of an absolute right to property and capital is rejected, since property is not absolutely dependent on the initial owner nor is it absolutely destined for the particular individual. Commenting on this point John Finnis states that "No one can say that the gift [of creation] has been made simply to him unconditionally, without regard to any of the other human persons who like him have been created to have dominion over the earth."²⁴ This social inheritance of property and capital places a corresponding obligation on participants of this inheritance to allow other people, including future generations, to participate and share in this inheritance.

John Paul II also maintains that the means of production are not only the result of the efforts of the Creator and past generations, but also the result of "the present generation of workers [who toil]...day after day" (LE, 14.3). In light of this and the belief that all capital and resources are inherited, John Paul II explains that the recommendation of joint ownership by the "highest magisterium of the Church,"

and experts in Catholic social teaching takes on special importance (14.4). He asserts that while joint ownership may not be applicable in all circumstances, it is clear that the proper position of all workers demands ownership of the means of production in some form.

THE MORAL ORDER: COMMON USE

Implied in the duty to subdue the earth is also the principle of common use. The duty to subdue the earth cannot become a reality unless access to common use exists. God's creation is intended for everyone. To deny access to the fruits of the earth is to disobey God's command of dominion. God's divine command has a harmonious relationship with the moral structure of creation; that is, God's divine command forms the moral structures of human relationship. Hence, part of the Creator's ordering is a just distribution guided by the principle of common use.

Following the tradition of Pius XII, John XXIII, and *Gaudium et spes*, John Paul II states that the first principle of the socio-economic order is "the universal destination of goods and the right to common use of them" (LE, 14.4). Every person is meant to share in the goods of creation. Habiger explains that the right to common use points to the fact that

Everyone has a right to have his basic life-sustaining needs fulfilled. The earth and its fruits were destined for the uses of everyone. No one is to be excluded from them or denied access to them. Consequently, that form of ownership is to be preferred which most successfully accomplishes the universal destination of material goods.²⁵

For John Paul II, two fundamental means to achieve common use are through ownership of the means of production, and wages (LE, 14.1-2; 19.1). What is unique about John Paul II's application of this principle is his specificity. Whereas, the prior social tradition demanded common use of creation, particularly in the form of wages, it did not connect the principle specifically with ownership of the means of production.

One of the most serious problems preventing a right to common use, according to John Paul II, is the separation and hostility between the representatives of capital and labor. A fundamental reason for this hostility is the separation of the means of production from workers, and poor wages. This opposition in the workplace, for John Paul II it is unnatural. By isolating the means of production "as a separate property in order to set it up in the form of 'capital' in opposition to 'labour'" violates the purpose of use and possession for which these means of production were originally destined (LE, 14.2). And failing to pay a family wage forces both spouses to work, thus upsetting family stability."

Fundamental to the relationship between the representatives of labor and capital is the principle of common use, which according to John Paul II is the basis of the Church's teaching on remuneration which includes the means of production and wages. The rest of this section explores these two forms of remuneration.

Wages. Although *Laborem exercens* spends less time on wages (only two paragraphs) than any of the other papal documents discussed in this book, John Paul II is still very concerned with the family wage. He states that a family wage is an

extremely important criterion for “verifying the justice of the whole socio-economic system” (LE, 19.1). It is an irreplaceable litmus test of the integrity of society’s economic system. The bulk of the wage section in *Laborem exercens* is spent on the family, more particularly on the mother, so as to call attention to what John Paul II perceives as one of the most negative consequences of the failure to pay a family wage—mothers leaving the home so as to supplement their husbands’ inadequate wage.²⁶

John Paul II specifically bases the family wage on the principle of the common use of goods. He states:

In every system, regardless of the fundamental relationships within it between capital and labour, wages...are still a practical means whereby the vast majority of people can have access to those goods which are intended for common use: both the goods of nature and manufactured goods. Both kinds of goods become accessible to the worker through the wage which he receives as remuneration for his work (LE, 19.1).

Even more than worker ownership, wages are the most practical means by which people have access to the goods of creation. Family wages are a primary indicator to the fulfillment of the principle of the common use of goods; that is, family wages provide access to the goods of creation such as food, shelter, education, medical care, and so forth.

Like the popes before him, John Paul II condemns outright the determination of wages solely through the market. He explains that proponents of free market economics maintain that remuneration should be determined by the market and not by its necessary characteristic (as discussed by Leo XIII), nor by a principle such as common use. Such a market wage is dictated by the supply and demand of capital and labor which is rooted in the mechanics of the market and not based on moral principles which stem from human needs.²⁷ Implicit in this market wage is the idea that wages can fall below the level necessary to support a family, hence denying the principle of common use. John Paul II rejects this form of rigid capitalism because it denies the influence of moral norms and spiritual values upon economic life. He does recognize that wages in the Western world are less determined solely by the free market than they were in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. But he is concerned that the full human dimension characterize by the principle of common use is not sufficiently taken into consideration in determining a family wage.

John Paul II realizes, however, that the family wage cannot be determined outside the productive/distributive system (the market) in which it finds itself. The market sets parameters for wages. He explains that paying a family wage in a particular industry or company may be impossible because of either financial inability, or because of the various needs of different family sizes, medical care, special education, and so forth. Consequently, John Paul II advocates allowances by the state to “mothers devoting themselves exclusively to their families” (LE, 19.2). He explains that family wages are basic human rights which are the responsibility both of the employer which he refers to as the direct employer, and also the state which he refers to as the indirect employer. (The distinction between direct and indirect employer is explained in Chapter Five.) The failure to incorporate the state as partially responsible for the family wage places undue

burden both on the organization as well as on the family, particularly on large families. As many commentators throughout the Catholic social tradition have noted, to delegate to one organization alone the duty to pay a family wage would give economic incentives to organizations to discriminate toward large families. The failure of the state to supplement family wages also ignores the complexity of the economy and the social responsibility of society as a whole to guarantee a family wage.

Ownership. For John Paul II, property is not a right in and of itself. It is a means to further the principle of common use. He explains that justice is achieved when capital serves labor. In order for capital to serve labor, it must be at labor's disposal, particularly through ownership. Ownership of capital, particularly the means of production, "is acquired first of all through work in order that it may serve work" (LE, 14.2). The only criterion for legitimate entitlement to ownership of the means of production is capital's service to labor. John Paul II claims that the means of production "should serve labour and thus by serving labour that they should make possible the achievement of the first principle of this order, namely the universal destination of goods and the right to common use of them" (Ibid.). By connecting the principle of common use to some form of worker or joint ownership, John Paul II re-envisions ownership. He perceives ownership not as a form of worker self-interest (as opposed to managerial self-interest), but as a quest to fulfill the principle of common use. He never absolutizes worker ownership, since it is only one form of property among many. It is a means to the larger goal of common use. However, worker ownership is perceived by John Paul II as one of best means to achieve one of the ultimate ends of common use, namely, a just distribution of goods.

Worker ownership serves other ends as well. It also has a tendency to fulfill the personal component of the principle of common use. John Paul II refers to this personal component as the "personalist argument." He points out the "Church's teaching has always expressed the strong and deep conviction that man's work concerns not only the economy but also, and especially, personal values" (LE, 15.1). The rule of ownership ought to be at the service of "personalistic values." Workers are not only concerned with what they receive from their labor (extrinsic benefits). They also want to know that they are working for themselves (intrinsic benefits). For John Paul II, it is difficult for workers to have a personal connection to what is not their own. He maintains that worker ownership contributes to the personal development of the individual worker, that is, to the formative dimension of work. Another aspect of this personalistic component of worker ownership is that it creates stronger social relationships between employees and employers. Worker ownership is advocated by John Paul II not only because it distributes the wealth, but because it serves well as a means to personalization by affecting positively the formative dimension of the person and creating stronger social relationships between worker and employer.

3. The Process: Co-Creators and Participants

John Paul II has two primary concerns in the area of the production process: the religious nature of the process of work and what effect the process of work has on the worker. He sees a possible connection between the work of the Creator and the work of humanity. Work has a goal in the grand design of God's creative order. To attain this end, people's work ought to be a participation in God's continuing work of creation. John Paul II also views the organization as an organic structure, where every worker has a particular function and role in cooperation with others to contribute to the common good of the organization in harmony with society. However, John Paul II warns against a mechanistic organization which subsumes the subjectivity of the worker within the goals of the organization or the laws of the market. An organization becomes organic precisely when, in the way that it is organized and structured, it recognizes the priority of the subject. An organic workplace, for John Paul II, is a participatory workplace that places the good of all persons at the center of its organization. The conflict between the good of all persons and the good of the organization is absent from John Paul II. The true good of the organization is the same as the good of the person.²⁸ This section explores John Paul II's understanding of worker as co-creator in building God's kingdom and the worker's role as an active participant in the production process.

CO-CREATION

John Paul II insists that work is a personal activity which participates in God's ongoing creation. Or, in other words, through work, people are co-creators with God.²⁹ This particular idea is heavily influenced by *Gaudium et spes*. In part I chapter III of *Gaudium et spes*, the bishops discuss the meaning of human activity in light of God's revelation (GS. 33-39). They discuss human activity in light of Genesis 1:27-28, focusing on how labor unfolds "the creator's work" (GS, 34). John Paul II develops this "co-creation" theme more specifically in his section on the spirituality of work (LE, 24). Although the theme of co-creation can be found both in *Gaudium et spes* and in Leo XIII and Pius XII, no pope has developed the idea of co-creation as thoroughly as John Paul II.³⁰

Although John Paul II never uses the term, the idea that people are "co-creators" is ever present in the encyclical (LE, 13.1; 25). The basis for understanding what he means by co-creation and co-creator is to grasp that creation is not a one time event. It is a continuing process, sustained through God's power and love, in cooperation with people. He explains that people continue to develop and perfect creation in collaboration with God by participating in God's continual creative activity (LE, 25.1). John Paul II maintains that people participate in God's creative activity by carrying out God's command to subdue and have dominion. In this way they reflect "the very action of the creator" (LE, 4.1). He asserts that God has given people the command to subdue the earth, and God has provided work as the means to attain this dominion. This command to subdue the earth is an invitation to participate in God's creative activity (LE, 25.3). Commenting on this theme of co-creation in *Laborem exercens*, Romano Rossi points out:

[The person] is called to participate in the remaking of a more perfect creation, while by transforming and dominating the world, he, in a sense, becomes ‘partner’ with God. Through his work he regains his true greatness as God’s collaborator . . . and ensures the continuation of the divine creative action. . . . Thus, the worker becomes the means in order that the whole of creation will be subjected to the dignity of the human being and son of God.³¹

For John Paul II, an inherent and intrinsic unity, then, exists between God as creator and person as worker. As Hollenbach points out, the relationship is not related as the sacred to the profane; rather, the person’s work is related as a participation in God’s continuous creation.³² As stated in *Laborem exercens*:

The work of God’s revelation is profoundly marked by the fundamental truth that man, created in the image of God, shares by his work in the activity of the creator and that, within the limits of his own human capabilities, man in a sense continues to develop that activity and perfects it as he advances further and further in the discovery of the resources and values contained in the whole of creation (LE, 25.1).

John Paul II explains how the fact that God’s creative activity is described as work and places Genesis as the first “gospel of work,” establishing dignified work.³³ As God’s image, people ought to imitate God’s work, since God presents God’s own creative activity as work.

John Paul II perceives the relationship of the workers’ activity with God’s creative activity as extremely personal. There is an intimate calling and invitation to participate and carry on God’s work every day in the workplace. Quoting *Gaudium et spes*, John Paul II explains that “by their labour they [workers] are unfolding the creator’s work, consulting the advantages of their brothers and sisters, and contributing by their personal industry to the realization in history of the divine plan” (LE, 25.3; GS, 34.1) John Paul II’s spirituality of work is not a retreat from the world; rather, it is an immersion into the world, so as to fulfill the world within the Creator’s order. Again, using *Gaudium et spes*, he points out that humanity’s talent and progress which emanate from their work is not in competition or in opposition with God’s creation; rather, “the triumphs of the human race are a sign of God’s greatness and the flowering of his own mysterious design” (LE, 25.4; GS, 34.2). For John Paul II, Christians are called to build up the kingdom, that is, to perfect creation, through their work as co-creators within the Creator’s order and design. Work as co-creation entails a personal vocation to build the world not only in a technological and scientific way, but primarily in a moral way—as partners in establishing God’s kingdom of peace, love, and justice.³⁴ As a co-creator, the worker has been given a religious reason to participate in the upbuilding of creation. This elevation fulfilled through Christ’s grace makes work not only good but holy (LE, 25.5).

John Paul II’s vision of workers as co-creators raises the importance of the work process to a religious level, highlighting the religious structure of the workers’ place in the production process. He explains that the capacity for creativity, self-reflection, invention, and innovation in people constitute in part their

likeness or image of God as well as the means to move creation toward its perfection.³⁵ If people are created in God's image and if God's first act is creation, then the characteristics of creativity on the part of workers has an important part to play in their work. Their creativity is an image of divinity that ought to be expressed in the workplace.³⁶ The whole person should be involved, that is, the physical, the intellectual, the emotional, and the spiritual aspects of the person. Work ought to be designed to use the whole person and not merely one part, as for example, in certain types of assembly line and bureaucratic structures. John Paul II does not offer specific or obligatory models for the workplace, but he perceives a moral obligation on the part of employers and experts in the fields of organizational behavior and human resources to search for ways to incorporate the full person in the production and service process. He recognizes and applauds the fact that this type of work is being done.

THE MORAL ORDER: PRIORITY OF LABOR AND PARTICIPATION

For John Paul II, three tendencies in the production process threaten the dignity of labor by violating the principle of the priority of labor over capital: the priority of the machine over the worker; the continuing inimical relationship between labor and management; the depersonalization of centralized bureaucracy (LE, 5; 13; 15). For John Paul II, these threats can be overcome by the active participation of the worker in the decision making of the organization. This section examines more carefully how the priority of labor and participation influences John Paul II's understanding of this facet of the production process.

The Priority of Labor. The fact that capital originates from creation and human labor is, for John Paul II, the reason why labor has priority over capital. The production process should not be turned into merely a process driven by capital. Although capital conditions human work, it should never be seen as the primary purpose of human work. Workers are not to be viewed "as a special kind of 'merchandise' . . . needed for production" (LE, 7.1). John Paul II calls this merchandise view of production "materialistic economism." He explains that this philosophy of work "is provided by the quickening process of the development of a one-sidedly materialistic civilization, which gives prime importance to the objective dimension of work, while the subjective dimension . . . remains on a secondary level" (LE, 7.2). In other words, work is valued more for what it produces than the person who actually produces it, that is, the production process maintains a priority of capital over labor.

John Paul II recognizes that this view of work has subsided since its height in the nineteenth century. However, for John Paul II, the materialistic values still present and growing today can create an environment conducive to a materialistic view of work. This materialism can easily lead back to the rampant depersonalization that existed in the late nineteenth century. He believes that today's consumerism, for example, has intensified the desire to maximize one's consumption experience to such an extent that the desire "to have" things has taken priority over the call "to be" more human (LE, 7.2). It is the fear of consumerism and materialism that shapes John Paul II's concern that labor will be perceived as a form of "merchandise" not only by the employer but also by labor itself.³⁷ Seeing the person as a mere instrument of the production process reverses the ordered

priority of labor over capital established by nature. John Paul II maintains that the person “ought to be treated as the effective subject of work and its true maker and creator.”³⁸ Reducing the person down to one of the many material factors of production violates the original purpose of the production process—to manifest the dignity of the human person.

Participation. John Paul II maintains that the priority of labor over capital is sustained in the workplace if workers have a participatory role in the direction of their work. He explains that the worker “must be able to take part in the very work process as a sharer in responsibility and creativity at the work-bench to which he applies himself (LE, 15). For John Paul II, only through the exercise of personal responsibility will the worker truly be able to participate in self-determination and overcome the traditional hostility between workers and employers. For the worker to truly be the subject of the production process (as the priority of labor requires), an organization must be organized to maximize personhood and optimize profits. John Paul II maintains that the means of production are merely instruments for the development and fulfillment of the human personality. Any organization based solely on maximizing profits, efficiency, and productivity reverses the priority of labor over capital, even though they may claim this priority serves the best interest of labor. The workplace should be structured primarily to actuate the development of the worker. Work is a human activity not merely an economic activity. John Paul II rejects the old capitalistic adage, that the key to successful organizations is the control of production decisions by owners of capital and by the managers who represent them.³⁹

In respect to the personal formation of the worker discussed in section I of this chapter, participation in the workplace is extremely important to John Paul II. His writings suggest that he more than any pope before him has a systematic understanding of the meaning of participation.⁴⁰ As a philosopher, John Paul II’s (Karol Wojtyła) fundamental criterion concerning the fulfillment of human acts (which includes the act of work) is whether they are conducive to the participatory structure of the human person. He asks:

do they [acts] create conditions for the development of participation, do they make it easier for a human being to experience a human being and other human beings as the ‘other I,’ and, through that, allow also a fuller experience of one’s own humanity, or do they, on the contrary, impede it, destroying that basic fabric of human existence and activity?⁴¹

This criterion of participation is important for John Paul II’s social teaching on work.⁴² Since human acts are self-determining, and since work is a human act, the workplace must be structured in light of the personal formation of the worker. This is the argument on which the priority of labor rests. Those who structure the production process have an obligation of justice to respect the participatory structure of the human person. Just as Leo XIII argued that the wage structure must conform to the needs of the person, that is, wages must be living wages, so John Paul II argues that the production process must conform to the formative dimension of the person.⁴³ Only through participation can the personal nature of the person be fulfilled. The work process not only enables the worker *to have more* but also *to be more*.

More specifically, John Paul II relates worker participation to the virtue of industriousness. Using Aquinas, John Paul II points out that virtue “is something whereby man becomes good as man” (LE, 9.3). Hence, if the practice of virtue makes people more human, then work, practiced as industriousness, makes workers more human. Workers need the freedom to practice the virtues that are appropriate to work such as industriousness. John Paul II furthers the idea of virtue in relation to process of work in his new encyclical, *Centesimus annus* (CA). He includes industriousness but expands the list to include

diligence, . . . prudence in undertaking reasonable risks, reliability and fidelity in interpersonal relationships, as well as courage in carrying out decisions which are difficult and painful but necessary, both for the overall working of a business and in meeting possible set-backs (CA, 32).

John Paul II points out the “principle resource” throughout the production process is the person. The ingenuity, creativity, and intelligence of workers in collaboration with other employees establish “working communities” which can be relied upon to transform man’s natural and human environments” (Ibid.).

John Paul II also sees worker participation as developing community and solidarity in the workplace. He explains that in order for work to have a positive effect on the lives of individuals, it must “first and foremost unite people” (LE, 20.2). Work has a social power, by the nature of its activity, to build a community. A social obligation exists for all workers and most especially those who manage and own the means of production to become an integral part of this community. John Paul II describes the socio-economic life of work as a system of “connected vessels,” where work’s fundamental structure of interdependence leads to a true community of persons (LE, 20.3). As Rossi points out

This [participation] creates a closer union among individuals, and tends to cement more strongly the bonds between members of the human family, since work is a social fact which requires various forms and modalities of cooperation and establishes a relation of solidarity among those who work together.⁴⁴

John Paul II maintains that for work to realize this unifying character, it demands a truly participatory workplace. For example, if unity between labor and management is to exist, it must be realized in a workplace that allows the participation to form that unity.⁴⁵

4.The Product: Stewardship and the Common Good

As with his predecessors, the product is the least developed dimension of John Paul II’s theology of work in *Laborem exercens*. However, he does develop it in other writings both earlier and later. The primary focus of *Laborem exercens* is the formative dimension of work.⁴⁶ Here, the importance of the product originates in whether it serves the person or not. His focus on the worker is meant to de-emphasize the classism that arises when people are categorized according to the type of work they do (LE, 6.4). John Paul II is concerned that the products and services

produced from work, such as technology, has determined the value and meaning of the person. He maintains that the source of human dignity originates from the subjectivity of the worker not the product made. In his emphasis on the subject, however, he never loses sight of the common good. For John Paul II, it is precisely by examining the subject

that man combines his deepest human identity with membership of a nation, and intends his work also to increase the common good developed together with his compatriots, thus realizing that in this way work serves to add to the heritage of the whole human family, of all the people in the world (LE, 10.2).

Even though the focus of the encyclical is on the subject, the products and services produced by the process of work cannot be divorced from the common good of society, which for John Paul II is rooted in the personalistic values of the worker. He explains that one cannot be separated from the product one produces. If an inconsistency between the moral norms of the subject and the moral content of the product is maintained, it can only create alienation. For John Paul II, the worker needs to take full responsibility of not only the process of work but also of what is produced. What is produced must contribute to the benefit of others in society. He explains that society is the “social incarnation of the work of all generations” (Ibid.).

As with his treatment of remuneration and the production process, for John Paul II the product is viewed from the original purpose of creation, namely, that God has given people creation to subdue and have dominion so as to act as stewards to contribute positively to one’s own formation and to the common good.⁴⁷ He explains that God has given humanity the responsibility of stewardship over creation, that is, the products produced have a special purpose to serve God’s created order. This special purpose is found in pursuit of the common good discoverable through reason. This section examines John Paul II’s understanding of the product dimension in light of the principles of stewardship and the common good.

DOMINION AS A FORM OF STEWARDSHIP

Several different aspects exist in understanding the divine command to subdue and have dominion. In section II of this chapter, subdue and dominion were discussed in its distributive aspect. In this section, subdue and dominion are examined in light of the tremendous responsibility of stewardship that dominion carries with it. John Paul II explains that the proper understanding of God’s command to subdue and have dominion over the earth must be understood within God’s created order. In *Laborem exercens*, John Paul II states that the person is created in God’s image and that as God’s image the person has been given a command to subdue the earth “with justice and holiness” (LE, 25; GS, 34). In *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (SRS—1987), he explains that the person “must remain subject to the will of God, who imposes limits upon his use and dominion over things” (SRS, 29). In *Redemptor hominis* (RH—1979), the essential meaning of dominion for John Paul II is seen to consist of a dominion or priority of labor over capital, ethics over technology, persons over things, a spirit over matter (RH,

16). Dominion is primarily a moral dominion which makes it an act of stewardship. As such, it is not only a dominion over objects but also a dominion over oneself. Products are a means to the social, moral, and spiritual development of the human person, which is the glory of creation as well as the Creator. Products have no more fundamental purpose than this.

John Paul II explains that God has given people what is necessary for the upbuilding of human society, and people have a duty to use what is given for the purpose of upbuilding. Creation has a purpose that is still to be unfolded. He explains that as participants in God's creative order, people unfold God's work "consulting the advantages of their brothers and sisters, and contributing by their personal industry to the realization in history of the divine plan" (LE, 25.3; GS, 34.1). This divine plan partially entails the building of society for the welfare of humanity through created goods and services in accordance with the designs of God's creation. John Paul II states this vocational aspect to the products produced most profoundly in an address given to farmers in Des Moines, Iowa:

The land is God's gift entrusted to people from the very beginning. It is God's gift, given by a loving Creator as a means of sustaining the life which he had created. But the land is not only God's gift; it is also man's responsibility. Man, himself created from the dust of the earth (cf. Gen 3:7), was made its master (cf. Gen 1:26). In order to bring forth fruit, the land would depend upon the genius and skillfulness, the sweat and the toil of the people to whom God would entrust it. ... You [farmers] are stewards of some of the most important resources God has given to the world. Therefore conserve the land well, so that your children's children and generations after them will inherit an even richer land than was entrusted to you. But also remember what the heart of your vocation is. While it is true here that farming today provides an economic livelihood for the farmer, still it will always be more than an enterprise of profit-making. In farming, you cooperated with the Creator in the very sustenance of life on earth.⁴⁸

Whether a farmer, artisan, intellectual, entertainer, or businessperson, the materials one produces and services one renders have a purpose in the design of God's created order.

As an image of God, co-creator, and steward, the person's duty and right to subdue the earth is never a license for exploitation. While the command to subdue and dominate has been used to justify environmental irresponsibility, John Paul II states that the divine commission of dominion must be understood as a call to master and guard now and for future generations, and not as a license to exploit and destroy at will. Commenting on *Laborem exercens*, Gregory Baum points out the divine commission to subdue the earth was given to an agricultural people. He explains that "It was a call to become cultivators of the earth and stewards of the riches stored up in nature. Agricultural people know that nature must not be violated, for if you subjugate nature, you make it barren and destroy it."⁴⁹ To have dominion, then, is to have mastery as artisans have mastery over their craft. Mastery is not the exploitation of something. It is understanding the nature of one's craft, in the same way as artisans know how correctly to use their tools and

materials. In the same sense, dominion is meant to unlock the mystery of creation through the stewardship of created products.

John Paul II explains in *Redemptor hominis* that the, accelerated depletion of natural resources, the disproportionate amount of talent and money applied toward military technology, and the exploitation and destruction of creation itself has not furthered humanity's dominion over creation. It has reversed it. The environmental problems racing the world manifest the failure of humanity to be God's stewards. Workers live in fear that what they produce will be used against them. John Paul II asks the question "why is it that the power given to man from the beginning by which he was to subdue the earth turns against himself?" (RH, 15.1). Why is it that people are exploiting the earth for industrial and military purposes through an uncontrollable development of technology outside the moral order of creation? John Paul II's answer is that people have become alienated from the products of their labor, and from proper relations to their communities. They have failed to be stewards in their dominion.

For John Paul II, the fact that the environment is exploited comes not from the biblical command to subdue the earth, but rather from a secular idea that the purpose of work is primarily economic—maximize profits. This is precisely where the biblical command of dominion is reversed. Maximizing profits separates stewardship from dominion by producing products only for economic reasons. When products and services are divorced from moral and spiritual purposes, that is, stewardship, the products themselves can lead to the demise of the social and spiritual nature of the person. John Paul II explains in *Redemptor hominis* that people cannot abdicate their moral and spiritual position in the order of creation; otherwise, they become slaves of their own products and production processes.⁵⁰ When people exploit the earth, that is, when they fail to recognize the moral character of dominion, they will eventually become dominated by creation.⁵¹

THE MORAL ORDER: SOLIDARITY AND THE COMMON GOOD

Genesis' command to "subdue the earth" corresponds to what John Paul II calls the objective aspect of work. As an acting person, the individual is meant to be active in the world, transforming the earth. The earth exists for all people to satisfy their needs through the means of their work. Like no other animal, people have extended themselves beyond their own immediate surroundings and have changed the face of the earth. The increasing sophistication and appropriate use of technology has given humanity dominion over the earth like it has never had before. But that dominion must be informed by stewardship.

In the opening sentence of *Laborem exercens*, John Paul II asserts that as a social and communal activity, work must contribute both to the technological and scientific development of society, and most importantly to the cultural and moral level of the society (LE, 0; 8). For work to attain such a noble goal the objective content of work (the product) must be directed to the common good. How else can the advancement of technology and the moral level of society progress unless the products are not worthy and noble to the moral development of the person? For John Paul II, it is precisely through work that "matter gains in nobility" (LE, 9.3). He explains, however, that before the content of the product can even be discussed, workers must be imbued with a sense of purpose, believing that the organization

for which they work is channeling what they create toward the common good. John Paul II calls this sense of purpose the virtue of solidarity.

In *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, John Paul II explains that all economic activities, including work, have an interdependent nature.⁵² He maintains that interdependence should be formed by the virtue of solidarity which is “a firm and preserving determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and each individual, because we are all really responsible for all” (SRS, 38). For John Paul II, the fact that people are interdependent in their work demands the virtue of solidarity. For example, in *Laborem exercens*, he explains that solidarity does not represent a struggle as found in the divisiveness and hostility between labor and management which has until recently characterized the labor/management relations in North America. Rather, solidarity reflects unity in struggle “for” justice, not “against” a particular group (LE, 8). Formed by the virtue of solidarity, work ought to be a cooperative activity that directs its productive capacity to the needs of society.

Solidarity prevents the tendency to reduce work to a mere economic calculation, or psychological exercise. This tendency is revealed in a company that reduces its self-understanding to being a collection of self-interested individuals seeking to maximize their interests, whether psychologically or financially understood. Consequently, the existence of the company can be disassembled at the sign of any economic or personal disadvantage. This understanding of an organization can produce not only poor worker morale, but also in the long-run poor productivity, unstable communities, and ultimately selfish people. John Paul II contends that individuals dominated by a self-interested philosophy lose sight of what ought to be the common goal or end of the organization. Their motivation is restricted to whether it is advantageous to themselves and not necessarily the organization or the community. For him, solidarity must pervade the attitudes of all the workers so as to direct the products of the workplace to the common good. John Paul II’s understanding of solidarity is based on his belief that workers as well as all people are truly connected.

For John Paul II, then, the purpose of solidarity is to direct the person to the common good. In work, the common good primarily directs the decisions regarding the product to be used by all (SRS, 39). He asserts that something is wrong with the organization of work, particularly with what has been produced. This is demonstrated by the fact that large proportions of resources are unused, yet, millions of people are unemployed or underemployed and suffering from want of basic human needs. John Paul II maintains that decisions about products and services cannot be dictated solely by the forces of supply and demand. Products and services ought to be principally determined on whether they contribute to the common good and welfare of humanity, and secondarily on whether the market will handle their presence. He explains that through work, the person humanizes the earth by providing products and services which serve humanity (LE, 12.3). What people create must have a fully human meaning and not only a market or psychological function. He maintains that the product as well as every aspect of work must be directed primarily at “being more” and secondarily at “having more.” For John Paul II, products and services “should harmonize with the genuine good of the human race” (LE, 26.4). They must be subordinated, primarily to the moral law and secondarily to market or personal demands.

The products created by industry and service should have as its end the common good. Workers, both management and labor, must ask whether the product they are making or the service they are rendering contributes to the common good, namely whether it is making people as well as themselves more human. Becoming more human has a normative content that has an essentially social character which must contribute to the edification of society. An essential aspect to this social character of work lies in its capacity to add value and utility to an object, which includes a moral value that contributes to the common good, and not merely a functional utility. John Paul II explains, for example, that the ultimate purpose of technology—which is itself a product—is to contribute to the dignity and development of all humanity. In the workplace, technology can increase the quantity, quality, efficiency, and profitability of a company, enabling them to take a long-term perspective and concentrate on things other than the survivability of its day-to-day existence. Technology can reduce the physical toil and monotonous activity of work's process. Appropriate technology can make peoples' jobs as well as other aspects of their lives safer, easier, more expansive, and possibly more meaningful. John Paul II points out that the invention of technological products such as communication systems, computers, aeronautics, and so forth have affected the workplace and the world. Technology has made the world more accessible to people, has increased educational and cultural opportunities, and has overall furthered the discovery of creation's mysteries.

Sadly, however, this material transformation has not always furthered human development. John Paul II explains that it has sometimes degraded and alienated people from themselves, from others, and from the goods of creation, either because of human ignorance or human sin (LE, 5.3). He asserts that humanity fears self-destruction by what it has produced. Examples include the exorbitant expenditures in the defense industry on nuclear products, the side-effects of production such as pollution and depletion of resources, chemical food additives that increase heart disease and cancer, the media industry—largely entertainment and advertising—manipulating desires of sex, aggression, power, material wants, and so forth. These products are sometimes produced in a work environment where workers are able to attain autonomy, creativity, and supposedly self-actualization. Yet, the products they produce, contribute to the gradual physical, moral, and spiritual decline of society. As John Paul II stated to the Federation of Knights of Labor: “Never has man been as rich in goods, means, and techniques as he is now, but never has he been as poor in indications about their utilisation.”⁵³ If people truly want to attain personal fulfillment in their work, the products and services they produce must conform to the dignity and development of the person.

Summary

John Paul II defines work as a human activity for three principle reasons: 1) Work is a religious activity in that it fulfills God's demand to subdue and have dominion over creation. 2) Work is a personal activity in that it partially manifests one's humanness through the self-determining character of its activity. 3) Work is a social activity both in the sense that it is interpersonal, and in the sense that it is directed toward a social goal. From these three principal reasons, according to John Paul II, work derives its religious and moral meaning. Therefore, the experience

of work has bearing upon the person's dignity. Work provides the possibility for the person to become "more of a human being" and society to become more humanized. This formative dimension of work demonstrates the priority of the subject over the object because it is through the subjective aspect that the worker has the possibility to perfect, realize, and develop the self as well as society. Quoting *Gaudium et spes* John Paul II points out that just as work proceeds from the person, it is also ordered towards the person:

For when a man works he not only alters things and society, he develops himself as well. He learns much, he cultivates his resources he goes outside himself and beyond himself. Rightly understood, this kind of growth is of greater value than any external riches which he can garner. ... A man is more precious for what he is than for what he has (LE, 26.4; GS, 35).

Work is good not only because of the usefulness of the object produced or of the monumental change it has produced in nature, but primarily because work provides the possibility for human fulfillment. Work is an integral part of what it means to be human, since it has such a major influence on the development of the person.

In the area of remuneration, John Paul II perceives it in light of the divine command to subdue and have dominion over creation. People have been given collectively a right to use the resources of creation. The inheritance and demand of dominion are given for a very specific purpose—to be used by humanity to better reflect God's image. For John Paul II, this purpose reflects a strong anti-deterministic meaning. People should not be thought of as formed totally by their environment; rather, they should be viewed as shaping it and having dominion over it. So as not to be determined by the environment, people must have the opportunities and tools to determine the environment. People need employment (LE, 18), just wages and social benefits (19), vocational and professional education (20.5), and the ownership of the means of production (14) to become the masters of their environment. For John Paul II, a failure to distribute justly the resources of creation increases the possibility of determinism both by preventing those who have received little to subdue the earth, and by increasing the dependency of material goods for those who abuse the command of "dominion" by hoarding.

In the area of the production process, John Paul II explains that a workplace with employee involvement can offer workers the opportunity to participate in God's ongoing creative activity, and achieve self-realization and self-improvement by committing themselves to the good of the organization and to the whole community. Without some form of employee participation, work tends to become alienating and materialistic, where value is equaled with the size of one's paycheck.

In the area of the product produced, John Paul II explains that even though the subject has priority over the object, it is not an absolute priority in the sense that one dominates the other. The product is not meant to serve the person in merely an individual or private sense, but primarily in a way that serves the whole person which includes the social and spiritual nature of the person.

¹ Quoted in Romano Rossi. *Human Labour*. The Social Teaching of John Paul II Series (Vatican City: Pontifical Commission “Iustitia et Pax”, 1980), 19.

² This goal of integration in *Laborem exercens* stems from *Gaudium et spes*. Of all the social documents, *Gaudium et spes* is the most influential on *Laborem exercens*. Fr. Henri de Lubac stated that John Paul II was “a man of *Gaudium et spes*” (Bryan Hehir, “John Paul II: Continuity and Change in the Social Teaching of the Church,” in *Co-Creation and Capitalism*, eds. John W. Huock and Oliver F. Williams (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 131.) John Paul II was involved in the composition of the document and also wrote extensively on it in his book *Sources of Renewal*. John Finnis states that *Laborem exercens* is a commentary on *Gaudium et spes*, particularly part I chapter III (John Finnis “The Fundamental Themes of *Laborem exercens*,” in *Catholic Social Thought and the Teaching of John Paul II*, ed. Paul L. Williams (Scranton: Northeast Books, 1983), 21). This section of *Gaudium et spes* like *Laborem exercens* is an analysis of human activity from the light of revelation (see Karol Wojtyla, *Sources of Renewal* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980), 48). This seems to have influenced Wojtyla in *The Acting Person* (Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, Analecta Husserliana, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, vol. 10 (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1979).

³ Michael Schuck points out that the natural law approach adopted by Leo XIII to John XXIII is not less theological than *Gaudium et spes* and John Paul II. Rather, they have different theological methods. All the popes in the social tradition view the natural law as a participation in the divine law (Michael Schuck, *That They Be One* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991). 156).

⁴ “Philip Wogaman, “The Economic Encyclicals of Pope John Paul II,” paper presented at “The Center for Ethics and Religious Values in Business” (Notre Dame, IN, 24-26 April 1989), 6.

⁵ John Paul II maintains that any proper understanding of work should be based on an anthropology informed by scripture. Humanity must have a consistent image of itself that is both humanistic and theological. The material and social goals of the workplace, he maintains, ought to be connected to the spiritual goals of humanity. Previously, scripture had not been as fully integrated into the Catholic social tradition as it could have been. Witness the social documents of the Church discussed in the prior two chapters, which were rooted primarily in natural law. In them, scripture is used sparingly in principles, and is never the basis for arguments. One can get the impression from *Mater et magistra*, Pius XII’s allocutions, *Quadragesimo anno*, and *Rerum novarum* that natural law reasoning is sufficient to evaluate all social problems. Although all these documents state that without a spiritual conversion along with charity the social problems of society will remain unsolved, their dependence on natural law and under emphasis of scripture could lead to a contrary conclusion.

⁶ Jan Schotte, “The Social Teaching of the Church. *Laborem exercens*. A New Challenge,” *Review of Social Economy* 40 (December 1982): 344.

⁷ LE, 24.1. Hauerwas applauds John Paul II’s attempt to use scripture as a source of understanding work, although he perceives it as a miserable failure that verges on intellectual dishonesty (Stanley Hauerwas, “Work as Co-Creation: A Critique of a Remarkably Bad Idea,” in *Co-Creation and Capitalism*, eds. John W. Houck and Oliver F. Williams (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 43). For Hauerwas, John Paul II’s narrow use of Genesis reflects a ploy to arrive at conclusions derived from a natural law methodology. This narrow use, for Hauerwas, “reflects an implicit but continuing reliance upon the natural law presumption that creation itself furnishes sufficient grounds for universally moral assessment” (ibid.) John Paul II presupposes unity between the sources of revelation, namely scripture and natural law. It is his intention to unite the two more closely. It is not a ploy. For John Paul II, natural law is in harmony with scripture not

opposed to it. He is not arguing as an exegete, but speaks magisterially—explicating theological doctrines. He uses natural law as well as certain concepts of phenomenology to explain these doctrines. John Paul II is explicitly using scripture as the foundational source to the Church’s authority. Natural law is used as a tool to explicate in reasonable terms what has been given in faith.

⁸ John Paul II, “Address to the Latin American Bishops,” in *John Paul II in Mexico* (London: Collins, 1979), 74; quoted in Brian Benestad, “The Political Vision of John Paul II: Justice Through Faith and Culture,” *Communio* 8 (Spring 1981): 5.

⁹ “For an insightful analysis and critique of John Paul II’s exegesis of the Genesis text see David Hollenbach, “Human Work and the Story of Creation: Theology and Ethics in *Laborem exercens*,” in *Co-Creation and Capitalism*, eds. John W. Houck and Oliver F. Williams (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 65ff. According to Hollenbach, John Paul II’s biblical theology is not developed enough especially its treatment of sin (Ibid., 69 and 74); see A. O. Erhueh, *Vatican II: Image of God In Man* (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1986), 68-71, for Wojtyla’s influence on *Gaudium et spes* concerning the use of “image of God.” Erhueh points out that, for Wojtyla, the person as the image of God, “has his true meaning only in relation to the Personal God as a person” (Ibid., 71).

¹⁰ John Paul II. *Original Unity of Man and Women* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1981). 101.

¹¹ Roger Heckel, *The Human Person and Social Structures*, The Social Teaching of John Paul II Series (Vatican City: Pontifical Commission Iustitia et Pax, 1980), 7.

¹² Ibid.; see John Paul II’s *Original Unity*, 22.

¹³ The terms natural law and moral order differ only in name not content. It seems the name change stems from Maurice Roy’s, “Reflections on *Pacem in terris*,” 11 April 1973, in *The Gospel of Peace and Justice*, ed. Joseph Gremillion (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976), 556-561. In his letter by Cardinal Roy to Pope Paul VI, Roy explains that the term “nature” has been interpreted to mean “that there is a strict parallel between man and his morality and biological laws and behaviour. . . . This concept [nature] seems too ‘essentialist’ to the people of our time, who challenge, as being a relic of Greek philosophy, the term ‘Natural Law,’ which they consider anachronistic, conservative, and defensive. They object further that the expression was defined arbitrarily and once and for all in a subjective and Western manner, and is therefore one-sided and lacking in any moral authority for the universal conscience.

Although the term ‘nature’ does in fact lend itself to serious misunderstandings, the reality intended has lost nothing of its forcefulness when it is replaced by modern synonyms ... [such as] man, human being, human dignity, the rights of man or the rights of peoples, conscience, humaneness (in conduct), the struggle for justice, and, more recently, the duty of being, and the ‘quality of life.’ . . . Thus, leaving aside what words are used, the important point is this: in this ‘nature,’ individuals and peoples all have a common denominator, a ‘common good of man,’ which is neither a simple label nor a mere compromise but a basic and existential reality. It is a combination of postulates and experiences, ancient and modern, which people do not question, even if they belong to opposed systems, for ‘men find in it that inalienable part of themselves which links them all: the human in man (Paul VI to U Thant, 4 October 1970, AAS 62 [1970], p. 684)” (Ibid., 556-557).

It seems that John Paul II’s reference to the moral order stems from the Cardinal’s warning against the prevalent misunderstanding of nature and natural law. The term moral order reflects a more personalistic meaning than the possible physicalist meaning that some people may impose on the natural law.

¹⁴ Mason, 103-105. This distinction between labor and work will not be carried throughout the book, since the papal social tradition itself does not make the distinction.

¹⁵ Gooley, 212.

¹⁶ Miroslav Volf criticizes John Paul II for insinuating that the relationship between dignity and work means that those who work more have more dignity and those who work less (children and the elderly) have less dignity (Miroslav Volf, “On Human Work: An Evaluation of the Key Ideas of the Encyclical *Laborem exercens*.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37 (1984): 73).

¹⁷ *Work In America*, no page number opposite, title page.

¹⁸ Wojtyla, *Sources of Renewal*, 120.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 286.

²⁰ James Schall, “On Imitating the Creator,” in *Papal Economics*, ed. Philip Lawler (Washington: The Heritage Foundation, 1982), 21.

²¹ John Paul II could be criticized for going overboard here. By stressing the subject so much, he seems to ignore the object. There is very little discussion on the value of the object in *Laborem exercens*. Cf. section IV of this chapter.

²² Oliver Williams, “Introduction,” in *Co-Creation and Capitalism*, eds. John W. Houck and Oliver F. Williams (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 9.

²³ This inheritance recognizes work’s social character a point upheld throughout the social tradition of the Church. John Paul II defends this social character by maintaining that all capital is the result of work and God’s creation. The popes prior do not seem to make the connection of the doctrine of creation with the present ownership of capital. This may be one reason why John Paul II’s statements on private property are more restrictive than those of John XXIII, Pius XII, Pius XI, and Leo XIII.

²⁴ Finnis, 29. In capitalistic societies, ownership is often defined as one’s right to use properly as one pleases. If people wish to destroy their cars, they have the right to do so, as long as it does not inconvenience anyone directly. In the Catholic social tradition ownership is inherently social. Ownership has duties which include “right use,” whether for the multi-millionaire entrepreneur or the workers who participate in the ownership of their workplace.

²⁵ Habiger, 303.

²⁶ Unfortunately, John Paul II does not deal with the growing problem of single parents, most of whom are women.

²⁷ Rodger Charles, *The Social Teachings of Vatican Two* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 317-318.

²⁸ See James Donahue, “The Social Theology of John Paul II and His Understanding of Social Institutions,” *Social Thought* 13 (Spring/Summer 1987): 28-29.

²⁹ LE no. 25; John Paul II has received criticisms from both Catholics and Protestants in deriving a co-creation theme from Genesis. Hauerwas maintains that the text in Genesis means the exact opposite. He states that “The good news of the creation account is that God completed his creation and that mankind needs to do nothing more to see to us perfection. That is exactly why God could call it good and rest—and more importantly invite us to rest within his completed good creation” (Hauerwas, 45). For Hauerwas, the person is a representative not a co-creator of God’s creation (46). The idea of co-creator, for Hauerwas, comes close to the reason for the Fall—putting oneself on the same level as God, that is, idolatry (45, 47). Work, for Hauerwas, is a means to survival, a service to others, and most of all “a way to stay busy” (48). To attribute work to the significance of co-creation is to make work “demonic”—“an idolatrous activity through which we try to secure and guarantee our significance, to make ‘our mark’ on history” (48). Hauerwas’ critique exposes the roots of some fundamental differences between Catholic and Protestant theology, in particular, whether creation is final with God’s act, or a continuing process. For Hauerwas, work, in general, is not a fulfilling activity. It is merely a necessity for survival, that is, it does not have the personal character ascribed to it in the Catholic social tradition. Sin, for Hauerwas, is the corruption of work, resulting from humanity’s idolatrous

desire to see their work as more than it really is (48). John Paul, according to Hauerwas, does not take sin seriously enough (48; see also Hollenbach, "Human Work" 65-69).

John Paul II would refute any charge of idolatry in his theme of co-creation. He is careful to qualify the theme of co-creation. He states that while people share in the activity of the Creator, the person's activity is "within the limits of his own human capabilities," and it is only "in a sense" that it contributes to develop God's creation (LE, 25.1). Certainly, the language of 'co-creation' is analogical and not literal. God is the one and only Creator. However, as an image of God, the human person has been given a special place in creation to fulfill God's will in a way that no other form of creation has been called to. Thus, in order for the person's work to be co-creative it must conform to God's creative order (LE, 4). Not all human work is co-creative. John Paul II would agree with Hauerwas that work can be destructive as well as idolatrous, but there is also the problem of degrading work and failing to understand its nobility and dignity. "Technology can cease to be man's ally and become almost his enemy, as when the mechanization of work 'supplants' him, taking away all personal satisfaction and the incentive to creativity and responsibility, ... or when, through exalting the machine, it reduces man to the status of its slave" (LE, 5.3; see Baum, 61). John Paul II does not deny the effects of sin on work (LE, 9). He knows the toil of work first hand as a laborer in a quarry. Yet, work, as a human act, can be a moral and spiritual reality that transforms work as toil. For John Paul II, work is a human activity whereby people can build community, achieve self-fulfillment, and come closer to God, if they work within God's creative order (see Gooley, 225-232).

³⁰ Leo XIII writes that work creates a personal imprint on creation (RN, 62); Pius XII refers to the idea of co-creation (see Gooley, 134; Calvez and Perrin, 229-230).

³¹ Rossi, 31-32.

³² Hollenbach, "Human Work," 60-61.

³³ "And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done" (Gen. 2.3; see Psalm 8:4-7).

³⁴ John Paul II, Address at Nowa Hota, Poland 1979; quoted in Gooley, 233.

³⁵ See Michael Novak, "Creation Theology," in *Co-Creation and Capitalism*, eds., John W. Houck and Oliver F. Williams (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 33ff.

³⁶ Bernard Murchland, "Creativity and the Social Order," in *Co-Creation and Capitalism*, eds. John Houck and Oliver Williams (Lanham, University Press of America, 1983), 83.

³⁷ See statistics from Arthur Anderson, "'America's Money Maniacs,'" *Business & Society Review* 66 (Summer 1988): 13-17. Schasching points out that "One becomes ready to sell the 'merchandise' of labor in order to buy participation in materialistic civilization" (Schasching, 139).

³⁸ LE, 7.2.

³⁹ Mark Fitzgerald, "Focus on Labor," in *Co-Creation and Capitalism*, eds. John W. Houck and Oliver F. Williams (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 260.

⁴⁰ See Wojtyla. *The Acting Person and Sources of Renewal*.

⁴¹ Karol Wojtyla "Participation and Alienation," in *The Self and The Other*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, vol. VI (Boston: D. Riedel Publishing Co., 1977) 72-3.

⁴² *Redemptor hominis*, 15-16 outlines criteria for judging social, economic, and political systems.

⁴³ See Gooley, 184-190 concerning participation.

⁴⁴ Rossi, 32; James Donahue points out that for John Paul II, what is discovered in the process of work is that a person, "when acting together with others, retains the individual value or his or her own action while also sharing in the achievements of communal being" (Donahue, 23). Work is the outcome of an ongoing cooperative process of a work community.

⁴⁵ David Hollenbach, “Liberalism, Communitarianism, and the Bishop’s Pastoral Letter on the Economy” *The Annual* (1987): 34.

⁴⁶ LE, 6; 15. John Paul II has been criticized from a variety of different perspectives concerning his emphasis on the subject over the object. For example, Hauerwas has noted that John Paul II’s over emphasis on the subjective activity can eventually entail the view that we should be able to find work fulfilling no matter what its objective character” (Hauerwas, 49). Joseph Pichler argues that *Laborem Exercens* “In emphasizing the sanctity of work as a ‘process,’ the encyclical understates the sanctity of its ‘purpose’ which is to provide consumers with material goods to help them achieve self-determination” (Joseph Pichler, “Business Competence and Religious Values’—A Trade Off?” in *Co-Creation and Capitalism* (Lanham, University Press of America, 1983), 116). Michael Novak criticizes John Paul II for not understanding capital in capitalism. Novak says that the pope has a narrow definition of capital (i.e., object). It excludes the persons whose investments are in the discovery and transformation of natural sources (Michael Novak, “Creation Theology,” in *Co-Creation and Capitalism* (Lanham: University Press of America. 1983), 20-23). John Paul II gives the impression that the subject and object are separate, verging on a form of dualism. While the distinction between subject and object must be maintained, lest one fall into pantheism or monism, to separate them too far can underestimate the importance of the object. Although John Paul II may underestimate the importance of the product, he does not ignore it, particularly in other of his papal writings.

⁴⁷ The word stewardship, like co-creator, is never used in *Laborem exercens*; however, the concept is certainly prevalent throughout the encyclical.

⁴⁸ John Paul II, *Pilgrim of Peace: The Collected Speeches of John Paul II in Ireland and the United States* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1980), 117-118.

⁴⁹ Baum, 63. While Baum’s point is correct overall, agricultural people have abused the land either because of short-term economic necessity, inappropriate farming methods, and so on. His statement may be a bit too idyllic.

⁵⁰ This moral and spiritual position opposes those who may want to advocate a *laissez-faire* position that so long as the product or service is legal, one should not be concerned about its moral aspect; as when the American Medical Association states that doctors should concern themselves with whether abortion is legal and the procedures are safe, rather than with the ethics of abortion.

⁵¹ This is precisely why John Paul II maintains the dominion language of Genesis. While he recognizes that extreme abuses exist in what is called “dominion theology,” not to maintain the primacy of the person in the order of creation can possibly fall into pantheism as some extreme forms of the environmental movement has done (e.g., Earth First). For John Paul II, the divine command to subdue the earth gives human beings priority over all creation, which is primarily a moral priority. To deny the command of dominion places at risk this fundamental ordering. For an explanation and evaluation of “dominion theology” see Jeremy Rifkin, *Entropy* (New York: The Viking Press, 1980), 236ff and Lynn While, “The Historical Roots of the Ecological Crisis” *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-1207.

⁵² SRS, 39.

⁵³ John Paul II, “Address to the Federal Knights of Labor,” May 11, 1979; quoted in Obiora Ike, *Value Meaning and Social Structure of Human Work* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1986), 234.