

IDENTITIES AMIDST CONNECTIONS AND DISCONNECTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

In capitalist societies, people “participate” in the activities of capitalists in their capacities as workers/employees and consumers. In both capacities, people transact with capitalists (or their representatives) within fields of interaction framed by money-making and power-monitored ventures. Within such fields, the mode of interaction does not count as essential in the people’s lifeworld.¹ The “essence” of capitalism is in the recurring practices of capitalists who play around the elements which they own: private property (including symbolic capital like education and skills), self-interest (search for profit, honor, prestige, distinction) and the employment of their labor and the labor of others. If there is an essentialist character to this description it is because capitalists tend to stick to what they consider as essential to their practice. In those three basic elements only acceptable combinations are of course allowed: self-interest dictating the use of capital plus labor. If we combine an “alien” category like sympathy or compassion or eccentric desire, the pre-defined set of combination will automatically marginalize it or mark it as

1. “The lifeworld is the phenomenological terrain of sedimented tradition, shared contexts, knowledge and competencies – a complexity on which every communicative act depends.” Martin Morris, “Jürgen Habermas,” in *Contemporary Critical Theorists: From Lacan to Said*, ed. Jon Simons (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 238.

extrinsic. This illustrates the essence of constant and prohibitive combinations within capitalism. The chain of combinations will have to constantly affirm self-interested behavior, otherwise the system is no longer capitalist.

The modern/advance-modern capitalist organizations and networks keep their necessary blueprints or master plans for various activities. Such blueprints are assumed to function as “models of” and “models for” thought and action, guiding people in their activities and providing some core ideas which act as set patterns and references for future courses of action.

Consumers, who may experience greater enjoyment of rights and liberty in their spending activities, cannot expect that the capitalist master plan which guides commerce may be replaced by the less-formalized values of friendship and mutual-help. Consumers, in their non-contractual presence in malls and other shopping areas may indeed bring with them the familiar values of their own lifeworlds. But as soon as they enter the format of commerce what is given prime importance would be the cash or credit card that they bring and not the fellow-feelings of sympathy or friendship. The latter are better expressed through the fields of association which are more open to lifeworld encounters and group interactions like the home, hobby groups or other non-profit associations. This is not to say that lifeworld encounters are entirely out of place in jobsites. Some jobsites may not really be devoted to commerce and some commercial firms provide space for non-formal interactions especially among the employees tasked with more complex and discretionary work.² What we may have to bear in mind instead is that jobsites are system-driven and not lifeworld-driven fields of activities. As such they are spheres of interaction where experiences of alienations are common and even “necessary”.

The heightened interdependencies (and thus the interconnections through networks of different processes/activities) brought about by the schemes of division of labor in

2. See Stephan Fuchs, *Against Essentialism: A Theory of Culture and Society* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), 245.

production units as well as schemes of marketing of both basic materials and finished products have brought together complex personalities and nationalities into varied negotiating tables. The traditional village labor and products are now penetrated or accessed by the globalized interlocking financial, production and marketing schemes. There is some truth in the observation about the world transformed into a one whole “global village”, and that is mainly because of the continuing expansion of global capitalism propped up by borderless information technologies.

Interconnections and interdependencies abound, but many of these revolve around interests which snap readily into the narrow structure of capitalism. Cultural worldviews, local customs and traditions, indigenous identities, the lifeworld, had to defer, in many instances, to the means-end reasoning of capitalist schemes. Capitalist reasoning has *almost always* landed or crept into all aspects of life—eventually circumscribing them.

If means-end reasoning also promotes relationships with narrowed-down goals, it does restrict, to a great extent, human life in its multi-dimensional (including non means-end) aspirations. In other words, means-end interests and processes engender estrangements and alienations in the many, far too many, established practices and concerns which used to promote cohesive relations among people. Capitalism has developed and flourished but created, in the process or as a consequence, irreversible havoc on various cultural traditions, identities and on natural and humanized spaces. It has, in effect, transformed the human world into its own office and factory.

In this article, we will comment on the views of several authors (Marx, Elias, Weber, Freud and Marcuse) who have reflected on Western capitalism’s wide-ranging effects, mainly ambiguous effects, on various lifeworlds and identities. Their analyses of estrangements, alienations, civilizing process, rationalizations and transformations of the human and physical realities have offered views about Western society and identity penetrated by capitalism. Their analyses, while mainly looking into social relations, do not fail to bring into relief affected bodies and psyche of every human being. Learning from their observations about their own societies (and their

beleaguered inhabitants) would be a way towards a better formulation of possible historical alternatives to capitalist circumscribed worlds.

RESTRUCTURING OF MATERIAL CONDITIONS AND THE BREAKDOWN OF TRADITIONS

The breakdown of the feudal institutions and other traditional socio-cultural arrangements of 19th century Europe was in no way caused by a single factor. Nevertheless, it is easy to identify industrial capitalism, which evolved around the centralized production units-factories, as the single most powerful and fundamental trigger leading to socio-cultural breakdowns. These breakdowns took many paths and produced many forms which engendered various social ills (or perceived social ills) identified by various social scientists such as alienation, anomie, class conflicts, neo-colonial domination and dependence, civil apathy, possessive individualism, etc.

The shift from the household-type to factory-based industry did not only disturb and split the household from their members but also from their traditional culture that has informed them for generations. Capitalist factory industry was founded on totally different principles which caused no small negative effects on traditional principles like kinship automatic solidarity and informal neighborly mutual help.

Traditional societies depended on the stability of the households constituting them. It is, thus, quite understandable to observe tradition-keepers (elders, leaders, clergy) complain against liberal ideas which have fostered (and were fostered by) industrial capitalism and have disturbed the household units. The keepers' failure to protest against liberalism would be, to the mind of every traditionalist, tantamount to their disappearance as seat of authority. The perceived negative effects on traditions by liberal ideas and business practices are thus seen also as threats to the existence of tradition-bearers and -keepers. Some authorities, however, are able to transform themselves into hybrid types and eventually become more adaptable to the demands of change triggered by industrialization (cf. agricultural barons shifting to

wool,³ as well as enclosures of England,⁴ or plantation owners shifting from tenancy to contractual paid work⁵).

Common people of a traditional mold could not keep secret their complaints against the secular “liberal culture” and the destabilizing effects of industrialization on their age-old ways. The collapse of traditional family arrangements because of urban migration and urban work; the loss of one’s daughter to the lure of city life; the “decadent” ways of their youth infected by the unruly urban teenagers; the invasion and exploitation of the countryside and wilderness by merchants; the “disrespectful” attitude of the more carefree and rights-bearing urbanites, etc. (not to mention the kind of waged work which extends from morning till night). These are

3. The peasantry in England was eventually driven out of their fields by the inroads of capitalism in the form of sheep’s wool production. Thousands of acres of land which used to feed humans had been converted into sheep’s pasture. England’s transformation into capitalism, therefore, was caused not just by the town’s factories but also by countryside commerce. The profit principle rooted in private control over property did the trick in both forms. As soon as the royalty was emasculated after the Revolution of the 17th century the barriers to the enclosing landlords were removed and “prepared England for rule by a ‘committee of landlords’, a reasonably accurate if unflattering designation of Parliament in the eighteenth century.” Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 19. The retention of power by the upper classes did not, however, prevent capitalist influence to penetrate and transform the countryside which already began long before the Civil War. Money and no longer birth was to form the basis of the aristocracy. Parliament became an instrument of landed capitalists.

4. As early as 16th century England, agricultural life among peasants was to be shattered by the growing practice of enclosures of land by the yeoman and even more by the landed upper class. These enclosures were “encroachments made by lord of manors or their farmers upon the land over which the manorial population had common rights or which lay in the open arable fields.” R.H. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1912), quoted in Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, 9.

5. The land assigned to the peasants by the feudal seigneur was supposed to yield produce meant for their family and the seigneur’s share. However, as soon as opportunities arise, some of those in the upper ranks of the peasantry – the yeoman – (presumably imitating the habits of the landed upper classes and their overlords) were also caught in the practice of commercialization of agriculture and so, thus, opening up a tendency towards individual discretion which departed from customary rules of the feudal arrangements. See also Mildred Campbell, *The English Yeoman under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts*, 2nd ed. (London, 1960).

some examples of perceived signs or effects of industrialization, with its liberalizing worldview, apparently wreaking havoc on traditional people's lives.

As the process of industrialization continued to grow and expand further, the drive of the urban centers towards the countryside, and even beyond, has not only generated a movement of change. Rather, this movement has also brought about a powerful pull upon the more traditional village peoples whose struggles and hope for a better life would also serve as a push towards the enticing center. Actually, it is not for economic reasons alone that villagers are lured towards the city but also because of other opportunities like education and skills advancement. Ambition or pursuit of prestige and improved reputation and even adventure would not be absent from the facts of migration.⁶

Tradition too has played a role in the process of de-traditionalization. Considering the slow process of disintegration of former stable rural economies and the "invitation" of urban work to supply what was lacking to peasants, the physical migration of tradition-bearing populace has contributed much to the population of town/city factories thereby transforming these and nearby areas into centers of subsistent migration. Most of those who migrated were people driven not only by the need to avert further economic crisis in the countryside but also by the prospect of settling down within a set-up more promising for their future and congenial to their more and more forward-looking consciousness.⁷

It is because of physical migrations (to and from urban areas; by subsistent migrants or by entrepreneurs/merchants) that the initial breakdown and splitting of traditional beliefs and practices would be felt by those staying in the countryside and by those leaving it and settling down in the urban areas. It is inevitable that beliefs and practices transported from the countryside by traditional culture-bearers would have to clash with or be despised by the more

6. See Mary Jo Maynes, *Schooling for the People: Comparative Local Studies of Schooling History in France and Germany, 1750-1850* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985), 101ff.

7. Cf. Agnes Heller, *Renaissance Man* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

dominant liberal-capitalist culture-bearers of urban centers. Beliefs and practices of urbanites penetrating traditional settings are often imposed as they habitually gain the upper hand in most economic or even cultural transactions (cf. the damage caused by non-villagers to the nightcourting practices of the traditional villages of Scandinavian countries⁸).

What should be kept in mind is that village traditions have neither informed nor constituted the 17th or 19th century industrial capitalism. Within liberal-capitalist economies, traditional beliefs and practices are actually more intruders than welcome visitors. Although some advanced-capitalism practices integrate native/indigenous cultural beliefs and practices into the business setup, this is done in view of the profit-motive and managerial efficiency and not an intrinsic gesture of respect to a people's culture.

The migrations instigated by factory-industry and the village people's hope pinned on it would then be a main reason for the start of the transformation of institutions. People will be delivered and further transformed into this context of transformations and the eventual capitalist restructuring of society.

ALIENATIONS: INTERCONNECTIONS AND DISCONNECTIONS

The emergence of capitalism highlights the moving away of work and consumption (personal as well as business resource utilization practices) from rural communities and the push towards urban capitalist centers. This is the original and far-reaching industry-induced separation upon which other forms of separation will appear or reappear. In urban centers, capitalists are dominant and their presence, with their principles and activities, permeates everyday life. They represent to every individual who depend on them as a necessary "partner".

Capitalists are not disinterested partners. Their brand of

8. This courtship system collapsed in time. In Sweden "men who were not part of the system and who could remove themselves without having to marry the impregnated locals brought it to an end." In Finland, the bicycle allowed some guys to break away from a group to overextend his "wooing radiuses", with the dire consequences for the courtship tradition. Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 102-105.

partnership with the workers is based on an asymmetrical form of relations since their resources and objectives can only accept self-interested behavior as their true partner. This is a partnership with self-interest. If one is willing to be one, as workers are willing to be enlisted, then they could be considered capitalist-interest partners.

As it forms its typical productive forces, as it set up its appropriate organization, as it establishes venues for the circulation of goods, as it provides enduring fields for workers' and consumers' socialized dispositions, as it generates its distinctive legitimating ideas, capitalism eventually produces homogenization and conformism. Individuals have to give in to the master of their present socio-economic history and somehow, within the workplace, sacrifice individuality since this is incited by the capitalist himself. Ideally, for most workers within workplaces, personal desires have to be unspoken, not being allowed of their full expression. It will be through work, the means for capitalist's desires for more capital (economic, social, symbolic), that the worker will submit himself but in the process fail to voice out his very personal desires.

As capitalism eventually takes its fundamental shape, it gains its autonomy away from the spaces, culture and dominant powers identified with the feudal or simple agrarian-based societies. Its history is also the story of its structures and system within which various modern/postmodern ways and multiple channels of alienating interactions unfold.

Some forms of alienation act insidiously and fundamentally into molding attitudes and behavior, driving people towards greater separation, indifference or apathy. These forms of alienations have their objective forms, i.e., alienations which have become part of our state of affairs and thus are present even without our awareness of them, even if we deny them. They are there no matter what we think, no matter what we intend, no matter what we do.

The objective forms of alienations may exist outside the subject but impinge upon consciousness and behavior or mold enduring dispositions, in which case, these alienations are also internalized and become part of ourselves.

No matter how we assess social transformations today, the meaning of alienation should be read against the broader context of what is dubbed as post-capitalist, a setting which, for some theorists,

is understood to be beyond the Marxian productionist form of alienation. It should be made clear, however, that even previous to the Marxian idea of alienation, there were already different forms of alienation linked to a non-capitalist era. Some of these forms may have been grafted into the capitalist structures and thus acquired a character no longer identified with established traditions. For example, male domination in the feudal age has also found its modern expression within firms where male rule has become identified with the “rights of man”.

Indeed, alienation may have to be viewed against the backdrop of a more complex historical reality whose structures may determine either consolidations or separations. There are previous traditional venues and relationships which have their own brands of alienations but have been transformed and aggravated by the capitalist core mainstays’ dominance (private property and self-interest core). These situations have been engendered because of capitalist processes of production and spending/consumption: people separated from traditions, family members separated from one another, human beings assaulting nature and people estranged from their neighbors.

Thus, alienation may not only be examined as alienation within labor or market contexts but also as alienations *because of* spending/consumption and labor patterns or *in spite of* non-existence of capitalist labor or cash for the market of goods. Generating value today need not extract surplus value from labor since alienation could be expanding beyond productionist matrices. Fundamental forms of alienation are also engendered by today’s spending/consumption patterns.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION-BASED ALIENATION IN MARX

Marx does not deal with the subject of identity directly but his analysis of capitalism is concerned with the effects of capitalist processes on people, on their character, on their minds and bodies. His theory of alienation is a key to understanding the many social problems which have implications to identity formation.

Marx’s concept of alienation has its roots in the capitalist production contexts of the early Industrial capitalism. Today’s

production/manufacturing setups in post-capitalist economies have characteristics different from what Marx observed. Moreover, today's manufacturing capitalism is marginal to the core economies' service capitalism. What is left of production/manufacturing may now be populated by the core's "developing" sectors (which include the "developing" nations' production setups) or by imported labor from "developing" countries or otherwise exported offshore.

Marx's meaning of alienation may even be challenged inasmuch as post-capitalist settings' material base/bases have already acquired drastic transformations. His analysis is based on simpler material structures and springing from an original ethico-political starting point which generates the concept of alienation along productionist contexts and emancipatory concerns for victims-protagonist proletarians. It is, thus, possible to claim that there are no longer alienations in post-capitalist economies which have displayed mainly service capitalism and where production workers are already involved and inspired by better wage-returns.

Thus, theorizing alienation today may not necessarily mean toeing the Marxist line. The concept may have to evolve into broad or complex forms, matching the dense and convoluted experiences of change within industrial and "post-industrial" societies.

In his first thesis on Feuerbach, Marx's praxis is understood as a *sensuous human activity*, that is, the acts of the human being are seen in the form of and related to labor. It is through work and labor that every human being self-creates and self-actualizes. Likewise, through the product of labor, human beings produce themselves as objectified humanity. It is also the nature of humans to be productive for they cannot survive unless they are able to produce.⁹ It is also through labor that one relates with other human beings. The product produced by someone is one's activity in an objectified or congealed

9. Human beings are able to think, i.e., humans have reason. This distinguishes them from animals (Aristotle). Humans distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence. See Karl Marx, *German Ideology*, in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, ed. and trans. Loy D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Books, 1967), 409; also in Karl Marx-Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), 31.

form¹⁰ within a historically conditioned social matrix —viewed in Marx’s time as an industrial capitalist economy (as political economy).¹¹

For Marx, one is alienated in one’s labor. In an alienating situation—as in a dependent economic relations—the ideal activity for human association becomes oppressive. Capitalist labor as human activity becomes an alienating activity and humans are deprived of initiative or decision to do what really humanizes them and their surroundings. Even in the way one accomplishes one’s work, an extrinsic determination is imposed. One plays no part in deciding what to do or how to do it. Waged workers are deprived of the right to control. Among fellow workers, competition and antagonism render healthy relations extremely difficult. In a capitalistically structured life, the distinctive relations of a person to oneself, to nature, to others and to one’s potentialities/possibilities as a human being are splintered. A harmonious set of relations is difficult to expect in a context where people are expected to fit a format compatible with rigid planning and administration, competition and profit.

Thus there is a double meaning of human labor. Labor, in the positive sense (praxis), as a sensuous human activity expresses the humanity of every agent in a free and social manner. In the negative sense, labor in an alienating situation dehumanizes the agent. One’s products, expressions of oneself, are no longer under one’s control and even become hostile to people since they are a negation of human potentialities. Commenting on Marx, R. J. Bernstein writes:

Objectification becomes alienation only in a given historical social setting. When man exists in a social situation where the objects that he produces and the “system” in which these are exchanged is such that his products gain a mastery over him and dehumanize him, then *this* form of objectification is alienation. Alienation has no fundamental ontological status, it is a historical condition, and one of

10. Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844),” in *Writings of the Young Marx*, 289.

11. Political economy for Marx points to the actual bourgeois economy or to the theories and explanations of this economy by the “classical economists.” See Richard J. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 52, n. 55.

Marx's chief endeavors was to lay bare the structures of the historical social situations in which objectification becomes alienation.¹²

The work-based understanding of alienation in Marx emphasizes its objective character and thus focused on the ineluctable alienation of the "species being" because it is glued to relations of production. Alienation, however, may be understood in more concrete terms, that is, as estrangement from one's creations, from the creative process of production and estrangement between subjects: between the subjects-possessors of objective products/commodities, whether tangible or intangible, and the subjects-commodity whose roles as subjects-creators are demoted by their waged identities. Focusing on the objective dimension of alienation may emphasize the nature of estrangement between the workers and their "species being" but it does not make one immediately conscious of the mediating subjects of such estrangement.¹³ Moreover, the way workers have been treated as sovereign buyers/consumers by the market have given them the opportunity to get some attention and respect, albeit by reasons extrinsic from their worth as human beings, thereby further creating a wider chasm/estrangement from intrinsic human values. This Marxian view of alienation is expressed by Fink who explains that Lacan's notion of castration is closely related to alienation and separation:

Castration can thus be associated with other processes in other domains: in the economic register, capitalism requires the extraction or subtraction from the worker of a certain quantum of value, "surplus value." That value (which is not so much a plus or surplus as a minus from the worker's point of view) is taken away from the worker—the worker is subjected to an experience of loss—and transferred to the Other qua "free" market. Surplus value, equated...with surplus jouissance (Lacan's *plus-de-jouir*), circulates in an "alien" world of "abstract market forces." Capitalism creates a loss in its field, which allows an

12. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, 46.

13. See M. Burawoy, *The Politics of Production* (London: Verso, 1985).

enormous market mechanism to develop. Similarly, our advent as speaking beings creates a loss, and that loss is at the center of civilization and culture.¹⁴

From a critique (which is itself a form of praxis) of society as alienating, Marx has formulated a form of praxis that seeks to complete the overcoming of alienation. The task of criticism involves more than a criticism of philosophy or theology. It reaches to all the realms of societal processes and all its ideologies. We are referring here to ideology in its pejorative sense.

A “relentless critique” of law, politics and political economy—the superstructures—is also needed to understand ideologies. Such a critique comes in a form of theoretical analysis, an analysis of existing institutions and the contradictions inherent in them. And it is by criticizing and understanding what is really taking place in society that one can come to an uncovering of the real possibilities for a society’s future development. It is in the negative itself that we can have a glimpse of what is possible.

Theory and praxis are united in Marx’s call for a “relentless criticism of all existing conditions” and revolutionary practice.¹⁵ Theory in the shape of critique is at the service of revolutionary praxis, which is itself an actualization of theory. The call of Marx to criticize philosophy (as mere interpretation) brings him to the realization that one must go beyond it. The object of criticism, however, is no longer just philosophy but all existing social conditions. And Marx’s claim that the root of all critique is the critique of political economy (a congealed or crystallized form of human activity—praxis) leads him to an objective demand to change the world. Critique and revolutionary praxis, as one critico-practical activity, seeks the overcoming of all forms of alienation in society toward the full actualization of the potentialities of praxis as positive human labor.

INDUSTRIAL TO “POST-INDUSTRIAL” TRANSFORMATIONS

As the population of towns and cities grew, the demand

14. Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 100.

15. Karl Marx, *Writings of the Young Marx*, 212. See Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, 50ff.

for more products have multiplied and this provided further impetus towards the greater increase in production inside the factories. As the need to increase production developed, more financial support from the hands of capitalists resulted. It also made work inside the factories routinized and monotonous. An author has documented the following in 1905:

Each one of the hundreds of parts of a mowing machine was made separately, and sometimes handled by hundreds of men. When [one man]...worked there was a machine which cut and stamped a certain piece of steel about two square inches in size; the pieces came tumbling out upon a tray and all that human hands had to do was to pile them in regular rows and change the trays at intervals. This was done by a single [person].... Thirty thousand of these pieces he handled every day, nine or ten millions every year. Nearby him sat men bending over whirling grind-stones, putting the finishing touches to the steel knives of the reapers; picking them out of a basket with the right hand, pressing first one side and then the other against the stone, and finally dropping them with the left hand into another basket. One of these men...sharpened three thousand pieces of steel a day for thirteen years.¹⁶

Mass demand needed mass production that led to division of overspecialized forms of labor. In order to meet the demand for more goods and to sell these at low price, merchants devised ways to cut down on expenses through more efficient ways of using capital and labor. They bought more power-driven machines that widely introduced the practice of division of labor inside the factories. In this regard, the workers' ideals had become estranged from themselves. Nature will also "suffer" from being treated as inert means and thus separated from the cycle of life.

Marx has anticipated the coming of a new breed of workers who could no longer fit into manufacturing and strict division-of-labor setups. He referred to a clear separation between muscle-dependent and information-based workers, "the fully developed

16. Quoted in W. Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: History of Social Welfare in America* (New York: Free Press, 1974), 76-77.

individual, fit for a variety of labors, ready to face any change of productions, and to whom the different social functions he performs are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers” (*Capital I*: 487-8). Today’s multitude of young and versatile workers will identify with Marx’s late stage capitalist workers.

With the advent of the versatile worker/s, Marx was actually hoping for the demise of capitalism and the eventual growth of communism. Of course, he could not have fully anticipated the way advanced economies today have redefined the roles of capitalists and workers whose work patterns, organization, rituals, and beliefs could eventually give shape to a “post-capitalist” order or “post-industrial” capitalism.

The post-capitalist scenario may highlight some structural transformations in ownership, management, and class patterns, but the capitalist-self-bound private-property-interest mainstay still remains in place as more and more capitalist- and private-ownerships will be concentrated within financial institutions including the most powerful globalized ones.

INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY TO KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

Discussions about post-capitalism (or post-industrial capitalism or capitalism in postmodernity) attempt to explain the characteristics of advanced capitalism in developed societies/economies as well as those pockets of developed capitalism in developing (read: maldeveloped or undeveloped) economies.¹⁷ Their studies are also applicable to post-modern setups in some economically backward settings like those in Manila, Bangkok and Bombay.

While it is suggestive of a system outside or after capitalism, post-capitalism is still capitalism as it exhibits the mainstays: profit-making, private property and waged labor. The term points to a capitalist stage different from the modern capitalism of the Industrial and Production eras from 1700’s to 1930’s. While the post-modern

17. See Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, trans. Joris de Bres (London: Verso, 1975).

character of capitalism may not be totally absent in the modern capitalist settings, post-capitalism clearly magnifies and emphasizes it.

In post-capitalism, capital is no longer restricted to money as means to exploit labor and nature in order to earn more money or profit. Capital in post-capitalism already acknowledges the centrality of knowledge. Under post-capitalism, knowledge is also capital/private property; labor is metamorphosed intellectual/managerial labor; nature gets synthesized by knowledge; production has become information/knowledge processing. Thus, post-capitalism is an economic system organized around the central asset of information/knowledge.¹⁸

The Industrial Revolution has exhibited the manufacture-based form of capitalism in most industrialized countries. As it progressed, however, a different kind of industrial capitalism was already developing along the lines of further exploitation of information/knowledge for greater knowledge and for its extensive applications for production. The Productivity Revolution was inevitable as more and more production units applied knowledge to work.¹⁹ As a result, more and more knowledge/information-dependent work required a different breed of workers — the more intellectually and managerially astute ones. The United States, Western Europe and Japan reaped production dividends from their additional investments on research and education and their production-applicability. Other countries which followed their example (but having possessed other contributing factors, e.g., land distribution and development of domestic-based industries) also rose to become the newly developed economies (cf. Tiger economies of Asia). It is doubtful though whether workers in these economies would no longer experience capital as an overpowering entity for which much of their time and creativity would be traded.

18. Cf. Bourdieu's notion of capital which is more expansive than that of Marx. See Chelleen Mahar and Christopher Wilkes, "Pierre Bourdieu," in *Contemporary Critical Theorists*, ed. Jon Simons, 223ff. (218-233).

19. Peter F. Drucker, *Post-Capitalist Society* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 32-39.

KNOWLEDGE/INFORMATION-BOUND IDENTITIES

Information as capital is not a material which could clearly run from one hand to another. It may even be less-noticeable in transactions. This is why the bond that previously existed between a parent and a child through a heritable land or capital is no longer durably maintained when the next generation decides in favor of an education with prospects which would ignore the elder's land, property or money. It is true that the son-entrepreneur may have a reason to be grateful to his father for his education and for his personal computer set, the information, however, that could carry him towards excellence and success will be a knowledge stamped on his own individuality and not on cattle's hide or a manufacturer's product. Modern/Post-modern knowledge's provenance may not be referred back to traditions and properties of the elders. The individual will be inchoately cut off from a previous world because of the autonomy proffered by his acquisition of a knowledge which engenders other possible worlds and non-traditional forms of interactions.

Relationships, which used to move around land or cattle or factory, may now have unstable footing in information-based transactions like digital processes or internet exchange. Moreover, elders may not be able to tag along the non-material as they are used to run around land or shops with their familiar material settings. If adjustments are not made and communications not bridged, possible alienations between elders and their descendants could follow.

Since knowledge is far too dispersed and numerous, individuals are diffused through the myriad of knowledge which are also links to further knowledge and further diffusion. Social relations built around these loci are thus broadened to complex spheres of interest. This leads to a multiple range of relationship forms with a very low degree of solidarity or a high degree of individualism. The individual could be further differentiated amidst other multiple zones of knowledge and representations which already abound everywhere.

KNOWLEDGE/INFORMATION-BASED GLOBALIZATIONS

Finance capitalists belong to a breed of capitalists (distinct

from the specialized capitalist industrialist, commercial, service and agri-business types) who are three or four degrees detached from production workers and market consumers.

The impersonal, pervasive and highly invisible transactions in high finance capitalism have determined social relations that have become types of post industrial communications as efficient global, deregulated and infotech powered transactions.²⁰ Through all the exchanges, highly placed personalities will penetrate capital market exchanges without getting involved in the processes of manufacturing and commercial market transactions in order to earn one's income. Work in this case is predominantly shaped by over-the-network service capitalism.

Finance capitalism therefore skips (or moves beyond) the previous capitalist road of production or exchange of manufactured goods for profit. This does not mean, however, that it does not have a link with the masses of industrial workers. Positioned at the high altar of capitalism, finance capitalism occupies the top spot as a world-systems logistics and control center. In that capacity, high finance is part of the causal links to the disadvantaged position of debt-ridden nations. Nevertheless, its high priests have no bonds with the masses.

Within local or national areas, which have become mere sites for global e-commerce, successful manufacturers and market moguls may establish their own financing outfit for themselves or open it to a wider public. The nature of exchange no longer belongs to subsistence activities but to secondary/tertiary concerns or to more remote ventures or future-oriented activities (e.g., building a house, buying a car, opening a shop, starting a business, financing a building construction, or roads and bridges in the case of state infrastructure projects; or big-time investors' hedge and buyout funds).

The financial resources of the finance capitalists are thus

20 Cf. Manuel Castells, *The Network Enterprise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); idem, "Flows, Networks, and Identities: A Critical Theory of the Informational Society," in P. McLaren, *Critical Education in the New Information Age* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene, *Megatrends 2000: New Directions for Tomorrow* (New York: Avon Books, 1990); Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Society* (London: Hutchinson, 1973).

immediately reserved for non-subsistence concerns. If church or government projects may need to finance food subsidies for people affected by drought or typhoons, they may have to be mediated through interest-bearing loans to be able to use the bank's resources. In this case, the finance capitalists do not necessarily have to feel the urgency of emergency situations in order to continue fulfilling their social roles. They are only "moved" insofar as they are asked to fulfill their roles.

It is in view of this absence of automatic concern which makes finance capitalism problematic in social amelioration or human solidarity. This problem is more compelling than in pre-modern times since resources of rich persons and rich countries then were not really earmarked for the global finance markets. Since the wealthy peoples/nations' resources are the most likely means to immediately meet the basic problems of the poor, their transfer into financial markets would render these resources virtually unavailable. As resources which belong to the finance markets, they are not only unavailable for charity, they are also unavailable for immediate creation of jobs or for production of affordable goods.

Finance capitalism has also dominated market transactions worldwide. In this sense, capitalist activities down to the *sari-sari*²¹ store and street-vendor level are pervaded by the dominant and colonizing posture of capital markets.

Its nature as several degrees detached from the ground makes finance capitalism a reflection of its goods: money—which is the representation of entrepreneurship, exploitation of work, nature and private property. Finance capitalism as foremost representational capitalism will no longer pass the more palpable sensuous forms of production and marketing of goods as a form of capitalist enterprise. It is also a form of marketing of services via representational goods "useless" or maybe a "mirage" to the subsistence needy. The disadvantaged citizen's experience of alienation is thus a result of a chasm created by the nature of representational finance capitalism as taking its abode above the most immediate earthly concerns.²²

21. Literally, "assorted" – a small-capital neighborhood convenience store found all over the Philippines.

Indeed, investors in financial markets are not expected to meet or personally face their managers, other employees, co-investors, consumers, raw materials and products.

Finance capitalism therefore takes into another height/level the meaning of alienation similar to a separation of a human being from a deity whose representation is derived from the economy or ecology of the worshipping individuals (cf. Marx's fetishism of money).

This position of the non-active capitalist is far removed from the grounds of production and product circulation. Service capitalism has more and more replaced some manufacturing industries, especially in Japan and in many affluent Western European economies, but this has been reassigned by owners to cheap-labor setups in developing economies like China, Thailand, Vietnam and India. The so-called demise of the industrial/manufacturing worker in most affluent nations should not be seen as replacement by service workers but merely a reassignment of role to extension and often dependent nations' workforce serving as industry/manufacturing functionaries.²³ This is hundreds or thousands of positions away from the rank-and-file laborers and consumers. Such absence on the ground will be problematic as the disadvantaged workers will neither be able to go near the person of the owner nor has the owner the opportunity for direct contact below. The super-institutional position of owners provides no avenue for affective communication with those who suffer hunger or homelessness. This scenario still does not offer a promise of direct responsibility, much less of guaranteed sense of solidarity or community.

ALIENATION AND THE AFFLUENT WORKER

In affluent settings, poverty, of course, is less of a problem; but alienation is recognized as a major problem. In poor territories,

22. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lan (London: Athlone, 1984 [1972]), 228ff.

23. Cf. H. Beynon, "The end of the industrial worker?," in *Social Change in Britain*, eds. N. Abercombie and A. Warde (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 167-83.

poverty and alienation go hand in hand or are correlative phenomena. Poverty causes alienation while alienation also causes poverty.

On the “brighter” side of the capitalist spectrum, there lies the affluent worker who is mainly situated in the dominant economies of Western Europe, North America, Australia, Japan and the Asian Tiger economies. Their status as more sovereign, autonomous, enterprising, and globalizing than their poorer counterparts found in dependent economies of underdeveloped/developing countries is very often regarded as an indicator of lesser or absence of alienation. Alienation, however, may not be limited to a *production or non-involved work* meaning.²⁴ In post-capitalism where the consumers have become central to every capitalist venture, another expanded meaning of alienation could be formulated.

In capitalism, production is not a common family affair; very often, spending/consumption is.²⁵ In most cases, consumers will not consider work as intrinsically rewarding; shopping is. What used to be a way of expressing one’s self (through crafts) has become a means to acquire what the market offers as needs and which becomes, through and in the process of marketing and spending/consumption, ways of expressing one’s self. This is what happens when spending/consumption becomes the common activity, and production is at the behest of capital.

Through their experience in the workplace as assets of employers, workers will also learn how to become enterprising, rational and calculating in their regard for themselves either as producers or as consumers.²⁶ Being either objects of exploitation for gain or organizable assets towards excellence, workers will exhibit in their behaviors some forms of identity which production units and consumer markets have established as qualifications or quality marks. As consumers, workers very often behave consistently

24. For a general survey on the meaning of alienation, see Rabindra N. Kanungo, *Work Alienation: An Integrative Approach* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982) and its bibliographical entries.

25. Cf. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, vol. 1, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley/LA/London: University of California Press, 1978), 375ff.

26. Cf. Goldthorpe et al, *The Affluent Worker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

according to their learned behavior in production or service units, in the world of capitalist or late-capitalist enterprises.²⁷ Without realizing it, consumers become and reinforce further what they imbibe in their workplaces and what they, discriminately or indiscriminately, consume and symbolically represent for themselves in the market.

Although the capitalist work-field has determined people's disposition for socialized work, it has less direct contribution to the formation of patterns of spending/consumption behavior. What it has engendered are kinds of persons who have learned to protect and preserve and to express their private desires at the proper time and place. It is also within the socialized work-field and work-activities that individuals acquire schemes of private perception, thought and action which are very often deliberately marginalized or ignored by the public realm's capital-constrained rationalizations. Thus, in the process, as the individuals submit portions of themselves via socialized labor, most of their passions and other more private objectives or frustrations in life are not given real opportunities for expression or satisfaction. This explains their tendency to separate and push back momentarily their private side but freely, if possible, convey this through the more expressive forms of behavior like artistic activities or consumption of food, drink or sex or the gaining of exciting or beautiful experiences outside socialized work.

Workers, especially the affluent ones, sequester commodities and thus tend to express or even affirm themselves through products (or vice-versa) that do not bear the personal marks of their producers but very often represent the values consistent with the enthronement of private lives (cf. endorsers of products like movie stars and celebrities who bear capital's definition of beauty and excellence). Being deprived of the initial opportunity to express themselves in work, most consumers search for their identities in what has been strewn into the open market by the appropriators and markers of products and identities.²⁸ Alienation in production is compensated by self-generation/expression in spending/consumption.

27. See R. Keat and N. Abercrombie, *Enterprise Culture* (London: Routledge, 1990); Z. Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

28. Cf. Nikolas S. Rose, *Governing the Soul: the Shaping of the Private Self* (London: Routledge, 1990).

Sequestration of experiences and properties by private individuals is also a sign of “identity shopping”.

WORK AND HABITUALIZATION

The 19th and 20th centuries of social transformation in the Western European contexts highlighted the processes of democratization, moralization and the spread of national feelings, consciousness and ideals.²⁹ This has been studied by Norbert Elias who points to it as part of a generalized civilizing process.³⁰

This process is primarily linked to the generative patterns of life around groups (courtly life in France, parliamentarization in England) that are most influential in the setting of behavioral standards for the rest of society. Such standards help promote some enduring social as well as personal dispositions, *habitus*, more in line with the demands of an ever growing complex urbanized world. The growing awareness of the need to self-propel or self-discipline (vs. external power exerted over individuals in traditional societies) as a result of the complex social pressures exerted on behavior has become the hallmark of a civilizing or manner-refining process. A more self-controlled way of carrying oneself in these settings is learned slowly, both in primary and secondary settings, until it becomes one’s “second-nature”. A characteristically more introspective disposition in people evolve as a result of the formative influence of others whose presence determine a more calculated and self-controlled release of drives or instincts. The industrial arena, with the most influential behavioral standards of the bourgeoisie who dominated state and industry, is the important field wherein such a civilizing process unfolds. In such a field, where various agents maneuver and struggle for resources, the “increased sense of visibility of selves and others” contribute to a more generalized disposition towards civility or refinement. “The constraint exerted by people on one another increased, the demand for “good behavior” was raised more

29. See Jonathan Fletcher, *Violence and Civilization: An Introduction to the Work of Norbert Elias* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997).

30. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (London: Blackwell Pub., 1994).

emphatically”.³¹ The widening of one’s public milieu and its greater complexity has pressured the individual’s internal space to have its self-control developed.

Elias focuses on the slow transformation of people’s attitudes and behavior through changes associated with the demands of a life of refinement. The expressions of refined behavior before a select circle of personalities gradually infect the attitudinal and behavioral patterns of the rest of society, especially those of the emerging bourgeoisie. Through expressions of bodily comportments in eating, drinking, or carrying oneself in public, the civilizing process is let loose and eventually permeates everyday life. The exposure of every citizen before a larger group requires everyone to learn the art of self-control or self-restraint as regards natural functions and bodily behavior (sex, eating, drinking, excretion). What became more important for this civilizing process is no longer the impact of visible forms of control but the introspective process gradually learned by every citizen in the presence of others in the context of families, occupational groups, and in relationship with state authorities or rulers. What people have learned through time within these important contexts for socialization and enculturation/structuration have become part of themselves as “second-nature” or *habitus*. It is the social *habitus* which largely determines the individual’s personal *habitus* which is continually nurtured by the presence of other *habitus*-bearing individuals in different social networks. For Elias, it is in this generalized civilizing process that identity and sexuality will be viewed. This way of looking at attitudes and behavior will not fail to see how people have come to develop and evolve the way they are in concrete contexts and periods.

Business firms, as setups organized around the rational/purposive interest of earning profits, create environments for individuals. The top-to-bottom employer supervision has created not only regulations but also the more palpable interdependent horizontal routines which put pressure on, among others, self-discipline, respect of place and mutual correction. The presence of mutually introspective agents working alongside one another has created a certain form of order and rational behavior which is consistent with the work-field rationalized by the employers

31. Ibid., p. 68.

themselves. Thus, the field of work-interdependence leads to the formation of enduring, much like second-nature, dispositions of self-control or self-discipline among the workers-subjects. Workers in work-fields know what to expect from one another, how to react to certain situations, what to anticipate and what emotions to allow expression or hold back. It also creates an area for individualized training or specializations, a further condition for expanding the space for the individual's inner world. This becomes possible as relationships of control, dependence and interdependence become more intense within workplaces. Workhours for individuals are not only hours for the organization but also hours for much self-“dedication” in line with the generalized aim-inhibited field of relations. Inevitable internal processes of self-awareness, self-control, self-pity or self-fulfillment are also coterminous with workers' activities.

The capitalized work-field and dispositional factors contribute further to the growing *supervised interdependence* between workers. The socialized patterns of rules and activities, the sensuous presence of co-workers and the socially-sanctioned worker-dispositions act together to produce a typical modern workplace, modern workers plus their further disposition-creating rules, rituals and roles.

The introspective process is constantly replicated within the jobsites and in market spaces of exchange. It is a recurring process which acquires a character specific to the rational requirements within jobsites or marketplaces. The generalized civilizing process supposedly churns out packed citizens of refinement who are more attuned to societal manners. The jobsites/marketplace refinement process takes a more technically controlled mode of transforming people into the ideal or qualified employees and customers. Nevertheless, this process, which is more specific and distinct from Elias' more generalized civilizing process, also adds a twist to every civilizing as well as individualizing process which demands of every person greater reflexivity and self-restraint.³² Evident in jobsite and marketplace processes will be the mutual adjustments produced by mutual observations and bodily presences of several actors who maneuver for spaces and resources available in society.

32. Cf. Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 1-36.

The everyday exercise of job skills or techniques also produces attitudinal and behavioral changes in individuals. The more technically-oriented routines may have been categorized as secondary to the primary family setting formation but in fact have attained primary importance in the transformation of individuals and their families. Work and expenditure/consumption have more profound effects on people than we realize, placing family formation at their mercy because of the prolonged, sustained and repetitive nature of exposure and submission of people to what are valued as necessary capitalistic work and the spending on market products; not to mention the dominance of the male and his representations.

The refinement of manners through one's work in jobsites and through one's spending/consumption patterns also presupposes the reflexive process linked to demands for self-control and adjustments. Jobsites' regulations, repetitive movements, network of interdependent procedures, coordinated routines, divisions of labor, working hours, confined spaces and co-workers' observations induce distinct understanding about one's self and environment.

For the workers, the reflexive process related to one's job is different from that which involves self-control or self-restraint in matters of manners or etiquette which is wider in its application than the specialized instrumental work manners or work ethic.

Work manners may be more important, within the workplace, than one's social manners. If one's social manners are less refined than civil society's standards, work qualifications and required activities will take over manners. Or, in other words, work manners will have to force individual and social manners to follow instrumental reason (reason framed by considerations of means aimed to produce desirable ends [means-end reasoning]). Work manners, therefore, become instrumentalized manners which will not allow unique individual or traditional cultural manners free expression, unless, of course, such do not violate the core elements of capitalism. It would even be more favorable to the firm if individual or cultural habits could support or firm up the structures of profit-making.

As one becomes more attuned to the world of work, consciousness about the distinctions between self (and one's culture) and work becomes less and less a subject of immediate scrutiny. Work which is previously more open to direct awareness also creates

more chances for self-observation. As one advances in experience or age as a waged worker, self-identity, in many instances, is forced to find solace in wages and consumables.

For the veteran workers, the internalization of processes, of workers' time and space, of the multiple factors which make one a worker, etc., has become part of one's ability already wedded to the world of business work. One becomes more skilled and masterful of what one does everyday without necessarily expressing one's emotions or private desires into it. In this sense, the efficient worker could express quasi-machine characteristics.

A worker also tends to fail to be constantly present to one's history and to be less critically aware of one's environment. In other words, one becomes, to a great extent, a necessary neutral, if not positive, fixture of the world of work. With this development follows the onset of habitualization which also brings a certain closure to historical and critical consciousness, unless, of course, the world has become problematic or another world has been opened up. When one is habituated to certain tasks, procedures, schedules, spatial-contours, mechanical or personal controls, pressures, arrangements, etc., one also acquires certain capacities, special schemes of perception, appreciation, and action built into one's abilities not just functionally specific to one's work but already applicable, to some extent, to the other aspects of one's life. One's habits at home may be curtailed or prevented from free expression at jobsites, but one's character acquired through habitual activities at home will still form as ground for the acquisition of other routines which also produce modifications in one's character, and so on. When the worker is happy with the job there is no subjective perception of the problem of alienation from personal happiness which one is supposed to derive from work. However, when the worker fails to derive joy from work there will always be the production of negative by-products of such alienation, viz., unhealthy feelings of loneliness, absence of self-fulfillment, lack of drive or energy, negative perceptions about one's life, stress, enervation, etc. This is not to say that all forms of loneliness or lack of self-appreciation come from experiences of alienation in work. This is just to say that alienation could bring about *other* negative, although unintended, consequences. (In this regard, interpreting the link between the unconscious and reality has occupied Freud and his

interpreters.)

Capitalism does not just produce alienated workers/individuals in jobsites and leave them feeling unfulfilled perennially and without end. Capitalism also seeks alienation-ready individuals whose manners are not only refined but also sturdy or adjustable, modifiable, disposed, or even eager to absorb the negative by-products of the system as it contributes to the failure in making life worthwhile for many people. As more civilized and versatile job applicants are available, the more the profit-making enterprise will be able to concentrate more on its purpose. There is thus every reason for all employers to enter into active campaign for greater refinement in manners or civility since this would mean lesser problem for them: a perfect worker-job fit or personal-corporate dovetailing of interests. Civilizing process, therefore, serves the realization of a more cohesive society of workers and consumers.

Inasmuch as the field of employment and trade/consumption could produce habitualization or conformity it also breeds, to some extent, resistance. Several factors could influence the formation of variations in the employee's attitude and behavior, but one's ability for self-restraint is a major factor. It is not only a self-restraint based on established norms but also a self-restraint based on the established patterns of bodily movements and activities in different fields where the other's presence hammers on human senses and sensibilities. Elias concept of *figurations* as interdependency networks helps to point out the complexity of the fields and the dynamics inherent to such fields as creating channels of cooperation and competition for everyone. Something happens to individuals who experience being determined involuntarily by similarly situated mass of other individuals who must work according to their employer's prearranged job descriptions or shop and adjust to every trader's offer. The mutual presence of co-workers and co-shoppers alone already provides dynamics for self-restraint ("as reflections, presence of mind, consideration, role taking, and the ability to bear and control conflicts"³³) as they negotiate different fields also encumbered by the regulatory presence of authorities along with the more diffused power-presence in agreements and contracts, policies,

33. Cas Wouters, *Sex and Manners: Female Emancipation in the West, 1890-2000* (London: Sage, 2004), 2.

discourses, price-tags, warranty certificates, advertisements, expiration dates, etc.

Mutual expectations spring up from each worker's consciousness as the importance of coordinated jobs, which only become productive if done according to the internal logic of economic practice, stimulate everyone's awareness.

This argument may seem to veer away from a generally regarded positive evaluation of individuation process as differentiation, and move towards a less-autonomous and dependence-producing formation process. True, the individual's substance may be filled with conformism and dependence whose content may seem inconsistent with formation of individualism, but a more important process is the individual's gaining of wider internal space as a possible domain for further self-propagation and fertilization of individualism (and its representations) and some forms of autonomy. The values of freedom and autonomy will also gradually populate every worker's inner space no matter how these are gained or expressed through work as well as through spending/consumption.

The gaining of self-control or self-restraint by work-determined workers thus passes through work and spending/consumption processes which more and more throughout the histories of capitalist societies (especially those of the affluent ones) take the character of liberal and autonomous exercises. Self-control and self-restraint thus take the face of liberal and autonomous individuals whose self-expressions are largely privatized and whose experiences sequestered for private needs. The workers' gains in work and expenditure/consumption are also gains towards privatizations that have tremendous implications for resistance which are not necessarily expressed in public; these are unexpressed because disallowed or largely under private custody. More of the emotionally debilitating effects of work may be expressed through resistance but in the forms of individualized expressions through customized sequestrations of pleasure or private joys of spending or consuming. Sexual attitudes and behavior may be the channels of resistance or release as every individual seeks reprieve from the enervating or depressing or stressful effects of necessary work.

Capitalism provides spaces for workers (outside work)

where they could rejuvenate themselves through leisure and consumption. This activity does presuppose one will have some cash (from one's wages or income from other sources) to pay for one's needs. The lack of cash or skills and the absence of work will be deadly for people looking for a place in capitalist societies.

One's ability or inability to control oneself in work does not necessarily convert into automatic self-control in spending/consumption or in intimate interactions which are, to some extent, expressions of consumption habits as compensatory or self-seeking habits. On the contrary, self-seeking spending/consumption patterns pass through the liberty channel more than social-control channels (although manipulation in the market may also be a form of social-control).

FREUD AND PRODUCTIVE CIVILIZATION

The analysis of Freud regarding the expression or restricted expression of passions/drives or sexuality within the civilizing process of industrialization/capitalism highlights the effects of patriarchal dominance on both the public and private life. With the emphasis on the development of autonomous self and civilized culture, modern civilization has to maintain a certain relationship with what is considered as irrational: nature. As patriarchy releases and channels its energy towards the civilizing processes, it has to exert its control over what it perceives as threat to civility and male or technical rationality. The dominant position of the male will thus be felt in the control of the "animal" or "natural" tendencies especially on children and women. The cultural matrix with grids of heterosexuality, double standard, active male/passive female roles and asexual children will further be curtailed or "subordinated to the advantages of ascetic sexuality characterized by sexual continence, monogamy and rational sex."³⁴

The social world being dominated by men has marginalized not only the "pleasure principle" but also the "second sex". In effect, the relative inhibition of eros/passion in the rationalized domains

34. Gail Hawkes, *A Sociology of Sex and Sexuality* (Buckingham/Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1996).

of production/market have made the social world a male territory which produced them injured males³⁵ as inhibited but mother-deprived³⁶, hungry-for-love (love-takers) personalities. Their aims in the production/public domains have inhibited their emotional expressions as well as their love relationships. In other words, daily exposure and devotion to work failed to achieve “wholeness”. These dejected males may, however, seek compensation in the eros-filled domestic arena (or in women in general) where women are supposed to fulfill the function of warm de-stressing wives-mothers. Aim-inhibited love relationships,³⁷ therefore, are in many instances expressive of compensatory and thus self-seeking sexuality—perpetuating the de-stressor role of women. Women, who cannot avoid the stressful conditions at home will suffer double-stressful roles as wives and mothers. This makes sexual expression within capitalism so different from the naturalist or anatomical expression of sexuality. Since males, through work, are constantly set off from tradition, dogma and emotion, sexual identity becomes a lifestyle issue which is *also* set-off from tradition, dogma and control of society. But as soon as women enter the world of work, her socialized presence becomes a disturbing story for the males’ sense of dominion over the public and the private. Lost in the world of work (children perceive the absentee father as model) where people are supposed to have control and develop their identities, males coast along with their inadequacies. Finding themselves expert in instrumental activities, many would become stunted in their abilities to nurture emotional ties or promote intimate communication. But for as long as their dominant patriarchal prerogatives are still enjoyed, their stunted nature will not be critically noticed.³⁸

When the individual sought/ found oneself in the social world

35. Cf. Herb Goldberg, *The Hazards of Being Male* (New York: Signet, 1976); see Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 149-152. See also Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (London/NY: Continuum, 2004 [c1993]), 51-61.

36. The mother is a representation of someone who is very close, warm and intimate to somebody.

37. See Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (New York: Signet, 1976), 86ff.

38. Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy*, 115ff.

of work and expenditure/consumption, sexuality inaugurated its divorce from traditions, dogma and generations (kin/relations). Sexuality expressed its way through and among the free labor power and liberal consumers of goods, forging and releasing itself as a product of the social world. But when the social world has failed to respect eros/passion, sexuality itself has been inappropriately marginalized and yet allowed to reproduce/germinate in the margins. The marginal eventually penetrated the center and sexuality has never been the same again—when everyone is no longer punished for being free, autonomous and creative. In this regard, perversions have even transformed within the social world into part of acceptable pluralisms in some societies.³⁹

RATIONALIZATION AND ATTITUDES/BEHAVIOR FORMATION

Max Weber's rationalization theory provides another broad matrix which makes possible for a distinct understanding of capitalism and its effect on identity. We have in his work a classic formulation of duality of rationality structures which points to the ambiguity of rationality in capitalist processes producing both enabling and disabling effects. Freedom and un-freedom are both unintended effects, but they are unceasing and productive of contradictory sexual attitudes and behaviors.

The capitalist processes affect every individual who is caught, as worker or consumer, in its rationalizations acting like "a housing as hard as steel" (*ein stahlhartes Gerhause*) providing both a restraint and a sense of security.⁴⁰ Capitalism, as a result of its consistent rationalization of resources along the means-end road, would logically impose itself on other spheres or as a consequence railroad other spheres of human interaction. Within workplaces, sexual asceticism (inhibited expression of eros, in general) is a natural course to follow; within domestic spheres sexual ordering through marriage becomes a norm. It would seem that sex, being considered irrational, would thus find in marriage, in the conjugal union of husband and wife, the

39. Ibid., 32-34.

40. Hawkes, *A Sociology of Sex and Sexuality*, 29.

appropriate rationalizing institution in capitalist settings. This would shape restricted desires in individuals now denied their uninhibited “natural” expression, and injurious to the emotional health of many people.

A more profound consequence of the dominance of a means-end reasoning is people’s captivity not only around manufactured products but also around the knowledge (theories, information, discourses, laws, norms) and interests propagated as values in society. The communication of instrumental reasoning required by the internal structure of capitalism may not be evident to workers and consumers who are also its readers or hearers. In other words, critical distancing from capitalism or instrumental reasoning may not be a proper stance to be expected from capitalist-spirit bearers. They are simply embedded within the structure. When interests and values are enmeshed in products, information and relationships, they are too dense and complex objects of immediate and clear understanding. After all, people simply grasp their everyday lifeworld from the point of view of common sense. It is because of this common-sensical viewpoint that the web of interlocking mechanisms of social life escape attention. Instrumental reasoning built into everyday transactions thus escapes as legitimate even as it colonizes more substantive values like friendship or compassion or simple fun derived from play or games.

Weber’s outline of the means-end reasoning in capitalism is further analyzed by Habermas as the latter investigates the grounding of knowledge in specific interests.⁴¹

According to J. Habermas, the specific viewpoints, from which apprehension of reality starts, give grounding to every form of knowledge. He refers to the deep-seated constants that constitute the *a priori* structure of human knowing. They are the “basic orientations rooted in specific fundamental conditions of the possible reproduction and self-constitution of the human species, namely work and interaction.”⁴²

In other words, these interests are lasting orientations whose

41. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987 [1972]).

42. *Ibid.*, 196.

function is for the pursuit of values itself in all its forms and expressions in human existence. With interest, the human will pursue what it values as interesting; objects appear as important only when the relation between the subject, human affectivity, and the object is bridged by interests.

Those basic subjective orientations determine people's thinking and have a quasi-transcendental status. Habermas's aim to unmask the objectivist claim of "pure" theory or disinterested knowledge and to challenge the reductionist positivism in scientific method is relevant to our task of showing that knowledge is interest-bound, i.e., it refers back to the subject.

Habermas distinguishes three categories of possible knowledge: "information that expands our power of technical control; interpretations that make possible the orientation of action within common traditions; and analyses that free consciousness from its dependence on hypostatized powers."⁴³

These three categories of knowledge are grounded on three interest-points that are constitutive of possible knowledge: technical cognitive interest, practical cognitive interest and emancipatory cognitive interest to which scientific rationality (instrumental reason), interpretative reason and critical reason correspond. In saying this, we neither claim that these interests are exclusive in nature for one could contribute insights that are helpful for the others, nor claim that knowledge will be limited to these three forms.

The insights of a capitalist-entrepreneur, for example, could also be useful for a social worker and that of a biblical scholar for a chemical engineer. What is important to point out is that interests determine people's minds and that our situation today is dominated by the interests of some people whose too restricted insights largely determine our society's present and future direction.

The technical cognitive interest (common to many scientists of the natural, political and economic realms) that generates instrumental or predictive knowledge for control of nature is not an illegitimate interest. To transform the natural environment into human space through technical or predictive control is a legitimate task.

43. Ibid., 313.

Such a predictive rationality, thus, bears itself on a specific form of social organization, around systems of human labor. Consequently, scientific knowledge constituted by an interest in predictive or technical control is also legitimate. What is challenged by Habermas, through his critique of the works of Mach, Comte, and Peirce, is the illusion of empirical-analytic science to equate itself eventually with the whole of knowledge.

The claim of the empirical-analytic science shows that it is no longer aware of its limits and most especially of its prior constitution or genesis. It eventually becomes the knowledge that will now disregard other forms of knowledge that do not have their sources in predictive technical control. It is then closed to sciences that do not follow the method of a positive science, which only considers as knowledge those that pertain to calculable empirical data, data which are open to predictive and administrative control. This position does not consider as valid forms of knowledge the speculative forms of science whose object of study is the human spirit (including its creations, traditions, morals, etc.).

Many scientists seem to consider their empirical-analytic method as the only valid way of making conclusions. They tend to forget that many things cannot be measured by the instruments they use for their trade. For example, the value that a community attaches to an empty bottle of Coke (cf. "The Gods Must be Crazy" movie) cannot be measured by the instruments used by statistical economics. A more ethnographic and qualitative approach could "measure" it. Its answers, however, are not based on the expectations of the so-called exact sciences. But, still, its answers could be based on its own premises.

The absolutization of instrumental rationality gives birth to an exploitative reason devoid of any self-critical element and separated from societal/cultural substantive issues. Without any internal nor external check on its limitations, instrumental reason becomes the Reason for all forms of society.

Practical cognitive interest is the frame of reference of the historical-hermeneutic sciences. Such an interest is the frame by which the knowledge that seeks common understanding in the conduct of life is constituted.

The verification of law-like hypotheses in the empirical-

analytic sciences has its counterpart in the interpretation of texts. Thus the rules of hermeneutics determine the possible meaning of the validity of statements of the cultural sciences.

Proper to the hermeneutic sciences is interpretative rationality. The thinking human being serves as a mediator of different traditions and as interpreter of language. Reason's aim is practical – as contrasted to the technical; it tries to enter into different worlds of meanings, of different traditions of thought and language, and aims at the “preservation and expansion of the intersubjectivity of possible action-orienting mutual understanding.” The paramount concern is toward the “attainment of possible consensus among actors in the framework of a self-understanding derived from tradition.”

Again, we see that the aim of interpretative reason is a noble one. Habermas, however, calls attention to its limits by showing how language becomes an instrument of domination and social control. He criticizes attempts to universalize hermeneutic understanding as going beyond the limits of its validity. Bringing together different traditions into a frame of intersubjective understanding without taking into account the fact that traditions may ossify and become oppressive is itself ideological. The need for critical self-reflection – of a critical consciousness – is crucial for hermeneutics to transcend its limits. In this regard a critical rationality is called for.

Critical social sciences have their frame of reference in the interest of emancipation from unrecognized dependencies and hypostatizing relations. The systematic sciences of social action such as economics, sociology and political science, Habermas says, “have the goal, as do the empirical-analytic sciences, of producing nomological knowledge.”⁴⁴

A critical social science goes beyond the establishment of laws and norms. It is primarily concerned with the unmasking of ideologies and promotion of transformative action.

A critical thinker thus presupposes the existence of a social condition in which action and communication are distorted. Since the contextual reference of a critical theory is the interest for emancipation from various forms of domination, the assumption

44. *Ibid.*, 310.

of a mere instrumental/administrative or interpretative rationality is inappropriate. Instrumental rationality has the inability to understand substantive issues since it limits itself to what is calculable and predictable; interpretative rationality gives more priority to harmony rather than the setting up of the conditions for attaining that harmony.

The problems posed to us by a situation of calculative domination within market setups are more traceable to a break in harmonious relations, which cannot just be approached by a technical/administrative process nor by hermeneutics and consensus. In a situation of domination, the identification of conditions that produce anomalous relations and their dismantling will have to be a priority. Let me illustrate.

For everyone to enjoy the fruits of cultivated farms, the conditions must be available for all to receive their share. Equal opportunity over these fruits must be enjoyed by everyone. In other words, there should be no monopoly, domination and oppression. It is a fact, however, that in our society equal opportunity is not a premise. As a result, many people become poor because of deprivation by way of lack or absence of opportunities. Technocrats in our government recognize this state of poverty but look at it from a different standpoint. Many of them offer solutions that still maintain the lack/absence of opportunities as tacit horizon of work.

Many technocrats in the government get elected or appointed and their acquisition of wealth and power contribute further to the maintenance of a non-egalitarian form of society. These technocrats who manage our state of affairs fail to recognize the nature of their work as perpetrating the status quo. For them to be critical, however, is tantamount to questioning those conditions that gave rise to their positions. They cannot afford to contradict themselves that is why many of their technical-managerial practices are self-serving and thus not critical but only technico-managerial or instrumental.

These technocrats also encourage all sectors in society to enter into dialogue or discussion in threshing out problems. However, before people can enter into a discussion, the a priori conditions of equality and freedom have to be established. Otherwise, instrumental practices will only be self-serving, and communication a mere power-wielding or power-conserving exercise. It is not the concern of emancipative rationality to discredit the other concerns of well-

meaning people, but to offer a remedy to an unacceptable state where many theories and practices are also domination-perpetuating or, at least, indifferent. A critical science braces itself for a difficult task of transformation as it offers its constructs for human emancipation.⁴⁵

Theory and praxis are then enmeshed in the concern of a critical science to remedy situations of oppression; it is concerned with emancipation in its critique of ideologies and in its interest in the transformation of warped social relations. Emancipatory interest, therefore, takes form in the medium of power.

Habermas offers a critical theory that relies on the Marxian ideology-critique and Freudian psychoanalysis. He says that “the critiques which Marx developed as a theory of society and Freud as metapsychology are distinguished precisely by incorporating in their consciousness an interest which directs knowledge, an interest in emancipation going beyond the technical and the practical interest of knowledge.”⁴⁶

SURPLUS-REPRESSION AND SURPLUS OFFER OF GRATIFICATION

Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization* serves to extend the Freudian (and to some extent, Weberian) analysis of socially repressed sexuality but with greater focus of this within the context of the workplace.⁴⁷ Thus, in Marcuse’s synthesis, Marx’s problematization of work would

45. Some theories about persons, may have already acknowledged the criticisms lodged against them for not sufficiently bringing into relief the *a priori* structures of language. However, it is still necessary to expand their self-correction with studies dealing with the structuring effect of the social world on the unconscious and pre-conscious world of individuals as this have implications for the more rationalist/intentionalist-grounded theory. This is handled by authors like Lacan, Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva. See the introductory essays in *Contemporary Critical Theorists: From Lacan to Said*, ed. Jon Simons (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

46. J. Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 9; the English translation is an abridgement of the fourth edition of the German original: *Theorie und Praxis* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971).

47. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1969).

meet the Freudian problematization of the civilizing process. In his discussions of *surplus-repression* (“the restrictions necessitated by social domination”⁴⁸) and *performance principle* (“the prevailing historical form of the *reality principle*”⁴⁹) we could identify the integration of Freudian and Marxian elements:

For the vast majority of the population, the scope and mode of satisfaction are determined by their own labor; but their labor is work for an apparatus which they do not control, which operates as an independent power to which individuals must submit if they want to live. And it becomes the more alien the more specialized the division of labor becomes. Men do not live their own lives but perform pre-established functions. While they work, they do not fulfill their own needs and faculties but work in *alienation*. Work has now become *general*, and so have the restrictions placed upon the libido: labor time, which is the largest part of the individual’s life time, is painful time, for alienated labor is absence of gratification, negation of the pleasure principle. Libido is diverted for socially useful performances in which the individual works for himself only in so far as he works for the apparatus, engaged in activities that mostly do not coincide with his own faculties and desires.⁵⁰

The integration highlights an analysis which uses the study of the unconscious as a further means of laying bare the mechanisms of social repression.

Marcuse does not claim that the road to emancipation from excess of repression is the attainment of a condition devoid of any repression. In fact, he affirms that a certain amount of repression is necessary for a society to function. He calls this basic repression—”the ‘modifications’ of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization”.⁵¹

It is also necessary to point out that the surplus-repression he is talking about is a gendered one. Throughout history, reality (cf.

48. Ibid., 44; see also p. 46ff.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., 51.

51. Ibid., 44.

Freud's reality principle) has been dominated by the male (cf. Freud's phallus principle). Under capitalism, surplus-repression is male instigated and male perpetuated. This is a significant qualification since transformations in sexuality today involve constant tension between the male and the female who has gained a place (although still ambiguous in many instances) in the midst of male-dominated workplace/marketplace.

Marcuse, following Freud, reaffirms the formative nature of gratifications (or failure of gratifications) of desire in every person's life. Insofar as the person strives, all memories of gratification inform all forms of striving. Every person would strive to recapture all past gratifications insofar as these would be opened up by everyday reality. Of course, this becomes impossible since one's instincts and impulses do not always dovetail with the requirements of today's reality, especially amidst reality of alienation in labor. One even has to repress those memories and strivings for lost gratifications or be continually disturbed by the stirrings of gratification-seeking desires. However, individuals realize this: that by embracing present-day socio-economic realities and their representations (cf. the objective Imaginary-Symbolic tandem of Lacan),⁵² one could take a share of gratifying provisions or provisional gratifications offered by society. Society itself only relinquishes once the individual surrenders impulses for pleasure or for gratifying life in general. This is also like saying that once people accept the performance principle, they will also experience some form of gratification provided they are ready to cut down their search for joy. That is why people tend to focus more on the immediate gratifications offered by reality rather than struggle for the real emancipation of their life-instincts (the eros principle of life) from the grip of stultifying market structures. People, thus, lose self (alienated) through the sacrifice of happiness for some "detour

52. The Imaginary is a stage in every person's development where the fragmented experiences of the infant is initially brought into unity, an image, which would then take the place of one's immediate identity. In this stage, the infant is brought into that process of identification, that is, where one is transformed in assuming an image. The Symbolic is the linguistic representation, coursed through by persons seeking for a better field in its search for a more stable identity which the Imaginary cannot possibly provide.

gratifications”.⁵³ This state of alienation will not, of course, form into a condition of unproblematic harmony where tension between life-instincts and surplus-repression is absent. Marcuse has highlighted Freud’s suspicion regarding the fundamental regressive or ‘conservative’ tendency in all instinctual life (cf. “the return of the repressed”): “a compulsion inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces”.⁵⁴ Insofar as the individual lacks any alternative to the existing reality, one will have to face a life-long struggle between instinctual strivings, on the one hand, and life-denial and acceptance of restrictions, on the other. The conscious worker does not only control desires but also coordinates, alters, organizes one’s deeper instincts and impulses so as to minimize conflicts with the reality of the dominant public spheres.⁵⁵ Most people will even rationalize those life-strivings as basic drives’ disturbances, and thus unwanted, thereby further legitimizing surplus-repression. Marcuse says, “with the progress of civilization and with the growth of the individual, the memory traces of the unity between freedom and necessity become submerged in the acceptance of the necessity of unfreedom; rational and rationalized, memory itself bows to the reality principle”.⁵⁶

In reality (performance principle), workers are no longer assured of inherent gratification. It is in the present-day consumption, through spending, where individuals would fight for their right to enjoy whatever they think would satisfy their impulses or instincts towards pleasure. It is, however, not a secret that the market is one extension of capitalism where male domination is still felt with some amount of complicity from the female, without, of course, discounting the fact of the growing transgressions by the “other sexes”.

53. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 42.

54. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1950), p. 51; quoted in Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 38.

55. Cf. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 41.

56. *Ibid.*, 43.

FROM SUBSISTENCE PRODUCTION TO MARKET'S DETOUR GRATIFICATIONS⁵⁷

In our world, goods are waiting as “potentially gratifying objects” for consumers. Within contexts dominated by instrumental activities, what is gratifying or fulfilling is not solely for the consumers to determine but mainly for the manufacturers.

Traditional/simple societies used to produce their own goods for consumption and had the freedom, no matter how limited it was, to determine what was necessary and what was something they could live without. The simplicity of their material culture did not only determine their needs but also their imagination to create things beyond what was necessary.

The question of what is gratifying for waged-consumers who merely buy what they need may only be answered by their cash supply and the market's inventory. Today, consumers need not worry about availability since the market is flooded with all kinds of goods. What they have to worry, if they are aware of it, is the way the market is saturated with goods that do not necessarily cater to their life-instincts. The most saleable items in the market need not be necessities. Business cannot flourish if it concentrates on “deeper” needs. It can only expand if they flood the public with offers of wants.

In most pre-modern societies (including some underdeveloped/developing societies) *where we find persons/groups producing their own consumable goods*, we also find the element of waiting-in-patience before actual consumption and gratification. The waiting-in-patience component of production-consumption somehow was part of the whole story of survival and gratification as families and clans (or people in closely-knit communities) worked patiently to produce their own goods. It was normal to wait patiently for the brewing of a very satisfying barrel of beer; for the aging of a most exhilarating drink; for the careful knitting of clothing material for quality pullovers. In most cases, in instances of patient waiting, a certain form of “postponement” of gratification is welcome.

57. This section is a rework of portions of my article “Instant Gratification,” *Concilium* 4 (1999): 49-58.

“Postponement” in this case is quite an anachronism. To postpone gratification already implies individual capacity and the objective possibility of bringing about gratification. In many pre-modern cases, postponement is unavoidable both subjectively and objectively. Many subjects are naturally waiting for the produce and the object of their desires. In today’s markets, objects are created even before subjects are aware of them.

As more complex patterns of production, exchange and consumption of goods developed, the supply and availability of objects became overwhelming. As more “alien” goods are introduced into the market, many people who knew nothing of new products are no longer aware of the mediating waiting-in-patience factor for production and gratification. Hence, gratification can no longer account for waiting-in-patience since it is now divorced from a tradition- or family-based patient production.

As goods become more abundant, subjects are now bombarded by *surplus-stimulations*. Such overwhelming omnipresent “alien” objects disturb focus and tend to influence (or overpower) choice. Choice as restricted by the tacit horizon of goods has become a market-trained choice. Such goods even induce in many a forgetfulness about what was once considered as fundamental: common or household work to produce goods for one’s needs and pleasures or sometimes waiting for inheritance from one’s folks.⁵⁸ The household is no longer a matrix for common work to produce its goods. Almost everybody is now taking for granted the necessity of waged-labor (and thus separation from the household) to be able to buy goods for the satisfaction of needs and wants. Waiting-in-patience is now for the money to be earned to buy products ready-made or prepared by others who are not necessarily one’s consociates or acquaintances. Consumption of products will now involve buying from markets of people whose main end is not sharing but earning money. This is done mainly through the process of non-tradition-bound or impersonal commercial transactions not without traces of surplus-repression.

58. See Neil McKendrick, Colin Brewer, and J. A. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

Goods and services produced and sold in the community-detached impersonal markets of capitalism are to be assumed as potentially gratifying. The capitalist market's drives to manufacture and offer these goods and services are correlates of consumers' desires and needs. Necessarily, the handlers of the market do not just produce goods and services; they work in view of every consumer's desire and potential wants for products. They also see to it that consent among consumers will be manufactured through more and more manipulative advertising. Thus, we find in the global market the development of a highly rationalized (strategized) system of production which tries to set its own acceptable levels and patterns of spending/consumption. This kind of production-consumption dynamics is well-monitored while maintaining incessant pounding on consumers' passions longing for gratification. Capitalism has now focused on the consumer for its manufacturing strategies.

If the economy has to maintain robust standards, spending/consumption activity has to be stimulated. All sectors of society are targeted but specially the more numerous – the young teenagers/young adults who would sometimes comprise more than 40% of a country's population. That is why most of the choices today are “juveniled” since so many goods are tailored for juvenile taste. But an economy pumped up by spending/consumption will be secure for as long as spending/consumption-stimulation is a priority.

One of the most successful ways of inducing desire and manufacturing consent is the promise of instant gratification. The market's offer of instant gratification may be seen in two interrelated areas: first, in the area of availability of products; second, in the area of functionality or effectivity.

Gratification is already announced by producers and felt by individual consumers with the availability or even with the promise of availability of instantly consumable food, sex, sports, clothes, information and other things including religion. Individuals open to the suggestions of the media and other information outlets are captured by a deluge of choice data that stimulate attention, attract support, maintain patronage and disseminate favorable opinions about certain goods and services. Many products are already packaged and offered as gratifying even before they are tried and tested by the

public. Their acceptability is already resting on well-publicized approval ratings by public/consumer proxies such as the in-house scientific research team, state controls, consumer societies, media, etc. In other words, subjects who consume such goods are not entirely free to exercise first-hand critical choice since a whole bundle of determining factors are already let loose even before they see the products. What individuals may consume is no longer dictated by choice of what to produce since they no longer produce what they consume. Others are frustrated at times because what they need to consume are no longer sold in the market since producers ceased producing them for lack of a *determined number* of captive or possessed consumers. We are reminded of the lessons capitalists learned from the Great Depression years when a glut of electronic and transportation goods flooded the market whose supposed consumers merely wanted soup and bread or a decent work.

Even if a product has been in the market for years and is already enjoying a seal of superior quality and a track record of public acceptability measured by sales and profits, its handlers cannot sit in passive contentment and allow popularity be in charge of the product's future. With the challenges posed by competitors, with the discoveries of new technologies and raw materials, with the consumers' ceaseless search for what satisfies or excites, etc., market handlers are in constant search for ways to maintain their product's hold on people as well as expand its turf. All factors considered, the question of consumer gratification is the most important and as a result a whole culture of gratification-oriented marketing dominates our market-oriented society. Thus, products packaged with guarantees of satisfaction and consumer options like "3-day testing"; or "return if not satisfied" are very common. This whole culture of satisfaction guaranteeing has led to disastrous results as it already pervades (or colonizes) the lifeworld of individuals. Patience has been overtaken by the more attractive values of efficiency, productivity, and sophistication.

Today, things for sale are already there even before one is born or when one is already gone. Products made by others for our spending/consumption are already there making many of us consumers of others' products. Certain patterns of production and

spending/consumption have developed and functioned as molds into which personalities are shaped. Everyone becomes driven by the complex paths of production and spending/consumption.

Some products or goods are offered to satisfy the basic needs of people while others are meant to satisfy one's search for "higher" things. The former are more aptly termed as "gratifying" while the latter may be more appropriately called "fulfilling". Both goods, however, are now items for sale. The best detergent and the best counseling for self-fulfillment are available for those who can pay for them. Seen from the perspective of the world capitalistic market, sandwiches, health, leisure, education, security and divine blessing have something in common: a price tag.

Producers, in their constant search for saleable goods, preempt consumers' needs by introducing products that substitute for what is real. In some overly congested and polluted cities, oxygen packs (fresh air) are already for sale. One's need for someone to nurture is even fed by the market's newly-developed toys and virtual realities.

Consumers, in their habit of searching for what is more stimulating, help the producers manufacture goods whose features elicit excitement. In many cases, gratification and fulfillment becomes synonymous with excitement. Eventually, consumers (many people) develop the habit of judging other goods, including the more intangible ones (like intimacy, friendship and love), according to their capacity to excite repressed or buried desires (or even ability to entice sublimated desires). This is an instance when the values of the market could twist people's minds at the expense of the more substantive human values treasured by many cultures.

THE DISADVANTAGED AND DEFICIT GRATIFICATION

In many poorer nations, aside from the low-salary schemes perpetrated by the majority of business firms, lack of social security benefits and perennial economic crises, the more fundamental forms of oppression come hand-in-hand with work.

We know how people are forced to take up work/roles they do not like just to meet the demands of survival. People usually do not find in roles the fulfillment that human beings are longing for.

They are simply roles and, thus, provisional. The factories or the offices are not the usual places where people could experience self-affirmation and fulfillment. People are not happy in monotonous and business-aligned jobs. In these places, most patterns of activities do not promote free expression of ambitions, legitimate aspirations or calling. They are even counter-productive in the sense that they do not engender a more relaxed, free, and thus joyful disposition – a basic disposition that could promote generosity and cooperation among workers. Take the case of a worker in a canning factory. If he is assigned to press sardines in cans before they are finally sealed, every second he will be pressing a can brought by the conveyor belt operating for seven to nine hours moving 20,000 to 30,000 cans a day. This is his assignment for the whole day, for the whole week, for the whole year. A year of work yields 6 million monotonous strokes, and this is not at all enjoyable. It is a punishing drudgery and a surplus of repression. In his post, the worker looks forward to very short breaks and to the end of day and so probably rushes home or to other hangout. Workers are, of course, happier and relaxed in leisure activities. Not a few of them find happiness and fulfillment in the simple appreciation of the wife, children or select friends. Through these more self-gratifying activities, compensation for the goods lost through repression may actually predominate an individual's enjoyment. Unfortunately, a male's compensation for the lost self in work may be translated into the female's submission to the phallus.

Moreover, “normal” interactions usually are not possible because work is too specialized, strictly controlled, and usually not to one's own inclination. The factory setting, the monotonous work in the offices, the dull and disheartening government service, many single-parent households or even a household where either the husband or the wife is habitually absent, are areas of life where self-satisfaction is very low in supply and where self-esteem could also hang precariously. We find in these settings many subjects deprived of the essential forms of gratification. Eventually they form part of that whole reserved army of potential subjects seeking gratification – the same multitude whose appetite and capacity to pay become the consumer mass base of the producers/investors' market stock.

On the surface of things, the presence of goods and the

need for them presents a symbiosis for the maintenance of a whole network of relationships natural to a market setup. Classical economics may not question the existing division of labor, the taken-for-granted buy and sell format, the notion of private property and the institutions that support and legitimize all of these. Problems, however, arise as soon as one looks at this “normal” picture from the perspective of those who suffer, or simply of those who are deprived of the basic things in life. Institutions that make up our society as a whole will soon have to be problematized as more and more of their ill effects or unfavorable consequences are seen to affect millions of inhabitants of poorer nations.

Amidst the glut of goods, is the multitude of poorer people (seeking fulfillment/gratification) who are unable to get hold of potentially gratifying commodities. Instant gratification offered by the market is real for the rich but something distant for the poor. Some alternatives may actually offer more compensatory substitutes.

This is not to say that instant gratification is beyond the reach of the poor; it is reachable but in tiny measures and only on a few items. To illustrate, affluent societies sell many of their commodities in regular containers or bundles to their citizens who have the capacity to pay. Cigarettes are sold in packs, soy sauce in bottles, butter/margarine in bigger parcels, or food in whole servings. In poorer countries, cigarettes are also sold by sticks, shampoo in mini-sachets, soy sauce by tablespoonfuls, butter by spread, or food in quarter or eighth part. In Manila and other areas in the Philippines, chicken extremities such as feet (fondly called “Adidas”) and head (“helmet”), even their entrails (“IUD”), cooked curdled blood (“Betamax”), and pig’s ears, are barbecued and sold on the streets for the common citizen to enjoy while those with more ample resources could regularly visit Kentucky Fried Chicken or MacDonald’s. Such a disparity of capacity and enjoyment of resources further illustrates the meaning of division of classes. This fact qualifies the slogan “class struggle” not as a fight over goods but as a distress-causing condition that further heightens rich-poor difference/estrangement. From this perspective, instant gratification is a distress-inducing fact for the many poor people if the poor themselves regard goods as desirable. It is unlikely that the poor masses would think otherwise since they are part of the captive majority who also patronize the market. It is

rare to see people who refuse to be captivated by the aggressive advertising campaigns of the market handlers. Aggressive promotions do not exempt anybody from the objective of manufacturing consent. Challenging these aggressions is like crying in the wilderness especially when consumer activists are such a rare breed and oftentimes marginalized.

Consumers perceive themselves as autonomous, enterprising and calculating searchers, discriminating subjects, in their consumer behavior. They are self-regulated but also open to new forms of control in corporate management, public relations and advertising campaigns in the market.⁵⁹ These also indicate the nature of their confinement in a market where their worth in work has been preempted by compromise through wages and identity-forming organization principles. Thus humans, whether as workers or consumers, become seduced and possessed by a gnawing desire to find oneself in any product/consummable with which they could again, or over and over again, express and identify themselves, albeit only in episodic and thus, fleeting moments. In fact, the consumers' drive to find themselves in goods are of desperate and hopeless desires because they are aimed at intrinsically empty products, that is, in themselves empty of substantive values.⁶⁰ Ironically, spending/consumption practices have become ways of affirming one's being as self-regulating, self-actualizing, self-directing creative individual.

Liberalism in political theory and practice would dovetail with the non-political, but choice-filled and participative, consumer. Liberal theorists and practitioners could thus identify their cherished ideas of liberty, rights and freedom with the freedom that their brothers and sisters rightfully exhibit in the open field of commodities. To such consumers, shopping is also liberating.

CONCLUSION

The world of work and spending/consumption, as it has taken shape under capitalism, has engendered not only economic

59. See Z. Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

60. See Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, ed. M. Poster (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

and administrative privileges for some (mainly males) and deprivation for others but also estrangements that produce further estrangements or alienations and dejection. Some of these alienations are self-evident while others are not; the latter only have become perceptible because of certain ways of seeing or understanding which are, in most instances, keys to further understanding. The types of alienation discussed by Marx provided one of those keys to a better understanding of the problem of estrangements or the topic of imperiled intimacies (sexual or non-sexual) in modernity. Freud, Elias, Weber, Habermas and Marcuse occupied us as they pointed out some of those keys to wider vistas which allow basic understanding of attitudes and behavior of many individuals. Moreover, their ideas, taken together, offer tremendous help for a fundamental understanding of relationships (ideational and operational) as we look at capitalism turn through histories and cultures of different personalities.

What I have presented briefly are accounts of the structures and various adjustments within capitalism, the consequent transformations of beliefs, attitudes, behavior and identities and some of the problems (alienation and dejection) which these transformations have brought about. For my purpose, they are discussions which set the stage for the task of formulating an ethics which takes into account those less noticeable structures of behavior. Such a formulation seeks to bring ethical reflection into a structural mode of ethical analysis.

Most of our ethical analyses address issues that are linked to the personal avowals and conscious choices/decisions of individuals. However, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors are for the most part determined by structures which have become less open to personal choice. While our ethical evaluations focus on the implications of actions for human interaction, in most instances, structures of work and spending compel whole societies into activities that maintain a system dominated by economic interests. Such economic interests and the corresponding social network they have produced have become constraints of action and thus already part of the goods “contained” in every act. In this sense, the social context itself may have to be a component of every ethical scrutiny even if the latter is dealing with a case of failure or deficiency in individual moral choice.

Conscious decisions and actions, which are tacitly determined by what have preceded individual choice, are not anymore the only important object of ethical analysis. Since choice is circumscribed by objective determinants, the latter ought to be a focal point of every ethical analysis.

Many ethical reflections which evaluate conscious decisions of subjects do not always give *appropriate* attention to the determinants of consciousness and behavior. Many of its concerns are pinned on choices and their consequences which, by and large, do not refer to the various less-visible ecological settings or less-noticeable coordinates of action. By not being critical to structures of choices, the less-noticeable structural mechanisms escape assessments or are being taken for granted. Moreover, in many instances, the notion of what is ethical has resulted into an identification with right intentioned choice and action rather than on the promotion of life that is worth living for individuals. The latter is supposed to focus on the integration of choice and action into settings which could provide better conditions for right living and solidarity. Thus, ethical reflections on behavior may have to bear in mind the nature of choice and action as “coordinated entities” which embody various elements and not only present bodily activities or performances. This way, choices and action may no longer be excessively viewed as stuffs for repair or rehabilitation but as some opening towards other conditions of possibility for a better life. Such social conditions entail some demands for social engagement.

