

presents another proof of the truth of my old observation: *rich land and poor labourers*." (Quoted by Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City*, p 137)

- 6 For a textbook example of this difference in freedom and the power of capital interests to disorder human lives, see *The New Statesman* report, "Lovely for some in the Garden", 7 November 1980.
- 7 See, for instance, the recent study by Charles Medawar of the effects on citizens of Third World countries of large corporation advertising – pushing products and a way of life which they cannot afford and which does them physical and cultural damage: *Insult or Injury? An enquiry into the marketing and advertising of British Food and Drug products in the Third World*, published by Social Audit, 1979.

Shall Work Set Us Free?

Angela Cunningham

Much of the recent interest taken in work springs from our present plight of high unemployment, united with fears that the micro-chip technological revolution will increase unemployment such that we shall have to move to a leisure society, where to work is a privilege.

This presentation (in the medical sense) of the problem affects the diagnosis and affects, too, the way we think of work. For instance, very few commentators seriously challenge the equation of work with paid employment. This short-term focus excludes areas of work which should be included both because they are definitely work, and also because taking cognizance of longer-range matters might help us see the present position more clearly, although at a greater distance from the plight of the depressed ex-steel workers of Consett. Incidentally, here it is worth remembering that if we look at the world as a whole, the vast majority of its inhabitants are not in paid employment – they are either outside the market economy altogether, living in subsistence societies, or, as in Britain, supporting those in paid employment by the hidden subsidy of home work, the cooking, cleaning, child-rearing necessary for the maintenance of society, and the consuming necessary for the maintenance of our kind of capitalist society. Thus out of a British population of some 55 million, only about 18 million are in paid employment. On the old model of society these 18 million were seen as supporting the rest; a shift in the phantasm, partly brought about by reflecting on the possible consequences of the micro-chip, has enabled us to see things a little differently – the old, housewives, even the children, as consumers, domestic main-

tenance workers, future guarantors of pension funds, can be seen as supporting those in paid employment just as much as the other way round. 'I stay at home to let you go to work.'

To take a longer view is not meant in any way to belittle the difficulties which the unemployed face, but rather to plead that we should also look at work in a larger perspective to enable us to see more clearly all our options, and avoid defining the situation from inside the late neo-capitalist framework in which it is presented, a definition which would severely limit our response to a reactive stance. We need to distinguish between short, intermediate and long-term aims and perspectives, all three of which are necessary. Thus while realizing that short-term tactics are clearly vital, this paper is aimed more at the long term, if only on the justification that to limit response to the short term alone is to stay within an essentially defensive posture, which Lenin identified as the limitation of trade union consciousness.

I am thus asking that we try seriously to develop a view of work which includes employment but is not exhausted by that term. Fr Vincent McNabb, in the 1930s, used to argue that 'unemployment' was an unfortunate word because it linguistically implied that its solution was 'employment' whereas both phenomena, on his view, were alike the bad consequences of industrialization. While we cannot ignore the problem of unemployment it would be a mistake to reduce work to it.

I want to begin by identifying and briefly delineating 3½ ethics, or moralities of work, which have been very influential in our culture and which are still floating around in the cultural ether. Because I am principally concerned here with their influence now I feel justified in treating them as models, rather than being absolutely exhaustive historically.

I

First, the Greek attitude to work seems to have seen it as something which lessened man's humanity. In so far as it was characterized by necessity, work reduced man's nobility. Man is most noble (and therefore for the Greeks most human), most fulfilled, in living the life of leisure, including public affairs and the duties of citizenship. The other side of this coin is that workmen cannot be either wholly fulfilled or wholly human, in the most worthwhile sense.¹ This view of work as something that soils or reduces human beings, has had a good innings in the last 2000 years and more (Castiglione's *The Courtier* was a very influential Renaissance example), sometimes popping up in combination with other, apparently quite opposed views, for example in eighteenth and nineteenth-century England where gentility was associated with 'independent' means, the genteel undertook no kind of work,

either in the sense of labour or serious creation, while for the poor quite another view was propagated. Something in direct line here, it seems to me, is Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, which associates culture with a domain or way of life free of the necessity to work for the essentials of existence. Play, the undetermined sphere, provides the mainspring of culture, and is opposed to work. Huizinga seems to have equated the continuation of culture with the existence of a leisure class. The advent of democracy, when 'all Europe donned the boiler suit' thus signalled the end of culture for Huizinga because it removed the preconditions for an elite dedicated to high culture.

Hannah Arendt fits in here, too, although less obviously and without the elitist assumptions of Huizinga. She distinguishes labour (the realm of an animal-like necessity, an endless cycle of production for immediate consumption to satisfy the most basic human needs) from work, where human beings transform the given, for use rather than immediate consumption, e.g. artefacts. However, she sees the highest sphere of human life, which she terms action, as outside the realm of our usual understanding of work altogether. As far as I understand it 'action' takes place in the public sphere, where human beings, because of their individuality and freedom from having to work to live, can realize themselves most fully because they are here least determined.

At least one element of Marx corresponds to this.² What emerges as essential to this model, so far as I am concerned, is a humanist view of man as most fulfilled when least tied to the necessity of producing the wherewithal to live.

II

The second ethic of work I want to outline is enshrined in Aquinas, who, as far as I can see, adapted Aristotle quite considerably. The contemplative life is rated higher than the active, *but* its superior virtue is seen as deriving from a super-human source – it is higher because here we touch on the life of the angels, of the divine, a spiritually superior life. The most fully *human* realm of life belongs to *homo faber*, and the best form of work is agriculture, *because* it answers most directly to the most basic human need for sustenance and shelter, it creates real wealth without destroying natural resources, or involving unjust acquisitions from others. Although this depiction of agriculture might seem a travesty of how agriculture as a matter of fact is now carried on in much of the world we can appreciate both the theoretical point and the normative power of the distinction.

Homo faber echoes God's creative aspect in transforming the world and exercising dominion over it, and thus work is seen as fulfilling man's nature, not hindering its expression. This categor-

ization of work also involves a hierarchy of types of work, with trade, which creates nothing, at the bottom end of the scale, and finance out of the picture altogether. McNabb puts it nicely: 'Some men wrest a living from nature; and it is work. Some men wrest a living from those who wrest a living from Nature; and it is Trade. Some men wrest a living from those who wrest a living from those who wrest a living from Nature; and it is Finance.' An important concomitant of this position is, then, that work must be man-centred, not vice versa, the nature and not just the fact of work is important. Thus a leverage exists for criticising the conditions and purpose of work, a leverage sometimes operated in the papal social encyclicals. This tradition would argue that the work experience must be human in character and incorporate socially useful ends. This is the view adopted by most Distributists and is at the root of their hostility to industrialization. They rejected industrialism because it could not accommodate this view of work. They considered that the fragmentation of labour under industrialism split *homo faber* from *homo sapiens*.

Although most work involves some aspects which would be better classed as labour (even intellectual work -- e.g. checking footnotes) it must never degenerate into labour alone, but must retain links with man's creative and playful aspects. Some exponents, for instance Josef Pieper, talk less of the nature of the work experience itself, and stress the necessity for leisure to the completely human life. In some ways Pieper's *Leisure the Basis of Culture* bridges the Greek and the Thomist models, but it is important to note that Pieper was reacting to what he saw as the increasingly triumphant totalitarian 'total work' state, where human beings are reduced to functionaries. Auschwitz, with its obscene attitudes to human beings and to their work, is the end point of the view that Pieper was opposing. Whereas the counterpart to this inhuman 'total work' was *accidie*, or a barren idleness, the proper, and necessary correlate of work was leisure -- but by leisure Pieper seems to have meant a combination of contemplation and celebration, which he saw as only possible within a religious framework.

III

The 'total work' outlook Pieper so strongly attacked he saw as the logical outcome of the third model, the Protestant or Puritan work ethic. In many ways this is the best-known, but I would just like to make one or two points, since its familiarity by no means signifies any diminishing of its hold on us -- despite the permissive society, social security and the coming of the leisure revolution it probably holds us all as much in thrall as ever, even if in disguised manifestations. The position that work occupied in this framework was very complex, and some strands at first sight coexist in

considerable tension. Thus to work hard and successfully was to demonstrate one's virtue, but at the same time work was seen as necessary because of man's sinful state. It was regarded both as punishment *and* the medium of redemption, rather than an expression of man's creative nature, and it became easy to begin to regard work as a curse, as evil in itself. This had the spin-off, in time, that it became inappropriate to insist that work should in itself, as an experience, reflect man's full human nature, and thus eased the way to the acceptance of that alienated labour we associate most clearly with the circumstances of the Industrial Revolution.

A second point, possibly familiar but worth remembering, is that *effort* became disproportionately stressed, almost identified with virtue, in the sphere of ethics and knowledge as well as work. Whereas for Aquinas the highest moral good was effortless because it sprang from love, Kant rules out as ethically good any action which is not difficult. The value of work derives from the effort put in rather than from the fitness of the work itself or its social significance or human purpose.

Carlyle, the prophet of the religion of work, was of course very influential in spreading a version of this view in the nineteenth century, and in more recent times the ideology of the communist countries seems to enshrine the Protestant work ethic with surprisingly few emendations necessitated by the role of the state. In Russia, for instance, the value of full employment takes precedence over a higher standard of living that could be introduced by technological advances which would also bring about redundancies. Cynics would attribute this desire to have the whole population busily occupied to a fear of increasing dissidence if people had time to stop and think, but while I do not dismiss this the strength of something like the Protestant work ethic in communist countries must be acknowledged.

I V

My last model I term the Catholic/Libertarian, and it has '½' status only because in some ways it seems to belong clearly to the Thomist model, although I believe that it is sufficiently different, or developed, to require separate treatment.

Such disparate figures as Ruskin, Morris, Proudhon, Eric Gill, Paul Goodman, possibly Marcuse, Arnold Wesker and Schumacher (among many others!) share enough in their attitudes to work to be legitimately linked together in this model.

Fundamental to the position is an optimistic view of human nature – if men are relieved of the deformities inherent in industrialism/capitalism we shall be able to return/advance to a situation where *homo faber*, united with *homo sapiens*, can realize his essence in creating, and co-operating with his fellows. No neces-

sary work can be degrading because if it is necessary to man's existence it is natural and therefore good – although for most in this tradition it is legitimate to devise ways of lessening the unpleasant work, via a combination of technology and work-sharing. Culture and art on this view stem from work, rather than being added afterwards. What is wanted is the abolition of alienation in work, so that our creativity and pleasure can find its natural home in creative work and, crucially, this involves more than a change in the ownership of the means of production, it requires a change in process and purpose. If control over the work process, and the product of work, were in the hands of the individuals directly concerned, the responsible workman would emerge, producing for social use rather than selfish profit, finding fulfilment in the right way of making right things.

Perhaps because the position has been most clearly and powerfully enunciated by artists and craftsmen, it diverges from the Thomist view in stressing work in creating artefacts rather than agriculture, and there is a greater concern with the individual consciousness.

Clearly a lot of thinking on alienated work has been done in the socialist tradition but comparatively little of it has been related to any positive conception of the nature of unalienated work or a normative account of the necessary links between the human condition and work. The non-libertarian socialist tradition as a whole has failed to contribute much to this debate, it seems to me, perhaps because an ethic of work depends upon a previous set of beliefs about the nature of man, and of human needs, and the libertarian tradition in socialist thought has always been readier to give importance to such sets of beliefs than the non-libertarian.

Although individual thinkers, and probably most of us today, take bits of assumptions from each of these models, it seems worth trying to disentangle the threads, to see where we come from and where we stand now.

* * *

Before turning to suggestions for an improved model I would like to pick out some elements in our situation today which I think have relevance to any consideration of finding an adequate morality of work.

At the moment well over two million insured unemployed in Britain can find no jobs, in the main because of a combination of world-wide recession stemming from the oil crises together with the heritage of being the world's first industrialized nation, whose industrial plant was not sufficiently destroyed in the last war to force modernization – that is, we have inherited outmoded industries and processes. But we are also beginning to experience what

can be termed structural unemployment, that brought about by the application of the new micro-chip technology. Its advent has frequently been compared in significance to the introduction of the wheel. Its potential for affecting both the manufacture of products and any work which involves processes – e.g. clerical work, agriculture, is, it seems, in itself limitless and, like the wheel again, it can be applied to what is termed the world of leisure as well as the field of paid employment. The scale of the changes it promises are mind-boggling – in terms of the numbers in the workforce, between 1970 and 1978 half the Japanese workers employed in making TV sets were disemployed, while the number of sets manufactured increased by a quarter! On another level, it is quite possible that what have been the under-industrialized countries of the world could become the most technologically advanced in terms of production. There is no reason therefore to assume an industrialization stages view, with the application of microtechnology replacing older systems in the same countries – witness the recent entrance of South Korea into the world market, beginning to rival Japan in the production of cheap electronic goods.

Whether we embrace the challenge of the micro-chip or not, either way, there will probably be between 5 and 5½ million unemployed people in Britain by the year 2000. Within 20 years almost one-quarter of current jobs will have disappeared, and it seems unlikely that anything like an equivalent number of new jobs will arise as a direct result of this technological advance. In the field of leisure and high-level services jobs will perhaps increase if we have the resources necessary to provide for them, but not enough to significantly affect the balance of jobs lost. What Clive Jenkins has called the collapse of work (meaning paid employment) will have happened, either in a situation of growth and buoyancy, or one of depression and winding down, if we fail to grasp the micro-chip nettle confidently enough.

The threat to paid employment has come at a time when more people in England want to enter the job market than ever before, and have greater expectations from work than previous generations – both in terms of material benefits and job satisfaction. More and more women are entering the job market – partly because of economic need, of inflation, partly as a response to enlarged expectations of material goods that increasingly one wage per family will not satisfy, but also because more and more status in our society has been seen as issuing from job as well as from husband and children. The response to the isolation of being the wife and mother in our nuclear family society has often been to go out to work, for company and identity as well as independence and money.

So, at a time when more people see themselves as both needing work and wanting work, it threatens to become a scarce commodity, and disproportionately so for women. There has been a shift in the view of work (meaning paid employment) as awful and something most people only did because they needed the wages, which can be seen as one of the secular early twentieth-century inheritors of the puritan view of work as necessary for man's sinful state. While all the writings on the alienation of work hold as true as ever, recent events have shown that what people find in even alienated work is complex. For example, in Peter Townsend's recent study of poverty, obviously to the author's surprise, 81% of his survey were satisfied with the 'job itself' category on his questionnaire – though the numbers were higher for professional workers. Although those made redundant in our society know, unlike the 1930s, that they and their children are unlikely to go actually hungry the fear of being made redundant is as large as ever. The fear of loss of income is primary, powerful and real for all of us, but it is not the only fear. Worries about being isolated in the home, the loss of contact with fellow workers, the removal of a pattern of life, etc., accompany the threat of poverty. These other factors are stressed by, for instance, the workers at Corby themselves along with the loss of money. So the right to work rather than increased unemployment benefit, or the divorce of income from work, has thus far at any rate continued to be the cry.

At a time when technology has brought about, for the first time in human history, the possibility of, in principle at any rate, separating the supply of what is needful to human existence from the need for human work, a divorce parallel to those other technological discoveries which have ruptured hitherto necessary links between sexuality and procreation, at the same time people have begun to realize they want work ... and this realization has been articulated in a context where work = paid employment. To understand our situation we have to realize that Chesterton's young women suffragettes, when they rose up to say they would not be dictated to and sat down as stenographers, were not being wholly contradictory, but were early exponents of a position where value and status, social identity, were seen to be linked with occupation, with paid employment.

This equivalence, another late twentieth-century variant of the puritan ethic, has only come to its fullness in very recent years, particularly with regard to its direct hold on women – I mean an ethos where e.g. even those with private incomes feel they are incomplete without a 'proper job'. The irony is that this ethos has come into being at a time when the assumptions behind most

work ethics – that we, or the majority in any society, need to work to live – is challengeable, and at a time when capitalism, historically the main carrier of the puritan work ethic, needs to disemploy its workers and turn them into consuming drones in order to keep the cycle going.

We are passing from a situation where the need to work was objective, located in the conditions for continued existence, to one where it is subjective, located in our need to work.

At the moment much of the surface of the subjective need to work, at any rate, stems from a variant of the Protestant work ethic. It carries with it a corresponding fear of having to face our own deepest inadequacies if we pause from being busy – a dread of just what that leisure Pieper talked about would entail. The threat to our social, human identity involved in removing our job description leaves us feeling we have nothing left to contribute. As Clive Jenkins neatly puts it, if religion was the opium of the masses, work has become the castor oil of the population! Without paid employment we fear we are left at best with the prospect of a life of self-improvement rather similar to the young ladies in Jane Austen's novels: languages; drawing; perhaps even the use of the globes, but without any prospect of a Mr Knightley's entering our lives to give it meaning – we know we are left on the shelf.

I use this female perspective on purpose, because I think that the kind of enforced leisure that is dreaded has much in common with the female condition, not just as depicted in nineteenth-century novels, but as lived in twentieth-century industrial societies by housewives. What many women have fled from, Betty Friedan's condition without a name, preferring even alienated employment, we dread that we shall all, men and women, be forced back into: perpetual consumers rather than contributors to human existence.

I consider this fear realistic, on one scenario. A sign of the times is to be found in a recent *Times* news item which described how a Bath 'leisure consultant' hired six people from the local Job Centre as leisure consumers. For £1.50 an hour they were required to visit a leisure centre, museums, the ballet, the theatre, a poetry reading:

“These people will have to work”, Forbes-Hamilton [sic] said yesterday. “They will not be doing nothing as they would be if they were on the dole. Unemployment is becoming more and more part of our lives. Just because people are out of work does not mean they should be able to sit at home and do nothing. I am suggesting they become leisure consumers.” He did not care whether the ‘workers’ had any interest in the places to which they were dispatched.’

This episode neatly combines many of the horrors various strands

of thought have envisaged as making up the leisure society – compulsion; authoritarian attitudes; a passive, consumer attitude to the arts; a complete stratification between the ‘leisure workers’ and the artists on the one hand and those running society on the other – what might be termed the leisure servile state. Although there’s a charming air of the absurd about this particular occurrence it is one, if not the, logical extension of the puritan work ethic into the microtechnology capitalist world. It seems to me self-evidently awful, and to be actively resisted. In order to do so we need to argue from an alternative ethic, and I want now to describe some of the features I would like to see in such an ethic.

V

I want to argue for a modified variant of the catholic/libertarian morality of work, for *homo (vir and mulier) formans*, liberated by leisure and where the subjective impetus to work is acknowledged as part of the human condition. I stress the female since I think the complete lack of attention to what has traditionally been seen as women’s work, e.g. child rearing, the running of a home, constitutes the most serious shortcoming of the *homo faber* tradition, one which has in many cases led to a deficiently narrow view of truly human work, and one which needs to be sharply corrected.

That is, ‘making’ needs to be extended, and not only to the areas associated with female activity. If Coomeraswamy’s epigram holds, that the artist is not a special kind of man, but every man a special kind of artist, the sense to be given to ‘special kind of artist’ must be extended so that it includes the range of human activities that most of us would surely want to term ‘work’ – that carry a notion of some kind of self-committed project, whether it be with regard to intellectual, creative, or relational activity. Work is increasingly ‘what I am prepared to give my time to’, ‘how much of this other person’s time is worth this amount of my time, of me’? The scale is a very human one. Thinking in the perspective of *homo formans* means not dividing the giving of form to life into the utile and the non-utile, or cash and non-cash. We need an adequate sense of worth regarding human form-giving. What value do we give to the shaping of a family, a house, a car, a statue, an economic insight, a piece of organizational skill, a piece of plumbing? What we are looking for is what is worthwhile, what contributes to the quality of life in a substantial way, whether physically, emotionally or spiritually.

Homo formans includes the notion of responsibility and thus of personhood, whether in individual or group work (taking up the McNabb objection that modern conditions of work deprive us of moral agency). It also has the sense of effort and recognition of effort important in earlier views of work, and that sense of making

as self expression which is part of the subjective need to work.

Much human work that is repetitive, not issuing in a clear end product or achievement, or one that doesn't last, e.g. running a home, child rearing, caring for the sick and the elderly, cooking food, has been seen traditionally as low status. We need a new distinction of labour from work that will alter the balance here. The rearing of children will remain as a necessary activity or responsibility when many others will have disappeared, and on any clear view surely should be seen as one of the, if not *the*, most important of human tasks. In the good society I think work would be characterized by four c's: choice; control, over both the process and product; change — i.e. variety in activity; challenge — some kind of purpose. If the microrevolution takes place in a socially responsible context it is quite likely that this could be achieved. Of course some necessary work/labour of a kind usually thought unpleasant would remain to be done, but this presents no insuperable problem. (Cf. William Morris on this, or issues of *Anarchy*, first series.)

Many in the libertarian tradition have decried the so-called leisure society, either on essentialist grounds, deriving from a view of man's nature (e.g. Gill), or, secondly, on political/pragmatic grounds (e.g. Marcuse).

To consider the former kind of objection: while I would certainly agree that we need to start from first principles, and I accept that the tradition I should like to see myself as limping from based its morality of work, quite correctly, on its necessity for human existence, such that agriculture's primacy relied on its supplying our most basic needs, nevertheless that link between work and the objective necessity for it, *has* now in principle been broken, and we cannot ignore the given of our situation — that necessity cannot be fabricated. We cannot ignore the consequences of the import of the microtechnological revolution.

The second kind of objection is that the political/power context in which microtechnology is introduced into the world will ensure that it increases the hold of repressive culture over us, and will restrict rather than enlarge the potential for human freedom, preventing the operation of a human-centred sphere of work in favour of one which is profit-centred. In Marcuse's terms, although the performance principle has created the preconditions for its own abolition, repressive culture will see to it that the microtechnology is used in its own interests, concentrating on destructive weapons and useless objects.

It is quite true that in the present context technological changes have been developed in the interests of the employers — the impetus has come from science plus the desire for profit, but

this instantiation does not exhaust the possibilities. Events at Lucas Aerospace³ are one indication of what can happen, of how workers' control and involvement can bring about, in however limited a fashion, production for use and for social ends, decided upon by the people involved in the process, under conditions of structural unemployment.

The work question cannot in practice, as opposed to theory, be divorced from the question of power, but it seems to me that we do face a neutral technology which carries endless possibilities for good as well as evil. Now that our basic needs can be met with a modicum of required work, our society faces a choice. Consumption can be increased, and microtechnology used to make more useless things to keep the system going, or we can instead angle our technological resources towards ending the inequitable distribution of world resources -- we can choose the kind of wealth created, and the ending of world starvation is more *possible* now than ever before, making even more grotesque its likely increase.

Neocapitalism itself will have to adapt quite considerably in the next 20 years if it is going to survive. On the worst scenario, political democracy will diminish or disappear and society be run at gun point, with a huge reserve army of the unemployed kept in relative deprivation. But the instability this would lead to, in a situation, say in England, of five or six million unemployed, makes it, I think, more likely that the adaptations will be in the direction of a spreading of the material benefits inside the confines of micro-technologically successful societies, with perhaps a partial divorce of income from employment. Christian hope, if nothing more, encourages me to believe that in circumstances characterized by greater time to think, increased access to education and so forth, the human spirit and human ingenuity will transcend the containment that I have no doubt the powers that be will aim for. Who would have thought for instance, from Engel's and de Tocqueville's descriptions of dehumanized Manchester, what splendid forms of life would emerge in Northern working-class culture? The solidarity, friendliness, humour -- the humanity which emerged from what must have been nearly the worst conceivable conditions of work and life should encourage us to have more faith that even were the worst to happen and the conditions of zombiedom come upon us, human beings would work their way rapidly out of being zombies. While making every effort to prevent such a state of affairs occurring and of lessening what we may see as the clock-work orange situation of, say, a disemployed Birmingham car worker living in a high rise flat, we should respect his/her ability to transcend what seem perhaps from our more fortunate life styles, life-denying circumstances. And here by transcend I imply 'change',

not 'spirit rising above'.

There do seem to me genuinely hopeful signs about in this area. At the same time as we have seen the adoption of the Puritan work ethic in its paid employment persona by some women, other aspects of what can be very broadly seen as the woman's movement pull in the opposite direction, for example an increasing sharing of home and child work between the sexes, and a break-up of the rigid gender/nature division, such that more men can now develop the feminine side of their characters, adopt different life styles which involve a different attitude to what constitutes work. Men can choose to look after the children without being considered eccentric or pathetic, women can be strong without being defined as harridans or unsexed. The process of feminization already, in small amounts perhaps, has led to a more holistic view of life and work, where wider perspectives than those of paid employment are brought to bear – ranging from the executive who decides to retire at 40, to the father who goes on the dole to be around with his children while they are small.

Increasing numbers of people are turning to crafts and to growing their own food – some part-time, some full-time, for their livelihood. There is a recouping of skills occurring, where direct personal control is valued. People's history groups are mushrooming, self-publishing groups like the East Bowling history workshop in Bradford, where people are re-grasping their own past, and moving from developing writing skills to actually printing their own works, to organizing militant community associations. The extent of all this, and the satisfaction people derive from finding out, from organizing their own groups, from weaving, allotments, baking, pottery making, small-holding etc., argues against this phenomenon meriting Orwell's ridicule of 'fret work' providing fulfilment through creative leisure in the hours when the worker is not attending the assembly line. For many, a growing number, these are not 'hobbies', gratuitous and self-centred ways of passing leisure time, but where their real work occurs. Engagement in such activities makes us critical of job situations where autonomy and responsibility are at a minimum. Every week I hear of more individuals who have voted with their feet, leaving such jobs, so that it seems to me these craft/creative/alternative activities do not act as a sop to those engaged in alienated work, a containing mechanism, but rather can provide the confidence and experience of another way of living and working which leads to criticism and rejection of the alienated work situation.

The enterprises which many disemployed workers are setting up with their redundancy money are another encouraging sign of the readiness of people to engage, to find alternatives. The trouble

is that such a response to being made redundant requires a lot of self-confidence. Groupings of workers organizing co-operatively (along Mondragon lines, perhaps?), plus a snowball effect, could make such ventures easier to begin.

A different attitude to manual labour is emerging, a shift away from assuming it is unsatisfying or demeaning. In my experience at any rate there are a significant number of people responding creatively to a situation of no jobs, for instance by using the government retraining service to learn carpentry, or car maintenance, and setting up on their own as woodworkers, builders, gardeners. Part of the reviled black economy is a return to bartering, to a post-cash, mutual aid way of relating. Others I know have set up services or co-operative businesses devised to enable single parents to engage in activities outside the home, e.g. a junk shop run by six women, a restaurant run by three women who work two days each.

The number of communal co-ops around, running playgroups, bookshops, whole food stores, often wo/manned by people originally on the dole show that people do turn to socially useful work and co-operation with others, given a context which allows for it. What is involved here is a purposive expansion of existing areas of diversity of skill and personal control.

In the short term we need as much flexibility as possible, as much government help for pluralism as we can get, so that the release from employment brings an expansion of life not a diminution. This is one point where long-term ethics of work need to mesh with shorter-range, political activities. Recent interest shown by the TUC in the unemployed is very welcome, but it could be pushed much further.

CONCLUSION

I would argue, then, that the modified catholic/libertarian ethic, the *homo formans* model, provides the beginnings of a morality of work which is connected with our roots but able to adapt to the coming microtechnological revolution, which I believe is, in principle, capable of providing the preconditions of human work and existence.

Flexibility and choice are needed, but we also need some overarching theory from which to judge the rightness of options – while we must beware of being over-prescriptive about what is to count as proper work, to have no theory is to give up on holding views about human nature and needs, and to retreat into a nihilist individualism, where anything goes.

At the least *homo formans* could prove useful over the next 20 years, in the transitional phase we shall be living through, in providing a perspective on the possible as opposed to the actual, a

ground from which to make demands, for instance for work sharing, flexibility of life work patterns, rather than accepting a situation of half the working population toiling while the other half forms the reserve army of labour.

I believe that the new situation heralded by microtechnology does carry within it the potential for realising the *homo for-mans* work ethic. It is up to us to struggle for its victory over the opposite scenario. On an individual level the release from the office or the factory forces us to confront the human situation – we can no longer ignore what is wrong in our lives, our society, our world. While this will doubtless lead to depression and anxiety, and probably in many cases place an unhealthy weight on family relationships, it carries the possibility both of a radicalization of demands, and a more human life. The Christian effort should, surely, go into transforming the political and social arena, such that the technological sphere is directed to human, not profit ends.⁴

- 1 E.g. Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk III, Ch. 3/5. Although there are other, very different, attitudes to be found in the Greeks, and even within Aristotle, I want to argue that the one delineated here has been the most influential.
- 2 'The realm of freedom only begins, in fact, where that labour which is determined by need and external purposes ceases.' *Capital*, III, va 111/2, p 873.
- 3 Workers at Lucas Aerospace, given the opportunity of deciding how they would like to apply their knowledge, skills and machinery, came up with plans for designing and making a variety of useful artefacts, including several aids for handicapped people.
- 4 A version of this paper was first given to a meeting of the Christendom Trust in July 1980. My thanks to the Trustees for their invitation, and to Adrian Cunningham, Ricca Edmondson, Alan Holland and Russell Keat for their help.

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