Blog on Capitalism

Exploring the nature of Capitalism

The nature of work

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30 November 2009 XPS Version: PDF Version:

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> Suppose that, at a given moment, a certain number of people are engaged in the manufacture of pins. They make as many pins as the world needs, working (say) eight hours a day. Someone makes an invention by which the same number of men can make twice as many pins as before. But the world does not need twice as many pins: pins are already so cheap that hardly any more will be bought at a lower price. In a sensible world, everybody concerned in the manufacture of pins would take to working four hours instead of eight, and everything else would go on as before. But in the actual world this would be thought demoralising. The men still work eight hours, there are too many pins, some employers go bankrupt, and half the men previously concerned in making pins are thrown out of work. There is, in the end, just as much leisure as on the other plan, but half the men are totally idle while half are still overworked. In this way, it is insured that the unavoidable leisure shall cause misery all round instead of being a universal source of happiness. Can anything more insane be imagined?
>
> (Russell 1935 pp.16,17)

Western people, quite unwittingly, have committed themselves to particular forms of meaning, activity, interaction and organization which determine their attitudes and behaviour toward each other and toward everyone else on Earth. Over the past seven hundred years Western individuals and communities have progressively been reorganised and reoriented to what we now know as *economic* principles and practices, which govern both individual and communal organization and activity.

The same sets of categories, the same processes of classification, and the same underlying categorical presumptions drive both the organisational systems within which people live and their own processes of thought. People *know* that the economic presumptions contained within and expressed through the forms of organization within which they are enmeshed are correct, they make *intuitive sense* 1.

Western people are, of course, not *ensnared* in the forms of meaning and organization and processes of interaction and activity within which they find themselves. If those forms were not there, they would feel compelled to create them or something very similar to them, as, indeed, they have created them through most of the world as they have gained influence in other communities.

Although Western people *think* the principles which underpin the forms of organization and interaction in terms of which they organise their lives, they have not always thought in these ways or organized their lives by the fundamental economic principles which now govern life. The emergence of "modern" ways of thinking and organising life was slow and painful for most Western Europeans 2. The majority of people, during the 16th to early 20th centuries, had to be *taught* to take these principles seriously, and the disciplines imposed on them by those Western Europeans who gained control of government and who were already thinking in these ways were harsh 3.

In the late 20th century most Western people, as a consequence of the prolonged disciplines imposed on their forebears, think and organise their lives by the fundamental economic presumptions which drive organization and activity in their communities. However, in the light of current presumptions amongst development specialists that non-Western communities can easily be redirected into Western forms of organization and activity, it should be stressed that the path leading to this reorientation from feudal to modern ways of thinking and acting was both long and very arduous. Since the basic presumptions and principles of thought of a community determine all the behaviours and interactions of its people, they cannot easily be altered. Attempts at such radical social engineering inevitably disrupt communities and confuse and confound the minds of their members.

Western Europe did not escape cultural confusion as its cognitive frame changed. As Foucault (1971) describes, in Western Europe it produced, over several centuries, a pervasive awareness of uncontrolled madness in the minds of most people. During the seven centuries it took Western communities to shift from feudalism to modern ways of thinking the constantly expanding "middle classes" (comprising those who had begun to reorder their lives by the emerging economic principles) recognised a deep responsibility for re-educating the "lower classes" 4 (those who were not ordering their lives by the new economic presumptions). The final triumph of modern ways of thinking has been heralded in the late 20th century by the progressive disappearance of the "lower classes" as more and more people who come from such backgrounds have begun to think and act in middle class ways 5.

When human beings are convinced of the rightness of their causes they usually feel a moral responsibility to compel those who don't understand or

live by the principles which underpin their lives to conform to them. We have seen the disastrous consequences of this many times in the 20th century. From Stalin, to Hitler, to Pol Pot, to numerous wars waged by both Western and other communities, to the ethnic-cleansings of the 1990s, human beings have amply demonstrated their insistence that those who are weaker than they should be made to think and live as they do. Western Europeans have been engaged in such a mission for the past several centuries, and chief amongst their concerns has been the need to convince people everywhere of the importance of *work*.

Western people are, of course, not the only ones enmeshed in home-grown systems of meaning, organization and interaction, this is the condition of humanity. People, everywhere, organise themselves and their worlds in ways which are consonant with their forms of categorisation and classification. The problem, in trying to understand both ourselves and others, is that, just as the languages of people are historically determined and unique to the communities which speak them, so are the forms of organization and interaction in communities, since they are expressions of the underlying principles of categorisation and classification which have been historically, and subconsciously, shaped through history [6].

So, while Western people *know* that work is important, and while they organise their individual lives and their communities in ways which stress and reinforce the importance of the organisational forms and processes of interaction required by work, other communities are just as consistent in their thinking, just as certain of the importance of their own understandings of the world, and just as committed to maintaining them through time. And, because these structures and principles are historically, and uniquely determined within communities, it is most unlikely that they will reinforce or give coherence to the Western commitment to work.

People can, of course, be taught the Western understandings, and, while the West is dominant and they need to behave in those ways in order to succeed in that Western dominated world, they will appear to live by those understandings. However, if the influence of the West wanes, so too does the commitment of those people to ordering their lives by Western understandings. Then, they begin, inevitably and less than consciously, to reshape their own behaviours and interactions to fit the unconscious ordering principles of their communities [7]. This has been demonstrated time and again in Third World communities as Western influence has become less dominant.

Of course, Western commentators do not see such divergence from Western forms of organization and expression as the re-working of Western forms to more coherently fit underlying indigenous processes of categorisation and classification. Rather, they see it as a descent into chaos as people no longer order their lives by those *rational* [8] forms of meaning and organization which the West has introduced into their communities.

This is particularly true when non-Western people appear to lose their commitment to forms of organization and activity which maximise the possibility and quality of productive employment. Then, Western people know that if they cannot organise *themselves* to work, it is perfectly acceptable,

indeed, necessary, that multi-national enterprises base their productive activities in their communities. Although it may appear that those multi-national enterprises are "exploiting" cheap labour, Western people *know* that, in fact, they are providing employment which might help to turn the country once more back to *economic* prosperity. Not only are they providing some cash inflow to communities, they are, even more importantly, reintroducing those communities to "work discipline".

Work discipline, titles of consumption and status

Work is an organising motif in Western communities, it is a central pillar of what I have elsewhere called the *social templates* [9] of Western communities. And, because people *know* that it is so important to life, even when the opportunity arises to make it less important in individual lives, Western people will, without realising that they are doing so, reorganise their communities to reassert its importance and once again make commitment to work central to daily life. This has never been better demonstrated than in the Western response to the computer revolution of the past thirty years. During the 1960s Western people first became aware of the transforming possibilities of the computer revolution which was looming on the horizon. As a report from a specialist committee to President Lyndon Johnson of the USA in 1964 put it:

> Distribution of titles of consumption (i.e., money) has been via jobs… this will have to end. The continuance of the income-through-jobs link as the only major mechanism for distributing effective demand – for granting the right to consume – now acts as the main brake on the almost unlimited capacity of a cybernated productive system. Further, up to this time resources have been distributed on the basis of contributions to production, with machines and men competing for employment on somewhat equal terms. In the developing cybernated system, potentially unlimited output can be achieved by systems of machines which will require little cooperation from human beings. (in Macbride 1967, p. 195)

Numerous articles were written in newspapers and magazines speculating on how people would *fill in their time* when robots and other computer based technologies made their lives easier and freed human beings to leisure activity. And, equally, speculation was rife as to how "titles of consumption" would be distributed when consumption was no longer tied to work. How would we distribute income to people when machines were doing the producing and money had become simply a means to obtain goods and services produced by them, with the "income-through-jobs link" broken?

Of course, there seems no logical reason why, if we invent machines to do our work for us, we should not reward ourselves by gaining increased leisure time and by distributing the means for obtaining the goods and services produced in some other way than as rewards for work. The reality, however, has been very different from the speculated futures of those articles. In the late 1990s people either work for longer hours, with more demanding pressures, or find themselves, involuntarily, committed to part-time work or to unemployment queues. And the incomes of people are, if anything, more closely tied to work than they were thirty years ago, as business taxes, duties, tariffs and other forms of public impost on economic activity have been reduced while

government services and welfare payments have correspondingly been cut back.

So, what has gone wrong? Why have not new technologies, which have, unarguably, enabled more efficient and less labour intensive production, enriched human beings everywhere and freed them to non-work activity? In order to understand why, in a climate which should have led to shorter working hours, people have found themselves working harder and for longer, amongst other things [10], we need to understand the peculiar nature of *work* in Western communities.

Distinction between labour and work

In order to understand the nature of *work* in Western communities one needs to recognise that the term takes its substance from its coalescence of particular meanings, attitudes, interactions, activities and organisational imperatives required by the systems of status and respect which have evolved within Western communities. Through the past seven centuries Western people have evolved a very distinctive and peculiar understanding of the nature of work [11], which necessitates making a clear distinction between the terms *labour* and *work*. The term *labour*, for our purposes, will refer to any activity which includes expenditure of physical or mental effort especially when difficult or compulsory. It is normally defined as human activity that provides goods or services.

Work, on the other hand, cannot be so simply defined since it not only includes labour but a variety of moral prerogatives of labour. The following discussion of work, for reasons which we have already spelt out, relates only to understandings in Western communities. Nothing we are talking of can simply be translated to "human beings" at large. They are culturally specific understandings which reflect the very peculiar history of Western communities over the past several centuries.

The term *work*, as we will define it, includes the services performed by workers for an *income* since one of the important reasons given by people who are asked why they work is that without work they would not be "able to afford to live". As the committee reporting on cybernation in 1964 put it, "Distribution of titles of consumption (i.e., money) has been via jobs" [12].

But it does not only refer to activity which generates an income. It is also, and perhaps far more importantly, the term we use to imply that an object is performing as *it was meant to perform [13]*. So, we are able to ask "is it working?", and the person to whom we are speaking knows that in order to answer the question he or she must check its *performance* and that performance should be judged against the *potential* of the item. There is, therefore, a teleological dimension to the term. That is, work is understood, in a less than conscious way amongst most Western people, to be directed toward an end or shaped by a purpose, primarily related to individuals *achieving their potential*. People *ought* to work.

This understanding of the meaning of work implies that objects, or people, have been designed to perform in certain ways. When they are performing as they have been designed to, they are *working*, when they are doing something other than what they have been designed to do, they are *not working* or they

are *disabled*.

During the 17th to 19th centuries, there emerged a clear division between the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor. Those who were undeserving were those who, while "able-bodied", yet were not employed and/or relied on welfare support to one extent or another for subsistence. The deserving poor were those who could not help being unemployed. The largest category of these were people who were classified as in some way "disabled" as a consequence of some physical imperfection or other which interfered with their ability to be employed. During the 17th and 18th centuries, as Mackelprang and Salsgiver (1996) explain, it was assumed that it was the responsibility of the community to repair these imperfections so as to ensure that such people could engage in work.

> In the United States, institutions dedicated to perfecting the imperfect sprang up (Rothman, 1971) with the hope that professional intervention could cure these inadequacies. When a cure was not possible, people with disabilities could at least be trained to become functional enough to "perform socially or vocationally in an acceptable manner" (Longmore, 1987b, p. 355).

Over the past two centuries, Western communities have identified a variety of "disabled" people. Into this residual category are placed any who are, in any way, "deficient". The range of people placed into this category is remarkably wide, including those who are mentally retarded or otherwise mentally 'impaired', blind, deaf, lame, exhibiting some other form of physical abnormality or 'deformity', or suffering from any of a variety of long-term illnesses. Even today, the term "disabled" is applied to any who are in any way "impaired" and are therefore "dependent" [14]. This is exemplified in the acts passed in most Western countries over the past fifty years, such as the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (1992) which guarantees to the physically or mentally impaired protection against discrimination (see Anderson 1992). This category includes not only those with physical or mental problems, but also many whose "impairment" is social in nature. But for the need to be able to perform at "work" and so ensure their "independence" [15], there could be little reason for the existence of such a widely inclusive category of people. These are the "dependent" ones, those who must be "cared for".

During the 19th century, as Mackelprang and Salsgiver (1996), describe, Western communities developed quite specific programs for dealing with these "unrepairable" people. Such people were concluded to be permanent "dependents" who should be cared for by the community but were, nonetheless, a drain on its resources and should be, to a large extent, separated from the rest of the community lest others become in some way contaminated.

> Professionals lost confidence in their ability to perfect people with disabilities, concluding that they were innately unproductive and thus endemically without worth. No intervention could bring about change because the laws of nature deemed people with disabilities unfit (Longmore, 1987a). People with disabilities were to be prevented from marrying or having children for fear of propagating their imperfections. As the 19th century progressed, institutions to deal with the threat and nuisance of people with disabilities increased

dramatically, and they were increasingly isolated and institutionalized, sometimes in sub-human conditions.

For those who are not "handicapped" or "disabled", there are two contrasting states to *work* in Western communities. The first is usually termed *unemployment*, this is, as most dictionaries define the term, "a period of *involuntary idleness*". It is during periods of unemployment that people are paid "the dole". Synonyms of the term include: affliction, anguish, care, grief, heartache, heartbreak, regret, rue, woe, misfortune, adversity, contretemps, mischance, mishap, tragedy. So, being unemployed is assumed to be related to misfortune and heartache. The unemployed person is being denied the *opportunity to work*, and there is something morally wrong with a person who accepts this situation with equanimity. People who are not given the chance to work *should* feel a sense of adversity, of affliction, of being judged as good-for-nothing and worthless. Those who lose their jobs are said to have been *declared redundant*.

Work and leisure

There is, however, a state in which the person is *not working* both legitimately and necessarily. This is a state of *voluntary idleness*. The overarching, positive antonym for work is *leisure*, which can be divided into active and passive categories of behaviour. The active forms of leisure include pastimes, sports, games, recreation and other *amusements*. These are times when the person "charges the batteries", engaging in refreshing diversions so that they will be mentally and physically re-tuned to better perform in the realm of work.

The passive forms of leisure include: relaxation, repose, rest, requiescence. These periods should provide the person with stillness, with a tranquillity not possible in the busy round of work activities. But, these times also have a *purpose*. They are times when the individual is able to distance himself or herself from the busy round and take stock, getting work into perspective so that they will perform more effectively and efficiently than before [16].

When people are found to be run-down, worn-out or exhausted by the pressing urgencies of work they are prescribed times of leisure, when they can, for a period, escape the *duties of life* and become mentally and physically renovated. Even these times are considered to be intimately intertwined with work, they are not separate, alternative bases for life, they are the activities and times when human beings, who are *naturally and morally* fashioned for work, re-create themselves, and, in doing so, function more effectively within the world of work.

This conceptualisation of *work* as "appropriate performance" is not closely tied to particular vocations or aptitudes (though we gear our education systems to determining the aptitudes of children and to honing those aptitudes so that they might be as successful as possible in work in later lives [17]). It is, rather, in human beings, considered to be diligent application to productive endeavour [18] and is very often dissociated from an individual's own aptitudes and abilities unless these have clearly been honed so as to improve the person's potential for work. There is almost a sense of illegitimacy about "working" at something which one enjoys for itself - enjoyment, after all, is one of the definitional properties of *leisure*. If one was to respond to the question, "what would you do if you didn't have to work?" with the reply "what I am now doing" most

people would find it difficult to accept. There seems to be a contradiction inherent in doing what one calls *work* in a time when one no longer is required to work.

So, for instance, an artist who paints because he or she greatly enjoys the activity, or a tennis player who makes a living from the game, seem in some way to be “cheating”. Such people have blurred the boundaries between work and leisure. In order to ensure that this does not provide people with escape from the normal necessity to work they must be categorised as in some way “special”, and, in order to remain legitimate they need to be seen as in some way “driven” to apply themselves to their activity by some inner compulsion. Work is about discipline, about applying oneself to activity which is in some way an imposition of ordered *endeavour* upon the individual.

Those who are not inwardly driven soon find that people around them supply much of the needed resolve to engage in work through their expressed attitudes toward these deviant people. It is the lucky few who are able to combine personal interest with work but they, driven to constant involvement in a form of activity which is normally defined as *leisure*, need to demonstrate that they have an extraordinary commitment to the attainment of perfection. They are *professionals* not “amateurs”. The realm of leisure is constantly being redefined as more and more leisure activities are *professionalised*, transforming them from leisure to work, from a form of activity presumed to be “relaxing” to one which the individual is diligently focused upon and from which the individual “derives an income”. We speak of this phenomenon as the “professionalisation of sport”.

The organization of work

Yet, although it is assumed that work is associated with *income*, and indeed one would hardly perform work if there were no income attached to it, there is more to work than the income obtained. Work should be performed over extensive periods of time, and the time set aside for it should be spent in activities which are clearly defined as “work related”. Recently, talking with someone involved in a large corporation, I was told the following story:

> Several people in an office had found that, by hurrying through their tasks they were able to perform most of the day’s required activities in the first three to four hours of the day. They therefore decided to do this and spent much of the afternoon in playing cards. The manager of their section of the corporation decided that this was entirely unacceptable (for reasons which you, if you are a Western person, will already understand, even if you can’t articulate them). He called the offending workers into his office to remonstrate with them. They asked him whether there was any expressed dissatisfaction with the quality or consistency of their efforts. He answered that there wasn’t but that there was a perception that they were lazy because they spent so much time in playing cards. He explained that they were not employed to play cards, but to carry out the duties of their positions. They were asked, in future, to “space” their work and spread it over the entire day. They were not to indulge in card playing or in excessive periods of “morning tea” or “afternoon tea” but were to use their time in “work related” activity.

This is, of course, reminiscent of Parkinson’s (1957) Law: “work expands to fill

the time available for its completion and subordinates multiply at a fixed rate, regardless of the amount of work produced". A Western person, hearing this story, immediately recognises a whole constellation of reasons why the workers could not be allowed to continue to "play" during "work hours". Work, in almost all forms of employment, covers a period, and tasks are performed through that period. There are, in all jobs not directly driven by assembly line practices or by "piece" work, spaces of "inactivity" through the period. Most workers, if they concentrated their efforts, could perform the required tasks of their positions in much less than the *time span* of work.

It was, in fact, this recognition which led to "Taylorism" (see Taylor 1911), the scientific management programs of the early 20th century, which aimed to eliminate "inefficiencies" and ensure that workers performed in the most productive manner possible. It has, similarly, resulted in recent management strategies to "streamline" companies, through concentrating work activity within a smaller workforce [19].

As we observed earlier, these practices are aimed, at a time when new technologies are simplifying work tasks and increasing productivity in many areas, at increasing the work commitment of individuals, requiring them both to work harder and for longer hours. That is, for reasons with which most Western people find it hard to disagree, new management strategies are aimed at *increasing* commitment to work, not at lessening it. And, we know that this is as it *ought* to be. As soon as we find that a term has a teleological dimension of this kind, we immediately also know that the term is a *prescriptive* one. The term *work* is such a term in the English language.

It is undeniable that *labour* is something in which all people everywhere engage because some of the tasks which need to be performed in any community require an expenditure of physical or mental effort which is at times irksome to those required to perform the tasks. However, the need to allot a specific period of each day to the performance of such tasks, and then to ensure that people are managed in such a way as to maximise their activity, is a distinctively Western need. It is this allotment of set times to maximised labour-related activity which uniquely defines *work* in Western communities. This complements the equally unique relationship perceived between production, possessions and status in Western communities [20] and ensures that people are focused on the status maintenance and attainment prerequisites of their communities.

Because our drive to consumption and accumulation is open-ended, Western people argue that so too must our commitment be to producing the goods and services we "need" [21]. This is, in fact, a *consequence* of the Western belief that individuals should diligently apply themselves to productive endeavour, to work, rather than a *cause* of it. It is not that we work because our needs are constantly expanding. Rather, the ability to acquire a constantly expanding range and quality of goods and services *is evidence of our strong commitment to work* [22]. Of course, in the minds of most Western people the two are intimately connected. Since our prime means of obtaining the income necessary to obtaining the goods and services we need is work, we are quite sure that unless we work we will not be able to obtain those goods and services. This, of course, is true, but simply demonstrates how strongly

Western people, over the past four centuries, have reinforced the need to work through closely tying both material wellbeing and status attainment and maintenance to its performance.

The most important forms of behaviour, organization and meaning in any community are strongly reinforced through the ways in which they are made "necessary" through tying individual and communal wellbeing to them, so that people sense that unless they are maintained, life will become increasingly difficult. Over a period of more than four centuries Western European communities increasingly buttressed "work" in this way, until, by the late 20th century, Western people are, indeed, very certain that unless they commit themselves to work, both their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of the communities in which they live will be at risk. In a very real sense, Western people do not work in order to live, they live to work!

Teaching Western Europeans to work

So, how did it happen that Western Europeans became so convinced of the central importance of work? To understand this, we need to look back into Western Europe's historical experiences [23]. Here we will focus on a few of the presumptions and practices which led to the present Western commitment to work. In the past, during the 16th to 19th centuries, as Foucault says,

> If it is true that labor is not inscribed among the laws of nature, it is enveloped in the order of the fallen world. This is why idleness is rebellion - the worst form of all … the sin of idleness is the supreme pride of man once he has fallen, the absurd pride of poverty… In the Middle Ages, the great sin… was pride… All the 17th century texts, on the contrary, announced the infernal triumph of Sloth: it was sloth that led the round of vices and swept them on. (Foucault 1971: 56-7)

As Foucault says, by the 17th century, *responsible* Western people had come to believe that commitment to work was either based on natural law requirements, or that it was necessary to sanctification. The emphasis, among the "responsible people" of 17th to 19th century Western Europe, was on the *necessity* to engage in *work*, that is, in productive enterprise: *in realising the* ***potential*** *of one's own capacity to labour*; of one's own innate "talents"; and of the environment available for exploitation. John Locke, in the late 17th century, put it like this, "God gave the world to men in common; but… it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational (and *labour* was to be *his title* to it)." (1982, p.21). It was the necessity to "make the most of oneself through industrious endeavour" that lay at the root of the 18th and 19th century insistence that everyone become involved in productive endeavour.

As Locke (1982, Ch. 5) argued in 1692, God commanded human beings to labour, and the property they accumulated as a consequence of their labour *demonstrated their commitment to that industriousness* which God required. To do otherwise than industriously accumulate personal property was to rebel against the natural order established by God for the wellbeing of both individuals and communities. Not only was one rebelling against God, by breaking the natural laws for human "progress" the person was also refusing

to take his or her communal responsibilities seriously.

The term *work* summarised and expressed, in human organization and behaviour, the central presumptions of the emerging *primary ideology* of Western Europe (see Ideology and Reality, History of the Emergence of Capitalism). Commitment to work demonstrated that the person, as an individual, was dedicated to obtaining the returns which the industrious gained for their dedicated effort. Those returns were important both to the individual and to the community in which he lived. Richard Baxter affirmed this when he proclaimed in 1678,

> If God show you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way (without wrong to your soul or to any other), if you refuse this and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your Calling, and you refuse to be God's steward. (quoted in Gilbert 1980:33).

As Foucault (1971:46) claims, during the 17th to 19th centuries there was far greater concern about the consequences of *idleness* than of *illness*. It was considered the responsibility of both Governments and responsible citizens to *teach* the "idle poor" the virtues of consistent work. As Sir William Coventry, in the 1670s, claimed, poor laws 24, which protected the idle from the consequences of their sloth, should be repealed and the Government should establish "workhouses 25 … where such as will not work for themselves may be compelled to work for others" (in Appleby 1978, p. 151).

Sayings emphasising the sinfulness of sloth proliferated through Western Europe, summed up in a number of very similar English proverbs: "Idleness is the beginning of all sin"; "The devil makes work for idle hands"; "Idleness breeds vice"; "Idleness is the devil's workshop". If sloth was sin, indigence and pauperism were its consequences.

By the 18th century it was well understood that indigence was closely tied to immorality. The harshness of the workhouses between the 17th and 20th centuries was necessary to discourage the moral depravity of sloth. And, just as the evils of idleness were denounced, so the virtues of *industry* were heralded. There was virtue in *steady or habitual effort*, in *diligence in an employment*, in applying oneself in a disciplined way to productive endeavour, in "adopting those habits of industry, which always tend to steadiness and sobriety of conduct, and to consequent material wealth and prosperity" (Codere 1951, p. 24).

The morality of work

There was a *morality* in the consistent, daily commitment of the individual to work, to industriousness 26. The individual gained respect and status through clearly demonstrating a consistent, continual commitment to harnessing his or her environment in the interests of accumulation and production. A *conspicuous* commitment to *industry* became the primary evidence of the individual's commitment to upholding the central moral values of Western Europe.

In any community, the morality of individuals is measured in terms of consistent commitment to the central tenets and understandings which drive and give force to systems of status and respect in the community. In Western

Europe it became an accepted fact that "responsible people" work hard, and that, as Locke (1982, p. 27) said, "*labour makes the far greatest part of the value of things*" 27. So, it was entirely necessary that individuals who worked hard should retain possession of the things whose value they had thus increased and this "necessarily introduces *private possessions*" (Locke 1982, p. 22). Hard work gives value to objects, and the evidence of hard work is, therefore, an accumulation of private property. In order to demonstrate the virtues of individuals it was necessary that those who created value should possess the objects within which that value was expressed.

The accumulation of private property *by individuals* was both just and appropriate since, through their own industry, they had created the property they accumulated. It was neither appropriate nor just that those who created the wealth should be required to share it with others who did not create wealth. Rather, those who did not create wealth for themselves should be compelled to do so. Otherwise they would be a drain on those who through their own productive endeavour had accumulated wealth and had, in this way, demonstrated their commitment to the central moral values of their communities.

Responsible governments ensured that the conditions encouraging and facilitating such activity were maintained, and that those who were "not responsible" were "made responsible" by making the condition of their lives as difficult as possible until they committed themselves to work. This has remained, throughout the 20th century, a prime responsibility of Government. Governments should educate and train the "workforce", and should provide every inducement and encouragement to people to "work". They should, conversely, strongly discourage idleness and vagrancy 28.

For the past several centuries Western European communities have had (and most still have) strongly enforced laws calculated to ensure that people were "gainfully employed" and had "visible means of support". Anything which might discourage people from strong and continuous commitment to work should be removed in the interests of ensuring that people "worked for their living". Over the past four centuries concerted efforts have been made by responsible Western Europeans to strip people of any other means of subsistence than work aimed at increasing the cash worth and extent of their private property.

From subsistence to open-ended accumulation

As a legacy of the feudal period in Western Europe, many poor peasants between the 16th and 19th centuries owned small parcels of land which provided all or part of their subsistence. They also had rights of use in areas of common land attached to manorial estates but available to all associated with the estate, whether small farmers or rural labourers, where they could forage and graze animals. The land was used for subsistence, not for increasing cash income or private property.

This focus in life was one which emphasised *communally determined limitations on the accumulation of property*, not an open ended accumulation of private property 29. As such, in the minds of the responsible people of

Western Europe, the land these people held was being used “inappropriately”. Therefore, as Locke (1982 Ch. 5) reasoned, it should be forfeited to those who would use it “productively”, that is, to increase cash income and private property.

Not only were these peasants using the lands they controlled inappropriately, because they obtained a part of their subsistence from it, wage labour, for many of them, was an additional source of income used to augment the subsistence obtained from their own or common land. In consequence, the “labouring poor”, who were not strongly oriented to the emerging status systems based on accumulation and conspicuous consumption which were driving activity among those who had come to be called the “middle class”, were unreliable workers. They seemed ready to work for only so long as was necessary to obtain the additional income required for a subsistence lifestyle. If they did not need the money, they saw little reason to work.

By the end of the 17th century it was already recognised by those who were gaining control in Western Europe that so long as the poor had access to land and could supply part of their own subsistence requirements independently of the emerging work oriented economy, they would continue to treat work in this way. The answer, of course, was to strip away the small parcels of land from the poor, and to take away their access to common land, making them entirely dependent on work in the cash economy for their subsistence. The reasons given for the expropriation of these lands were varied, including, of course, Locke’s argument that land-holding should be rationalised to increase its economic productivity.

The upshot was that in England, between 1700 and 1845, more than seven million acres of common land was expropriated and consolidated in the hands of larger landowners who put the greater part of it into pasturage. Considerably more land was transferred from small to large landowners through the termination of leaseholds and through challenging ownership rights where small-holders lacked documentation supporting their ownership [30], though no records are available to determine the amount of land transferred in this way. Those who lost their lands in this consolidation became wholly dependent on cash work and increasingly reliant on the social welfare provided by parishes under the Poor Laws. As Toynbee (1884) described,

> between 1710 and 1760 some 300,000 acres were enclosed, between 1760 and 1843 nearly 7,000,000 underwent the same process. Closely connected with the enclosure system was the substitution of large for small farms. In the first half of the century Laurence, though approving of consolidation from an economic point of view, had thought that the odium attaching to an evicting landlord would operate as a strong check upon it. But these scruples had now disappeared. Eden in 1795 notices how constantly the change was effected, often accompanied by the conversion of arable to pasture; and relates how in a certain Dorsetshire village he found two farms where twenty years ago there had been thirty. The process went on uninterruptedly into the present century… The consolidation of farms reduced the number of farmers, while the enclosures drove the labourers off the land, as it became impossible for them to exist without their rights of pasturage for sheep and geese on common lands… the fields being now in pasturage, the farmers had little occasion for

> labourers, and the poor being thereby thrown out of employment had, of course, to be supported by the parish. Here too the evil was aggravated by the fate of the ejected farmers, who sank into the condition of labourers, and swelled the numbers of the unemployed.

In the late 18th century, responsible people in Western Europe, still exercised by the laziness and vagrancy which seemed endemic amongst the "labouring poor" (consequences, of course, of their particular understanding of the relationship between possessions and social status (see Subsistence and Status)), sought further ways in which to compel people who seemed content with a subsistence lifestyle to consistent industry. High on the list of means of achieving the desired change in orientation was education. As E. P. Thompson describes,

> William Temple, when advocating, in 1770, that poor children be sent at the age of four to work-houses where they should be employed in manufactures and given two hours' schooling a day, was explicit about the socialising influence of the process:
>
> There is considerable use in their being, somehow or other, constantly employed at least twelve hours a day, whether they earn their living or not; for by these means, we hope that the rising generation will be so habituated to constant employment that it would at length prove agreeable and entertaining to them… (1967, p. 84)

But this was a slow process and seemed all-too-often not to succeed. There needed to be other ways of ensuring that people would commit themselves to consistent employment and many other approaches were tried. Among the most extreme solutions to the problem was the remedy spelled out by Townsend,

> The poor know little of the motives which stimulate the higher ranks to action - pride, honour, and ambition. In general it is only hunger which can spur and goad them on to labour; yet our laws have said, they shall never hunger. The laws, it must be confessed, have likewise said that they shall be compelled to work. But then legal constraint is attended with too much trouble, violence, and noise; creates ill will, and never can be productive of good and acceptable service: whereas hunger is not only a peaceable, silent, unremitted pressure, but, as the most natural motive to industry and labour, it calls forth the most powerful exertions; and, when satisfied by the free bounty of another, lays a lasting and sure foundation for good will and gratitude... The wisest legislator will never be able to devise a more equitable, a more effectual, or in any respect a more suitable punishment, than hunger is for a disobedient servant. Hunger will tame the fiercest animals, it will teach decency and civility, obedience and subjection, to the most brutish, the most obstinate, and the most perverse.
> (Joseph Townsend 1786 [31])

It was not long before British authorities moved to institute such measures. The Speenhamland [32] decrees in the late 18th century allowed employers to pay "market rates" for labour, which soon drove wages below what was necessary to maintain subsistence. Parishes were required to make up the shortfall from their rates. This soon placed parish finances under great strain.

Then, with the poor still resisting the insistent demands of "responsible people" that they work consistently for whatever wages they were paid, the Poor Laws were amended in 1834, freeing parishes from responsibility for ensuring a subsistence living for workers. The poor found themselves compelled to work at whatever wage they could get, and wages, in line with Townsend's recommendations, were deliberately calculated to provide only a minimal subsistence to the worker and his or her dependents. Those who did not work, did not eat. And those who could find no work were placed in institutions which were deliberately organized to instill a sense of foreboding and unworthiness in those who were unemployed.

The effect of these changes was to strongly disguise the problem of joblessness in a society where increasing numbers of people had been reduced to wage labour as their only means of subsistence. As Toynbee (1884) says " the effect of the new law was very remarkable. As an example, take the case of Sussex. Before 1834 there were in that county over 6000 able-bodied paupers; two years later there were 124." Those who had work were no longer eligible for poor relief, despite their wages being adjudged lower than required for subsistence, and so were removed from the registers. Many others, unwilling to move into workhouses, attempted to survive without welfare support. What emerged during the 16th century as a belief in the virtue of industry and the sinfulness of sloth, had become, by the early 19th century, a ruthless policy of exploitation and compulsion to work, with all social welfare supports removed so that people had no option but to take whatever work was offered at whatever wage the market set 33.

In the 19th century, during Western Europe's expansion into the rest of the world, the emphasis on the importance of work was as strong, if not stronger than in the 17th and 18th centuries. Western Europeans took their commitment to work with them as they invaded the rest of the world. A common theme of those who wrote on the problems in the countries and communities for which they felt they had to take responsibility was that "traditional" people seemed so unwilling to put in a "full day's work".

As Bishop Smythies of UMCA mission wrote to his supporters at home concerning African communities east of Lake Nyasa, "If all was quiet and there was no fear of… marauding tribes and yet no civilisation to quicken thought, in a climate where everything comes easily to hand… the people would have nothing to keep them from becoming more and more enervated." (in Cairns 1965: 79). Henry Drummond, commenting on the people of the same area, claimed that "apart from eating, their sole occupation is to talk, and this they do unceasingly" (Cairns 1965: 79). As Cairns claims of European attitudes, "the general attitude was that work, more for the sake of the virtues which it fosters than for the wealth it created, was necessary to a well-ordered purposeful life" (1965: 79).

Western Europeans, intent on colonial expansion, believed that they were on a "civilising" mission and that one of their most important responsibilities was to teach people in other countries and communities to *work*. Bernard Magubane provides a succinct description of Western attitudes toward non-Western communities in his description of relations between Europeans and Africans in

South Africa,

> Before they were physically subdued, African traditional societies with plenty of land confronted the requirements of capitalism with difficult problems. The wants of an African living within his subsistence agriculture, cultivating his own *mealies* (corn), were confined to a *karosss* (skin cloak) and some pieces of home-made cotton cloth. The prospects of leaving his family to work in a mine, in order to earn wages with which he could buy things he had no use for, did not at once appeal to him. James Bryce observed that, "The white men, anxious to get to work on the goldreefs, are annoyed at what they call the stupidity and laziness of the native, and usually clamour for legislation to compel the native to come to work, adding, of course, that regular labour would be the best thing in the world for natives." (Magubane 1975, p. 233)

This belief in the virtue of work was, by the 19th century, so ingrained in Western Europeans that they *knew* that it was both logical and rational that people be compelled to work, no matter what their objections. Western Europeans had a moral duty to teach the world to work, and they went about it in non-Western communities with a missionary zeal.

Why Work is Moral 34

This emphasis upon the importance of work has scarcely diminished in the 20th century. Writers as diverse as Thorstein Veblen, John Dewey, Hannah Arendt and Daniel Bell have argued that work has as Bell put it, "always stood at the center of moral consciousness" (in Wolfe 1997 p. 559) 35 The most important duties and responsibilities of community members, those which, as Kant (1909) has suggested, secure our own "freedom", are strongly reinforced through the ways in which they are made "necessary" to both individual and communal wellbeing. People in Western communities have a range of "common-sense" reasons why everyone *should* be involved in work. Because, as Kant has explained, concepts of morality and duty go hand in hand, the *duties of life*, whether or not they are consciously labeled "moral" within the community, are of the same order, and supported by the same rational framework as the consciously recognised "moral issues" of the community 36. In Western communities, a wide range of common-sense reasons are given as to why people must be involved in work.

One set of reasons relates to the economic wellbeing of the whole. The economic wellbeing of the country *requires* that everyone commit themselves to consistent hard-work – only in this way will the gross national product continue to grow and the economy "expand". One of the problems faced by those who are intent on "economic efficiency" is that too many people are prepared to take from the system without being prepared to contribute to it through "putting in an honest day's work". Too many people "take sickies", too much time is "lost" through avoidable breakdowns and through absenteeism. People seem prepared to put "holidays" before productivity and so the country is no longer able to compete effectively with other countries where people are "more committed" to work. Bureaus of Statistics publish tables showing "days lost" due to a lack of commitment to work, to absenteeism 37.

A second set of reasons relates to the economic wellbeing of the individual and his or her dependents. People who don't put work first fail to establish

themselves financially and so become a drain on the community through becoming, at one time or another in their lives, dependent on “welfare”. Their children do not receive the advantages in education and in quality of life which those who conscientiously apply themselves to work are able to provide their children. Consequently, their children become “disadvantaged” and in later life are unable to “achieve their potential” in the world of work.

A third set of reasons relates to the community perceptions of the individual and to the self-image of the person. Those who diligently apply themselves to work become “successful” and grow in self-confidence and in poise. They earn respect from others and become recognised as dependable and reliable (or, alternatively, as ruthless and dominant). In consequence they become leaders, those whom others know will be able to take up responsibilities and see them through. They become appealing to others and, because of the attributes they have demonstrated through their success in work, become successful in non-work situations.

These understandings permeate Western consciousness. They are presented and reinforced in many different ways. Perhaps the most pervasive and effective ways in which they are reinforced are through the varieties of forms of product and service promotion and in the various forms of “entertainment” to which the vast majority of Western people subject themselves for the three or four hours a day they spend in watching television. Whether in salacious soap operas, or in advertisements for motor cars, those most admired are usually those who seem to have been able to succeed in the workplace, in the economic arena. They are wealthy, suave, sophisticated, with the easy grace of those who know their *own worth*. They provide models against which we can measure ourselves or that we can attempt to live by. They provide reinforcement of the primary elements of the moral code by which Western people, as a result of a four-century-long re-education program, try to live.

Even when these forms of moral education [38] deal with people who are involved in “illegal” activity, the heroes are seen to be living by the central moral tenets of Western communities. They are successful in business or they are assiduously applying themselves to the “work” in which they are involved. To the successful go the spoils! And those spoils include the sexual conquests and dominance which successful people are assumed to enjoy. Those who are successful in business, who have demonstrated their morality through their economic achievements, are able to “afford” the kinds of leisure activities which most of us can only envy! To them belong the fast cars, the yachts, the lavish entertainments and the lifestyles of the “rich and famous”. Far from challenging the central moral tenets of Western communities, the magazines and television entertainments of the West strongly reinforce them.

The reason why most Western people do not see the forms of behaviour and interaction being reinforced as *moral* is that the most important moral issues of a community are so obviously self-rewarding that we do not consciously focus on them. The West is no longer centrally concerned with sexual morality – that belongs to a past age, when people were prudish and no-one seemed prepared even to talk about the possibility of sexual adventure. It is no longer centrally concerned with violence since most of its entertainments glorify it, though it is roundly condemned in the abstract. It is, of course, centrally

concerned with social justice: in a "user pays" environment people get what they deserve! And it is centrally concerned with economic success, which is *assumed* to be related to work.

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[1] It was this intuitive recognition of the verity of the basic principles underpinning his ideas which was used by Stanley Jevons (who was one of the pioneers in spelling out the basic principles of neo-classical economics) in 1871, as evidence of the correctness of his assertions in his argument for the universal validity of economic propositions. As he says, "The science of economics, however, is in some degree peculiar, owing to the fact, pointed out by J. S. Mill and Cairnes, that its ultimate laws are known to us immediately by intuition… "(1970, p. 88). What is known "intuitively" is that which is fundamental to processes of thought, action, interaction and organisation in any community, those forms and understandings which constitute the principles and presumptions of what I have elsewhere called the "cognitive

frame" and the "primary ideology" of communities (cf Geddes (History of the Emergence of Capitalism)). These are, of course, specific to particular communities, so, what makes "intuitive sense" in one community may well seem less than rational in another.

2 See History of the Emergence of Capitalism for a summary of the processes through which Western Europeans moved from feudal to modern forms of meaning, interaction, organisation and activity.

3 See Thompson 1980, 1967; Polanyi 1957; Wilson 1969 for descriptions of the experiences of those on the receiving end of this four-century-long re-education program.

4 Were Third World governments to implement some of the measures used by Western Europeans during this re-education period, Western nations would be the first to loudly protest the inhumane treatment and insist that those governments be pressured to change their policies.

5 It has become fashionable to use the term "class" in defining variant socio-economic groupings in communities. This, however, too easily links the features of 19th century classes to what is a very different phenomenon. The "lower classes" were not simply the economically disadvantaged, they were the groups within the community who were being re-educated to take their place within a capitalist system. People who have already accepted that their lives should be organised in terms of capitalism can still find themselves economically disadvantaged, but they are not members of the "lower classes" as traditionally defined.

6 And, because these principles are even more fundamental than linguistic principles (indeed they underpin linguistic principles), while the superficial organisation of life might be changed as a result of Western pressures, the underlying rationale for behaviour will remain very consistent through time. This is why, although communities appear to change and adapt when they are forced to accept new ways of organisation, over time, those ways inevitably become reshaped to make them consistent with the underlying cognitive principles and structures through which community members make sense of themselves and their worlds. As anthropologists have come to realise over the past thirty years, the term *culture* should not be seen as referring to immutable forms of organisation, interaction and meaning. The *surface features* of human community, which include what has over the past century been referred to as culture, can change considerably, yet remain consonant with the underlying principles expressed in those surface forms. So, all "cultural" change within communities must be understood in terms of the fundamental cognitive principles which order both thought and community (see Crick & Geddes (eds) 1998 Chapter 4 for further discussion, also History of the Emergence of Capitalism)

7 see Mary M. Crain 1991 for an interesting discussion of non-Western perceptions of and attitudes toward work in the Ecuadorian Andes. While such reorganisation and reassertion of fundamental principles of categorisation and

classification will produce forms of organisation and interaction which echo those of the past, they will, of course, not simply replicate past forms. First, any form which emerges is simply one of a range of possible forms, any or all of which might be generated from the same fundamental categorical principles. So, even if the same principles were in operation one would find different surface forms; secondly, the principles themselves are not static, they change through time (see History of the Emergence of Capitalism) and the forms of interaction and organisation which emerge will reflect such changes.

8 The rationality of a community is, of course, always relative to its cognitive frame.

9 See Geddes 1993; Geddes *et al* 1994 ch. 3 for discussion of the term.

10 see Geddes & Crick 1997, pp. 214ff for some of the other forces involved

11 For this reason, one needs to be very careful in employing the term when discussing organisation and activity in non-Western communities. The term carries all the baggage of Western presumptions of what is important in life, including key presumptions of the primary ideologies of Western communities (see History of the Emergence of Capitalism).

12 We need to clearly differentiate between causes and consequences when understanding the nature of work. As we will see later, cash income has historically been used as a primary means of enforcing and reinforcing the commitment of Western people to "habits of industry". And, over the past two decades, as Western people have recommitted themselves to their economic formulations of life, it has, once again been used in this way, with "user pays" schemes being promoted and reliance on Government welfare payments being challenged. It is, therefore, understandable that Western people strongly link the two. This does not mean, however, that work and income must logically *necessarily* be tied to each other. What it does demonstrate is that Western people have so closely tied both material and social wellbeing to "habits of industry", that is, to work, that they can scarcely conceive of any other means for distributing income.

13 See History of the Emergence of Capitalism for an examination of the reasons why Western Europeans became so concerned that individuals "perform" to their potential.

14 In recent years, as Brendan Gleeson, describes "some members of the British Disability Studies community in particular, such as Paul Abberley and Mike Oliver, have been exploring historical materialism as a social theory which might illuminate the genesis and reproduction of disablement in Western societies. These theorists have insisted upon an important conceptual distinction between impairment, which describes a real physiological limitation or absence (e.g., of a limb), and disability, which is the socially imposed state of exclusion or constraint which impaired individuals may be forced to endure (Oliver, 1990 & 1996).".

[15] See History of the Emergence of Capitalism p. 95ff for discussion of this deep felt need in Western communities for individuals to be "independent"

[16] These times have not always been available to Western workers. They have been negotiated between those who believe they have a moral responsibility to ensure that work is taken seriously and those who represent the workers and who, themselves, feel that people have a moral responsibility to work. The times negotiated have always been justified in terms of the overall increased efficiency of workers when they are allowed these times of relaxation and leisure. This is why, if a person uses these times in ways which do not refresh and re-equip him or her for work, employers have always believed they have the “right” to challenge the use being made of leisure time.

[17] So important is work to most people in Western communities that it seems not only desirable but necessary that other forms of organisation and activity be geared to supporting it or to preparing people to better perform in the world of work. Education in Western communities is not geared to increasing knowledge or to the pursuit of wisdom or “truth”, it is geared to equipping people to more effectively participate in the “workforce” and few people in those communities would argue that it should be otherwise.

[18] Decreasingly defined as the production of goods and services, and more and more defined as the production of a cash income. That is, whereas being “productive” was considered centrally important with the cash return secondary, now “material success” is the focus and being “productive” is increasingly assessed by the cash return for one’s endeavours. This is one of the reasons why we now sense that we live in a “consumer society”, rather than in a “producer society”. The most direct evidence of our ability to “get cash” is our levels of consumption. This leads, inevitably, to extending our consumption beyond our income so that we are also living in a “credit society”. The pressures to spend come not only from advertising, they also come from our own self-image, from our need to show ourselves and others that we really are “successful”.

[19] See Sewell & Wilkinson (1992); Jenkins (1994); Geddes & Crick (1997, pp. 214-9)

[20] See Subsistence and Status for further discussion

[21] See Geddes & Crick 1997, p. 195ff for a discussion of the nature of “needs” in Western communities.

[22] See Locke 1982, ch. 5; History of the Emergence of Capitalism, pp. 100ff for further discussion

[23] These have been dealt with in greater detail in History of the Emergence of Capitalism

[24] In British history, a body of laws undertaking to provide relief for the poor, developed in sixteenth-century England and maintained, with various changes, until after World War II. The Elizabethan Poor Laws, as codified in 1597-98,

were administered through parish overseers, who provided relief for the aged, sick, and infant poor, as well as work for the able-bodied in workhouses. Late in the 18th century, this was supplemented by the so-called Speenhamland system of providing allowances to workers who received wages below what was considered a subsistence level. The resulting increase in expenditures on public relief was so great that a new Poor Law was enacted in 1834, based on a harsher philosophy that regarded pauperism among able-bodied workers as a moral failing. The new law provided no relief for the able-bodied poor except employment in the workhouse, with the object of stimulating workers to seek regular employment rather than charity. (Poor Law" Britannica Online. <http://www.eb.com:180/cgi-bin/g?DocF=micro/475/86.html> [Accessed 07 June 1999].)

[25] Institutions to provide employment for paupers and sustenance for the infirm, found in England from the 17th through the 19th century and also in such countries as The Netherlands and in colonial America. The Poor Law of 1601 in England assigned responsibility for the poor to parishes, which later built workhouses to employ paupers and the indigent at profitable work. It proved difficult to employ them on a profitable basis, however, and during the 18th century workhouses tended to degenerate into mixed receptacles where every type of pauper, whether needy or criminal, young or old, infirm, healthy, or insane, was dumped. These workhouses were difficult to distinguish from houses of correction. According to prevailing social conditions, their inmates might be let out to contractors or kept idle to prevent competition on the labour market. The Poor Law Amendment of 1834 standardized the system of poor relief throughout Britain, and groups of parishes were combined into unions responsible for workhouses. Under the new law, all relief to the able-bodied in their own homes was forbidden, and all who wished to receive aid had to live in workhouses. Conditions in the workhouses were deliberately harsh and degrading in order to discourage the poor from relying on parish relief. Conditions in the workhouses improved later in the 19th century, and social-welfare services and the social-security system supplanted workhouses altogether in the first half of the 20th century. ("workhouse" Britannica Online. <http://www.eb.com:180/cgi-bin/g?DocF=micro/644/75.html> [Accessed 07 June 1999]).

[26] See How Born Again Christians rescued Capitalism for a description of the deep religious commitment of Western Europeans, since the 18th century, to the moral requirements of Capitalism.

[27] So convinced were Western Europeans of the value-creating nature of labour as spelt by Locke (1982) that through the 18th and 19th centuries the “labour theory of value” became the standard for both classical economics and for Marx. Locke’s argument for the logical primacy of individualised property and its necessary connection with individual industry has, in the late 20th century, remained central to neo-liberal arguments for the importance of private accumulation as both a reward of and spur to industriousness.

[28] A vagrant was one who was able to work but preferred instead to live idly, often as a beggar. The punishment for this, during the 18th and 19th

centuries, ranged from branding and whipping to conscription into the military services and transportation to penal colonies. During the 20th century, this form of behaviour continued to be punished though the severity of the punishments lessened as the century unfolded.

29 see Subsistence and Status for further discussion of these alternative emphases in accumulation

30 Since, under the feudal system, such rights had been transferred through generations without written documentation of the transfers, many smallholders had no "legal" evidence to support their customary ownership rights. Larger landowners, usually claiming primary rights over manorial estates within which these smallholders held their land, used their positions to disenfranchise those who held areas within their estates, incorporating their lands into their farm holdings. The smallholders were usually displaced with little or no compensation.

31 Townsend Joseph 1786, *A Dissertation on the Poor Laws*, http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/townsend/poorlaw.html [accessed 23rd Nov. 2009]

32 Practice of economic relief for the poor that was adopted over much of England following a decision by local magistrates at the Pelican Inn, Speenhamland, near Newbury, Berkshire, on May 6, 1795. Instead of fixing minimum wages for poor labourers, the practice was to raise workingmen's income to an agreed level, the money to come out of the parish rates. This allowance was designated as the price of 3 gallon loaves a week for each man (a gallon loaf was 8 1/2 pounds [about 4 kilograms]) plus the cost of 1 1/2 loaves each for a wife and every child. The money was to cover all expenses. This allowance system lasted until the enactment of the Poor Law Amendment (1834). Contemporary commentators and modern historians alike have condemned the system; the former claim it encouraged the poor in idleness, while the latter stress the opportunity it gave unscrupulous employers and landlords to reduce wages and raise rents respectively, knowing their depredations would be redressed from the public pocket. ("Speenhamland system" Britannica Online. <http://www.eb.com:180/cgi-bin/g?DocF=micro/560/22.html> [Accessed 07 June 1999])

33 See Geddes & Crick 1997, Chapter 6 for economic developments in the 20th century which have, once again, used the 18th and 19th century arguments that "social welfare" saps the moral integrity of people and should be drastically scaled down, with "market forces" ensuring the wellbeing of communities and individuals.

34 This is of course an issue of debate in philosophical circles (cf Wolfe (1997) for an exploration of the debate). Here we are assuming work to be a moral imperative. However, it is not a *universal* moral imperative. It is a moral issue only for Western communities and for people who have learned not only to behave, but also *think* in Western terms.

35 For the purposes of this essay we will define *morality* as acceptance of and compliance with forms of behaviour, attitude and interaction which individuals *intuitively recognise* as being of central importance to ensuring "quality of life" in their communities. Robert Greene (1997 p. 193), summarising Bonaventure, suggests that moral understandings are "apprehensions for which no reason could be given, apprehensions somehow rooted in affective human experience." (Kant's *moral imperative* below) (see footnote 1 on the nature of such intuitions). That is, community members instinctively "know" that such attitudes and behaviours are inescapable requirements of life and are inevitably rewarded. The moral obligations imposed on community members are justified through appeal to these intuitively recognised forms. As Immanuel Kant (1909) has explained, the concepts of "the moral" and of "duty" go hand in hand. As he says, "We know our own freedom- from which all moral laws and consequently all rights as well as all duties arise- only through the moral imperative, which is an immediate injunction of duty; whereas the conception of right as a ground of putting others under obligation has afterwards to be developed out of it." When a community becomes convinced that its members have certain inescapable duties and responsibilities, it buttresses and reinforces the associated forms of behaviour and organisation in a wide variety of ways so as to channel people into conformity. So, it becomes "common sense" that the person should conform to the moral order.

36 It could be argued that those issues which a community consciously recognises as "moral" and in need of conscious bolstering are those which are becoming questioned in the community. So, issues which are consciously labeled "moral issues" and debated, are those which community members sense are being marginalised and are under threat. Most of the truly moral issues of a community are so obviously "common-sense" that questioning them seems either foolish or deliberately subversive. And, the most central are so clearly simply features of the "real world" that debating compliance seems absurd.

37 Research by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Social Policy Systems and University Research Center found that in the first quarter of 1995, absenteeism in manufacturing industries increased an average of 13 percent above a similar period in 1994. The only category with a bigger absenteeism problem was furniture manufacturing at 20 percent! Figures like these are available for every industrialised country, with numerous discussion papers generated by them dealing with ways in which absenteeism might be reduced and people's commitment to work reinforced.

38 Although most people in Western communities do not see these as moral issues. To most people the "morality" of the West is something different, it relates to forms of social direction and control which are under constant challenge, such as sexual tabus and attitudes to violence. In fact, however, the central moral understandings of communities are usually so much a part of accepted behaviour that they are not focused on, or, if they are, it is in order to insist that conformity to them leads to wellbeing, to a successful life. While our forms of entertainment, driven by market pressures, tend to titillate and

"shock" through playing with the limits of acceptable behaviour, the behaviours which are projected, and the limitations being transgressed are not those central to life in Western communities. To challenge those would be considered foolish.