TOWARDS A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF WORK:
A CRITICAL APPROPRIATION OF THE THOUGHT OF
JÜRGEN HABERMAS

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The thesis makes use of the thought of the leading contemporary
philosopher/sociologist Jürgen Habermas for a critical reconstruction of
a theology of work.

After setting the agenda, the introductory chapter briefly surveys
thought about work in a selection of the sociological/philosophical
literature from Hegel to Habermas.

There follows an exposition of the relevant aspects of Habermas' thought: up to the 1970s (chapter 2), and in the 1981 Theorie des
kommunikativen Handelns (chapter 3). Chapter 4 consists in a critical
examination of themes from Habermas' account in the light of the secondary
literature.

The last two chapters deal specifically with the relevant theological
literature in the light of the above. Chapter 5 considers themes therein
such as the domination of nature and the importance to be attached to
social labour in the human enterprise. The final chapter attempts a
reapplication of the themes of sabbath, cross, creation, kingdom and
vocation in a reformulated theology of work.

The thesis argues against the romantic rejection of technology found in
some of the philosophical and theological literature, and against the
advisability of tying theological categories such as "creation" to the
performance of social labour. It suggests that these categories should
instead be related to the transformation of social relations, of which the
relations of production form a part.

To the best of my knowledge, there exists no other significant work
relating the thought of Habermas, including his 1981 magnum opus, to the
issue of a theology of work.
This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.
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To Sr. Jacqueline Picard, without whom I would not have seen the paradoxical beauty of the cross of Christ, and to my father Laurence West in loving memory, this thesis is dedicated.
ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

The Author-Date System has been used throughout in the footnotes, with the exception of the following works in German and English by Habermas, for which the abbreviations given below apply. Other works may be identified by reference to the main bibliography, commencing on page 255, to which the reader is also referred for information about the contents of the various English and German editions of books by Habermas. The reader's attention is further drawn to the subdivision of this bibliography into three parts: works by Habermas in German, works by Habermas in English, and other works.


PKHI 'A Postscript to Knowledge and Human Interests', in J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, second edition, London, 1978, pp. 351-386 [=1978c]

PPP Philosophical-Political Profiles, London, 1983 [=1983b]


The following abbreviation is also used:


In running text, the use of single quotation marks has been reserved for quotations from other authors. Double quotation marks are used for other purposes, such as the denotation of technical terms.
Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth' .... So God created man in his own image ... male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it ... behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed ... and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food' .... And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. [Genesis 1:26-31, RSV] [1]

And to Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, "You shall not eat of it", cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you .... In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return' .... therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. [Genesis 3:17-19, 23, RSV]

The pastors, the theologians and the faithful who demand that a theology of work should be produced quickly, which would be well suited to present circumstances, well-structured, obviously of universal significance, and which would leave no room for question or doubt, seem to forget that work has enjoyed very different reputations in Christianity down the centuries, sometimes very bad, sometimes very good. Is work blessed or is it cursed? Is it the imitation of God, the creator, or the curse of God on the sin of Adam? [2]

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[1] For list of abbreviations, see pp. viii-ix.
1.1 Hebrew myths and the human condition

In the second of the Hebrew myths of origins quoted above, from the account of the Fall in Genesis 3, there is a sober lack of high-flown rhetoric about the existential or cosmic significance of work. Work, at least as known to the author, is seen as part of the curse; [3] it is an unpleasant but necessary function if we are to eat - and that is that. The spirit of this view is echoed by the contemporary theologian Karl Rahner:

There are people who surround [work] with a halo and hymn its praises as the expression of the great and glorious creative ability of mankind in the mass .... [But in fact] it is just work, that's all, a tiresome thing but tolerable enough, nothing to make a fuss about, for it comes round regularly with the clock. It sustains life on the one hand and wears life out on the other. It is a thing that cannot be avoided .... The first thing, then, that theology has to say about work is simply that it is, and will continue to be, work, tiresome and monotonous and involving the surrender of the worker's will to the demands of the daily round ... a sign of the fallen state of mankind. [4]

Work here is simply a matter of bringing a recalcitrant nature under control, of laboriously keeping down the "thorns and thistles", so as to extract the wherewithal to keep a material being in existence.

However, much recent theology has refused to see this as the only significance to be attached to work, in general and in the Genesis narratives in particular. This sort of approach concentrates more on the account of the creation in Genesis 1. God in Genesis 1, it points out, works and creates, and creates man [5] in his own image: ergo man must work too,

[3] Richardson (1952, pp. 25f), von Rad (1972, pp. 94f) and others insist that the Jahwist does not regard work as such as a result of the fall, as man already works at tilling and keeping the garden in Gen 2:15. But this is to place too much weight upon what is essentially an incidental feature of the story (compare Barth 1961, p. 472). Moreover it supposes anachronistically that the Jahwist was philosophizing about "work in general" rather than simply reflecting upon work as he knew it. See also 1.2.2 and 6.1 below.


[5] This is one instance where it is difficult to avoid sexist language while yet retaining the same sense. I use the words "man" and "his" here generically. On the issue of gender and work, see 5.2 below.
both to fulfil his own nature, and to cooperate in the completion of the cosmos. Moreover, the words 'subdue' and 'dominion' in Genesis 1:28, however understood in detail, [6] imply work on man's part as God's viceregent. [7] Work, therefore, is more a matter of co-creation or creativity [8] than of mere survival, an essential part of the fulfilling of God's purposes for individual worker, society and cosmos alike. Here are two modern examples of this sort of thought:

Work is God's intention for mankind entirely apart from sin. The ordinance of work, like every other aspect of the divine Law, is good and wholesome, and in it man can and should find blessing .... it is his proper nature to be a worker, and to be denied the opportunity of work is to be treated as something less than a human being, created in the image of God, who is himself represented as a worker. [9]

Wild nature is not enough, because it is prehuman and premoral. Through man's work the wilderness is to be made a garden ... the products of volcanoes, earthquakes and sedimentation, to be made into great sculptures and buildings. God through Christ redeems human nature in man himself; and through his work man extends redemption to wild nature. [10]

Work, then: a part of the curse, only contingently connected to human nature, a matter of mere necessary control and survival; or work a part of the divine creative ordinance, essential to human nature as such, a matter of creativity. Blessing or curse? Control or creativity?

[6] See further 1.3.1 below.
1.2 The problem of definition

1.2.1 Past and present

Let us now make a quantum leap from the Bronze Age peasant farmer of Genesis 3 to the worker of modern Britain. Several things about "work" have changed in the transition, almost to the point where it becomes misleading to use the same word in both cases.

Firstly, and most obviously, the level of technological control of the environment has been greatly increased. Moreover, our modern worker is aware that the level of this control is not static, but on the contrary is increasing ever more rapidly. Whereas the sweat and thistles were an ineluctible fact of life in ancient Palestine, the modern worker knows that, at least in principle, unpleasant tasks are replaceable by a combination of information technology and machinery. Prometheus has been unbound; man has it within his grasp to undo the curse. Yet paradoxically, this advance is also threatening: lives are devalued when identities defined in terms of a function in the community, a job, are destroyed; [11] much work is "deskilled" to the level of mere mechanical repetition; [12] and the power to destroy is given along with the power to create.

Secondly, labour has far more clearly become social labour. Whereas the Palestinian peasant to a large extent produced directly what the family needed to survive, [13] that is true of no-one in Britain today, "back to nature" communes notwithstanding. Most workers now only produce one product, and are therefore reliant upon society for the rest of their needs. [14] Moreover a large section of the workforce do not even produce a material object/commodity at all, but work in symbols: teachers, bankers, clerks etc. [15] Modern society is predicated upon the division of

labour. [16]

Thirdly and relatedly, work for many members of modern society is coterminous with paid employment. [17] This usually entails, among other things:

(1) a distinct division of time (day/week/year/life-span) into work and leisure, [18] accompanied by a commodification of time. [19]

(2) a division of space between home and workplace, accompanied by high levels of institutionalization and surveillance in the latter, [20] and

(3) a network of social relationships connected with the workplace, distinct from those of the home. [21]

None of which applies to the ancient peasant farmer.

If we now return to the question posed in the opening section, and ask whether there is more to work than mere survival, it is clear that for the modern worker there now is. For the modern worker, along with the pay cheque, comes also a social network which constitutes part of his or her identity, social status, and (usually at least) some sense of achievement and/or of contributing to society at large. [22] "Work" has clearly become a much more complex phenomenon than it was in Genesis 3. Yet this only presses more urgently a second question: that of definition. Can we pin down what work is, so as to be able to say something useful about it?

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[16] The implications of this for social integration were classically investigated by Durkheim in The Division of Labour in Society (Durkheim 1933). See further chapter 3 below.
1.2.2 Work and Wittgenstein

Here we hit a snag that dogs much of the philosophical discussion about work. A definition that confines work to what happens on production lines in factories is too narrow — according to that definition most people, even in the modern industrialized societies, do very little work. [23] However, the other extreme seems equally unsatisfactory. Consider this definition from Pope John Paul II:

It is man's duty to work. It is by his work that he must procure his daily bread; by his work that he must contribute to the continuing development of the technical arts and sciences; by his work — of particular importance, this — that he must help to raise ever higher the moral and cultural standards of the society in which he shares his life with his brothers. The word 'work' means everything that man accomplishes, whatever its nature or attendant circumstances. [24]

This definition potentially includes almost all forms of human physical or mental activity, and thus is too broad if we want to discuss work as opposed to human action in general. Once we start narrowing this definition down, however (for instance to "employment" or to "physical labour") we start excluding cases that we usually think of as work in some sense, such as housework, or studying for examinations. In the Christian tradition we might even be inclined to call prayer "work"! [25]

So we have a synchronic and a diachronic problem. Not only does the nature of work change over historical time, but also 'the contemporary forms of social activity usually designated "work" have neither a common rationality nor shared empirical characteristics'. [26] The activities we usually classify as work bear only a family resemblance to each other in Wittgenstein's sense, rather than all instantiating some essence of "work"

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[23] In West Germany in 1980 about 73 per cent of the workforce were employed in service industries rather than in manufacturing (Offe 1985, p. 327, note 9).
as such". [27]

Bearing this problem in mind, in what follows I shall be paying particular attention to "work" in the sense of the production of the material basis of life within the economic system. There are three reasons why this is a crucial aspect of work to examine:

(1) It remains one constant factor [28] during human social evolution: a material being must interchange with its material environment in order to survive.

(2) It involves considering work in relation to other problematic phenomena of the modern world, such as the ambiguities of modern science and technology, and the ecological question.

(3) Most importantly, one whole tradition of thought, that stemming from Hegel and Marx, regards precisely this aspect of work as absolutely fundamental to an understanding of the human condition.

It is to this Hegel-Marx tradition (with certain important caveats, as will become clear below) that Habermas belongs.

1.3 Two key questions

I have already hinted at two key questions that will underlie much of the discussion of this thesis. We may conveniently make them explicit in relation to the Genesis 1 passage quoted at the beginning. The first is the question of the problematic status of "control" and "domination" in human life.

[28] Although, in view of Wittgenstein above, we need also to be aware of how it changes, it is impossible to conceive of a human society in which work of this kind did not occur.
1.3.1 Control or communication

The injunction to 'subdue the earth' and 'have dominion' over the other species in Genesis 1:28 [29] has attracted considerable attention in recent years. Some writers have cheerfully endorsed it. [30] But to others [31] it epitomizes all that is wrong with modernity in general, and with modern scientific technology in particular. [32] Painfully aware of the evils of the ecological problem and the arms race, to look no further, this group of writers calls into question the legitimacy of the control of nature upon which science and technology are predicated. They present the alternative of a communicative harmony with nature, in which the human being is "at home" in the cosmos rather than dominating and exploiting it like an occupying army. Such writers are dubious about the value of the project initiated by the Enlightenment, and the modernity that is based upon it. They embrace instead various degrees of romantic reaction (of an optimistic or pessimistic kind) to the modern world.

A distinguishable position, but one sometimes to be found in the same writer, [33] can be related to the observation that 'subdue' and 'dominate' are political terms used metaphorically for human dealings with the

[29] These terms have been variously used to justify a complete subjection of the natural world to human purposes on the one hand, or the need for a sympathetic stewardship of it on the other (Passmore 1980, pp. 3-40; Attfield 1983, pp. 20-50). Insofar as it is relevant, the Hebrew roots provide little backing for the latter position. The root kbš ('subdue') is used elsewhere for bringing peoples and individuals into subjection as slaves (Jeremiah 34:11,16; 2Chronicles 28:10; Nehemiah 5:5), for raping a woman (Esther 7:8), and for treading down an enemy in battle (Zechariah 9:15). The root rdh ('have dominion') is used for the ruling of enemies (Psalms 110:2; Isaiah 14:6) [Brown, Driver and Briggs 1968, pp. 461, 921f]. This raises the general problem of biblical hermeneutics, which cannot be dealt with here. See, for example, Thiselton 1980.


[31] See for example Gorz 1980, and several of the figures discussed in 1.4 and 5.2 below. Leiss 1972 provides a useful discussion.


[33] Gorz is a good example.
natural world. [34] Writers in this camp argue that the same pattern of reason tends to inform our attitudes to other persons and to the world of nature. Thus, they argue, in our technocratic society, 'the total domination of nature inevitably entails a domination of people by the techniques of domination'. [35] These writers are usually hostile to the pervasive use of power for social control in modern life - be it direct military or police power, bureaucratic power, or methods of surveillance and control in the workplace - and they locate the basis of much of this power in the various modern technologies that are also used for controlling nature. Rejecting this social control in the name of freedom, they argue that our interpersonal relationships cannot be transformed without a corresponding transformation of our relationship to nature.

Variations on these positions will be elucidated further in 1.4 below, and considered explicitly in relation to Habermas' work in 2.2. As suggested, the status of science, technology, bureaucracy, and Enlightenment thought are all tied up with this question of the status of "control".

1.3.2 The centrality of work

In 1.1 above, I noted a disagreement in the theological literature concerning the degree of importance to be attached to work. Whereas for some writers work is mundane and uninteresting, merely instrumental in keeping human life in existence, for others it is expressive of the very creative capacity that renders the human being imago Dei. For the latter, work is an activity of profound significance, that is to be interpreted using important theological categories such as creation and vocation.

This fundamental disagreement over the status of work is reflected in the philosophical and sociological literature that I will shortly be examining in some detail. One position taken up there is so significant that it needs underlining even at this preliminary stage: the position defended by Karl Marx.

[34] Compare Gorz's graphic term "ecofascism" (Gorz 1980, p. 77).
For Marx, an understanding of work is to all intents and purposes the key that unlocks the meaning of the whole of human history. The way in which work is organized, and the technology that it employs, are in his opinion ultimately determinative of the structure of society as a whole: of its laws, its politics, and its ideas - including its religious ideas. [36] Moreover, Marx regards human work as the process through which the species creates itself. [37] Work is not only the determinant of social life as it is now lived, but also the agent of its transformation. Thus to understand work in all its various dimensions is to understand the one utterly basic fact of human existence. [38]

This Marxian belief in the centrality of work has been enormously influential, both in the sociological and in the theological literature. In 5.3 below I will examine some of the latter that implicitly accepts it. But it has not gone unchallenged, even by those who are deeply influenced by Marx's ideas. [39] In 2.3 below I shall examine how Habermas deals with this aspect of his Marxian heritage, while in chapter 3 both of the key questions that I have raised come under discussion in Habermas' presentation of a model of modernity.

First, however, in order to highlight Habermas' importance and distinctiveness, I shall trace the development of some important and relevant ideas in the literature from the time of Hegel.

1.4 From Hegel to Habermas

Any history of ideas is inevitably a distortion, not only in terms of what it leaves out, but also in treating the ideas in abstraction from the concrete situation in which they arose. This is particularly true of the type of brief thumbnail sketch that follows. However, I think it is important, both for a theology of work in general, and for an understanding

[38] Compare Marx 1977, pp. 160f.
[39] See, for example, Giddens 1984, p. 243.
of Habermas in particular, to have a basic "map" of the origins and development of a small number of crucial ideas.

In each case, I make no attempt to give a balanced account of the thinker(s) involved, but merely extract a few points from their thought salient for my overall discussion.

1.4.1 Hegel: master and slave

In a famous passage of the 1807 Phenomenology of Spirit, usually known as the dialectic of the master and the slave, [40] Hegel to all intents and purposes invented modern philosophical interest in work. [41] This passage is also a locus classicus for the ineluctibly social (rather than individualistic) nature of the human consciousness, and indicates something of Hegel's philosophy of history.

In the Phenomenology, [42] Hegel presents the histories of the universe, of mankind, and of philosophy alike as an odyssey of Geist (mind or spirit) in the process of becoming self-conscious. The material universe, according to Hegel, is the result of Geist's self-positing to produce something apparently external and alien to it; and the evolution of life, consciousness and self-consciousness within it is the history of Geist coming closer and closer to recognizing itself in its creation. This progression proceeds by a series of "negations" - at once logical and ontological - whereby each stage is superseded as it falls prey to its own self-contradictory nature. The development of human consciousness is thus tied in with the evolution of the universe as a whole, both being facets of the history of Geist. This history is followed from its beginnings in a non-conceptual sense-certainty, [43] through a series of transformations, to the point of 'Absolute Knowledge or Spirit knowing itself as

[41] Although behind Hegel stands the Kantian concept of the active, synthetic consciousness; see for example Kant 1933, pp. 19, 23; compare KHI, pp. 10, 12.
Spirit'. [44] Here Geist realizes [45] that what it had all along sought to know as something other than itself (as an "object") is, in fact - itself. At this point, the self-alienation of the human condition is finally overcome; harmony is achieved. [46]

The master and slave dialectic is a crucial stage within this overall process, involving the development of self-consciousness out of consciousness. It has a suggestiveness that transcends Hegel's overall schema of absolute idealism.

Self-consciousness, suggests Hegel, cannot exist in isolation. To form a picture of itself, it needs some contrast - I can only become aware of myself when I am also aware of something that is not myself. Yet, Hegel argues, as something foreign, that external object becomes the object of desire. [47] To desire it is to wish to possess it, and thus to transform it into something that is no longer foreign. [48] But such an assimilation must leave desire unsatisfied, because self-consciousness has now destroyed the very thing that it needs for its own existence - the other. Now, then, may self-consciousness develop? The solution to this dilemma is the existence as object of another self-consciousness, [49] as this is the only entity that cannot simply be processed and negated. This launches us into a new situation, an interaction between two self-consciousnesses or persons.

Now, Hegel argues, each of these self-consciousnesses exists 'only by being acknowledged or "recognized"' by the other. [50] However, in an attempt to show that it is not attached to mere material objects - its own

[44] Ibid., p. 808.
[45] Hegel's position is that the minds of individual persons are aspects of (universal) mind itself. Thus this realization is at the same time a realization by an individual human mind and a realization by Geist (compare Singer 1983, p. 68).
[46] Although the enigmatic closing reference to history as the 'Golgotha' of Absolute Spirit suggests that Hegel was not lacking in a sense of the tragedy of history (Hegel 1931, p. 808).
[47] Ibid., p. 225.
[48] A parallel is being drawn with animal assimilation of food (Taylor 1975, pp. 150f).
[50] Ibid., p. 229.
body or that of its opposite number - each engages the other in a life-and-death struggle, risking the death, and hence loss, of both of these supports. [51] Yet actual death suits neither; so the victor in the struggle, realizing that the other is essential to him (to provide recognition) spares his life and enslaves him instead. [52]

The master, the apparent victor at this point, sets the slave to work on the material world for his benefit. [53] But this leads to a paradoxical conclusion. The slave, ceasing to be an equal person in the master's eyes, cannot provide him with adequate recognition. [54] Moreover, in working on the material world the slave shapes and fashions material objects, and in so doing makes his own ideas into something permanent - external objects. The slave thus becomes aware of his own self-consciousness in a way that the master cannot, because he sees it in front of him as something objective:

Through work and labour, however, this consciousness of the bondsman comes to itself .... The negative relation to the object passes into the form of the object, into something that is permanent and remains ... this activity giving shape and form, is at the same time the individual existence, the pure self-existence of that consciousness, which now in the work it does is externalized and passes into the condition of permanence. The consciousness that toils and serves accordingly attains by this means the direct apprehension of that independent being as its self. [55]

The slave thus achieves a higher state of self-consciousness than the master. [56]

In the Phenomenology, therefore, work is both existentially significant and an agent of social transformation. Moreover it is an integral part of the entire process of the self-positing of Geist that is the key to the universe as a whole.

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[51] Ibid., pp. 232f.
[52] Ibid., pp. 233f.
[53] Ibid., p. 235.
[54] Ibid., pp. 236f.
[55] Ibid., p. 238.
[56] Ibid., p. 237.
Now, to paraphrase a comment originally applied to Plato, the subsequent history of Marxist philosophy can be seen as a set of footnotes to Hegel's Phenomenology. And in this respect Habermas is no exception: the Phenomenology is still governing the agenda for his work - both positively and negatively - from the 1950's to the 1980's. [57] Points of contact include: (1) the importance of the ideas of dialogue, reciprocity, and consensus, (2) the need to attack and reconstruct the notion of a philosophy of history, (3) the critical analysis of the concept of alienation, (4) the attempt to present human social evolution as a rationally reconstructible process, and last, but not least, (5) the importance of work as an agent of social transformation.

1.4.2 Feuerbach and Marx: alienation

In the early writings of Karl Marx, [58] the active link between the material and the mental realms forged by Hegel is retained, but inverted. [59] Whereas for Hegel the material world is posited by Geist, and is thus at bottom a logical/mental construct, [60] for Marx the world of ideas is dependent upon the material world which is the ultimate reality. [61] In contrast to Feuerbach, however, Marx's materialism is active rather than passive. [62] Both the world and human nature are in the process of being created by human work, [63] in the context of which activity alone may human ideas be properly understood. [64] Human work replaces the self-positing of Geist - 'abstract mental labour' [65] - as the motor of, and central explanatory category for, human history.

[57] Although Habermas himself would locate his philosophical debt to Hegel elsewhere, i.e. in Hegel's Jena lectures (TP, pp. 142-169).
[63] See, for example, Marx 1976, p. 283; Capital is a "mature" work.
I shall be looking at some of these ideas in more detail whilst discussing Habermas' reconstruction of historical materialism in section 2.3 below. What interests me at this stage is Marx's adaptation of the concept of "alienation", which is mediated through Feuerbach.

Hegel had introduced the concept of "alienation" in the context of the self-positing activity of Geist. [66] Failing to recognize itself in its product, Geist had remained estranged or alienated from its own self until the achievement of Absolute Knowledge. This idea was taken up by Ludwig Feuerbach in the 1841 *The Essence of Christianity*, [67] where he reapplied it in the context of an explanation of religion. Man, he argued, has projected his essence as a "species being" into the heavens, in a way parallel to the positing by Geist of the material world. Only by means of this process does man come to recognize himself. [68] At first he mistakes what he sees for an autonomous being - God [69] - and thus while recognizing the nature of his essence, remains alienated from it. But by finally realizing that the projection (God) is a projection he can "negate" it, and repossess his own essence in full self-consciousness. [70] Thus for Feuerbach, as well as for Hegel, alienation is to be overcome by philosophy, on the level of ideas. [71]

Now for Feuerbach, religion is the essential defining feature of man, [72] and human development can most adequately be charted by a description of the process of religious development. For Marx, however, religion is merely superstructural rather than foundational. [73] Its central place is taken by work or labour, [74] and the history of the human race for Marx is most fundamentally described as a history of different forms of labour or "modes of production". [75] However, the early Marx at

[68] Ibid., p. 5.
[69] Ibid., p. 270.
[70] Ibid.
[71] A notion scathingly mocked by Marx (Marx 1977, pp. 159f).
[74] Ibid., p. 160.
[75] Ibid., pp. 389f.
least [76] retained from Feuerbach the idea of the alienation of man's essence, transposing it into the multiple alienations resulting from the operation of the capitalist economic system. Thus he fused two originally Hegelian ideas - the significance of labour as the objectification of the worker's ideas or self-consciousness, and the concept of alienation - into the new concept of "alienated labour". [77]

In the '1844 Manuscripts', [78] Marx argues that when a worker in the capitalist economic system produces a product as a wage-labourer:

(1) the object produced, as belonging to his employer, confronts him as an alien being, and, in the form of capital, enslaves him, [79] and

(2) the act of production is not truly expressive of his essence, such that his labour makes him miserable instead of happy. [80]

This, Marx argues, involves a quadruple alienation: of man from nature, which is his 'inorganic body', [81] of man from man, [82] of man from his own human essence, [83] and of man from the product of his labour. [84]

As the now-alien power of the worker's product is possessed by his employer in the form of private property, the solution to all of these forms of alienation is only to be found in an advanced form of communism: 'the positive abolition of private property and thus of human self-alienation and therefore the real reappropriation of the human essence by and for man'. [85] This, and only this, is

the genuine solution of the antagonism between man and nature and between man and man. It is the true solution of the

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[78] An early collection of manuscripts (Marx 1975, pp. 279-400), not published until 1932, and portraying a more humanist and existentialist Marx than the hitherto generally accepted picture of him. See McLellan 1980, pp. 18, 24-28.
[80] Ibid., p. 326.
[82] Ibid., pp. 329f.
[83] Ibid., p. 329.
[84] Ibid., pp. 330-332.
struggle between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution to the riddle of history, and knows itself to be this solution. [86]

Man under this communism is constituted as truly 'social man', [87] man in a completed sense, such that all of his previous history may be considered merely 'prehistory' by comparison. [88] At the same time he is reconciled with nature and other men:

Only to social man is nature available as a bond with other men .... Only as such has his natural existence become a human existence and nature itself become human. Thus society completes the essential unity of man and nature, it is the genuine resurrection of nature, the accomplished naturalism of man and the accomplished humanism of nature. [89]

For Marx, in contrast to Hegel, alienation is only to be overcome by action that establishes a new form of society. Whereas 'the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways, the point is to change it' as well. [90]

1.4.3 Bloch: utopian nature

This belief in a utopian future characterized by a reconciliation with a "resurrected" nature, was pushed to extremes in the work of Ernst Bloch. [91]

For Bloch, the human being is essentially future-orientated and utopian, 'believing in a perfect world and anticipating the future with
undying hope'. [92] This perfect world, argues Bloch, (ostensibly on the basis of the last passage from Marx quoted above) will be characterized not only by freedom and a classless society, but also by a reconciliation with nature.

In Bloch's thought this view is predicated upon a left-Aristotelian conception of matter as creative. Matter, in Bloch's opinion, has an entelechy or telos, which is continually expressing itself in new forms, and which will eventually reconcile matter with consciousness - [93] a view of matter which Newtonian mechanics fails to grasp. It is thus by no means 'a mere mechanical lump': [94] 'inorganic nature, no less than human history, has its Utopia'. [95]

At matter's higher stages of evolution, continues Bloch, it requires the participation of human subjectivity in order to realize its utopian potentiality. As Kolakowski paraphrases:

Man is a product of matter, but since he appeared on the scene he has been, as it were, in charge of its further development: he is the head of creation .... That which is 'not yet conscious' in us is correlated ... with the 'not yet' of nature itself; the subjective 'not yet' is to become explicit through our efforts, thus making manifest the essence of the universe. [96]

The result is an ultimate reconciliation of nature with history, involving the emergence of the potential subject in nature - the resurrection of a "natural subject". [97]

Two further points are relevant. Firstly, although basing himself upon a Marxian text, Bloch criticized Marx for over-estimating the importance of productive labour:

[92] Kolakowski 1978, p. 429. The definitive statement of Bloch's position in this respect is to be found in the 1959 Das Prinzip Hoffnung.
[95] Ibid., p. 440, quoting Bloch.
the man who expelled any element of fetishism from the process of production ... who banished all dreams, effective utopias and religiously garbed teleologies from history: the same man now treated the 'productive forces' in the same over-constitutive, pantheistic, and mythicizing way; and accorded to the design of a 'productive process' ultimately the same power of using and guiding which Hegel had granted the 'idea'. [98]

There is a more primal reality, which, although manifested in economics, is expressed also in religion and art. Thus labour lacks the centrality that Marx had erroneously and ironically attributed to it. Secondly, Bloch's non-Newtonian view of nature led him to postulate a non-exploitative, non-Euclidian technology. [99] But that leads on to my next section.

1.4.4 Marx and Marcuse: new society - new science?

Marx, in the final analysis, was an optimist about the promise of technological progress, arguing that it paves the way for a future communism of plenty to replace the communism of scarcity of the distant past. [100] Nevertheless he was well aware of the dehumanizing effects upon workers of the industrial revolution and the technology upon which it was founded. [101] Indeed, in Capital vol.I chapter 15, [102] and in a few pages of the Grundrisse, [103] he gives us a classical description and analysis of this aspect of nineteenth century life.

Marx's discussion of this topic, apart from a straightforward documentation of the conditions of factory workers, operated on two different levels. The first was an explanation in terms of economic principles. Denying the common-sense notion that mechanization is introduced in order to make work easier for the worker, [104] he looked for an explanation in terms of the category of "surplus value":

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[101] For both points, Marx 1975, p. 355.
Like every other instrument for increasing the productivity of labour, machinery is intended to cheapen commodities and, by shortening the part of the working day in which the worker works for himself, to lengthen the other part, the part he gives to the capitalist for nothing. The machine is a means for producing surplus-value. [105]

The incentive for the introduction of machinery was the search for profit on the part of the entrepreneur; machinery, by rendering production more efficient in terms of man-hours per unit product, gave the entrepreneur a larger profit-margin. The welfare of the wage-labourers was not under consideration at all, except insofar as they must be kept alive so as to reproduce their next generation.

But secondly, Marx also attempted to explain the experience of factory workers "from the inside", in terms of their relationship to the machines they operated. The automated machine of the factory, he argued, was a moving power that moves itself; this automaton consisting of numerous mechanical and intellectual organs, so that the workers themselves are cast merely as its conscious linkages .... Not as with the instrument, which the worker animates and makes into his organ with his skill and strength, and whose handling therefore depends upon his virtuosity. Rather it is the machine which possesses skill and strength in place of the worker, is itself the virtuoso, with a soul of its own in the mechanical laws acting through it .... The worker's activity, reduced to a mere abstraction of activity, is determined and regulated on all sides. [106]

The workers, in other words, lose control of the process of production, being reduced to mere "cogs in the machine". Organized to suit the overall process, and "deskilled", they feel themselves treated as things rather than as people. This implicit reduction of persons to things in the capitalist production process was later developed by Georg Lukács into an explanatory tool - "reification" [107] - applicable to a wide variety of phenomena in capitalist society. This aspect of Lukács' work, and Habermas' reaction to it, is discussed in 3.4 below.

[105]Ibid.
These two types of interpretation of the phenomenon of mechanization - one from "inside" dealing with the experience of the actors involved, the other from the "outside" abstracting from them in the categories of economics - Habermas terms " lifeworld" and "system" approaches respectively. We shall see in chapter 3 below that he finds the relationship between these two approaches crucial for an understanding of the complexities of late capitalist society.

Now, as regards the status of science and technology, Marx does drop some ambiguous hints in the '1844 Manuscripts' about a transformation of these under communism. Shortly after the passage about the "resurrection of nature" quoted above, [108] he writes that in communist society natural science will ... lose its one-sidedly materialist, or rather idealistic, orientation and become the basis of human science as it has already, though in an alienated form, become the basis of actual human life .... Natural science will later comprise the science of man just as much as the science of man will embrace natural science; they will be one single science. [109]

Yet this embryonic concept of a unified, humanized science is not developed, and does not lead Marx to oppose the methods of natural science as such in the present.

Herbert Marcuse, [110] however, had no such inhibitions. For Marcuse, the socialist utopia would involve a transformed relationship of man not only to his fellow man, but also to his own nature and to external nature as such. This implies the need for a new, human, technology:

The very concept of technical reason is perhaps ideological. Not only the application of technology but technology itself is domination (of nature and men) - methodical, scientific, calculated, calculating control. Specific purposes and interests of domination are not foisted upon technology 'subsequently' from the outside; they enter the very

[109] Ibid., pp. 93f.
construction of the technical apparatus. Technology is always a historical-social project; in it is projected what a society and its ruling interests intend to do with men and things. [111]

Marcuse, then, rejected the claim that technology per se is neutral, but open to misuse in the interests of domination. The value-neutrality that Max Weber had claimed for "formal rationality" he relativized as a valuation peculiar to capitalism. [112] Modern scientific technology, he claimed, is as culturally relative as any other aspect of western life. [113]

On the issue of science itself, however, Marcuse seems to have vacillated. On the one hand

science, by virtue of its own method and concepts, has projected and promoted a universe in which the domination of nature has remained linked to the domination of man .... Nature, scientifically comprehended and mastered, reappears in the technical apparatus of production and destruction which sustains and improves the life of individuals while subordinating them to the masters of the apparatus. Thus the rational hierarchy merges with the social one. If this is the case, then the change in the direction of progress, which might sever this fatal link, would also affect the very structure of science - the scientific project. Its hypotheses, without losing their rational character, would develop in an essentially different experimental context (that of a pacified world); consequently, science would arrive at essentially different concepts of nature and establish essentially different facts. The rational society subverts the idea of Reason. [114]

But on the other hand, Marcuse also denied that this implied 'the need for some sort of "qualitative physics", revival of teleological philosophies, etc.'. While admitting that 'this suspicion is justified', he asserted that 'no such obscurantist ideas are intended'. [115] Marcuse's position here

[112]Ibid., pp. 222f.
[115]Ibid., p. 166.
remains unclear. [116] The impression that he is being inconsistent is strong. Yet plainly Marcuse does not regard either Enlightenment natural science or modern scientific technology as merely neutral instruments, usable equally for good or ill. They are a good deal more sinister than that.

1.4.5 Freud and Marcuse: eros and civilization

Marcuse is also notable for the introduction of Freudian categories into an essentially Marxian view of human labour.

Sigmund Freud had maintained, for example in The Future of an Illusion, [117] that civilization is based upon enforced labour and a concomitant renunciation of the instinctual (mainly sexual) wishes. Mankind, he argued, is caught in the clash between a "pleasure principle" and a "reality principle", and the harsh realities of existence dictate that the former must be denied in order that men and women might work so as to survive at all:

> Every civilization must be built up on coercion and renunciation of instinct; it does not even seem certain that if coercion were to cease the majority of human beings would be prepared to undertake to perform the work necessary for acquiring new wealth .... every civilization rests on a compulsion to work and a renunciation of instinct. [118]

As Freud locates the source of all the motive power (libido) for human life in the sexual drive, it follows that there is a need for the transfer of some of this power from the sexual drive into the execution of human labour. [119] And this, in his opinion, is not to be achieved without a measure of coercion — in Marxian terms we might say of class domination:

> It is just as impossible to do without control of the mass by a minority as it is to dispense with coercion in the work of civilization. For masses are lazy and unintelligent; they have

[116]Leiss (1972, pp. 199-212) presents a Marcuse closer to the orthodox position (that science and technology have a validity independent of their social context) than perhaps these texts allow.
[118]Ibid., pp. 3, 6.
no love for instinctual renunciation, and they are not to be convinced by argument of its inevitability .... It is only through the influence of individuals who can set an example and whom masses recognize as their leaders that they can be induced to perform the work and undergo the renunciations on which the existence of civilization depends .... men are not spontaneously fond of work. [120]

Freud's attitude towards civilization and its advantages was thus essentially ambiguous, [121] and his outlook pessimistic: civilization can at best be a painful compromise, the lesser of two evils, as indeed the structure of the personality must be a compromise between the conflicting demands of the id and ego. Neither human life nor civilization can ever be finally "liberated", in Freud's opinion. The human-nature relationship is ineluctibly one of struggle, not of harmony, both internally and externally.

In his 1955 *Eros and Civilization* [122] Marcuse accepted much of Freud's analysis, but argued that increased productivity in social labour has rendered the need for repression obsolete. According to Marcuse, Freud's analysis is historically specific. Once indeed it was true that the sheer facts of existence (i.e. scarcity) compelled undue repression of the pleasure principle and the retention of social domination. But in modern societies 'the very progress of civilization ... has attained a level of productivity at which the social demands upon instinctual energy to be spent in alienated labor could be considerably reduced'. [123] Modern society, as now constituted, is carrying a large measure of surplus repression over and above that basic minimum needed for a society at our stage of technological development. This, Marcuse argues, is irrational - if human needs can be satisfied without repression, then repression has lost the rationale it had in the Freudian schema. It follows not only that political domination must have some other explanation in the modern world, [124] but also that human work is ripe for a qualitative revolution.

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[120]Freud 1962, pp. 3f.
[121]Freud 1962, p. 3; see further Freud 1963, passim.
[123]Ibid., p. 111.
[124]Ibid.
The exact change in work that Marcuse has in mind is not completely clear, involving as it does two apparently contradictory elements. Firstly, he rejects the idea that essential work should be humanized, or made expressive of man's essence; it should rather be reduced to vanishing point so as to leave as much room as possible for the real stuff of human existence, which is:

Play ... play is unproductive and useless precisely because it cancels the repressive and exploitative traits of labor. [125]

To believe otherwise - to look for pleasure in necessary labor - is to fall prey to ideology:

The typist who hands in a perfect transcript, the tailor who delivers a perfectly fitting suit ... the laborer who fulfills his quota - all may feel pleasure in a 'job well done'. However, either this pleasure is extraneous (anticipation of reward), or it is the satisfaction (itself a token of repression) of being well occupied, in the right place, of contributing one's part to the functioning of the apparatus. In either case, such pleasure has nothing to do with primary instinctual gratification. To link performances on assembly lines, in offices and shops with instinctual needs is to glorify dehumanization as pleasure. [126]

Thus here Marcuse sees the realm of freedom as lying beyond the realm of necessity:

freedom is not within but outside the 'struggle for existence'. Possession and procurement of the necessities of life are the prerequisite, rather than the content, of a free society .... Necessary labor is a system of essentially inhuman, mechanical, and routine activities .... Reasonably, the system of societal labour would be organized rather with a view to saving time and space for the development of individuality outside the inevitably repressive work-world. [127]

[125]Ibid., p. 157. By 'useless' he alludes to Max Weber's concept of purposive rationality (see 2.1 below).

[126]Ibid., p. 176; my stress.

[127]Ibid., p. 157.
However, secondly, Marcuse also seems to envisage 'a change in the character of work by virtue of which the latter would be assimilated to play - the free play of human faculties'. [128] Such work could be 'socially useful activity', [129] but would not be part of the system of necessity that now characterizes labour. Marcuse envisages the release of libidinous energy in such activity, so that the boundaries between work and play, work and art crumble. Yet this must have nothing to do with production in the Marxian sense:

The true spirit of psychoanalytic theory lives in the uncompromising efforts to reveal the anti-humanistic forces behind the philosophy of productiveness: 'Of all things, hard work has become a virtue instead of the curse it was always advertised to be by our remote ancestors'. [130]

Whatever the relationship between Marcuse's two emphases, it is clear that he lacks Freud's pessimism. Not only will technological advance remove the scourge of scarcity, but the embattled ego itself, and its rationality, can be redeemed and reintegrated with the forces of the unconscious - forces that were experienced as irrational and destructive during earlier stages of human history:

philosophy ends in the vision of a higher form of reason ... receptivity, contemplation, enjoyment. Behind the definition of the subject in terms of the ever transcending and productive activity of the ego lies the image of the redemption of the ego; the coming to rest of all transcendence in a mode of being that has absorbed all becoming, that is for and with itself in all otherness. [131]

This optimistic utopianism is in marked contrast to the pessimism of the 1944 work of Horkheimer and Adorno, with which I conclude my survey.

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[128] Ibid., p. 171.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid., p. 176 (quoting Chisholm).
[131] Ibid., pp. 111f.
Several of the ideas already discussed in this section are drawn together into a novel synthesis in Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, [132] and more particularly in the first essay therein, 'The Concept of Enlightenment'. [133] This work is also considered at length by Habermas. [134] It is therefore a fitting note upon which to conclude.

For Horkheimer and Adorno, "enlightenment" represents not just a movement of eighteenth century thought culminating in Kant, but a cast of mind that has sought from classical times to break the powers of myth and the natural world, so as to establish man's sovereignty and set him free. [135] Yet, they argue, this Promethean movement has had disastrous consequences; aiming to undo the curse, it has led to a new form of slavery. This is the origin of Horkheimer and Adorno's pessimism; the belief that 'the only kind of thinking that is sufficiently hard to shatter myths is ultimately self-destructive'. [136] How is this so?

The paradigm of enlightenment thinking, argued Horkheimer and Adorno, is to be seen in natural science and mathematics. These disciplines "disenchant" the world by the destruction of meaning. Substance, quality, being and, finally, even cause itself, are categories that it abandons in its reduction of all phenomena to mere numbers: [137]

From now on, matter would at last be mastered without any illusion of ruling or inherent powers, of hidden qualities. For the Enlightenment, whatever does not conform to the rule of computation and utility is suspect .... The multiplicity of...


[133]Horkheimer and Adorno 1979, pp. 3-42.

[134]See 3.4 below.

[135]Horkheimer and Adorno 1979, p. 3.

[136]Ibid., p. 4.

[137]Ibid., p. 5; compare pp. 7, 24.
forms is reduced to position and arrangement, history to fact, things to matter. [138]

And this cast of mind is inherently 'totalitarian', [139] invading all areas of life and reducing them to its own categories.

Now, while this mode of thought and action has been extremely successful in giving man mastery over nature, it has led at the same time to a destruction of individuality. Not only matter but also persons have been reduced to mere units, and rendered basically interchangeable. [140] This reduction process, they argue, is currently (that is, in 1944) manifested in two ways. The first is the reduction of all persons and qualities to a common denominator in the "market" of developed capitalism - a characteristic discussed by Marx under the heading of "commodity fetishism", [141] and made prominent in the thought of Lukács under the name of "reification". [142] While the second is the horde mentality of German fascism. [143]

Further, while the enlightenment mentality aims at knowledge which will give it power over the material world, this also results in the domination of other human beings. [144] It therefore leads to an alienation of man from other men, from nature, and from himself:

Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power. [145]

World domination over nature turns against the thinking subject himself. [146]

Finally man's subjectivity is abolished completely, to be replaced by the

[138]Ibid., pp. 6f.
[139]Ibid., p. 6.
[140]Ibid., p. 10.
[142]So 1.4.4 above.
[143]Horkheimer and Adorno 1979, p. 13. Many members of the Frankfurt School saw fascism as a logical result of the dynamic of capitalism, rather than a freak aberration from it (Held 1980, pp. 52-65).
[145]Ibid., p. 9.
in the end the transcendent subject of cognition is apparently abandoned as the last reminiscence of subjectivity and replaced by the much smoother work of automatic control mechanisms. [147]

This alienation and loss of freedom and individuality, Horkheimer and Adorno argue, is indicative of the fact that modern thought involves a regression to the very mythical thought patterns that it sought to escape. Science is inherently incapable of grasping the concepts of uniqueness or individuality, and can instead only deal in repeatable abstractions. But this very repeatability is the basic characteristic of the mythical worldview. In attempting to banish the tyranny of mythical thought in the name of human freedom, the Enlightenment has merely yielded another tyranny of its own:

The essence of enlightenment is the alternative whose ineradicability is that of domination. Men have always had to choose between their subjection to nature or the subjection of nature to the Self. With the extension of the bourgeois commodity economy, the dark horizon of myth is illumined by the sun of calculating reason, beneath whose cold rays the seed of the new barbarism grows to fruition. Under the pressure of domination human labor has always led away from myth - but under domination always returns to the jurisdiction of myth. [148]

Dialectic of Enlightenment is thus characterized by a deep pessimism, and an ambiguous relationship to the Enlightenment project. Its view of the human situation is tragic. With Horkheimer and Adorno we have in some sense come full circle. The movement of Hegel's dialectic of the master and the slave, and the final optimism [149] of Marx's materialist transformation of Hegel's Phenomenology, have evaporated. Under the conditions of modern capitalism, the slave's experience is so impoverished that his contact with the material world in work has lost its liberative

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[147]Ibid., p. 30.
[148]Ibid., p. 32.
The regression of the masses today is their inability to hear the unheard-of with their own ears, to touch the unapprehended with their own hands - the new form of delusion which deposes every conquered mythic form. [150]

[Odysseus'] men - despite their closeness to things - cannot enjoy their labor because it is performed under pressure, in desperation, with senses stopped by force. The servant remains enslaved in body and soul; [151] the master regresses. [152]

As the attempted changing of the world [153] thus leads the human race deeper and deeper into bondage, Horkheimer and Adorno retreat from Marx to Hegel, and look for salvation in reflection:

With the abandonment of thought, which in its reified form of mathematics, machine, and organization avenges itself on the men who have forgotten it, enlightenment has relinquished its own realization .... But true revolutionary practice depends on the intransigence of theory in the face of the insensitivity with which society allows thought to ossify. [154]

Marx's synthesis of the dialectic of the master and the slave with the concept of alienation is broken, and human labour loses its redemptive force in human history.

1.5 Enter Habermas

Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929), currently professor of sociology and philosophy at the University of Frankfurt am Main, is the leader of the second generation of the Frankfurt School thinkers, whose first generation included Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse. [155]
In some ways, Habermas might be thought a curious figure to be studying in this context. Part of his programme, after all, has been to challenge the central position of labour in the Marxist tradition, for the sake of an increased recognition of the importance of language. However, while much of his most important recent book [156] is concerned with developing this aspect of his project, it also provides critiques of Weber, Lukács, Horkheimer and Adorno, Durkheim, and Marx—many of the most important figures in the history of the philosophy of work. Moreover, much of Habermas' earlier output [157] is very much concerned with precisely the sorts of issues that I have been discussing so far.

In terms of the above discussion, Habermas' position may be characterized roughly as follows. Although emerging from Marxist roots of the Frankfurt School variety (his doctoral dissertation on Schelling [158] was under Adorno), Habermas is critical of three aspects of his background:

1. he defends the validity of Enlightenment thought against the attack of Horkheimer and Adorno (and indeed a variety of thinkers from Nietzsche to the French post-structuralists) [159]

2. the essential shape of his epistemology is drawn from Kant rather than from Hegel, and

3. as a result, he is suspicious of the centrally integrative function accorded to labour in the Marxist tradition, including the formulations of Lukács.

[156] Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns 1981, discussed in chapter 3 below. This is not now his latest book, but it remains the definitive and systematic statement of his position.


[158] Habermas 1954. Habermas provides a brief sketch of his intellectual history in ASI, pp. 149-153. The other interviews in this volume contribute many further details.

[159] Habermas 1985a, passim.
This, however, is to oversimplify; for each of the above points there is a rider to be added:

(1) although he does not consider modernity as such to be an unfortunate development in human history, he considers it to be in a "pathological" state as at present constituted.

(2) he retains the Marxian link between theory and practice, although fiercely critical of its formulation in writers such as Lukács, and

(3) he still regards the development of the forces of production as crucial in the dynamics of social evolution.

It is probably best to see Habermas as attempting a synthesis of two opposed traditions - the Hegel/Marx and the Kant/Weber - seeing in both some vital insights needed for an adequate understanding of modernity.

In this attempt to understand modernity, including the role of work in it, Habermas uses an interdisciplinary approach. He draws upon continental and English-speaking philosophy, sociologists such as Durkheim, Weber and Parsons, and the psychology of Freud and Piaget, moulding this disparate material into a synthesis of outstanding scope and explanatory power. I will be examining aspects of this work in chapters 2 and 3 below, while in chapter 4 I extract some issues for critical discussion. However, no attempt is here made to offer a rounded presentation of Habermas' thought or oeuvre as a whole. My thesis is not about Habermas as such, but an attempt to appropriate critically aspects of his thought in the service of a theology of work.

One further point should be stressed at this stage. Habermas' accounts of past figures (such as Weber, Marx, and Durkheim) are often idiosyncratic if considered as reconstructions of these thinkers "in and for themselves". But this is rarely Habermas' purpose in discussing them, for he does not set out to write a history of ideas for its own sake. Habermas treats these figures rather as dialogue-partners for the elucidation of his own problems. His apparently historical studies are always undertaken with systematic intent.
In this chapter I shall survey Habermas' account of the nature and significance of work, given in his writings up to, but not including, the 1981 *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*. [1] It is convenient to start by reconsidering the problem of definition.

### 2.1 Work and instrumental action

In *Toward a Rational Society*, [2] Habermas offers the following definition of Arbeit, [3] in the context of setting out a fundamental distinction between "work" and "interaction":

> By 'work' or *purposive-rational action* I understand either instrumental action or rational choice or their conjunction. Instrumental action is governed by technical rules based on empirical knowledge. In every case they imply conditional predictions about observable events, physical or social .... The conduct of rational choice ... [involves] deductions from preference rules (value systems) and decision procedures .... Purposive-rational action realizes defined goals under given conditions. [4]

In this broad sense, "work" stands for any form of goal-directed action: for any form of action that involves the attaining of pre-set goals by the choice and organization of the means to achieve them. This definition may usefully be compared with Max Weber's definition of "instrumentally rational" action, upon which it is dependent :

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[1] Systematic consideration of the 1973 *Legitimationsprobleme im Spätkapitalismus* is omitted, partly for reasons of space, and partly because its model of late capitalism has been superseded by the 1981 work.

[2] TRS. In this chapter I shall be considering the part of this work translated from the 1968 *Technik und Wissenschaft als 'Ideologie'* (Habermas 1968a).

[3] Variousy translated as "work" as here, or "labour". See 4.2 below.

Social action ... may be ... instrumentally rational (zweckrational), that is, determined by expectations as to the behavior of objects in the environment and of other human beings; these expectations are used as 'conditions' or 'means' for the attainment of the actor's own rationally pursued and calculated ends. [5]

In his later writing, however, Habermas introduces two changes to this terminology.

Firstly, he abandons the term Arbeit as too misleading for the designation of purposive-rational action. In the 1982 'A Reply to my Critics', for example, he writes:

By 'labour' Marx understood as a rule 'socially organized labour' .... In social labour we are dealing essentially with a combination of communicative and instrumental action. [6]

That is, social labour in Marx's sense is not simply a conjunction of individual instrumental actions, [7] but also the communicative co-ordination of these actions in society. Social labour is thus a complex concept that Habermas analyses into two components. To use Arbeit for one of these leads to misunderstandings. [8]

Secondly, Habermas tidies up his subdivisions of purposive-rational action. Whereas in Toward a Rational Society "instrumental action" can be used for actions directed either to the physical or the social worlds, in 'A Reply to my Critics' it is restricted to the physical. A new term, "strategic action", is introduced for purposive-rational social actions:

Actions orientated to success are termed instrumental when they are understood as following technical rules and can be appraised from the standpoint of the efficiency of goal-oriented intervention in the physical world ... strategic only if they are understood as following rules of rational

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[6] RC, pp. 267f. Unfortunately, the second part of this crucial passage is omitted from the German text (Habermas 1984a, p. 546).
[8] See further 4.2 below.
choice and can be appraised from the standpoint of the efficiency of influencing the decisions of rational opponents. [9]

Hence in this later work Habermas isolates three types of action, which he tabulates thus: [10]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action / Actor</th>
<th>Orientated to success</th>
<th>Orientated to reaching understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-social</td>
<td>Instrumental Action</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Strategic Action</td>
<td>Communicative Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social labour in Marx's sense always involves both instrumental action on the physical world, and communicative action with respect to the social world. [11] And, as a later elucidation makes clear, 'strategic actions are as much involved as communicative actions'. [12] I shall delay further discussion of the relation between these types of action until 4.2 below.

It is Habermas' concept of instrumental action [instrumentales Handeln] that I want to examine most closely in the next section. [13] Under consideration here will be the human relationship to external nature in social labour, with the accompanying social dimensions of that labour forming the background. As a material being, exchange with the material environment is the basis upon which all human life is built, a fact clearly

[13] For the concept of communicative action, see 3.3 below.
recognized by Marx, as indicated in chapter 1. Whether the concept of instrumental action as used by Habermas is adequate to conceptualize this exchange is a key question. Habermas thinks that it is:

instrumental actions, that is, interventions in the objective world, present themselves as the medium through which the material substratum of the life-world is reproduced, that is, through which the life-world develops processes of exchange with external nature. [14]

To evaluate this issue requires a closer analysis, firstly of the concept and scope of instrumental action, and secondly of the place of social labour in Habermas' whole anthropology.

In what follows I shall, as far as possible, use terms in the following ways: (1) "instrumental" and "strategic" action in the senses used by Habermas in the 1982 'A Reply to my Critics', (2) "labour" or "social labour" in the Marxian sense of work within the economic system, and (3) "work" in a more inclusive sense, as suggested by Parker, to encompass other forms of purposive activity as well:

work has a wider biological and physiological meaning of purposeful and sustained action .... work in its broad meaning is the opposite of rest. [15]

In quotations from Habermas, however, I shall retain the usage of his translators, if necessary giving the original German as well.

2.2 The place of instrumental action in the human project

2.2.1 The characterization of Instrumental Action

A: THE SCIENCES AND CONTROL

In the 1968 essay 'Technology and Science as "Ideology"', [16] Habermas

[16] TRS, pp. 81-122; Habermas 1968a, pp. 48-103.
provides the following brief characterization of the relationship between the natural sciences, [17] technology, and the control of external nature:

the empirical sciences have developed since Galileo's time within a methodological frame of reference that reflects the transcendental viewpoint of possible technical control. Hence the modern sciences produce knowledge which through its form (and not through the subjective intention of scientists) is technically exploitable knowledge, although the possible applications generally are realized afterwards. [18]

Several points require elucidation here.

Firstly, the term "transcendental" signals that Habermas is operating with a development of the Kantian epistemological framework. This is made explicit in Knowledge and Human Interests. [19] Kant, says Habermas, had pursued a 'transcendental-logical inquiry into the conditions of possible knowledge', taking 'modern science as the starting point of an investigation into the constitution of possible objects of causal-analytic knowledge'. [20] In other words, rejecting what we might call crude realism, Kant had asked himself what must be true about the knowing subject for it to be capable of the sort of knowledge exemplified by Newtonian physics. He had, in brief, concluded that "things in themselves" were unknowable, [21] but that the knowing subject imposed the categories of space, time etc. upon the sensory input to constitute the objective world of theoretical knowledge. [22] The knowing subject is active in the constitution of the world that it knows, in 'the constitution

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[17] Habermas uses more or less interchangeably the six terms "empirical sciences", "empirical-analytic sciences", "nomological sciences", "natural sciences", "modern sciences", and "objectifying sciences". In each case a different aspect of this group of sciences is under scrutiny. However, in accordance with German usage, the term "science" (Wissenschaft) is of much wider application, embracing most forms of methodologically rigorous study.
[21] Kant 1933, pp. 24, 27. "Thing in itself" denotes for Kant the unknowable world of reality as it exists in itself apart from any knowing subject.
[22] Compare Kant 1933, p. 22.
of the objects of possible experience'. [23] This basic "critical" [24] insight, Habermas says, has been abandoned by "positivism", [25] which 'ignore[s] the synthetic achievements of the knowing subject', resulting in 'the naive idea that knowledge describes reality ... accompanied by the copy theory of truth, according to which the reversibly univocal correlation of statements and matters of fact must be understood as isomorphism'. [26]

In *Knowledge and Human Interests* Habermas develops the Kantian position, arguing that reality can be constituted by the subject so as to yield knowledge in more than one framework, reflecting more than one "knowledge-constitutive interest". Each framework is pursued by one branch of the sciences, using a distinct methodology, and working on reality conceived from the point of view of one process crucial for the reproduction of the human species. From the 1965 Appendix to *Knowledge and Human Interests* [27] I have distilled the following schema of the three frameworks that Habermas proposes: [28]

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[23] KHI, p. 68.
[24] In German philosophy, the adjective "critical" is usually an allusion to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. However, the term "critical theorists" as applied to Habermas and others includes a reference to the Young Hegelian position on theory and practice (Bubner 1982, p. 42). For an analysis of Habermas' version of critical theory in the light of this, Bubner 1982; for Habermas' response, RC, pp. 229-238.

[25] "Positivism" is a much wider term for Habermas than in English usage, where it tends to be restricted to the earlier Logical Positivists. For Habermas it signifies a broadly empiricist approach to the philosophy of science, and includes figures such as Karl Popper. See Habermas 1976d, and the other essays in Adorno et. al. 1976.

[26] KHI, pp. 68f.
[27] AKHI.

[28] Compare AKHI, pp. 308-311. However, there is some ambiguity as to the relationship between the body of *Knowledge and Human Interests* and the Appendix in this context, especially about the status of the emancipatory interest.
Table 2: Epistemological frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Sciences</th>
<th>Reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>technical</td>
<td>empirical-analytic sciences</td>
<td>objectified from the standpoint of possible prediction and control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practical</td>
<td>historical-hermeneutic sciences</td>
<td>disclosed subject to a constitutive interest in the expansion of possible action-orientating understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emancipatory</td>
<td>critical social sciences</td>
<td>disclosed by a process of self-reflection, releasing the subject from dependence upon hypostatizing powers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In each case, the framework prejudges the meaning of possible statements that can be made within it. In the case of knowledge within the framework of the technical interest (i.e. empirical-analytic knowledge) the meaning of its descriptive/predictive statements is 'their technical exploitability'. [29] That is, knowledge within this framework is constituted by the subject in such a way that it is inherently capable of generating predictions, and therefore may be exploited in the interests of the control of the physical environment.

Habermas expands on this in chapter 9 of Knowledge and Human Interests:

In the behavioral system of instrumental action, reality is constituted as the totality of what can be experienced from the viewpoint of possible technical control. The reality that

[29] AKHI, p. 308.
is objectified under these transcendental conditions has its counterpart in a specifically restricted mode of experience. The language of empirical-analytic statements about reality is formed under the same conditions .... Both restricted language and restricted experience are defined by being results of operations, whether with signs or moving bodies .... Operations of measurement permit the reversibly univocal correlation of operatively determined events and systematically connected signs. If the framework of empirical-analytic inquiry were that of a transcendental subject, then measurement would be the synthetic activity that genuinely characterizes it. [30]

Within this framework both experience of, and statements about, reality are restricted to measurable quantities (such as mass, length, time etc.).

Habermas rarely illustrates this sort of abstract statement, so I shall try to elucidate it by means of an example. Taking the paradigmatic case of Newtonian mechanics, the motion of any body (say, an artillery shell) can be quantified and described by the use of algebraic equations. [31] Any such description of the motion of the shell of necessity allows two further operations: (1) once the initial conditions are known (i.e. the speed and direction of flight), the point of landing of the shell may be predicted, and (2) the flight of the shell may be controlled so as to hit a particular target by the choice of the initial conditions (i.e. the direction in which the shell is launched and its speed). The sort of description involved in Newtonian mechanics, generating "empirical-analytic knowledge" in Habermas' terms, is thus internally related to the ability to predict and to control events in the physical world. The decision to approach the phenomenon of the shell in this way, at the same time determines the use that can be made of the information gained. As Habermas puts it, 'the meaning of such predictions, that is their technical exploitability, is established only by the rules according to which we apply theories to reality'. [32]

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[31] These link the velocity of the shell at various times, the time elapsed, the force of gravity, the distance travelled etc. For details, Nelkon and Parker 1971, pp. 1-9.
To return to the quotation at the beginning of this section, two points should now be clear. Firstly, the decision to describe an object like our artillery shell in terms of mass, length, and time — rather than, say, its aesthetic qualities, or the historical significance of its flight — establishes ipso facto 'a methodological frame of reference that reflects the transcendental viewpoint of possible technical control'. [33] And secondly, this is irrespective of the likelihood that Newton, in first investigating the motion of falling bodies, had no such belligerent application in mind (or, indeed, any application at all) for his discoveries. In all probability his 'subjective intention' was to pursue the quest for truth for its own sake. Nevertheless the form of the knowledge that he produced was objectively 'technically exploitable', even if that was not realized until later. [34]

In Habermas' view, this casts doubts upon the "positivism" that posits a two step process: firstly the production of pure disinterested theory (science), and secondly its subsequent application (technology). The first step Habermas calls 'the ontological illusion of pure theory', because it is linked to 'the basic ontological assumption of a structured, self-subsistent world'. [35] Rather, scientific knowledge is characterized by its applicability from the outset. It is not disinterested, speculative knowledge, but knowledge orientated to a certain use. It is, as he puts it, characterized by a 'technical cognitive interest'; [36] and no clear line of demarcation can be drawn between modern science and technology.

B: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INSTRUMENTAL ACTION

The foregoing is directly relevant to this section about the nature of instrumental action for the following reason: Habermas sees modern science and technology, not as a totally novel phenomenon of modernity, but as a natural outgrowth of a form of knowledge and mode of action available to

[34] Ibid.; compare ITP, p. 8.
[36] Ibid., p. 308; stress removed.
the human species from the beginning.

This is made explicit for the case of technology in a passage from Toward a Rational Society, where Habermas is refuting Marcuse's ideas about a new science and technology: [37]

there is an immanent connection between the technology known to us and the structure of purposive-rational action .... technological development lends itself to being interpreted as though the human species had taken the elementary components of the behavioral system of purposive-rational action ... and projected them ... onto the plane of technical instruments, thereby unburdening itself of the corresponding functions .... Technological development thus follows a logic that corresponds to the structure of purposive-rational action regulated by its own results, which is in fact the structure of work. [38]

Hence:

... technology, if based at all on a project, can only be traced back to a 'project' of the human species as a whole, and not to one that could be historically surpassed. [39]

The control of nature, which is the goal of modern technology, pace Marcuse is one of the authentic goals of the human species as such. Technology results simply from a separating out, refining, and objectifying of the processes of instrumental action that are used by all in everyday life.

Modern science, Habermas believes, is similarly connected to the world of everyday life. Science is a development of that everyday form of knowledge - "truth" about the way the objective world is - that can be expressed in constative speech acts. [40] This, he claims, is knowledge resulting from experience constituted in the framework of the technical knowledge-constitutive interest. [41] What is new about modern science is that a particular mode of inquiry has been separated out, institutionalized in abstraction from the life-world, and made the subject

[37] See 1.4.4 above.
[38] TRS, p. 87.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Compare CES, pp. 58, 68; TCA1, pp. 23, 238.
[41] Compare KHI, p. 126.
of research and discussion among a scientific community. [42]

Now, Habermas is at pains to distance his position here from the instrumentalism of Dewey, calling his own position 'transcendental pragmatism'. [43] In 'A Postscript to Knowledge and Human Interests' [44] he denies that 'the success of instrumental action is a sufficient criterion of the truth of propositions'. [45] Instead he combines a pragmatic theory of meaning with a consensus theory of truth, [46] a position which he ascribes to the Peirce [47] of the middle period:

Peirce anticipated the separation of problems of object-constitution from those of truth. The pragmatist maxim regulates the meaning of empirically permissible expressions, confining the application of these expressions to objects of experience belonging to the realm of instrumental action. [48]

This implies that the meaning of an expression is regulated by the use to which it can be put, [49] in this case to 'grasp reality with the aim in mind of controlling it through technology'. [50] However, the objectivity of experience is not a sufficient condition for the truth of statements about it, because 'theoretical progress [is] a critical development of theory languages which interpret the prescientific object domain more and more "adequately"'. [51] To rely on experience alone to verify linguistic truth claims would mean that theoretical progress would have to be conceived as the production of new experience, and could not be conceived as

[42] KHI, pp. 124, 137. For elucidation of the term "life-world", 3.5 below.
[44] Added to the second (1973) German edition of Knowledge and Human Interests, in which Habermas replies to some of the criticisms levelled against the first edition.
[47] Charles Sanders Peirce, with John Dewey and William James, was the founding father of American pragmatism. In Knowledge and Human Interests Habermas develops his philosophy of the natural sciences by a critical appropriation of his work. On Peirce, Apel 1981.
[51] PKHI, p. 375.
reinterpretation of the same experience. [52]

So, the objectivity of the experience (guaranteed in Kantian fashion by the object constitution within the framework of instrumental action) guarantees not the truth of statements about the experience, but the identity of the experience in the various statements interpreting it.

In this statement we see a move towards the division between action and discourse/argumentation [53] that characterizes Habermas' later work. The problem with this solution is that it detaches the theory language from experience in a way that leaves very hazy its connection with the constraints of the external world; an objection put by Hesse, [54] whose force Habermas partly admits. [55]

C: "INTERESTS" AND ANTHROPOLOGY

In Knowledge and Human Interests, Habermas attempts to relate his transcendental frameworks to the anthropological constitution of the species, using the category "knowledge-constitutive interests". He tries here [56] to steer a middle course between the Scylla and Charybdis of idealism and naturalism. Knowledge, he claims, is 'neither a mere instrument of an organism's adaptation to a changing environment' like teeth, claws etc. (naturalism), nor yet 'the act of a pure rational being removed from the context of life in contemplation' (idealism). [57] Correspondingly:

'cognitive interest' is ... a peculiar category, which conforms as little to the distinction between empirical and transcendental or factual and symbolic determinations as to that between motivation and cognition. [58]

[52] Ibid.
[53] E.g. ITP, p. 18; compare TCA1, p. 18.
[56] Not entirely successfully; see 4.3 below.
[57] KHI, p. 197.
[58] Ibid., compare pp. 134f.
It fits in between the two.

Nietzsche is the representative of the naturalism that Habermas wishes to avoid here. [59] Nietzsche, says Habermas, 'saw the connection of knowledge and interest', but had made it 'the basis of a metacritical dissolution of knowledge as such'. [60] Correctly rejecting the positivist idea of pure disinterested theory in science, he had made the mistake of equating "interests" with "instincts". [61] His 'criterion of truth' had thus become mere 'biological utility', with the result that 'any illusion at random' could claim validity 'as long as some need interpret[ed] the world through it'. [62]

Habermas traces this unsatisfactory position back to Nietzsche's acceptance of a positivistic model of the natural sciences. [63] Starting from the view that only empirical-scientific knowledge could count as knowledge at all, so devaluing other forms of knowledge, [64] he had then undercut this position by applying the positivistic critique to science itself. [65] The result was to deny the possibility of any knowledge at all, scientific or otherwise; [66] epistemology was replaced by perspectivism. [67] But Nietzsche's position is ultimately self-contradictory, argues Habermas, because he implicitly claims truth for his critiques of science and philosophy, despite the fact that "truth" is a category that he explicitly denies himself:

Nietzsche ... denies the critical power of reflection with and only with the means of reflection itself .... [he] is so rooted in basic positivist beliefs that he cannot systematically take cognizance of the cognitive function of self-reflection from which he lives as a philosophical writer. [68]

[59] Ibid., pp. 290-300. On Nietzsche, see also Habermas 1982a, pp. 505-528; 1985a, pp. 104-129.
[60] KHI, p. 290.
[61] Ibid., p. 298.
[63] Ibid., p. 291.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., p. 297.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., p. 298
[68] Ibid., p. 299.
Habermas' attempt to steer a via media between idealism and naturalism starts instead from a recognition of the crucial role that language plays in human life: a stress that is repeated again and again in various ways in his work. He sees the change from animal proto-society to human society as involving the penetration of linguistic interpretations into the needs/motivation system of the organism, [69] changing animal "instincts" into human "knowledge-constitutive interests". These new interests are not merely instinctive desires for the gratification of needs. Their realization 'leads not to happiness but to success', which has 'has both a life function and a cognitive function'. [70] Naturalism thus makes a fundamental epistemological mistake. It attempts to explain human society completely in biological categories, whereas in fact these very categories have been derived by abstraction from our primary experience of cultural life, which is on a different plane. [71] We are forced, instead, to apply to the human species some of the properties of the (idealistic) notion of the "subject". [72] Knowledge-constitutive interests take the place of instincts for a species that creates itself and its world 'culturally by work and interaction'. [73] They 'mediate the natural history of the human species with the logic of its self-formative process'. [74]

In Habermas' 1968 work, then, he denies that the "natural history" of the human species can be grasped adequately in merely biological categories. Nevertheless he writes as if the human being was objectively made up of discrete "systems", each of which embodied one of the knowledge-constitutive interests. In his later work this form of expression has been abandoned; likewise also the concept of the knowledge-constitutive interests, which has been subjected to sustained criticism. [75] This, however, seems to have weakened the link between 'the

[69] Ibid., p. 285; see further 2.3.1 below.
[70] Ibid., p. 134.
[71] Ibid., p. 285.
[72] Ibid., p. 135. Compare Marx's reintroduction of the idealist concept of the active subject against the materialism of Feuerbach (Marx 1975, p. 421).
[73] KHI, p. 196.
[74] Ibid., p. 196.
natural history of the human species' and 'the logic of its self-formative process' that the knowledge-constitutive interests had forged.

The division of knowledge into various types, however, linked with different forms of argumentation and validity claims, has been retained and developed. [76]

2.2.2 The scope of instrumental action

Habermas adopts an intermediate position concerning the legitimate scope of instrumental action and the scientific/technological progress that has arisen from it:

neither the model of the original sin of scientific-technical progress nor that of its innocence do it justice. [77]

A: THE LEGITIMACY OF TECHNICAL CONTROL

Habermas rejects the idea that there is anything wrong as such with an objectifying or technical control of the material world. In fact, he argues, this has always been a desideratum of human existence. A fundamental experience of archaic societies was 'the experience of being delivered up unprotected to the contingencies of an unmastered environment', [78] and human existence has always involved the attempt to control this contingent nature that otherwise threatens it. [79] In societies with a mythical [80] understanding of the world, the flood of this contingency could be stemmed only in the realm of thought, by the anthropomorphizing of nature. [81] But Enlightenment natural science

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[76] See further 3.2 and 4.4 below.
[77] TRS, p. 89.
[78] TCA1, pp. 46f.
[79] Compare the concept of "creation" as the ordering of chaos: 6.3 below.
[80] By which term Habermas denotes primitive societies such as that of the Azande of Evans-Pritchard fame, (TCA1, p. 44) and their ancient counterparts.
[81] A device which 'makes possible not only a theory that explains the world narratively and renders it plausible, but also a practice through which the world can be controlled in an imaginary way' which is a 'technique of magically influencing the world' (TCA1, p. 48).
achieves this goal in reality. It is therefore to be welcomed.

In Habermas' view, then, control of the physical world is a necessary and authentic aspect of the human project. This involves him in a rejection of the views of earlier members of the Frankfurt School on this matter [82] such as Horkheimer and Adorno [83] and Marcuse. As we saw above, it had seemed to the thinkers of the Frankfurt school that the control of nature was internally related to man's repression of his fellow man and of his own self: that 'domination of nature involves domination of man'. [84] This implied that a transformed attitude to external nature would have to be an essential component of any future human emancipation.

Habermas analyses Marcuse's views thus:

Marcuse envisages not only different modes of theory formation but a different scientific methodology in general. The transcendental framework within which nature would be made the object of a new experience would then no longer be the functional system of instrumental action. The viewpoint of possible technical control would be replaced by one of preserving, fostering, and releasing the potentialities of nature: 'there are two kinds of mastery: a repressive and a liberating one'. [85]

Habermas rejects this. "Domination" and "repression" are political terms. It would certainly be legitimate to use them for human-nature relationships if nature could be our interaction or dialogue partner, because then:

instead of treating nature as the object of possible technical control, we can encounter her as an opposing partner in a possible interaction. We can seek out a fraternal rather than an exploited nature. At the level of an as yet incomplete intersubjectivity we can impute subjectivity to animals and plants, even to minerals, and try to communicate with nature instead of merely processing her. [86]

[82] See 1.4.4 and 1.4.6 above.
[83] TCA1, p. 379.
[84] Ibid.
[85] TRS, pp. 86f, quoting Marcuse.
[86] TRS, p. 88. Here he alludes to the future "natural subject" postulated by Bloch (see 1.4.3 above).
But that is a category mistake. Human interaction, he argues, is inherently linguistic — it is 'symbolic interaction in distinction to purposive-rational action' [87] — and symbolic interaction with nature is obviously out of the question. [88] It follows that the achievements of technology, which are indispensable as such, could surely not be substituted for by an awakened nature. The idea of a New Science will not stand up to logical scrutiny any more than that of a New Technology. For this function, as for scientific-technical progress in general, there is no more 'humane' substitute. [89]

The human project, then, is not to be furthered on the basis of communication with, or dissolution into oneness with, nature; it is to be based upon control of it. Habermas rejects any elements of Vitalism or Romanticism in his view of external nature. He traces the views of Marcuse, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Bloch in this area back to the Romanticism of Schelling, [90] and behind him to the mysticism of Boehme and the Jewish Kabbalah. [91] Habermas will have no truck with critiques of technology or instrumental action that display this pedigree.

Habermas' position here will be considered critically in 4.3 below.

B: THE LIMITS OF TECHNICAL CONTROL

Habermas is much more critical of the extension of technical control from control of the natural world to control of the social or subjective worlds. [92] I shall consider these in turn.

Much of Habermas' early work is devoted to attacking the modern extension of technical control into the social world. [93] In 'The

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[87] TRS, p. 88.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[92] On Habermas' concept of the "three worlds", 3.2 and 4.4 below.
[93] This is, in various guises, a main emphasis in Habermas 1962; 1971d; 1974a.
Classical Doctrine of Politics in Relation to Social Philosophy' [94] for example, he contrasts ancient Greek and modern ideas of "politics", to the detriment of the latter. For the ancient Greeks, he argues, politics referred exclusively to praxis, in the narrow sense of the Greeks. This had nothing to do with techne, the skillful production of artifacts and the expert mastery of objectified tasks. In the final instance politics was always directed toward the formation and cultivation of character; it proceeded pedagogically and not technically. [95]

However, in the seventeenth century Hobbes had established a political science on the model of the new natural sciences, so reducing praxis to techne. For Hobbes, the relationship of theory and praxis is defined in accordance with the model of classical mechanics. The scientific analysis of the relationships of life, objectified as an object of nature, informs us about causal lawfulness.... The construction of Natural Law can be understood as a general physics of sociation.... it specifies those institutional arrangements, the physically effective compulsive force of which can be expected to produce the natural modes of reaction that will lead to an orderly cohabitation of human beings. [96]

This, Habermas insists, involves a category mistake, reducing persons to the level of things. Politics ceases to be 'the doctrine of the good and just life ... the continuation of ethics', [97] as it had been for the Greeks. Ceasing to be related to ethics it became instead a dubious branch of the natural sciences, 'having little more than the name in common with the old politics'. [98]

This has all come home to roost, Habermas argues, despite the interlude characterized by the discussions in the bourgeois "public sphere" of the

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[94] TP, pp. 41-81.
[95] Ibid., p. 42.
[96] Ibid., p. 71.
[97] Ibid., p. 42.
[98] Ibid., p. 41.
nineteenth century, [99] in the bureaucratic states of late capitalism. [100] Society is here treated as a self-regulating system, whose objective is the control of its members so that the system can survive. [101] When systems theory thus extends a model drawn from the functioning of biological organisms to the level of human society, discussion about the nature of "the good life", and, ultimately, public discussion of any substantive issues at all, is eliminated. Administration becomes a matter of mere technological control. The technocrats:

want to bring society under control in the same way as nature by reconstructing it according to the pattern of self-regulated systems of purposive-rational action and adaptive behavior. [102]

This critique of modern societies is further developed in Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, and is dealt with in 3.5 and 3.6 below.

Secondly, technical control is also extended to the subjective worlds of individuals. Habermas looks forward (with distaste) to the

detaching [of] human behavior from a normative system linked to the grammar of language-games and integrating it instead into self-regulated subsystems of the man-machine type by means of immediate physical or psychological control. Today the psychotechnic manipulation of behavior can already liquidate the old fashioned detour through norms that are internalized but capable of reflection. Behavioral control could be instituted at an even deeper level tomorrow through biotechnic intervention in the endocrine regulating system, not to mention the even greater consequences of intervening in the genetic transmission of inherited information. [103]

[99] For Habermas' account and interpretation of the rise and fall of this political public sphere, Habermas 1962; Habermas 1974c translates a much abbreviated form of the argument.

[100] Spätkapitalismus (e.g. Habermas 1973a, p. 9) is Habermas' term for the societies of the modern western democracies. Much of what is said here also applies to the eastern European states (Arato 1982; RC, pp. 281-283).

[101] For Habermas' dispute with Niklas Luhmann on this issue, Habermas 1971c, especially pp. 142-405. Habermas' position is later developed in TKH2, pp. 173-293, for which see 3.5, 3.6, 4.5 and 4.6 below. For Luhmann's position in English translation, Luhmann 1982, especially pp. 229-270.

[102] TRS, p. 117.

[103] Ibid., pp. 117f.
However, the fulfilment of 'this cybernetic dream of the instinct-like self-stabilization of societies' [104] by the technocratic takeover of both social and subjective worlds, would be at the expense of precisely that which marks off the human being as (normatively) human: the process of arriving at norms of behaviour by open discussion. Such a development would therefore be a regression, not an advance. Essential features of human society would be neglected: communication, emancipation and individuation. Habermas believes that a complementary "rationalization" can occur in these areas as well as in the legitimate spheres of purposive-rational action, but that it must take a different form:

Rationalization at the level of the institutional framework can occur only in the medium of symbolic interaction itself, that is, through removing restrictions on communication. Public, unrestricted discussion, free from domination, of the suitability and desirability of action-orienting principles and norms ... does not lead per se to the better functioning of social systems, but would furnish the members of society with the opportunity for further emancipation and progressive individuation. The growth of productive forces is not the same as the intention of the 'good life'. It can at best serve it. [105]

These ideas are, once again, developed in Habermas' 1981 work, and are considered in 3.2 and 3.3 below.

Habermas' treatment of Freud in Knowledge and Human Interests [106] is in basic accord with this model. In Habermas' opinion, Freud made the mistake of seeing psychoanalysis as a branch of natural science. Thus he looked forward to the replacement of its provisional results by surer biochemical methods. [107] But in fact, argues Habermas, Freud's "scientific" account of the dynamics of the psyche in terms of energy flows has validity only within the limits of the psychoanalytic process, where its application is necessarily "practical". [108] It is knowledge constituted in the framework of the emancipatory rather than the technical

[104] Ibid., p. 118.
[105] TRS, pp. 118f; see further 3.3.3 below.
[107] Ibid., p. 247.
[108] Ibid.
knowledge-constitutive interest:

The energy-distribution model only creates the semblance that psychoanalytic statements are about measurable transformations of energy. Not a single statement about quantitative relations derived from the conception of instinctual economics has ever been tested experimentally. The model of the psychic apparatus is so constructed that metapsychological statements imply the observability of events they are about. But these events are never observed – nor can they be observed. [109]

Freud's assumptions to the contrary led him to projective faith in the power of psychopharmacology, but in fact psychopharmacology only brings about alterations of consciousness to the extent that it controls functions of the human organism as objectified natural processes. In contrast, the experience of reflection induced by enlightenment is precisely the act through which the subject frees itself from a state in which it had become an object for itself. This specific activity must be accomplished by the subject itself. There can be no substitute for it. [110]

Once again the subject, constituted by the penetration of language into the needs structure of the organism, resists theoretical eradication. Its emancipation is not achievable by any form of technology, biochemical or otherwise, that uses causal connections:

Psychoanalytic therapy is not based, like somatic medicine, which is 'causal' in the narrower sense, on making use of known causal connections. Rather it owes its efficacy to overcoming causal connections themselves. [111]

It is these causal connections, which have 'the driving, instinctual character of something that uncontrollably compels consciousness from outside', [112] that are responsible for the sort of mental illness that is

[110] Ibid., pp. 247f.
[111] Ibid., p. 271. This causality within the psyche that opposes the subject is not merely biological, however; like the subject itself, it too has a symbolic structure. So psychoanalysis 'certainly does grasp causal connections, although not at the level of physical events' (Ibid., p. 271).
[112] Ibid., p. 256.
accessible to psychoanalytic treatment.

Here again, then, the idea of scientific objectification and consequent technical control is rejected, as it was rejected in the case of the social world. Technical control, if it is not to lead to pathologies of various kinds, needs to be retained within its legitimate limits: and those limits are defined by the scope of the human relation to the physical world. [113]

C: SCIENCE AS "IDEOLOGICAL"

In the 1968 essay 'Technology and Science as "Ideology", [114] Habermas places an important additional caveat alongside his welcome for scientific and technological progress. Science, he argues, has acquired an ideological role in late capitalism, because here 'the development of the social system seems to be determined by the logic of scientific-technical progress'. [115] He reasons as follows.

Up until the nineteenth century, technological innovation was largely fortuitous; [116] but since the end of that century we have witnessed a 'scientization of technology' whereby 'technical development [has] entered into a feedback relation with the progress of the modern sciences', each reinforcing the other. [117] As a result (in Marxian terminology) 'scientific-technical progress has become an independent source of surplus value'. [118] No longer is it sensible, as Marx did, to measure the value of

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[113]In his later work, Habermas makes significantly less use of Freud, and much more use of the developmental psychology of Piaget. Even in Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, however, he has not disowned his earlier work completely. Here he calls the form of discourse used in psychoanalysis "therapeutic critique", and refers the reader to Knowledge and Human Interests for further explication (TCA1, pp. 20f; 410, note 18). See further 4.4 below.

[114]TRS, pp. 81-122.


[117]Ibid.

[118]Ibid.

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the product by the number of man-hours put into its manufacture, [119] because we are fast approaching the situation where virtually no man-hours will be required in manufacture at all.

This situation does indeed have some potential for progressive social change: it makes more and more implausible the conservative 'achievement-ideology', which legitimates the linkage of wealth and status to effort and achievement in the productive process. [120] However in the meantime, the development of society comes to be seen as internally linked to scientific-technical progress, and therefore to be autonomous from the power of rational human agreement:

The quasi-autonomous progress of science and technology ... appears as an independent variable on which the most important single system variable, namely economic growth, depends. Thus arises a perspective in which the development of the social system seems to be determined by the logic of scientific-technical progress. The immanent law of this progress seems to produce objective exigencies, which must be obeyed by any politics oriented toward functional needs. [121]

If this is the case, however, politics is no longer concerned with decision-making about real ethical/practical problems; it is merely concerned with releasing the productive power of science and technology most efficiently in the generation of wealth. The direction of change is pre-established (economic growth); the argument is only about who can engineer the growth most efficiently. Democracy is reduced to mere periodic plebiscites to choose alternative sets of administrative personnel. [122] As a result,

... the culturally defined self-understanding of a social life-world is replaced by the self-reification of men under categories of purposive-rational action and adaptive behavior. [123]

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[120]TRS, p. 122.
[121]Ibid., p. 105.
[122]Ibid.
[123]Ibid., pp. 105f.
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men lose consciousness of the dualism of work and interaction .... the culturally defined self-understanding of a social life-world is replaced by the self-reification of men under categories of purposive-rational action and adaptive behavior. [123]

[120] TRS, p. 122.
[121] Ibid., p. 105.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid., pp. 105f.
The operation of such a society is parallel to the self-maintenance of a biological organism, and is accessible to an exclusively systems analysis perspective. [124]

Habermas rejects this model of politics. To accept it is, he argues, to submit to the control of fate; whereas the nature of the human being is to exercise control over its world. This ideological function of scientific-technical advance must be rejected — without, however, rejecting scientific-technical advance itself.

The sort of democracy-technology relationship that Habermas approves of is sketched in the 1966 essay 'Technical Progress and the Social Life-World'. [125] The problem is set up thus:

In what follows we shall understand 'technology' to mean scientifically rationalized control of objectified processes .... 'democracy' to mean the institutionally secured forms of general and public communication that deal with the practical question of how men can and want to live under the objective conditions of their ever-expanding power of control. Our problem can then be stated as one of the relation of technology to democracy: how can the power of technical control be brought within the range of consensus of acting and transacting citizens? [126]

Habermas rejects two views of this relationship. Firstly, he rejects Marx's view that scientific-technical progress is the "motor" that will drive an automatic transition to a truly democratic institutional framework. Marx, he argues, had erroneously equated the practical insight of a political public with successful technical control of the production of use values. [127] He had therefore assumed that an increase in scientific-technical control would automatically guarantee social emancipation. He was wrong:

[124] Ibid., p. 106.
[125] Ibid., pp. 50-61; for first publication details, Habermas 1968a, p. 169.
[126] TRS, p. 57.
[127] Ibid., pp. 57f. "Use value" is a term in Marxian economics denoting the utility of an object of manufacture; it is contrasted with "exchange value", which is determined by the amount of labour incorporated in the object (McLellan 1980, pp. 89f).
Marx did not reckon with the possible emergence at every level of a discrepancy between scientific control of the material conditions of life and a democratic decision-making process. This is the philosophical reason why socialists never anticipated the authoritarian welfare state, where social wealth is relatively guaranteed while political freedom is excluded. [128]

Secondly Habermas also rejects the thesis that technical development is completely autonomous: that it generates its own goals and applications entirely by itself. This is to ignore the fact that both the pace and the direction of technical development are currently largely dependent upon state investment. This shows that it is controllable. Moreover, the assertion that politically consequential decisions are reduced to carrying out the immanent exigencies of disposable techniques and that therefore they can no longer be made the theme of practical considerations, serves in the end merely to conceal pre-existing, unreflected social interests and prescientific decisions. [129]

Technological advance is in fact being controlled in the interests of powerful groups in society, although this control generally remains concealed. [130]

Habermas thus concludes that 'as little as we can accept the optimistic convergence of technology and democracy, the pessimistic assertion that technology excludes democracy is just as untenable'. [131] Both of these extremes breach the basic distinction between instrumental and communicative action. Both deny the latter autonomy from the former. What is needed is the realization that technological advance must be taken in hand. Its direction and pace of growth, and its applications, must be made the subject of public discussion and political will-formation. [132] Human social destiny must be brought under control - not technocratically, but

[128]TRS, p. 58.
[129]Ibid., p. 59.
[131]TRS, p. 60.
[132]Ibid.
politically in the old (Greek) sense. [133] Only such discussion can hope to effect 'the rationalization of the power structure'; [134] Only such political control, resulting from effective public discussion, can defuse 'the irrationality of domination, which today has become a collective peril to life' itself. [135]

2.3 The place of social labour in the human project

Habermas has also considered at length the Marxian thesis that human history is best characterized as a series of different modes of production. [136] I therefore turn, for the rest of this chapter, to a consideration of Habermas' "reconstruction" of Marx's historical materialism. [137]

Within the Marxist tradition, as I have indicated, social labour occupies a central position as the key explanatory category for the elucidation both of the workings of society and of the process of social evolution. In Habermas' opinion this centrality amounts to 'the reduction of the self-generative act of the human species to labor'. [138] His reconstruction recognizes social labour as one of the essential features of human society, while denying it the supremacy that Marx afforded it. This down-grading of the importance of social labour at the level of social theory, corresponds to the stress on the importance of communicative action over against instrumental action at the level of action theory. [139]

I shall examine three settings of Habermas' reconstruction. In the next chapter it appears in Habermas' 1981 work in the form of the "system and lifeworld" model of society. [140] Here I shall give an account of

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[133] Ibid., p. 61.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[139] See further 4.2 below.
[140] See 3.5 and 3.6 below.
Habermas' earlier formulations, firstly in Knowledge and Human Interests, and secondly in the 1975 essay 'Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism'. [141]

2.3.1 Marx and Freud in Knowledge and Human Interests

In Knowledge and Human Interests, Habermas attempts to correct what he sees as the Marxian over-emphasis on social labour with insights drawn from Freud. I shall start by outlining Habermas' exegesis and critique of Marx.

A: MARX

Marx, says Habermas, [142] achieved a synthesis of themes from German idealism and Feuerbachian materialism. He had appropriated the stress on activity of the Kantian philosophy, the idea that the subject constitutes the world rather than merely passively experiencing it. But he had, as a materialist, [143] understood the subject of this constitution as 'the concrete human species' rather than 'transcendental consciousness in general', and the world constitution as material transformation of the physical world in labour rather than the mental construction of the world of perception. [144] Marx saw this labour process as changing not only the external nature that is worked upon, but also the nature of the labouring subjects themselves. [145] Because the human species is distinguished by 'the reproductive form of social labor', it lacks any 'invariant natural or transcendental structure'; instead it is characterized only by 'a mechanism of humanization'. [146] As the forces of production increase, transforming the world in proportion to 'their power of technical control', so too 'the identity of [the] societal subjects' changes. [147] Thus social labour 'designates the mechanism of the evolution of the species in

[141]CES, pp. 130-177; Habermas 1976a, pp. 144-199.
[142]Compare 1.4 above.
[143]Compare KHI, p. 25.
[144]Ibid., p. 27; compare p. 31.
[145]Ibid., p. 29.
[146]Ibid.
[147]Ibid., p. 36.
This model, Habermas argues, preserves valid elements from both Kant and Hegel. With Kant and against Hegel it denies the 'philosophy of identity' of mind and nature. [149] For Marx, the only 'unity of man with nature' available is the one that 'has always existed in industry'. [150] Certainly, social labour mediates external and subjective nature, but the unity brought about by the activity of a subject remains in some measure imposed on nature by the subject .... The unity of the social subject and nature that comes into being 'in industry' cannot eradicate the autonomy of nature and the remainder of complete otherness that is lodged in its facticity .... objectified nature retains both independence and externality in relation to the subject that controls it. [151]

This 'materialist concept of synthesis' retains from Kant 'the fixed framework within which the subject forms a substance that it encounters', though whereas for Kant this formation was a feature of the 'transcendental consciousness', for Marx it is a feature of 'the human species as a species of tool-making animals'. [152] The relation of the species to its natural environment is defined by the 'behavioral system of instrumental action', which is an invariant feature of human nature (in a Kantian transcendental sense) because labour processes are the 'perpetual natural necessity of human life .... equally binding on all subjects that keep alive through labor'. [153] With Hegel and against Kant, however, the identity of social subjects alters over time - there is a history of the species. Again, this is materialistically interpreted:

The identity of societal subjects ... alters with the scope of their power of technical control. This point of view is fundamentally un-Kantian .... both nature, which has been reshaped and civilized in labor processes, and the laboring subjects themselves alter in relation to the development of

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[148]Ibid., p. 29.
[149]Ibid., p. 25.
[150]Ibid., p. 32; quoting Marx.
[151]Ibid., pp. 32f.
[152]Ibid., p. 35.
[153]Ibid.
However, Habermas insists that Marx was confused about the relative status of social labour and other activities in the human self-formative process. While in his empirical studies on economics 'Marx [in fact] comprehends the history of the species under the categories of material activity and the critical abolition of ideologies, of instrumental action and revolutionary practice, of labor and reflection', his self-understanding as to what he was doing involved the reduction of the whole of human evolution to the categories of social labour. [155] Marx needs to be played off against himself.

A good example of Marx's tendency towards this economic reductionism, suggests Habermas, is to be found in the Grundrisse. [156] Here there is a model according to which the history of the species is linked to an automatic transposition of natural science and technology into a self-consciousness of the social subject .... According to this construction the history of transcendental consciousness would be no more than the residue of the history of technology. [157]

According to this model, in time the progress of science and technology will automatically eliminate, firstly the need for human beings to participate directly in the productive process at all, secondly production based on exchange value rather than use value, and thirdly the 'scantiness and antagonism' of the material process of production. [158] Automatically, that is, the transformation of the labor process into a scientific process ... [brings] man's 'material exchange' with nature under the control of a human species totally emancipated from labor. A science of man developed from this point of view would have

[154]Ibid., p. 36.
[155]Ibid., p. 42
to construct the history of the species as a synthesis through social labor — and only through labor. [159]

Elsewhere, however, Marx himself denied this simplistic model, arguing that

the self-constitution of the species takes place not only in the context of men's instrumental action upon nature but simultaneously in the dimension of power relations that regulate men's interaction among themselves. [160]

The critique of ideology, and revolutionary practice, have an independent and indispensable part to play in the transformation of the institutional frameworks that embody power relations. [161] For

the most progressive scientization of production could not lead to the emancipation of a self-conscious subject that knows and regulates the social life process. [162]

Habermas is convinced, against the "first" Marx, not only that social evolution irreducibly involves development at two levels — that of the forces of production, and that of the social structures of society — but also that the latter is autonomous from the former, and pursues its own "logic".

B: FREUD

In Knowledge and Human Interests, Habermas uses the work of Freud to correct the deficiencies that he detects in Marx. This involves him in a (much criticized) parallelism between the individual, subjective emancipation involved in psychoanalysis and the social emancipation involved in Marxian social transformation.
From Freud, Habermas draws two supplementary definitions of the human to counterbalance Marx's definition centred upon social labour: that 'men distinguished themselves from animals when they began to produce their means of subsistence'. [163] Firstly, the human species is distinguished from other animals by the possession of speech and consciousness, [164] by which 'adaptive behavior [is] transformed into instrumental action', and 'the heritage of man's natural history [is] articulated in the form of interpreted needs'. [165] Secondly, Freud also defines human society in terms of a certain social structure - the family:

Men distinguished themselves from animals when they succeeded in inventing an agency of socialization for their biologically endangered offspring subject to extended childhood dependency .... The two-stage development of human sexuality ... and the role of aggression in the establishment of the super-ego make man's basic problem not the organization of labor but the evolution of institutions that permanently solve the conflict between surplus impulses and the constraint of reality. [166]

For Freud it is not the transformation of adaptive behaviour into instrumental action, but the transformation of instinct-governed behaviour into communicative action, that is the key to hominization. [167]

Habermas at this point picks up the Marcusian critique of Freud. [168] Man lives under the constraints of external and internal nature which limit his freedom. Internal nature defines the level of his needs/desires independently of the level of scientific/technical development, and, therefore, of the ability of man to wrest from external nature the wherewithal to satisfy these needs. The short-fall in needs-satisfaction necessitates the formation of institutions that referee the resultant conflict. As the system of social labour develops, however, (so Marcuse) it creates the objective possibility of relaxing the repressiveness of the

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[164] KHI, p. 238.
[165] Ibid., p. 239; stress removed.
[166] Ibid., pp. 282f.
[167] Ibid., p. 282.
[168] Compare 1.4 above.
institutional framework, whose only rationale is the needs-gratification shortfall. [169] However, Habermas remains rather closer to Marx at this point than Marcuse had done. The achievement of this relaxation, according to Habermas, is the work of the critique of ideology, of "reflection". [170] And the indispensable contribution of Marx here was to see that the critique of ideology must also involve a critique of the class structure of society:

The institutional framework does not subject all members of society to the same repressions .... If production attains the level of producing goods over and above elementary needs, the problem arises of distributing the surplus product created by labor. This problem is solved by the formation of social classes, which participate to varying degrees in the burdens of production and in social rewards. With the cleavage of the social system into classes that are made permanent by the institutional framework, the social subject loses its unity: 'To regard society as one single subject is ... to regard it falsely - speculatively'. [171]

As the forces of production increase, therefore, critical reflection must examine not only the general level of repression implied by the institutional framework, but also its asymmetry. The aim must be a replacement of the affective basis of obedience to civilization by a rational one, [172] that is, 'an organization of social relations according to the principle that the validity of every norm of political consequence be made dependent on a consensus arrived at in communication free from domination'. [173] This would imply an equality in the level of the gratification of needs, and thus an abolition of the class structure.

The self-constitution of the human species, therefore, is not to be limited, as Marx tended to imply, to the system of social labour. Instead it must 'combine both self-generation through productive activity and self-formation through critical-revolutionary activity'. [174] Whereas

[169]Ibid., p. 283.
[170]Ibid.
[171]Ibid., p. 54, quoting Marx.
[172]Ibid., p. 283.
[173]Ibid., p. 284; see further 3.3.3 below.
[174]Ibid., p. 55.
the former can stimulate the latter, it can neither replace nor determine it. [175]

2.3.2 The reconstruction of historical materialism

In 'Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism', Habermas seems to have effectively abandoned the parallel between Freudian psychoanalysis and social emancipation, preferring the (also much criticized) parallel of phylogenesis with an ontogenesis borrowed from Piagetian developmental psychology. He has also tidied up his account in two significant ways. Firstly he has linked together the two Freudian insights as to the importance of language and family structure in the constitution of human society. And secondly, he has clarified the relationship between the developments in the spheres of instrumental and communicative action. In this essay he considers both the origins and definition of, and the subsequent development of, human society. I shall consider each in turn.

A: THE DEFINITION OF HUMAN SOCIETY

Habermas begins once again by rejecting as inadequate Marx's characterization of man as an economic producer. Although for Marx 'production' includes 'not only the instrumental actions of a single individual, but also the social cooperation of different individuals', [176] this is still only a necessary but not sufficient condition of human society. Such economic production, it seems, is also exhibited by the hominids, whose adult males formed hunting bands, which (a) made use of weapons and tools (technology), (b) cooperated through a division of labor (cooperative organization), and (c) distributed the prey within the collective (rules of distribution). [177]

Yet they were not yet fully human. Thus while the Marxian concept of

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[175] Ibid., p. 61.
[176] CES, pp. 131f.
[177] Ibid., p. 134
social labor is suitable for delimiting the mode of life of the hominids from that of the primates', it does not capture 'the specifically human reproduction of life'. [178]

The basis of distinctively human social life, Habermas argues, is to be found in the area of interaction rather than of economic production: in the form of the social structure and the means of its establishment and reproduction. In this respect the hominids occupy an intermediate position. I have extracted a comparison of the three forms of social life that Habermas considers into the following table: [179]

**Table 3: Forms of social life**

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<th>species features</th>
<th>anthropoid apes</th>
<th>hominids</th>
<th>man</th>
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<td>mechanism of development</td>
<td>organic</td>
<td>organic and cultural</td>
<td>cultural only</td>
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<tr>
<td>social labour?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>communication</td>
<td>gestures</td>
<td>protolanguage of signal calls</td>
<td>language</td>
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<tr>
<td>social structure</td>
<td>one dimensional rank ordering</td>
<td>separate male and female subsystems</td>
<td>familiarized male, kinship system</td>
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As in Knowledge and Human Interests, the key change in social structure that Habermas locates is the emergence of the family. This, he suggests, emerged as a response to a "system problem" set up by the division into male and female subsystems at the previous hominin stage. That stage had

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[178] Ibid., p. 135.
failed to institutionalize successfully economic exchange between the males and females of the species:

The male society of the hunting band became independent of the plant-gathering females and the young, both of whom remained behind during hunting expeditions. With this differentiation, linked to the division of labor, there arose a new need for integration, namely, the need for a controlled exchange between the two subsystems. [180]

This system problem was solved by the familiarization of the male, which permitted the adult male member to link - via the father role - a status in the male system of the hunting band with a status in the female and child system, and thus (1) integrate functions of social labor with functions of nurture of the young, and, moreover, (2) coordinate functions of male hunting with those of female gathering. We can speak of the reproduction of human life, with homo sapiens, only when the economy of the hunt is supplemented by a familial social structure. [181]

This change in social structure, Habermas argues, was internally linked to a development in language. In the new structure, the same individual needed to occupy different status positions, and perform different social roles, in different subsystems (the family, the hunt). Such 'social role systems' were based, not as previously on the occupant's capacity to threaten, but upon 'the intersubjective recognition of normed expectations of behavior'. [182] Yet this required three things: firstly the ability to 'exchange the perspective of the participant for that of the observer', [183] secondly 'a temporal horizon that extends beyond the immediately actual consequences of action', [184] and thirdly social roles sanctioned (initially) by a concept of the holy. [185] And these in turn required the full development of language. [186]

[180]Ibid., p. 135.
[181]Ibid., pp. 135f.
[182]Ibid., p. 136.
[183]Ibid.
[184]Ibid., p. 137.
[185]Ibid., pp. 137; 226f, note 16.
[186]CES, p. 137. These points are expanded at length in TKH2, pp. 7-169.
Habermas concludes that while 'the concept of social labor is fundamental, because the evolutionary achievement of socially organized labor and distribution obviously precedes the emergence of developed linguistic communication, and this in turn precedes the development of social role systems', [187] nevertheless 'the specifically human mode of life ... can be adequately described only if we combine the concept of social labor with that of the familial principle of organization'. [188] Thus 'production and socialization, social labor and care for the young, are equally important for the reproduction of the species'. [189] The hegemony of "production" in Marxist thought is to be resisted.

B: THE PLACE OF PRODUCTION IN SOCIAL EVOLUTION

In the later parts of the essay, Habermas returns to a consideration of the place of social labour in social evolution. Here he aims to reconstruct historical materialism as it was codified in Joseph Stalin's 1938 essay 'Dialectical and Historical Materialism'. [190] His account of this 'orthodox version' of Marxist thought [191] is as follows.

The key to the reconstruction of the history of the human species is provided by the concept of the "mode of production". [192] Each stage of society is most adequately characterized by one of five such modes: [193] the primitive communal mode of bands and tribes prior to civilization, the ancient mode based on slave-holding, the feudal mode, the capitalist mode, and finally the socialist mode. [194] In each case the mode of production may be resolved into two components:

(1) the forces of production (the labour power of the producers,
enhanced by technically useful knowledge leading to technologies of production, and by organizational knowledge effectively coordinating the first two) which determine the degree of possible control over natural processes; [195] and

(2) the relations of production, institutions and social mechanisms which regulate access to the means of production, and hence control the distribution of socially produced wealth. [196]

In the course of world history, these five modes of production follow each other in a sequence which is 'unilinear, necessary, uninterrupted and progressive'. [197] In this evolutionary process, which can be seen as the 'development of a macrosuject', [198] it is the forces of production that provide the motive-power for the whole. Advances in the forces of production lead inevitably to changes in the relations of production: [199]

The handmill produces a society of feudal lords, the steam mill a society of industrial capitalists. [200]

The economic "base" as a whole supports a legal and political "superstructure", and determines the way in which people think:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. [201]

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[195] Ibid., p. 138.
[196] Ibid., pp. 138f.
[197] Ibid., p. 139.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid., pp. 144f.
[200] Ibid., p. 139; compare Stalin 1973, p. 328.
Thus the only irreducibly autonomous feature of social evolution, according to orthodox Marxism, is the development of the material forces of production.

Habermas makes several quite profound changes to this model. Listed briefly, they include the following:

(1) The abandonment of the "species subject". Specific societies and individuals are the bearers of social evolution. [202]

(2) Separation of the logic from the dynamics of development, which allows him to retain a directional arrow of evolutionary development, whilst jettisoning the claim to 'unilinearity ... necessity ... continuity ... [and] irreversibility'. [203]

(3) Rejection of the idea that the base/superstructure model offers an 'ontological' interpretation of society, for the weaker claim that the economic structures assume 'the leading role' in social evolution. [204]

(4) Rejection of the idea that the 'basic domain' of society always coincides with the economic system, for the idea that this is only true for capitalist societies. [205]

(5) Rejection of the restriction of autonomous learning mechanisms to the sphere of technically useful knowledge. [206]

Positively, Habermas' new schema runs roughly as follows. There is indeed an 'endogenous learning mechanism' that results in the spontaneous growth of technically and organizationally useful knowledge - knowledge that can be used in the forces of production. [207] Pace orthodox Marxism, however, no profound social development can occur without the prior implementation of new forms of social integration. Despite a few examples

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[202]CES, p. 140.
[203]Ibid.
[204]Ibid., p. 143.
[205]Ibid., p. 144.
[206]Ibid., p. 148.
[207]Ibid., p. 145.
to the contrary, 'the great endogenous, evolutionary advances that led to
the first civilizations or to the rise of European capitalism were not
conditioned but followed by significant development of productive
forces'. [208] New technical knowledge 'can be implemented to develop the
forces of production only when the evolutionary step to a new
institutional framework and a new form of social integration has been
taken'. [209]

Moreover the development of new forms of social integration also
depends upon a learning mechanism. This mechanism yields a different,
moral-practical sort of knowledge:

the species learns not only in the dimension of technically
useful knowledge decisive for the development of productive
forces but also in the dimension of moral-practical
consciousness decisive for structures of interaction. The
rules of communicative action do develop in reaction to
changes in the domain of instrumental and strategic action;
but in doing so they follow their own logic. [210]

The development of technical knowledge, that is, can precipitate "system
problems", [211] but cannot on its own determine their solution. Thus in
the final analysis, it is 'learning processes in the domain of
moral-practical consciousness that function as pacemakers' [212] in
social evolution, not the productive forces as in orthodox Marxism. This
new moral-practical knowledge is, at transitional periods in social
evolution, institutionalized in a new 'principle of organization', which in
turn means

the establishment of a new level of social integration. This
in turn makes it possible to implement available (or to
produce new) technical-organizational knowledge; it makes
possible, that is, an increase in productive forces and an
expansion of system complexity. [213]

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[208] Ibid., pp. 146.
[209] Ibid., p. 147.
[210] Ibid., p. 148.
[211] On the concept of crises induced by system problems, LC, pp. 1-31 and
passim.
[212] Ibid., pp. 160.
[213] Ibid.

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Habermas' split of the dynamics and logic of development [214] is crucial to his case. It allows him to jettison too close a relationship to the philosophy of history or Darwinian evolution, [215] while at the same time retaining a genuine concept of "progress" as opposed to mere "change" in society. [216] Habermas maintains that such progress occurs both in the realm of the forces of production, and in the social framework of society.

To support his case here, Habermas makes free use of the developmental psychology of Jean Piaget and the (Piagetian) theory of moral development of Lawrence Kohlberg:

The genetic structuralism worked out by Piaget, which investigates the developmental logic behind the process in which structures are formed, builds a bridge to historical materialism .... it offers the possibility of bringing different modes of production under abstract developmental-logical viewpoints. [217]

This applies to technology, whose history may be modelled upon 'the ontogenetically analyzed stages of cognitive development, so that the logic of the development of productive forces becomes visible'. [218] And in the moral-practical realm also, Habermas links the organizational principles of societies with the stages of individual moral development advocated by Kohlberg. [219] Advances in both realms, Habermas argues, follow a developmental logic that is rationally reconstructible; [220] that is, they can be seen as part of a 'cumulative learning process' [221] that is independent of the actual course of development of real societies:

Progress in these two dimensions is measured against the two universal validity claims we also use to measure the progress of empirical knowledge and of moral-practical insight, namely, the truth of propositions and the rightness of norms. I would like, therefore, to defend the thesis that the criteria of social progress singled out by historical materialism as the

[214] Ibid., p. 140.
[215] Compare TCA1, pp. 143-156.
[216] Compare CES, p. 141.
[218] Ibid. Compare p. 149.
[220] Ibid., pp. 149, 153.
[221] Ibid., p. 163.
development of productive forces and the maturity of forms of social intercourse can be systematically justified. [222]

Habermas is thus able to defend some instances of social, intellectual, and technical change as "progress" as well as mere "change". In particular, as we shall see, he is able to insist that Enlightenment thought, and the social institutions and productive technologies of modernity allied to it, is more rational than primitive, mythical thought: is in fact, universally valid. Modernity for Habermas is an unfinished project, [223] not a wrong turning or a merely western phenomenon. Habermas' reconstruction of historical materialism is thus predicated upon a more positive attitude to the Enlightenment than that of Horkheimer and Adorno.

Both this last point, and Habermas' models of social evolution, rationality, and modernity are further discussed in the next chapter; for they are key concerns of his definitive work: the 1981 **Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns**.

[222]Ibid., p. 142.
3. WORK IN THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

3.1 Introduction

Habermas' 1981 *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* [1] is an ambitious two-volume work that attempts a critical overview of a wide variety of sociological traditions, past and present, with a view to the construction of a model of "modernity". [2] This involves a partial reconciliation of the paradigms of Parsonian functionalism, hermeneutics, symbolic interactionism, and Marxism, so as to produce a reconstructed critical theory of society more adequate to its object realm than the critical theory of the old Frankfurt School theorists.

The model of modernity is constructed with critical intent. In an introduction, [3] Habermas identifies two attitudes to the cluster of crises that have afflicted the western democracies since the end of the 1960's. The first, the 'neoconservative', [4] is to hold at all costs to the capitalist programme of economic and social modernization, giving the highest priority of all to economic growth. Refuge is sought from the socially disintegrative side effects of this growth in a rhetorical reaffirmation of now defunct nineteenth century values, whose basis has been eroded irreversibly by capitalism. The second, the

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[2] Habermas' name for the societies and culture of the modern western democracies.


'antimodernist', [5] replies to this with a critique of growth, that is directed against the modern economic, administrative and military systems, in a sweeping condemnation of them as a whole. Habermas rejects both of these extremes. The antimodernist rejection in particular, although appealing, fails to make a crucial distinction: that it is possible to restrict the growth of 'monetary-administrative complexity' without surrendering 'modern forms of life'. [6]

Habermas looks to Max Weber to provide his leaping-off point: that modern societies are more rational than traditional societies, yet that this modernity also involves unfortunate side-effects or pathologies. Habermas holds fast to this view, rejecting both:

(1) the post-structuralist relativism [7] that would see no useful sense in which modern societies could be said to be more rational than other ones, and

(2) the essential optimism of Parsonian functionalism, that fails to see the very real pathology striking at the heart of modernity as now constituted.

Habermas adapts from Weber an account of the rationality of modern societies, while looking to Marx for an account of their dynamics. This separation of dynamics and structure (compare the separation of logic and dynamics in 2.3 above) is reflected in his model of modern societies as "system and lifeworld", [8] which to some extent continues, on the level of a theory of society, Habermas' dichotomy between communicative action and purposive-rational action on the level of action theory. [9]

Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns is a rambling work that explores many by-ways in the setting-forth of its thesis. Some of these, such as the details of Habermas' analyses of Durkheim and Mead [10] and Parsons, [11]

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and the complexities of Habermas' theory of language, [12] can safely be left on one side with a simple appropriation of the results of the discussion. But to understand Habermas' view of the significance of work in society, it is necessary to have an overview of the argument of the book as a whole. This necessitates some account of Habermas' theories of rationality, action, and social integration as here set forth, as well as a direct discussion of the topic of social labour itself.

As is the case with chapter 2 above, this chapter is almost entirely exegetical in nature. Aspects of Habermas' argument are considered critically in chapter 4.

3.2 Max Weber and rationalization

Habermas starts from the work of Max Weber [13] because, among 'the classical figures of sociology', Weber was

the only one who broke with both the premises of the philosophy of history and the basic assumptions of evolutionism and who nonetheless wanted to conceive of the modernization of old-European society as the result of a universal-historical process of rationalization. [14]

That is, eschewing the models of Hegel and Darwin alike, Weber nevertheless believed:

(1) that the emergence of modern societies has a universal significance that cannot be captured within the paradigm of an extreme cultural relativism, and

(2) that this significance lies in the embodiment of an increase in rationality.

Weber, moreover, had linked together in his investigations of Occidental rationalism questions of rational action, the rational conduct of life,

[14] Ibid., p. 143.
and the rationalization of worldviews. [15] Both of these emphases Habermas here makes his own. The entire two volume work can be seen as a sustained attempt to reconstruct them on a sounder basis: to take up once again 'in an empirical manner but without the empiricist constrictions' the question of 'how the emergence and development of modern societies can be conceived as a process of rationalization'. [16] In a third way, too, Habermas finds Weber's approach persuasive. Weber was aware of the intensely ambiguous nature of modernization - of the losses as well as the gains involved - in a way that more optimistic sociologies (such as that of Talcott Parsons) are not.

3.2.1 The process of rationalization

The key concept in Weber's work, at least as far as Habermas is concerned, [17] is "rationalization". Habermas is concerned both to elucidate and reconstruct Weber's term.

The concept of rationalization in Weber's work, Habermas notes, is complex, covering areas of life as diverse as modern natural science, harmonious music, modern state administration, rational bookkeeping and the capitalist economic ethic. [18] Along with Parsons, Habermas classifies these manifestations of rationalism into three groups, according to whether the sphere of life affected is:

(1) **Society** (differentiation of capitalist economy, modern state, and formal law which organizes them internally and in their mutual interactions),

(2) **Culture** (differentiation of modern science and technology, principled ethics, and autonomous art as autonomous spheres each developing according to their own internal logic), or

[16] Ibid., p. 155.
In general, Habermas accepts with Weber the inevitability of these differentiations in society and culture that have accompanied the transition to modernity in the west. He believes that any truly modern society must have both an economy and a state that have become semi-autonomous from the "lifeworld" [20] of everyday life operating according to their respective criteria of purposive rationality; constituting, that is, 'subsystems of purposive-rational action'. [21] There is no possibility either of a withering of the state or of a collapse of the economy back into the lifeworld as Marx had predicted. Moreover, the distinctions that came to be drawn at the Enlightenment between science, ethics and art are real distinctions that can be abandoned only at the cost of a regression of the species to an earlier and less rational intellectual level, [22] corresponding as they do to the three "worlds" in which the human being lives, i.e. the objective, social and subjective worlds respectively. [23] Thus natural science, which corresponds to the objective world, is characterized by a methodological objectivation of nature, coming into existence through a conjunction of scholastically trained discursive thought, mathematics, an instrumental attitude to nature, and an experimental treatment of it. [24] This is to be distinguished carefully from a rationalized ethics, concerned exclusively with the social world of interpersonal relations, an ethics that is based upon principles instead of upon tradition, and that is universalistic, superseding the separation between in-group and out-group morality. [25] And both are in turn to be distinguished from autonomous art, art that has broken free from its context in the religious cult to become 'a cosmos of more and more consciously grasped independent values which exist in their

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[19] Ibid., pp. 158-164.
[20] For which term, 3.5.2 below, Lebenswelt is alternatively rendered "lifeworld" or "life-world" by different translators. For the Habermas/Weber characterization of economy and state, TCA1, p. 158.
[22] Compare TCA1, pp. 43-74.
[23] Ibid., pp. 52, 75-84, 308.
[24] Ibid., pp. 159.
[25] Ibid., p. 162.
own right', [26] concerned with the expression of the subjective world of internal nature. [27] These three 'cultural value spheres', concerned with different abstract standards of value (truth, normative rightness, and beauty/authenticity), [28] are seen as resulting from the rationalization of religious worldviews, in which they had previously been confused. [29] The separation of the problems with which each deals constitutes an indispensable step forward in human history of world-historical significance.

3.2.2 The paradoxes of rationalization

Habermas is less convinced, however, about Weber's account of the dynamics of social change, which he had placed at the door of the protestant ethic of the calling rooted in the personalities of the early capitalist entrepreneurs (the "methodical conduct of life"). [30] Agreeing with Weber on the need for the institutional and motivational anchoring of purposive-rational economic orientations, [31] he nevertheless wants to follow Marx in attributing to the growth in the forces of production the ultimate dynamic of social change. [32] Moreover, while applauding Weber's recognition of the loss of meaning and freedom in modern society (the "paradoxes of rationalization"), he rejects both Weber's exact diagnosis of the problem and his pessimistic prognosis concerning the necessary future of life in the modern world. In both cases Habermas traces Weber's error to a misunderstanding of the nature of rationality.

Weber had firstly argued, says Habermas, that rationalization necessarily involves a loss of meaning. The very 'differentiation of autonomous cultural spheres of value' that made possible 'a rationalization of symbol systems' under the abstract standards of value

[27] Ibid., p. 161.
[28] Ibid., p. 244.
[29] Ibid., pp. 47-53.
[31] Ibid., p. 219.
[32] Sections 3.5 and 3.6 below.
(i.e. truth, normative rightness, and beauty/authenticity), had also resulted in the disintegration of 'the meaning-giving unity' of metaphysical-religious worldviews. [33] This had set up the problem of the 'unity of the lifeworld', burdening the capacity of the personality system for integration. [34] This amounted to 'a new polytheism, in which the struggle among the gods takes on the depersonified, objectified form of an antagonism among irreducible orders of value and life', such that 'the rationalized world has become meaningless'. [35] Reason, fallen apart into irreconcilable moments, could no longer integrate the life of "the rational animal". Secondly, according to Weber rationalization inevitably involves a loss of freedom, due to the concomitant growth in subsystems of purposive-rational action. [36] Bureaucratic state and economy, organized according to their own (purposive-rational) imperatives, come to stand over against individual actors, and encroach more and more upon their freedom of action:

the vast and mighty cosmos of the modern economic order, which is bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production .... determines, with irresistible force, the lifestyles of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism. [37]

Material goods gain 'an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men', such that concern with them eventually becomes 'an iron cage'. [38] The individual, imprisoned inside a totally ordered society, is pushed back to a desperate attempt to establish a unity - which can no longer exist in the order of society - 'in the privacy of his own biography, with the courage of despair, the absurd hope of one who is beyond all hope'. [39] In other words, the natural correlate of modernization and its utilitarianism is existentialism.

[33] TCA, p. 244.
[34] Ibid., p. 245.
[35] Ibid., p. 246.
[36] Ibid., p. 244.
[37] Ibid., pp. 247f, quoting Weber.
[38] Ibid., p. 248, quoting Weber.
In Habermas' view, all of this involves an unwarranted restriction in the concept of rationality. The correction of this defect compels a revaluation both of the nature of the problems that face modernity and of the possibility of their solution. His fundamental complaint is that Weber restricted the concept of rationality to its purposive component, eliminating a priori the possibility of ethical and aesthetic rationalization. The first of these omissions is particularly important, and shows Weber to have been in the grip of the 'positivism' of his day, according to which 'ethical value judgements express purely subjective attitudes and are not capable of being grounded in any intersubjectively binding way'. [40] The logic of Weber's account of the separation of value spheres, says Habermas, suggests rather that 'ethical rationalization would continue ... according to the inner logic of a practical reason set off from descriptive claims and expressive tasks'. [41] Weber had assumed wrongly that 'a moral consciousness guided by principles can survive only in a religious context'. [42] And Habermas looks forward to an autonomous, rational ethic that retains the best insights of Christian ethics but is freed from its religious basis: to 'a form of the religious ethic of brotherliness secularized at the same level as modern science and autonomous art, a communicative ethic detached from its foundation in salvation religion'. [43]

This change in turn compels a revaluation of 'the Protestant ethic'. Weber had seen clearly enough that 'the ascetic ethic of vocation' of the early Protestant sects, with its 'egocentric foreshortening, particularism of grace, and conformity to the unbrotherliness of the capitalist economy' had in some sense been a regression behind the levels of brotherliness already achieved in Christianity. [44] But his restricted concept of rationality had kept him from the insight that such an ethic of brotherliness could actually be more rational than the Protestant ethic. In fact however, in Habermas' view, 'the Protestant ethic is by no means the

[40] Ibid., p. 231.
[41] Ibid., p. 230.
[42] Ibid., p. 299.
[43] Ibid., p. 242.
[44] Ibid., p. 228.
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[40] Ibid., p. 231.
[41] Ibid., p. 230.
[42] Ibid., p. 299.
[43] Ibid., p. 242.
[44] Ibid., p. 228.
exemplary embodiment of the moral consciousness ... but a distorted, highly irrational one'. [45]

Thus Habermas rejects both of Weber's theses: that of the inevitable loss of meaning and that of the inevitable loss of freedom in the modern, rationalized world. The problems of modernity, he argues, in fact follow from a selective rationalization that institutionalizes purposive rationality at the expense of moral-practical and expressive-aesthetic rationality. [46] Firstly it is wrong to speak, as Weber does, of the "paradoxes" of rationalization, if that means locating the seeds of destruction of the rationalized world in the very differentiation of independent cultural value spheres that made rationalization possible in the first place. Although indeed 'the immediate unity of the true, the good, and the perfect, which is suggested by religious and metaphysical basic concepts' has fallen apart in the modern world, [47] it is going too far to see the necessary result of this as a struggle between the forms of autonomous reason leading to meaninglessness. Rather, 'the unity of rationality in the multiplicity of value spheres rationalized according to their inner logics' may now be secured 'at the formal level of the argumentative redemption of validity claims'. [48] In other words, in each of science, ethics, and art it is possible to discuss questions of validity in what is, at a formal level, essentially the same way: by the adducing and discursive testing of reasons. [49] There remains a common 'procedural rationality after all substantial concepts of reason have been critically dissolved'. [50] It follows that the concept of the "meaning" of life can be retained. At worst, all that is required of individuals is the ability to switch their 'action orientations' as they take up different roles in

[45] Ibid., pp. 231f; compare TKH2, p. 450.
[46] Compare TKH2, p. 451: cognitive-instrumental rationality penetrates from the economy and the state into the communicatively structured areas, taking precedence there over the other two sorts of rationality. See 3.6 below.
[47] TCA1, pp. 248f.
[48] Ibid., p. 249.
[49] Ibid., pp. 8-42.
[50] Ibid., p. 249, my stress; compare TKH2, p. 451. This is underpinned by the reference of communicative action to all three areas (see 3.3 below).
everyday life. [51]

Secondly, Weber's "loss of freedom" thesis had also arisen because of his narrowing of the concept of rationality, in this case specifically because he ignored the ethical dimension in societal rationalization. Weber had seen, in the transition to the modern legal system, a separation of law from ethics and its subsumption under cognitive-instrumental rationality as 'an organizational means without moral-practical substance'. [52] So for Weber the idea of the ethical rationalization of law had become impossible; [53] the embodiment of moral-practical rationality had actually become irrational. [54] Habermas rejects this. He maintains that a truly rational law is to be 'correlated with the normative sphere of value' and 'rationalized under the abstract value standard of normative rightness'. [55] Thus law need not be felt as an alien force restricting human freedom from the outside as a result of the imperatives generated by its own internal systematization.

Habermas does recognize the general loss of freedom that results from the encroachment of bureaucratic and economic imperatives upon the lives of individuals in the modern world. But he sees the possibility of a modernized world involving a compromise between these imperatives and those of a rationalized lifeworld, such that the descent into the Weberian iron cage is avoided. This possibility is examined in sections 3.5 and 3.6 below. Firstly, however, it is necessary to explore Habermas' basis for a broader concept of rationality than that of Weber: a basis to be found in the paradigm of communicative action.

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[51] TCA1, p. 250.
[52] Ibid., p. 242; compare pp. 162f, 243.
[53] Compare TCA1, pp. 269f.
[54] Ibid., p. 267.
[55] Ibid., p. 260.
3.3 The paradigm of communicative action

Habermas traces Weber's restricted notion of rationality back to the very basis of his action theory. According to Weber, human action is to be distinguished from mere observable behaviour 'insofar as the actor attaches a subjective meaning to it'. [56] But this is to base the notion of action in the consciousness of the actor, a part of what Habermas rejects as "the philosophy of consciousness". [57] The problem with this starting point is simply stated: consciousness is a property of a single individual. It is, in Habermas' terms, a "monological" concept, [58] and theories of action and rationality based upon it are unable to break out from their monological starting point. Thus it is that:

1) Weber's action theory generates a model of society consisting of interpersonal relationships between strategically acting subjects attempting to manipulate each other purposive-rationally for their own ends, and

2) Weber's theory of rationality is limited to the purposive-rational dimension.

In order to overcome the shortcomings in both action and rationality theories, Habermas proposes a paradigm shift from a basis in consciousness to a basis in language. [59] This results in a shift:

1) in action theory, from the paradigm of teleological or purposive-rational action to that of communicative action, [60] and

2) in rationality theory from the paradigm of purposive rationality to that of communicative rationality. [61]

[57] TCA1, p. 390.
[58] Ibid., p. 280.
[59] Ibid., p. 390.
[60] Ibid., p. 339.
[61] Ibid., p. 10; compare pp. 335, 397f.
3.3.1 Habermas' appropriation of Mead and Durkheim

In chapter 5, [62] Habermas sets out this paradigm change in the context of extensive reconstructive critiques of the social psychologist George Herbert Mead and the sociologist Emil Durkheim.

Habermas finds Mead a useful starting point [63] because, in studying how speech is used to coordinate the purposive-rational actions of subjects, he did not start from the individual actor as did Weber. Instead he started from the interaction between two actors, [64] seeing the origins of symbolic interaction in the internalization of the objective meaning [65] available in interactions mediated by gestures. [66] The objective basis from which subjective meaning arises is thus not (as in Weber) the consciousness of the individual, but the relation between two individuals. [67] Subjectivity forms in the context of intersubjectivity, and it is language rather than consciousness that is the key to understanding both rationality and rational action.

Habermas then looks to Durkheim to develop this insight phylogenetically [68] into a concept of communicative rationality. Durkheim was correct, he argues, to locate in the sacred the root of both morality and language. [69] Thus the breakdown in the integrating power of the sacred during the transition to modernity has had the character of a "linguistification of the sacred". [70] The unity of the collective based upon the sacred legitimation of a general will is transformed into the unity of a 'communication society', [71] as the function of social integration passes from a pre-existent, ritually secured,

[62] TKH2, pp. 7-169.
[65] That is, meaning that is available to a (third person) scientific observer (TKH2, p. 18). Compare TKH2, pp. 179f.
[66] For example in a conflict between two dogs (TKH2, p. 17).
[67] Ibid., pp. 18f.
[68] Ibid., pp. 71f, 74.
[69] Ibid., pp. 73f, 83.
[70] Ibid., pp. 118-169.
[71] Ibid., p. 126.

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value-consensus [72] to a consensus achieved co-operatively as a result of discussion in 'the political public sphere'. [73]

In this process, the role of language is vital. It is because the use of language unavoidably involves the raising of "criticizable validity claims" which demand a yes/no response, that the possibility of dissent is introduced into society, and social integration must progressively switch from pre-existent to communicatively achieved consensus. [74] And this amounts to an increase in the "communicative rationality" of society:

The rationality-potential of understanding-oriented action can be released, and be transformed into the rationalization of the lifeworlds of social groups, in the measure that speech fulfills the functions of understanding, action-coordination, and the sociation of individuals, and thereby becomes a medium through which cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization take place. [75]

As this happens, and the sacred is linguistified, speech ceases to be 'freewheeling' [76] and fulfils its 'telos'. [77]

3.3.2 The concept of communicative action

In chapter 3, Habermas expounds systematically his concept of communicative action. The proposed relationship between communicative action and instrumental action [78] will be examined critically in 4.2 below.

Unlike instrumental (or strategic) action, Habermas says, 'I shall speak of communicative action whenever the actions of agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through

[72] Ibid., pp. 118f.
[73] Ibid., p. 125. Habermas' early work Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit deals with the history of the formation and dissolution of this political public sphere (Habermas 1962; compare 1974c).
[74] TKH2, pp. 113, 135f.
[75] Ibid., p. 132.
[76] Ibid., p. 133; referring to Wittgenstein.
[77] TCA1, p. 287.
[78] See 2.1, 2.2 above.
acts of reaching understanding'. [79] Thus, in communicative action, action participants are not primarily oriented to their own individual successes; they pursue their own individual goals under the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions'. [80]

'Reaching understanding' [81] in this context 'is considered to be a process of reaching agreement [82] among speaking and acting subjects', [83] an agreement that 'meets the conditions of rationally motivated assent to the content of an utterance' and 'cannot be imposed by either party'. [84] 'Reaching understanding is the inherent telos of human speech'. It is only by reference to the model of speech (pace Weber) that we can discern what "understanding" means at all. 'The concepts of speech and understanding reciprocally interpret one another'. [85]

Now, although these communicative acts of reaching understanding are a mechanism for linking 'the teleologically structured plans of action of different participants ... into an interaction complex', they 'cannot themselves be reduced to teleological actions'. [86] Speech may be used teleologically, as in strategic action, where 'one subject inconspicuously harnesses another for his own purposes ... by manipulatively employing linguistic means and thereby instrumentalizes him for his own success'. [87] Yet 'the use of language with an orientation to reaching understanding is the original mode of language use', upon which the instrumental use of language is 'parasitic'. [88] Upon reflection, this is obviously so, because 'if the hearer failed to understand what the speaker was saying, a strategically acting speaker would not be able to bring the

[80] Ibid., p. 286; my stress.
[82] Einigung (ibid).
[83] TCA1, pp. 286f.
[84] Ibid., p. 287.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid., p. 288.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
hearer, by means of communicative acts, to behave in the desired way'. [89] Thus "acts of communication" and "communicative action" are to be distinguished. [90]

The notion of communicative action is also connected in Habermas' thought with the three worlds introduced in 3.2.1 above, and the corresponding validity spheres of truth, normative rightness, and beauty/authenticity. [91] Indeed,

in coming to an understanding about something with one another and thus making themselves understandable, actors cannot avoid embedding their speech acts in precisely three world-relations and claiming validity for them under these aspects. [92]

It is in fact precisely by facilitating the reaching of agreement about items in these three worlds that language achieves its socially integrative function. [93] Thus it is that the notion of communicative rationality, connected as it is with the paradigm of communicative action, entails notions of rationality and rational action broader than those that Weber allowed for. [94]

3.3.3 Excursus: the ideal speech situation

In chapter 2 above, I noted that Habermas is hostile to the extension of technical control into the realm of social interaction, his ideal being rather action in accordance with norms that have been decided upon after 'public, unrestricted discussion, free from domination'. [95] Only such norms, he argues, can be a 'rational' basis for civilization. [96] In 3.3 so far we have seen these ideas developed. The linguistification of the sacred involves a move towards a society based on norms that are the

[89] Ibid., p. 293.
[90] Ibid., p. 295.
[91] Ibid., p. 307.
[92] Ibid., p. 308.
[93] Ibid., p. 305.
[94] Ibid., p. 335.
[95] TRS, p. 118, quoted in section 2.2.2:B. Compare KHI, p. 284, quoted in section 2.3.1:B.
[96] KHI, p. 283, quoted in section 2.3.1:B.
subject of a communicatively-achieved consensus: a society thereby embodying a greater degree of communicative rationality. [97] This involves the reaching of rationally motivated (i.e. unforced) definitions of items in the social world. And in this the rationality of speech is released to fulfill its telos. [98] Implicit in all of these formulations is Habermas' concept of an "ideal speech situation", a notion explicated definitively in the 1970's, and which he still defends in *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*. [99]

Habermas believes that truly rational ethical norms are those that 'express ... an interest common to all those affected and thus ... deserve general recognition' being 'capable in principle of meeting with the rationally motivated approval of everyone affected'. [100] But, he argues, such norms are precisely those that would be arrived at by a discussion that took place under special conditions: a discussion to which all interested parties were allowed equal access, and in which all force except 'the force of the better argument' was excluded. [101] Because under these conditions speech would be unhindered in reaching its telos of unforced, rational agreement, he calls this (counterfactual) situation the "ideal speech situation". In most if not all actual discussions, however, the operation of force prevents the reaching of such a true consensus. This force can arise 'from within the process of reaching understanding itself', or can influence it 'from the outside'. [102] In either case it results in a distortion of the agreement reached, rendering it a forced or false consensus. Norms so arrived at are ideologically distorted; they present sectional interests under the guise of apparently general

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[97] 3.3.1 above.
[98] 3.3.2 above.
[100] TCA1, p. 19.
[101] TCA1, p. 25; compare p. 19. This implies the application of 'general symmetry conditions' (TCA1, p. 25), usefully summarized in J. Thompson 1984, p. 266.
[102] TCA1, p. 25.
interests. [103]

Habermas proposes to escape from "decisionism" (groundlessness) in ethics by basing his general ethical principle of equality upon the logical structure of linguistic communication. In this respect, the ideal speech situation is set within a more general programme of "universal pragmatics" [104] - Habermas claims that the ideal speech situation is an unavoidable (although generally counterfactual) supposition reciprocally made in discourse. [105] Whether or not this aspect of his work is viable, and it has come under strong attack, [106] the notion of the ideal speech situation does serve to highlight the importance of 'the critical abolition of ideologies'. [107] It encourages us to recognize that language may be 'a medium of domination and social power', [108] at the same time as being constitutive of social life as such, and the vehicle of tradition. In chapters 5 and 6 below, I shall be examining in this light the use made of categories such as "creation" in theological discourse.

3.4 Max Weber and western Marxism

In chapter 4 of Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns [109] Habermas provides an analysis of the work of Lukács, Horkheimer and Adorno, writers in the "western Marxist" tradition who had adopted many of the insights of Max Weber. Lukács, in History and Class Consciousness, had combined insights drawn from Weber and Marx to characterize the paradoxes of modernity in terms of the phenomenon of "reification", [110] while

[103] Compare 2.2.2:C above for an example of this in operation. For an account and critique of Habermas' view of "ideology", Giddens 1979, pp. 174-178. For Giddens' own account (essentially similar to that of Habermas), ibid., pp. 186-196; compare West 1985b, pp. 429f.
[107] KHI, p. 42.
Horkheimer in *Eclipse of Reason* [111] and Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [112] had developed this in turn into a critique of instrumental reason with the same intent. Habermas argues that these writers adopted into their work the key deficiency located above in the work of Max Weber: a deficient concept of rationality based upon the 'philosophy of consciousness'. [113] Analysis of their shortcomings illustrates the need for a reformulation of the reification concept [114] in terms of the "system and lifeworld" model introduced later. [115] It also underlines the need for a shift to the paradigm of communicative action in social theory, a shift embodied in the lifeworld half of Habermas' model.

### 3.4.1 Lukács and reification

Habermas points to something corresponding to Weber's 'dialectic of societal rationalization' in the writings of Marx, in the form of 'the dialectic of living and dead labor'. [116] In the historical passages of *Capital*, he says, Marx 'traces the contradictory process of societal rationalization' by showing the effect of the capitalist accumulation process oriented to exchange value upon the producers. [117] Lukács took this up, and used it in *History and Class Consciousness* as the basis for an elucidation of the Weberian rationalization phenomena via the concept of reification.

Lukács traced the negative aspects of modernization to the capitalist mode of production, based on wage labour, which necessitates the transformation of human functions into commodities. [118] As the labour power of the producers becomes a commodity - a "thing" that is sold on the market - there results a split between the worker's labour power and his

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[112] Horkheimer and Adorno 1979; see 1.4.6 above.
[113] TCA1, p. 386.
[114] Ibid., pp. 398f.
[115] See sections 3.5, 3.6 below.
[116] TCA1, p. 343.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid., p. 356
personality. [119] Interactive relations in the sphere of social labour cease to be regulated by norms, and actors adopt an objectifying attitude to each other and to themselves, treating both as manipulable objects. [120] This is "reification". Social relations are transformed into purely instrumental ones. [121]

Whereas for Weber this change in the sphere of social labour was only one example of a more general process of rationalization, for Lukács it is causally basic. Because the wage-labourer relies upon the market for his entire existence, this reification works out from the sphere of social labour to affect his consciousness and all of his social relationships. [122] The result is a totally reified life. Thus 'in the structure of the commodity relation can be found the model of all the forms of objectivity in bourgeois society, together with all the forms of subjectivity corresponding to them'. [123] As Lukács himself puts it, the commodity becomes 'the universal category of society as a whole'. [124] The economic system of social labour is directly and causally responsible for the production of reified forms of life. [125]

In the second volume of Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, Habermas gradually develops a critique of Lukács' reification thesis. [126] On one point he agrees with Lukács: that the problems associated with capitalist society are not borne alone by those at the bottom of the class structure but affect the whole of society. [127] Nevertheless he rejects both Lukács' exposition of reification in terms of the philosophy of

[119]Ibid., p. 357.
[120]Ibid., pp. 357f.
[121]Ibid., p. 358.
[122]Ibid., p. 356.
[123]Ibid., p. 355, quoting Lukács (printing error corrected).
[124]Lukács 1971, p. 86.
[125]TCA1, p. 356.
[126]In chapter 4 (volume 1) he concentrates instead upon Lukács' adoption of the Hegelian philosophical framework. This, he argues, was responsible for the 'enthronement of proletarian class consciousness' (reinterpreted as coinciding with the views of the Party) as 'the subject-object of history as a whole', the consequences of which were 'unveiled in the Stalinist terror' (TCA1, p. 364).
[127]For which 3.6 below.
consciousness, and his "economism" that traces all of the reification phenomena of capitalist society directly to the effects of the economic system. Reification, he argues, arises not from the hegemony of instrumental reason, but from the activity of functionalist reason. [128] The details of Habermas' alternative, an alternative that significantly decentres the structural importance of social labour in society as a whole, is expanded in 3.6 below. [129]

3.4.2 Horkheimer and Adorno on instrumental reason

In Dialectic of Enlightenment, says Habermas, Horkheimer and Adorno generalized in three steps the concept of reification that they derived from Lukács, and in so doing demonstrated the inadequacy of the concept of rationality that they inherited from Weber.

Firstly, instead of deriving the structures of reified consciousness from the commodity form of labour power (so Lukács), they regarded the former ("subjective reason" and "identifying thought") as fundamental, and the abstraction of exchange as only the historical form in which "identifying thought" develops its world-historical significance. This, Habermas comments, is an "idealist" retranslation of the concept of reification into the context of the philosophy of consciousness. [130] Secondly, the concept of reification was extended to cover technical relations with external nature. Thus, says Habermas, they 'anchor[ed] the mechanism that produces the reification of consciousness in the anthropological foundations of the history of ... a species that has to

[129]In the context of the critique of Lukács, Habermas proposes to replace Lukács' "form of objectivity" (Gegenständlichkeitsform), related directly to economics, with a "form of understanding" (Verständigungsfom) that is characteristic of particular stages of social evolution, and which prejudices the forms of understanding that can occur within it. This concept replaces the conditions of the possibility of possible experience (so Lukács) by the formal properties of the intersubjectivity of possible understanding. The "form of understanding" is a compromise between the general structures of understanding-oriented action, and the systemic forces of the reproduction of society that cannot be made thematic within the lifeworld (TKH2, pp. 278f). The concept of "form of understanding" is elucidated and illustrated in TKH2, pp. 279-293.

[130]TCA1, p. 378.
reproduce itself through labor'. [131] Reification ceases to be a phenomenon introduced by capitalism: it has been present as a contradiction in human life from the beginning. And thirdly, following from this, 'they reduce[d] the control of external nature, the command over human beings, and the repression of one's own internal nature to a common denominator, under the name of "domination"', thus implying that 'the same structure of exercising force' reigns in all three instances, [132] and that 'domination of nature involves domination of man'. [133]

Thus, Habermas comments, Horkheimer and Adorno detached the concept of reification 'not only from the special historical context of the rise of the capitalist economic system but [also] from the dimension of interhuman relations altogether'. They generalized it temporally (over the whole history of the species) and substantively ('the same logic of domination is imputed to both cognition in the service of self-preservation and the repression of instinctual nature'). [134] The paradoxes of modernity were explained in terms of the career of instrumental reason: 'victories over outer nature are paid for with defeats of inner nature'. [135] Every advance is accompanied by 'the stamp of irrationality' - the reason which enthrones self-preservation as an absolute end leads to the paradoxical destruction of the very subject it seeks to preserve. [136]

Habermas once again rejects the deficient concept of rationality assumed here. Horkheimer and Adorno, he says, had rightly objected to the restriction of subject-object relations implied in logical positivism, a restriction to representation as theoretical control, and action as practical technical control. [137] However, short of a retreat to pre-Kantian metaphysical thought, they had no way of expanding subject-object relations to express adequately the deformation of life

[131] Ibid., p. 379.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid., quoting Horkheimer's Eclipse of Reason.
[134] TCA1, p. 379.
[135] Ibid., p. 380.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid., p. 387.
that instrumental reason involves. [138] And they were thus reduced to the paradoxically non-conceptual concept of "mimesis" to say what could not now be said. [139]

Rejecting alike this reduced concept of instrumental reason, and a neo-Thomism oriented to tradition, [140] Horkheimer in Eclipse of Reason retreated to an undifferentiated concept of 'objective reason', that 'conceived of the human world as part of a cosmological order', [141] and thus entertained ideas of reconciliation with it - a reconciliation including 'the interaction of human beings with nature, with animals, plants, and minerals'. [142] Yet as a result of its formulation as the obverse of an instrumental reason associated with "identifying thought", objective reason remained unspecifiable; for to specify it would be to attempt to grasp it with the very identifying thought that it was supposed to supplant. [143] 'At most', Habermas comments, 'we can circle around this idea, drawing on images from Judaeo-Christian mysticism': [144] we cannot define it. The unspecified concept with which Horkheimer indicates the nature of this objective reason, a reason that allows 'a universal reconciliation, an emancipation of man through the resurrection of nature', is 'mimesis', [145] involving 'the organic accommodation to the other' and 'an exchange of the subject with nature that is free of violence'. [146] Thus it was that Adorno, in Ästhetische Theorie, [147] 'surrender[ed] all cognitive competence to art, in which the mimetic capacity gains objective shape'. [148] Truth escapes theory and takes refuge in autonomous art, safe from the model of the natural sciences. [149]

[138] Ibid., pp. 388f.
[139] Ibid., pp. 384f.
[140] Ibid., p. 374.
[141] Ibid., p. 346.
[142] Ibid., p. 381.
[143] Ibid., pp. 382, 384.
[144] Ibid., p. 383.
[145] Ibid., p. 382.
[146] Ibid., p. 453, note 52.
[149] On Habermas' aesthetics, 4.4 below.
Habermas does not accept this move, by which, he says, 'philosophical thinking intentionally retrogresses to gesticulation', [150] and thus falls back behind the level of language. Philosophy here renounces its necessary goal of theoretical knowledge: [151] 'the critique of instrumental reason conceptualized as negative dialectics renounces its theoretical claim while operating with the means of theory'. [152] The solution to this aporia, a solution not available to Horkheimer and Adorno, is of course a move from the paradigm of instrumental reason, not back to Horkheimer's undifferentiated objective reason, but to a communicative reason with its formal unity in substantial differentiation. Such is the concept of reason that is carried forward into the "lifeworld" half of Habermas' "system and lifeworld" explanatory model.

3.5 System and Lifeworld

In chapter 6 of Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, [153] Habermas sets out his model of society as both system and lifeworld. This involves a partial reconciliation between the viewpoints of Parsonian functionalism and the "interpretative" sociologies.

3.5.1 Social and system integration

Habermas distinguishes between between two complementary and irreducible forms of "integration" in society: ways in which society is held together into a moderately coherent whole. The first is social integration, whose vehicle is the action-orientations of actors, and is mediated by communicative action. The second is system integration, which occurs via the integration of the unintended consequences of actions "behind the backs" of the actors. Whereas the first involves orientation to norms, the second is independent of them, involving instead the mediation of non-linguistic "steering media". The classical example of system integration is the integrative effect of the capitalist market

[150]TCA1, p. 385.
[151]Ibid.
[152]Ibid., p. 387; compare Adorno 1973, p. 8 and passim.
[153]TKH2, pp. 171-293.
system, [154] which, by means of the steering medium of money, coordinates the activities of group members apparently by accident, while each of them remains consciously orientated to his/her own egocentric interests.

To this division in types of integration, Habermas argues, correspond two concepts of society itself: [155]

(1) as the lifeworld of a social group, which can be analyzed adequately only from the internal perspective of a participant, and

(2) as a set of functionally integrated systems, which can be analysed adequately only from the perspective of the third person observer.

Neither set of concepts nor integrative mechanisms, he holds, is sufficient to represent society as a whole. Society must be conceptualized as both system and lifeworld, [156] and social evolution involves both a rationalization of the lifeworld, and an increase in the complexity of the social systems. [157] Habermas' intention is thus to transcend the division between action and systems theory, 'to grasp societies as systemically stabilized action-connections of socially integrated groups', [158] because a sufficiently complex metatheoretical framework cannot be developed inside either paradigm alone. [159]

3.5.2 Society as lifeworld

Habermas, distancing himself from the views of Husserl who operated with the "philosophy of consciousness", [160] defines the lifeworld as 'a reservoir of obvious or undoubted convictions that the communication participants can use for cooperative interpretation processes ... a culturally handed-on and verbally organized store of interpretation patterns'. [161] It is also

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[154]Ibid., p. 226.
[155]Ibid., p. 179.
[156]Ibid., p. 180.
[157]Ibid.
[158]Ibid., p. 301.
[159]Ibid., p. 303.
[160]Ibid., p. 189.
[161]Ibid.
the transcendental place where speaker and hearer meet; where they can reciprocally raise the claim that their expressions "fit" the world (the objective, the social or the subjective world), and where they can criticize and ratify these validity claims, disagree and achieve agreement. [162]

As an actor passes from one situation to another, different elements of this unquestioned background of the lifeworld will be thematized and problematized. [163] The lifeworld itself, however, is the "place" from which new situations emerge, [164] and

the communicative actor can as little take up an extra-mundane position over-against it as over-against speech as the medium of understanding processes through which the lifeworld is preserved. [165]

Actors move inside the lifeworld: [166] situations may change, but the boundary of the lifeworld may not be transcended. [167]

The lifeworld, Habermas continues, has three symbolic structural components:

(1) **culture**: the knowledge drawn on in interpretation,

(2) **society**: the legitimate order in reference to which members regulate their activities, and

(3) **personality**: the competences that an actor has at his disposal for interpretative processes, and whereby he maintains his own identity. [168]

He thus rejects the narrowing of the concept to only one of these elements, as in the sociologies of (respectively) Schütz (a 'culturalistically restricted lifeworld concept'), [169] Parsons (the lifeworld as a

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[162]Ibid., p. 192.
[163]Compare TKH2, pp. 188f.
[164]Ibid., p. 191.
[165]Ibid.
[166]Ibid., p. 192.
[167]Ibid., p. 201.
[168]Ibid., p. 209.
'societal community'), [170] and Mead (where 'the theory of society shrinks to social psychology'). [171]

But the lifeworld also has a material substrate (the human organism), and the reproduction of these three symbolic components in communicative action is to be clearly distinguished from the maintenance of this material substrate, which occurs via goal-oriented intervention in the material world (instrumental action). [172] Thus the continued existence of the lifeworld depends upon both symbolic and material reproduction. [173] Disturbances in the former lead to loss of meaning, anomie, and psychopathologies. [174] Disturbances in the latter lead ultimately to the death of the organisms themselves.

The rationalization of the lifeworld, [175] Habermas continues, is exhibited in its structural differentiation, in the separation of form from content, and in the becoming reflexive of symbolic reproduction. [176] Pace the 'counter-enlightenment' movement, represented by authors such as Gehlen, Heidegger and the French post-structuralists, [177] the pathologies of modernity are not to be traced to this rationalization as such: [178] Habermas claims that his model of society allows him to escape the "dialectic of enlightenment" presented by Weber, Horkheimer and Adorno.

Valid as this lifeworld approach to society is, says Habermas, it is inadequate on its own. Sociologies that restrict themselves to this

[170] Ibid., pp. 211f.
[171] Ibid., p. 212; stress removed.
[172] Ibid., p. 209; see 3.6.5 below.
[173] Ibid., pp. 209f.
[175] Compare 3.3 above.
[176] TKH2, pp. 219-221.
[177] For an analysis of a variety of these theorists, and their relation to the project of "modernity", Habermas 1985a passim.

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perspective [179] succumb to a 'hermeneutic idealism' [180] that ignores both the reproduction of the material substrate of the lifeworld, and the developmental dynamics of social evolution. The complementary paradigm of society as system is also needed. Habermas' stated guidelines here are very similar to those set out in his earlier reconstruction of historical materialism:

On the one hand the dynamic of [social] development is steered by imperatives that result from the problems of securing existence - of the material reproduction of the lifeworld; yet this social development, on the other hand, makes use of structural possibilities that are underlain by structural limitations that alter systematically with the rationalization of the lifeworld in connection with corresponding learning processes. [181]

3.5.3 Society as system

Sociologies based exclusively on a lifeworld approach, says Habermas, necessarily operate with the fictions of the complete autonomy of actors, the independence of culture from outside influences, and the transparency of communication. [182] But this is to ignore the effect of outside influences upon the socio-cultural lifeworld, influences that must be taken into account if society is to be adequately understood. These influences are 'not available to the intuitive knowledge of the participants', [183] and must instead be examined from the standpoint of a third person observer. [184] To adopt such a view of society, says Habermas, is to view it as a system. [185] And to study society in this way is to trace the unintended and counterintuitive connections that

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[179]Habermas includes symbolic interactionism, ethnmethodology, and the "hermeneutics" approach under this heading, as 'variants of an interpretative sociology that generally do not get beyond the reformulation of a more or less trivial everyday knowledge' (ibid. p. 223).
[180]Ibid.
[181]Ibid. Compare 2.3.2:B above.
[182]Ibid., pp. 224f.
[183]Ibid., pp. 223f.
[184]Ibid., p. 227.
[185]Ibid.

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coordinate actors "behind their backs" via the functional connection of
the results of actions. [186] Thus Weber was wrong to see organizational
competence as purposive-rational action "writ large", [187] and still
accessible to the actors in a lifeworld perspective. Rather there is a
complete disconnection from the rationality (even the purposive
rationality) of the participant [188] in favour of a systemic
rationality. [189]

Viewed as a system, society is seen as

a special case of living systems [which] are to be understood
as open systems maintaining their existence over against an
unstable and complex environment through exchange processes
across their boundaries. All system elements fulfil functions
in respect of system maintenance. [190]

The aim of a system is simply to maintain itself - maintain the status quo
- not to achieve some other ultimately meaningful goal or objective. Its
rationality - "systemic rationality" - is a measure of how efficiently it
achieves this purpose: in Habermas' terms how high its 'steering capacity'
is. [191] Systemic evolution therefore relates to the increase in steering
capacity [192] - which generally involves an increase in system
complexity.

Habermas maintains that all the evolutionary stages of human society
can, and indeed must, be represented as both system and lifeworld. Within
this paradigm he understands social evolution as a triple process of
differentiation:

System and lifeworld are differentiated in that the
complexity of the first and the rationality of the second
increases ... [moreover] each is differentiated at the same
time from the other. [193]

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[186]Ibid., p. 226.
[187]Ibid., p. 453.
[188]Ibid., pp. 240, 454.
[189]Ibid., p. 454.
[190]Ibid., p. 227.
[192]TKH2, p. 228.
[193]Ibid., p. 230.
From a systems-theoretic perspective, the evolution from tribal to modern society [194] can be presented thus. The lifeworld is at first coextensive with a little-differentiated social system, and 'all interactions which are structurally possible in such a society are played out in the context of a communally experienced lifeworld'. [195] During social evolution, however, the lifeworld is reduced to one subsystem among many. System mechanisms free themselves from the structures of social integration to set up norm-free subsystems like the economy and the state. With respect to these 'formally organized action systems, steered by exchange and power',

the participants behave as to a piece of naturalized [196] reality - in the subsystems of purposive-rational action, society coagulates into a second nature. [197]

Of course, even before the emergence of these subsystems, actors always could abandon understanding-oriented action for strategic action, and thus reify normative contexts into something in the objective world. But in modern societies

there arise spheres of organizationally-formed and media-steered social relations which no longer admit at all norm-conforming attitudes and identity-forming social participation, expelling them to the periphery. [198]

In modern society, these subsystems take on a life of their own, and are no longer subject to the control of the lifeworld.

3.5.4 System and dynamics

It is to these subsystems of purposive-rational action, and especially (as in Marx) to the economy, [199] that Habermas looks for the dynamic driving social evolution:

[194]Sketched in TKH2, pp. 233-257.
[195]Ibid., p. 234; stress removed.
[196]Naturwuchsiger.
[197]TKH2, p. 231.
[198]Ibid. My stress.
[199]Although on one occasion he hints at a more major role for warfare (ibid., p. 288).
The stimulus for a differentiation of the social structure is to be found above all in the sphere of material reproduction. [200]

The task of coordinated intervention in the objective world to maintain the material substrate of the lifeworld by the production and distribution of goods, demands a cooperation that can be more or less economically and effectively mastered. Complex skills of different actors must be coordinated efficiently. Thus

insofar as thrift of expenditure and the operational level of the use of resources serve as an intuitive measure for the successful solution of such tasks, there results a stimulus towards the functional specialization of activities and a corresponding differentiation of products. [201]

In other words, there arises pressure towards the division of labour.

The institutional form that social relationships may take within society affects the efficiency of these economic interventions in the objective world. Each stage in social evolution involves a distinctive institutionalization of organizational power and exchange relations, [202] and in the progression from 'tribal society', through 'politically stratified class society', to the current 'economically constituted class society', [203] there is at each stage scope for increased system complexity and therefore efficiency. [204] Thus the centralized state of politically stratified class societies allowed greater system complexity [205] than the institutionalized hierarchies of tribal societies that they replaced, [206] and in the split up of the steering functions of this state among military, judicial, and economic components that occurred at the transition to capitalist (economically constituted class) society, [207] we see a further increase in system

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[200]Ibid., p. 239.
[201]Ibid.
[202]Ibid.
[204]Ibid., p. 247.
[205]With its centralized administration, tax system etc.
[207]Ibid., pp. 255-257.
complexity and therefore in efficiency as well.

Habermas thus transposes his 1975 thesis concerning the relationship between moral-practical and technical progress [208] into the terms of his system and lifeworld model, producing a new version of his continuing project to reconstruct historical materialism. His 1975 thesis had identified developments in the moral-practical dimension as the pacemaker of social evolution. Similarly, here he denies that the structures of the lifeworld vary in dependency upon the complexity-stage of the system. Rather the opposite is true: complexity-stages are dependent upon the structural differentiation of the lifeworld ... which corresponds to ... a communicative rationalization. [209]

The level of possible systemic complexity, and hence, crucially, economic efficiency, is indeed raised when new system mechanisms are introduced. But these mechanisms must themselves be anchored in the lifeworld - they must be institutionalized. [210] These "base" institutions (in series, 'status', 'official office', and 'bourgeois private law') form a series of evolutionary innovations which can only arise under the condition that the lifeworld has become sufficiently rationalized, specifically that law and morality have reached a corresponding developmental stage. [211]

The sequence of evolutionary events (and here compare his exegesis of Weber in 3.2 above) is thus as follows:

in social evolution, higher integration levels cannot be established before legal institutions have been formed, in which a moral consciousness of the conventional or postconventional stage is embodied. [212]

[208] See 2.3.2.B above.
[209] TKH2, pp. 258f.
[210] Ibid., p. 259.
Modern societies embody post-conventional moral consciousness, [213] and the transitions to conventional and then post-conventional morality are necessary conditions for the formation of the institutional frameworks of political and economic class societies. [214] Or, as Habermas puts it:

new planes of system-differentiation can first be set up when the rationalization of the lifeworld has reached a corresponding level. [215]

System complexity and societal rationalization go hand in hand in social evolution, although they are mutually irreducible categories.

3.5.5 Parsons and systems theory

In this project to marry action and systems theory in a theory of society, Habermas claims Talcott Parsons as his forerunner. Parsons, he says, was 'the first to make fruitful a technically strong system concept for social theoretical considerations'. [216] He also considered the reconciliation of action and system theories to be the most important construction problem in need of solution in social theory. Parsons, however, had failed to achieve his stated aim of retaining both action and system aspects in his final model.

The first part of chapter 7 of Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns traces how Parsons fell short in this respect. Even in the early The Structure of Social Action (1937), Habermas argues, action theory was subordinated to systems theory, which was accorded conceptual primacy; [217] and as Parsons' thought developed through Towards a General Theory of Action (1951) [218] to his later systems theory of society, [219] this subordination became more and more marked. Thus, for Parsons, society came to be conceptualized with the help of an

[214] TKH2, pp. 266f.
[215] Ibid., p. 267.
[216] Ibid., p. 299.
[218] Parsons 1962; TKH2, pp. 322-338.
all-embracing general systems theory, and the functional imperatives of the boundary-maintaining system gained undisputed primacy. [220] Even "culture", apparently quintessentially a symbolic domain inaccessible to this analysis, was drawn in to become a functional component of the social system. [221]

Thus Parsons, having abandoned the lifeworld perspective, came to conceive of action systems merely as special cases of living systems. Action systems could no longer act, they merely functioned. [222] And society became a self-steered system surviving in an environment, whose developmental level is directly proportional to the level of autonomy that it can claim as a whole over-against this environment. [223] Social integration was lost altogether, to be subsumed with system integration under the single category "integration". [224]

Now, while Habermas disapproves of the all-embracing nature of Parsons' systems-functionalism, he does draw three important ideas from his work:

(1) the intention of an adequate reconciliation of action and system concepts in social theory,

(2) the idea of subsystems, as applied to subsystems of purposive-rational action like the economy and the state, and

(3) the concept of "communications media" that facilitate internal and external exchange with respect to these subsystems.

I shall examine Habermas' reconstruction of the Parsonian notion of communications media in the next subsection.

[220] Ibid., pp. 338f.
[221] Ibid., pp. 339f, 352.
[222] Ibid., p. 352.
[223] Ibid., pp. 357f.
[224] Ibid., p. 361.
3.5.6 Communications Media

Habermas initially introduces the concept of communications media by way of a reflection upon the consequences of the "linguistification of the sacred" and the "rationalization of the lifeworld". As the rationalization of the lifeworld increases, he says, there is a move away from coordination by pre-accepted traditional norms towards coordination by means of consensus achieved by the participants themselves in discussion. [225]

This, however, increases both the expenditure of time and effort needed to attain effective coordination, and the risk of disagreement and dissent. [226] Communications media prevent the swamping of the coordination mechanisms of a rationalized society that threatens as a result of this increase. They are 'strain-relieving mechanisms', [227] which thereby permit the increase in system-complexity that is the prerequisite for a more efficient material reproduction of society.

The later Parsons had used the concept of communications media as part of his systems theory of society. In his view the social system was divisible into four subsystems. To each he assigned a communications medium, whereby exchange occurred both within the subsystem and between that subsystem and the others that formed its "environment": [228]

[225]See 3.3 above.
[226]TKH2, pp. 268f, 393.
[227]Entlastungsmechanismen (ibid., p. 269).
[228]Ibid., pp. 385f. The social subsystems are tabulated on p. 365; the place of the social system in Parsons' overall systems scheme is tabulated on pp. 360, 376. The "system-environment exchange" model is drawn directly from that of a biological cell or organism, which preserves its existence only by exchange of energy and materials across its boundaries.
Table 4: Media and subsystems

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<th>Subsystem</th>
<th>Medium</th>
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<tr>
<td>economic system</td>
<td>money</td>
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<tr>
<td>political system</td>
<td>power</td>
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<tr>
<td>system of social integration</td>
<td>influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>system of maintenance of structural patterns</td>
<td>value commitment</td>
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</table>

Thus, for example, money was the medium of exchange within the economy itself, between economy and state in the form of taxes, and between economy and private household in the form of wages. [229] Habermas, however, denies that the concept is so widely and univocally applicable. [230] Parsons' "influence" and "value commitment", he argues, involve the "condensation" rather than the complete replacement of verbal understanding and consensus formation. [231] It is misleading to regard their operation as analogous to that of the true media of money and power that do actually replace speech in coordination rather than merely simplifying it. [232]

For Habermas, money is the paradigm of a true communications medium. Its speech-replacing function can be recognized by comparing the modern process of commodity exchange with primitive barter. When money rather than direct barter is the medium of transaction, the process of agreement and exchange is vastly speeded up, yielding a greater flexibility and the possibility of much greater system complexity and efficiency. [233]

However, the introduction of money also changes the nature of society at the same time as making it more efficient. Related as it is to use values, which have an empirically rather than a rationally motivating power, [234] it has a system-forming effect, both internally and

[230] Ibid., p. 386.
[231] Ibid., pp. 273, 275.
[232] Ibid., p. 418.
[233] Ibid., pp. 391-396.
[234] Ibid., pp. 397f.
Table 4: Media and subsystems

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<th>Subsystem</th>
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<td>political system</td>
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<tr>
<td>system of social integration</td>
<td>influence</td>
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<td>system of maintenance</td>
<td>value commitment</td>
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<td>of structural patterns</td>
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[230] Ibid., p. 386.
[231] Ibid., pp. 273, 275.
[232] Ibid., p. 418.
[233] Ibid., pp. 391-396.
[234] Ibid., pp. 397f.
externally. Internally, the differentiation of the (capitalist) economic subsystem via the medium of money abolished the pre-bourgeois normatively organized labour relations, in the process of the monetarization of the forces of production. [235] While externally, as the economic subsystem exchanges with its "environments" (the state, the household) by the money medium, these environments are transformed too. [236] The adoption of the money-medium to facilitate exchange in society in fact yields not only "strain relief", but also a "technicization of the lifeworld". [237] It does indeed allow for the setting up of more complex networks of coordinated actions, but at the same time it dispenses with the need for the competent communicative participation that is the characteristic of social integration. [238]

Habermas claims that "power" [239] is also, by analogy, a medium. Like money, it is symbolic, involving a claim-redemption structure. [240] It too standardizes responses into a binary form (obedience or disobedience), enhances efficiency of goal-attainment, implies an objectivating attitude to action situations, and generally renders interactions less complex and more automatic. [241] However, power is less clearly a "medium" than is money. It is less manipulable and quantifiable, and cannot be stored in a bank or circulated. [242] As requiring legitimation, it remains attached to the understanding and consensus of the participants in the lifeworld in a way that the money medium does not. Reasons are still involved in its exercise. Thus it is less clear in its system-forming effects, [243] and

[235]Ibid., pp. 399f.
[236]Ibid., p. 400. For example, as money becomes an intersystemic exchange medium, it forces the reorganization of power, as the economy is withdrawn from the direct control of the state. Thus power is assimilated to money as a steering medium (ibid., p. 256).
[238]Ibid., p. 394. See further 3.6 below.
[239]By which he usually means an asymmetry of power relations, rather than an abstract capacity to act or to achieve ends in general. Contrast Giddens' definition of power as referring to 'the transformative capacity of human action' (Giddens 1976, p. 110).
[241]Ibid., pp. 401f.
[242]Ibid., p. 402.
[243]Ibid., p. 403.
less suitable for "strain relief" in communication. [244] Nevertheless, power remains sufficiently medium-like, for Habermas to treat it as such in his model of modernity, to which I now turn.

3.6 Modernity and its pathologies

Throughout Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, Habermas is concerned to reinterpret the Weberian rationalization paradox so as to produce a more adequate theoretical model of modern societies and their pathological aspects. Continually, he argues, sociologies have tended to resolve rather than to retain this paradox. The classics of political economy, for example, attempted to show that the system imperatives of the capitalist economy were in harmony with the basic norms of a free and just community: Marx was right in claiming that this is not so, because the economic system has the latent function of maintaining a class structure, and therefore social injustice. [245] Similarly, Parsonian systems-functionalism, by reducing the lifeworld to merely one of several subsystems of the social system, and thus making social and system integration achievements functionally equivalent, makes it impossible to conceptualize system-complexity increases that occur at the cost of an attack upon a rationalized lifeworld, as involving in any sense a real cost. [246]

With his system and lifeworld model, Habermas claims to be able to reinject the Weberian paradox into Parsonian functionalism, while incorporating at the same time essential insights from Marx's work. His basic thesis is that 'the rationalized lifeworld facilitates the origination and growth of the very subsystems whose autonomous imperatives then hit back destructively at it', [247] and that this results in 'disturbances in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld'. [248] Pursuing different rational imperatives, although

[244]Ibid., p. 406.
[246]Ibid., p. 277; compare pp. 346, 550-553.
[247]Ibid., p. 277.
dynamically linked, the two processes of the rationalization of the lifeworld and the increase in complexity of media-steered subsystems collide in a contradictory and paradoxical manner. [249]

Thus Habermas claims it is possible to 'take up again the problem of reification and reformulate it in concepts of systemically induced lifeworld pathologies'. [250]

3.6.1 The model of modernity

Habermas presents his model of modern societies, [251] from a systems viewpoint, in a table which I have adapted below. [252]

[249] Compare TKH2, pp. 553f.
[250] Ibid., p. 293.
[251] Essentially the western democracies, but see TKH2, pp. 563f.
Table 5: The model of modernity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional orders of the lifeworld</th>
<th>Exchange relations</th>
<th>Media-steered subsystems</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>worker role</td>
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<tr>
<td>private sphere</td>
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<td>consumer role</td>
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<td>public sphere</td>
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<td>state citizen role</td>
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<th>P</th>
<th>labour power</th>
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<td>M</td>
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<th>M</th>
<th>goods and services</th>
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<th>P</th>
<th>organizational results</th>
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<th>P</th>
<th>political decisions</th>
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<td>mass loyalty</td>
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In bourgeois society, the lifeworld reacts to the separation out of the economic and administrative (state) subsystems by the formation of the socially integrated private and public spheres. [253] The institutional cores of these are respectively:

1. the nuclear family (which, from the system perspective of the economy, forms its "environment" as the private household), and

2. the communications network, that facilitates the formation of both cultural and political public spheres (which, from the system perspective of the state, forms its environment relevant to

legitimation). [254]

The economy interacts with the private sphere – and the state with the public sphere – by means of the communications media money and power (M and P in the table respectively). This involves the abstractions of work to labour power, use values to demand preferences, and collective will-expressions to mass loyalty, so that they can be exchanged for wages, consumer goods and political leadership respectively. [255] From the perspective of the lifeworld, the establishment of the two subsystems, and the exchanges via the money and power media, involve the establishment of the four social roles in the table. To play a social role is to enter a formally (that is, purposive-rationally) organized action-sphere, and to be released from the perspective of the lifeworld. [256] This is experienced from the lifeworld perspective as a monetarization and bureaucratization of everyday life, and results in what Habermas calls a "mediatization" [257] of the lifeworld.

On this basis, Habermas criticizes the "economistic" model of Marx, that was based upon the "theory of value" (see 3.6.3 below).

3.6.2 The colonization of the lifeworld

Habermas stresses that modern society inevitably embodies something of a compromise between:

(1) system imperatives, which, by an increase in complexity, allow an increase in the efficiency of the material production of the lifeworld and the "steering" of the social system as a whole, and

(2) the imperatives of social integration, which are responsible for the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld, i.e. cultural transmission, socialization, and the formation of personal identity. [258]

[254]Ibid., pp. 471f. Pace Parsons, the private and public spheres are not subsystems, and the state and economy do not act as "environments" for the public and private spheres (ibid., pp. 472f).
[255]Ibid., pp. 475f.
[256]Ibid., pp. 472-474.
[258]TKH2, pp. 341-343, 350.
He thus rejects Marx's thesis that the two sets of imperatives could be reunited under socialism. The separation of system and lifeworld, which occurred at the emergence from tribal society, is reversible only at the cost of regression, and the goal of "reconciliation" is mere romanticism. Systemic rationality is as valid in its place - and as non-transcendable - as the purposive rationality of modern science and technology. [259]

However, Habermas draws a distinction between a healthy modernization process, characterized by the above "mediatization" of the lifeworld to some extent, and the pathological "colonization" of the lifeworld: a term which alludes to the imperialistic destruction of traditional third world cultures during the expansion of international capitalism: [260]

The analysis of processes of modernization begins from the general assumption that a progressively rationalized lifeworld is both uncoupled from, and made dependent upon formally organized action-spheres, such as the economy and state administration, which are always becoming more complex. This dependence, stemming from the mediatization of the lifeworld through system imperatives, assumes the socio-pathological form of an inner colonization insofar as critical disequilibria in material reproduction (that is, steering crises accessible to systems-theoretical analysis) can be avoided only at the cost of disturbances in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld (i.e. of "subjectively" experienced identity-threatening crises or pathologies). [261]

This requires some elucidation.

A pathological "colonization" of the lifeworld arises, argues Habermas, when systemic imperatives penetrate into the areas where symbolic reproduction is indispensable. [262] As societies can be defined as 'systemically stabilized action-connections of socially integrated groups', [263] this will tend to occur when the systemic stabilization of the material reproduction of the lifeworld (i.e. the avoidance of the

[260] Ibid., p. 522.
[262] Ibid., p. 549.
[263] Ibid., p. 301; see 3.5.1 above.
crises of the capitalist economic cycle) is achievable only at the expense of the erosion of social integration possibilities. [264]

From his "compromise" position, Habermas can envisage two undesirable states of society:

(1) a society where social integration achieved by communicative action penetrates so far into the economic and administrative systems that these become chronically inefficient, leading to a descent into chaos and/or greatly reduced production of necessary material goods, and

(2) a society where the reverse is the case: where the economic and administrative systems are efficient but form their own social structures which "tower over" [265] the lifeworld, leading to a radical loss of meaning and freedom.

If the first case represents the logical result of the programmes of the protest movements, were these to be put completely into effect, [266] the second represents the actual state of the modern western societies at present.

3.6.3 Marx and the theory of value

In chapter 8 of Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, [267] Habermas attempts to draw Marx's work within his system-lifeworld-pathology model.

A: HABERMAS' EXEGESIS OF THE MARXIAN THEORY OF VALUE

Marx, Habermas says, pursued two logically distinct lines of inquiry, which correspond to lifeworld and system approaches to society. In his economics he analyzed the workings of the capitalist economy as a system from an observer perspective, whereas in his historical analyses of the evils of proletarianization and class division, he pursued an analysis of

[264]For the idea of the transfer of crisis tendencies from one area of the social system to another, LC, pp. 45-94 and passim.
[266]See 3.6.7 below.
the lifeworld of the capitalist producers. [268] The combination of these two in Marx, he continues, through the categories of alienated labour and the dual character of the commodity form, allowed the crucial exchange of labour power for circulating capital to be conceptualized both as a "steering-mechanism" of a self-regulating production process, and as a process of exploitation. [269]

"Alienated labour" thus becomes the place where the imperatives of social and system integration meet. Marx exposes the illusion that labour power can be reduced to a commodity like any other, by pointing out that it is not detachable from the workers themselves, and thus is fundamentally non-orientable to goals of saleability. It is irrefutably "subject-bound". [270] As action, labour belongs to the lifeworld of the producers, and is concerned with concrete actions and cooperative relations. But by abstraction into "abstract labour", it is transformed into a system-capacity of the capitalist business and economy, [271] a step amounting to alienation of the capacities of the producers from their lifeworld. In this, labour both becomes independent of the needs, competences, and social situation of the working individual, and as abstract labour power connected with exchange value, can now be seen as "human work" in general. [272] Marx elucidates this event of abstraction from reality as a reification of socially integrated relations: social relations are transformed into instrumental ones. [273]

In Habermas' view, Marx is here attempting to provide a set of 'translation rules' [274] by which systemic statements (about anonymous value relations) can be translated into historical statements (about interactive relations between social classes). [275] Thus system problems (crises) can be projected on to the plane of social integration, and

[268] Ibid., p. 492.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid., p. 493.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Ibid., pp. 493f.
[273] Ibid., p. 494; compare Lukacs in 3.4.1 above.
[274] Ibid., p. 495.
[275] Ibid., pp. 494f.
connected with the dynamic of class strife, [276] once 'certain empirical hypotheses about (for example) the solidarity effect of cooperation forms enforced by the conditions of the manufacturing system' [277] are accepted. Thus Marx gained some critical leverage upon capitalist economics by linking it, via his translation rules, with the exploitation of the producers and the destruction of their lifeworlds. [278] Having started from the lifeworld of concrete labour, to pass secondarily to the economic utilization of abstract labour, he can also return to the lifeworld plane of action and class, to point out the costs of capitalist modernization: [279]

The bilingualism of the theoretical representation gives the dialectical conceptuality, forced together in the Marxian system and action theory, its critical point. [280]

B: CRITIQUE OF THE MARXIAN THEORY OF VALUE

Although Habermas applauds Marx's attempt to work simultaneously upon both the system and the lifeworld levels, he finds fault with his way of combining the two conceptualities.

Firstly, he argues, Marx remains too attached to the Hegelian logic. [281] As a result, he conceptualized the capitalist system as 'nothing more than the ghostly form of a class relationship that has been rendered anonymous and fetishized', such that the apparent autonomy of the systemic production processes has 'the character of bewitchment'. [282] This leads him to eliminate a priori the possibility that the capitalist economy and bureaucracy - in themselves, rather than merely as a transitional stage to a future resolution - might also represent a higher evolutionary stage than that which they replaced. Thus he 'underestimates the evolutionary value possessed by the media-steered subsystems', in

[276] Ibid., p. 495.
[277] Ibid., p. 496.
[279] Ibid., pp. 497f.
[280] Ibid., p. 498.
[282] Ibid., p. 499.
terms of improved steering capacities, as well as of the destruction of the old feudalistic class relations. [283] Not surprisingly, therefore, his theory of revolution adopts a view of the merits of political action which is the opposite of that implied by systems-functionalism, [284] and deceives him into belief in 'a futuristic state' where 'the objective appearance of capital has melted away', and 'the lifeworld is given back its spontaneity'. [285] This is to be achieved by the revolutionary power of the industrial proletariat, who dismantle the institutional bases of the media (crucially private property) and thus force the collapse of the automatic system processes of economic growth back onto the lifeworld. [286] Thus, in Marx, "system" and "lifeworld" appear as the "realm of necessity" and the "realm of freedom" respectively, with the socialist revolution freeing the latter from the former. [287] Deceived by the Hegelian concept of totality, Marx failed to see that in any modern society, with whatsoever class structure (or none), there must be a high level of structural differentiation. [288]

Secondly, Marx 'lacks criteria for distinguishing between the disintegration of traditional life-forms and the reification of post-traditional lifeworlds'. [289] The concept of "alienation" remains ambiguous. Marx used it to criticize the lifestyle that arose with the proletarianization of artisans. But it is too blunt a tool to distinguish, in that destruction, between a reification of the lifeworld and its structural differentiation. [290] What is needed, and what the theory of value does not provide, is a concept of reification that would permit the identification of the syndrome of reification relative to each attained level of the rationalization of the lifeworld', [291] because, 'at the post-traditional stage of life-forms, the pain of the separation out of

[283]Ibid.
[284]Ibid.
[285]Ibid., p. 500.
[286]Ibid.
[287]Ibid.
[288]Ibid., p. 501.
[289]Ibid.
[290]Ibid., p. 502.
[291]Ibid.
culture, society and personality counts ... as a process of individuation and not of alienation'. [292] In a thoroughly rationalized lifeworld, the concept of reification points to the possibility not of a 'nostalgic, often romanticized, past of pre-modern life-forms', [293] but only to 'conditions of communicative sociation'. [294] Yet Marx lacks any concept of a rationalized lifeworld with which he could make this sort of distinction. [295]

Thirdly, implicit in the idea of alienated labour, at least in the Paris Manuscripts, is a standard of non-alienated labour which accords with the expressivist model of that creative productivity in which the artist, in the fashioning of his work, at the same time develops his essential powers. [296]

This concept Habermas traces to the Bildungsideal of Herder and the Romantics. He argues that it traps the idea of labour normatively in action concepts: capitalist labour becomes a deviation from "exemplary praxis", such that capitalist workers are robbed of the possibility of the development of their essential powers at the same time as they are robbed of their product. [297] To extrapolate from Habermas' statements a little, his model suggests two errors here:

1) a confusion of action concepts with system concepts ("production" being a system concept), and

2) on the level of action theory, a romantic confusion of aesthetic-expressive and purposive-rational action. [298]

Fourthly, once we see modernization as involving not only a new formulation of class relations but also an increased level of system

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[292]Ibid., pp. 502f.
[293]Ibid., p. 503. Such as, in the sphere of social labour, the pre-industrial world of the artisan and peasant (ibid., p. 502).
[294]Ibid., p. 503.
[295]Ibid., p. 502.
[296]Ibid., p. 501.
[297]Ibid., pp. 501, 503f.
[298]See further 4.7 below.
differentiation, the 'semantic question' about the translation between theoretical languages becomes an 'empirical question' about 'when the growth of the monetary-bureaucratic complex touches action spheres that are not transferable to systemic integrative mechanisms without pathological side effects'. [299]

Lastly, Habermas criticizes Marx for having produced 'an economistically foreshortened interpretation of the development of capitalist societies'. [300] Even though the world of work is indeed the source of the dynamic of the class struggle, reification effects are to be traced to both the economic and the administrative subsystems. [301] It is thus a mistake to see the economy/state relation on a base/superstructure model, [302] a mistake which stops Marx's critique of political economy from generating a suitable explanatory model for late capitalism - or for bureaucratic state socialism.

3.6.4 Marx and late capitalism

Marx's "economistic" model, Habermas points out, cannot accommodate two features of the state as it is found in late capitalism, which distinguish it from the form of the state that Marx analysed in the nineteenth century.

The first is its interventionist character vis-a-vis the economy and the lifeworld. The modern state intervenes in the economy to iron out the worst fluctuations of the capitalist crisis cycle. It also intervenes in the lifeworld, in the form of legal provisions (like unfair dismissal legislation), and monetary provisions (like welfare state benefits), to ease the destructive effect that the capitalist accumulation process has upon the producers. In modern capitalism the level of this intervention is, of course, kept within limits, [303] such that the internal dynamic of the capitalist economy is not subverted, and the basic class structure is not

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[300]Ibid., p. 504.
[301]Ibid., p. 503.
[302]Ibid., p. 504.
[303]Otherwise the system metamorphoses into bureaucratic state socialism, where the state power becomes the primary steering medium (TKH2, p. 564).
destroyed. Class antagonism is "pacified" rather than removed, and crisis tendencies are still generated in the economic subsystem. But from here they are shifted onto the administrative subsystem, where they "present" as the overtaxing of bureaucratic planning capacity. [304]

The second feature is the growth of mass democracy, that has evolved to provide the necessary legitimation to anchor the power medium of the state administration in the lifeworld. Apparently embodying political will-formation by democratic discussion and resultant consensus, in fact the input into the political system is mediatized to a large extent into mass loyalty. This is guaranteed partly by welfare state programmes, and partly by the selective exclusion of themes from public debate. The latter is achieved by restriction of access to the public sphere, and by manipulation of the information available to it. [305]

Thus to "economistic" Marxist theory, late capitalism presents a paradox: it leaves the drive mechanism of social evolution intact while lessening overt class conflict. The class structure is shifted out of the lifeworld and into the system by state intervention, and the unequal pattern of social rewards is no longer obviously traceable to a class basis. [306] The alien element of the workplace is made subjectively bearable by its "humanization", and/or by monetary rewards and legal security, while there is a general (although still differentiated) increase in the standard of living such that occupational roles lose their proletarian reference. Thus,

with the protection of the private sphere against the violent results of the system imperatives effective in the work-world, distribution conflicts lose their explosive force. [307]

However, while impoverishment related to the material reproduction of the lifeworld is reduced in late capitalism, there increasingly appear

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[304]Ibid., pp. 505f, 510-512; compare LC, pp. 50-60.
[305]TKH2, pp. 506-510.
[306]Ibid., p. 512.
[307]Ibid., p. 514.
class non-specific reification effects [308] that disturb the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld, [309] as the welfare state penetrates into the lifeworld in its attempt to neutralize the side-effects of the economic dynamic. [310] Thus, as the autonomous economic system continues to grow in complexity and size, there is an increase in the flow of compensation through the client and consumer roles, [311] and the expansion of the client role leads to problems precipitated by the "legalization" of communicatively structured action spheres. [312]

In late capitalism, it is not the power of ideology [313] that keeps these systemic effects generally hidden, but a fragmentation of everyday consciousness and a cultural impoverishment of the lifeworld. This happens as science, morality, and art are not only separated out into autonomous disciplines, but also split off from the everyday communicative praxis [314] that they should serve. In other words, instead of a false consciousness modernity presents a fragmented and impoverished consciousness. And it is under these conditions that the colonization of the lifeworld becomes possible. [315] Faced with this situation, pace Lukács, progressive praxis should abandon the pursuit of 'the scattered traces of a revolutionary consciousness'. Instead it should investigate 'the conditions for a recoupling of the rationalized culture with an everyday communication based on vital traditions'. [316]

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[308] Albeit filtered through the pattern of social inequality (ibid., p. 513). Habermas claims that this 'class non-specific outworking of the reification of communicatively structured action spheres' (p. 448) is equivalent to 'the pathological secondary effects of a class structure ... which cannot be adequately grasped using action-theoretical means alone' (pp. 449f).

[309] Ibid., p. 513.

[310] The effects of this penetration were ignored by Marx, who concentrated exclusively on the worker role. Thus Marx limited his concept of alienation to the alienated factory work of the early stages of industrialization, which he generalized to the proletarian lifeworld as a whole (TKH2, p. 513).

[311] Ibid., pp. 515f.

[312] See 3.6.6 below.

[313] As in early capitalism with its ideology of "fair exchange".


[315] Ibid., pp. 520-522.

[316] Ibid., p. 522.
3.6.5 Allocation

Habermas follows Parsons in distinguishing two key problems of social systems: "allocation" and "integration". [317] Allocation is concerned with 'adaptive and goal-achieving functions, with the getting, mobilization, distribution and effective use of scarce resources'. [318] The solution of these allocation problems in the broadest sense serves the functional integration of action systems, whereas social integration is concerned with the maintenance and integration of cultural values. [319] Also with Parsons Habermas sees social systems as inevitably a compromise between the corresponding two sets of imperatives. [320]

Habermas appears to equate "allocation problems" with the "material reproduction of the lifeworld", and this with "social labour":

The lifeworld of a social group ... stands via its material substrate in exchange with an environment, consisting of the ecology of outer nature, the organisms of the participants, and the structures of alien lifeworlds .... With its material substrate the lifeworld stands under contingent conditions, which, from the perspective of its participants, appear as either limitations on the realization of action plans or as restrictions on self-steering. This substrate must be maintained by the use of scarce resources through social labour; Parsons described the corresponding tasks as allocation problems. [321]

This - and only this - may be completely given over to systemic mechanisms without pathological consequences; the function of 'material reproduction' can 'so it appears' be 'handed over painlessly to media-steered action systems'. [322]

From an action-theoretical viewpoint, this material reproduction is internally connected with purposive-rational intervention in the

[317]Ibid., p. 341.
[318]Ibid.
[319]Ibid. See 3.5.1 above.
[320]Ibid., pp. 342, 350.
[321]Ibid., pp. 347f.
[322]Ibid., p. 549.
objective world. [323] However, as mentioned in 3.5.3 above, at least for stages following the evolutionary separation of lifeworld and system, it is a mistake to think of this material reproduction as an intended result of social labour. As systemically analysable, it transcends the action-orientations of the labourers:

The material reproduction of the lifeworld ... [cannot] be represented as the intended result of collective social labour. It generally takes place as the fulfilment of latent functions that transcend the action orientations of the participants. Insofar as the aggregate effects of cooperative actions fulfill the imperative of the maintenance of the material substrate, these actions can be stabilized functionally - i.e. via the linking of functional results .... These considerations ... suggest a change of method and of conceptual perspective, namely an objectivating view of the lifeworld as system. Insofar as the material reproduction comes into view, it is connected, not with the symbolic structure of the lifeworld, but only with the processes of the exchange of the lifeworld with its environment, with which (according to our definitions) the existence of the material substrate is connected. In respect of these "metabolic processes" (Marx) it is possible to reify the lifeworld as a boundary-maintaining system, for which functional connections are relevant, which cannot be sufficiently opened up from the intuitive knowledge of lifeworldly contexts. Survival imperatives demand a functional integration of the lifeworld ... that calls for a counterintuitive analysis from the standpoint of an observer who objectivates the lifeworld .... functional integration amounts to a material reproduction of the lifeworld that can be conceived as system maintenance. [324]

Thus it is legitimate to subsume social labour entirely under "production", in the sense of yielding a product, and to neglect the lifeworld/action perspective of the producers for a systemic/observer analysis that sees social labour as part of the economic subsystem.

[323]Ibid., p. 348.
[324]Ibid., pp. 348f.
3.6.6 The welfare state

What has just been said does not hold good, however, for cases connected to the medium of power and the administrative subsystem. These cannot be subsumed under system integration without cost, because social relations - unlike relations with the natural world - are necessarily symbolic in character.

In the sphere of power, Habermas holds that modernity must again be something of a compromise. A certain degree of bureaucratization is in fact a normal part of modernization, arising when ethics is replaced by law in action-coordination. [325] However, the dynamic of the economic system, and the reactions of the administrative system that it calls forth in late capitalism, [326] produce an apparently unstoppable tendency towards more and more bureaucratization. And this leads to identity or orientation problems in the individual, [327] and legitimation problems in society. [328]

The key here is the ousting of aspects of rationality in the lifeworld. In capitalist modernization, cognitive-instrumental rationality penetrates from the spheres of economy and state into other, communicatively-structured life-spheres, and there takes precedence at the cost of moral-practical and aesthetic-practical rationality. [329]

This leads, as Weber had pointed out, to a split in the personality of the modern person: between a specialist-utilitarian lifestyle ('experts without spirit'), and an aesthetic-hedonistic lifestyle ('consumers without heart'). The same person, adopting both attitudes, is fragmented and loses the ability to make unified sense of his life history. [330] Ruled by cognitive-instrumental attitudes to self and others in the work

[325] Ibid., pp. 470f.
[326] See 3.6.4 above.
[327] TKH2, pp. 460f.
[328] Compare LG, pp. 45-94.
sphere, ethical obligation is here weakened in favour of orientation to increasing income; and when not at work, the consumer is determined by expressive attitudes which are a compensation for an everyday theoretical and practical rationalism. [331]

According to Habermas, it is not the loss of objective reason (due to a rationalization of the lifeworld), nor even the highly complex nature of modern society (the result of an ever-increasing system-complexity), that results in the overtaxing of the integrative power of the individual. [332] Two other factors are responsible: the elitist separation of expert cultures from everyday communicative praxis, and the penetration of system imperatives into the areas of cultural tradition, social integration, and education. [333]

But it is precisely the latter, occurring with the expansion of the consumer and client roles, that is an inevitable consequence of the establishment of a successful welfare state. [334] The law here acts as a medium, [335] leading to a monetarization and bureaucratization of the core spheres of the lifeworld: [336]

To the extent that the welfare state proceeds via the pacification of the class conflicts immediately produced in the sphere of production, and casts a network of client-relations over private life-spheres, there appear ever more strongly the pathological effects of a legalization that is at the same time a bureaucratization and monetarization of core structures of the lifeworld. The paradoxical structure of this type of legalization consists therein: that the guaranteeing by the welfare state of the goal of social integration must equally serve the disintegration of precisely those life-relations which, abstracted by legal intervention from action-coordinating understanding mechanisms, are transferred to media like money and power .... a crisis of social integration. [337]

[331] Ibid., p. 478. This orientation problem corresponds to a legitimation problem in the public sphere, as ethics is ejected from politics, which becomes merely the use of legitimate power in struggle (ibid).
[332] Ibid., p. 488.
[333] Ibid.
[334] Ibid., p. 523.
[335] Ibid., p. 539.
[336] Ibid., p. 534.
[337] Ibid., stress removed.
The attempt to stabilize the system leads paradoxically to the undermining of its very basis in the lifeworld.

3.6.7 Protest potential

Habermas denies both that the advance of this state of affairs is inexorable, [338] and that we can conceptualize adequately the current rebellion against it as a "revolt of nature", as Horkheimer and Adorno had done. Rather, he sees at work in modern societies a set of countertendencies in which the rationalized lifeworld is resisting this colonization by system imperatives. [339] This is not, in his view, the equivalent of Marxian class conflict. Rather, the protest potential now arises along other conflict lines, namely where we might expect it if we accept the thesis of the colonization of the lifeworld. [340] Whereas overt class conflict occurred over the issue of the distribution of wealth, new conflicts have arisen, not in areas of material production, and not subject to alleviation by compensations that conform to the system. They are bound 'not to distribution problems, but to questions of the grammar of forms of life'. [341] They arise, that is, in areas of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization, as a reaction against their reification, and are concerned with 'the quality of life, equality, individual self-realization, participation, and human rights'. [342] They cannot be headed off by the input of money or power - that is by welfare state compensations. [343]

This 'protest potential' [344] Habermas sees embodied in the modern

[338] On which question, compare TKH2, p. 462: 'Whether the bureaucratization-tendencies described by Weber could ever reach the stage described by Orwell, where all integration-mechanisms ... are transferred to systemic mechanisms ... without a transformation in anthropologically deep-seated structures ... that is an open question'. Such an "administered world" was for Adorno the vision of the ultimate horror; yet for Luhmann it is reduced to a trivial presupposition.

[339] Ibid., pp. 575f.
[340] Ibid., p. 576.
[341] Ibid. Pages 576-583 are translated as Habermas 1981e.
[342] TKH2, pp. 576f.
[343] Ibid., p. 576.
[344] Ibid.
western societies in a motley collection of groups that manifest 'sub-institutional, extra-parliamentary forms of protest', [345] and whose common bond is 'the critique of growth'. [346] Examples that Habermas lists include environmental groups, the peace movement, alternative movements (squatters, communes), minority pressure groups (e.g. homosexuals), various psychology/counselling based support groups, religious fundamentalism, the women's movement, and independence movements. [347] Habermas' position with respect to these groups (except the women's movement) [348] is ambiguous. On the one hand he recognizes that they are phenomena expressing resistance to a real pathology of modernity. Yet on the other, he is often far from happy with the exact form that the protest takes. Two examples relevant to my interests will suffice in closing.

Firstly, with respect to problems addressed by the "Greens", he comments:

The major industrial intervention in ecological balances, the utilization of non-renewable natural resources, and demographic development, indeed present the industrially developed societies with huge problems - yet these problems are largely abstract and require technical and economic solutions which must, in turn, be globally planned and implemented by administrative means. [349]

The real answer to ecological problems is thus more and better technical and bureaucratic control, not less: a reality frequently ignored by "Green" protesters.

Secondly, he notes that the worker, consumer, client, and citizen roles come under attack in, for example, attacks on competitiveness in schools, on the monetarization of relations, or on the instrumentalization of professional labour. [350] Habermas holds that proposed

[345]Ibid.
[346]Ibid., p. 577.
[347]Ibid., p. 578.
[348]This is significant. Habermas sees that which in 5.2.1 I shall call "liberal" feminism as 'deeply rooted in the acknowledged universalist foundations of morality and legality' (ibid., p. 578). It aims, that is, to continue the Enlightenment project, rather than react against it.
[349]TKH2, pp. 579f.
[350]Ibid., pp. 581f.
counter-institutions, such as a non-profit-orientated economy, or an expressive "politics of the first person", are the result of conceptual confusion. [351] They result from a failure to realize that even a non-pathological modernity must involve both the rationalization of the lifeworld and the increased complexity of systems. [352]
4. THEMES FROM HABERMAS' ACCOUNT CRITICALLY EXAMINED

4.1 Introduction

In section 1.3 above, I identified two key issues that underlie much of the discussion of this thesis: the problematic status of "control" in human life, and the degree of importance to be attached to work in the human enterprise as a whole. As we have now seen, Habermas adopts distinctive positions on both of these issues. In this chapter I shall attempt to evaluate some of the positions that he takes up.

The question of "control" is discussed chiefly in 4.2 and 4.3 below, while the issue of the centrality of work underlies the discussion of 4.2, 4.5 and 4.6. In 4.4 and 4.7, pursuing one aspect of the problem of definition outlined in 1.2 above, I consider the relationship between art and work, and the notion of "creativity" as applied to human labour.

4.2 Instrumental and communicative action: two types of action?

Habermas' distinction between two different sorts of action - labour and interaction, or, in his later formulations, instrumental and communicative action [1] - is a crucial distinction that informs his work at many levels. These levels are usefully distinguished by McCarthy:

At a 'quasi-transcendental' level, the theory of cognitive interests distinguishes the technical interest in prediction and control of objectified processes from the practical interest in maintaining distortion-free communication. At a

[1] For analysis and criticism of this distinction, J.Thompson 1981, pp. 130-133; Giddens 1982a, pp. 100-116 (= Thompson and Held 1982, pp. 149-161); Rüdenklau 1982, pp. 150-154 and passim; Gripp 1984, pp. 23-26; McCarthy 1984, pp. 16-40. For the distinction in Habermas' work, CES, pp. 40f, 117-120; ITP, p. 8; RC, pp. 263-269; TCA1, pp. 284-286; TP, pp. 142-169; TRS, pp. 91-94. The distinction is presented as between instrumental and communicative action at PKHI, p. 383.
methodological level, a distinction is drawn between empirical-analytic inquiry and hermeneutic or critical inquiry. At the sociological level, subsystems of purposive-rational action are distinguished from the institutional framework in which they are embedded. And at the level of social evolution, the growth in productive forces and technological capacity is distinguished from the extension of interaction free from domination. [2]

This distinction has come under heavy fire from Habermas' critics. I shall consider, as typical examples, the objections offered by Anthony Giddens and John Thompson.

The distinction is introduced in two different contexts in Habermas' work of the late 1960's. Firstly, it appears in his reflections upon Marx's distinction between the forces and relations of production, considered in the light of Hegel's Jena lectures. [3] Secondly, it is also found in the context of Max Weber's distinction between purposive-rational and value-rational action. [4] Therein, according to Giddens, [5] lies the root of the ambiguous nature of the distinction. For it is not clear whether the distinction is supposed to be "analytical" (as in Weber) or "substantive" (as in Marx): [6] whether it is merely a matter of resolving aspects of a complex of human "praxis" that always (in Habermas' terms) has both instrumental and communicative aspects, or whether it reflects two sorts of action that can, at least in theory, be thought of as existing in their pure form. There is more than a suspicion in the minds of his interpreters that Habermas retreats to the more easily defensible "analytical" position when pressed, yet uses the distinction "substantively" in his social theory: that 'what is presented as a dwarf by daylight is working like a giant after dark'. [7]

[6] This is Giddens' terminology (ibid., pp. 108f). For a critique of this use of the term "analytical", note 27 below.
In Giddens' view, this sleight of hand is achieved by a play on the word "labour". Habermas, he says, misleadingly uses "labour" both 'as equivalent to an analytical element of action' and also 'in the sense of "social labour"', and thus assimilates "forces of production", "labour", and "purposive-rational action". Similarly, by using "interaction" as both an analytical element of, and a substantive type of, action, he assimilates "relations of production", "interaction", and "communicative action". [8] Thereby an essentially analytical distinction is imported into social theory, where it informs Habermas' reconstruction of historical materialism.

This objection is not quite fair, I feel, although Habermas has certainly opened himself to it by a degree of terminological obscurity. Part of the problem lies in in the difference between the 1967/8 and the 1981/2 usages of the terms "labour" and "interaction". [9] Whereas in the 1968 work Arbeit is an alternative term for purposive-rational action (instrumental action plus rational choice), [10] in 1982 this usage of Arbeit is studiously avoided, the term being reserved for "social labour" in Marx's sense. [11] Moreover "interaction", which in 1968 was used as an alternative term for communicative action or symbolic interaction, [12] and opposed to strategic action, in 1982 loses this technical sense. It comes to mean instead any social dealings with other persons, [13] be they "communicative" or "strategic", [14] as opposed to instrumental action, which is now restricted to 'goal-orientated intervention in the physical

[9] This terminological obscurity is compounded by the fact that Arbeit is translated as "labour" in the Viertel translation of the 1967 essay 'Arbeit und Interaktion: Bemerkungen zu Hegels Jenenser "Philosophie des Geistes"' (Habermas 1968a,pp. 9-47; TP, pp. 142-169), and as "work" in the Shapiro translation of the 1968 essay 'Technik und Wissenschaft als "Ideologie"' (Habermas 1968a, pp. 48-103; TRS, pp. 81-122), despite the fact that both essays appeared in the same German volume. The translation of the crucial passage in TRS, p. 91 is unreliable; compare Habermas 1968a, p. 62.
[10] TRS, pp. 91f.
[13] Compare M. Weber 1978, p. 4: 'Action is "social" insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course.'
world'. [15] At no time, however, does Habermas simply equate "forces of production" and "purposive-rational action" as Giddens claims. What he does claim is that the rationalization of systems of purposive-rational action leads to 'growth of productive forces; extension of power of technical control'. [16] The pair of concepts "productive forces" versus "productive relations", he says in a clarificatory note, lie at a different level of analysis from the concept-pair "purposive-rational action" versus "communicative action". Whereas the former refer to the level of society as a whole, the latter are action concepts referring to simple interactions. [17] Nevertheless, the two levels of analysis are linked:

there exists between productive forces and the type of purposive-rational action an analytically [18] explicable connection, inasmuch as the knowledge implemented in forces of production, embodied in technologies, organizations and competencies, is meant to improve the productivity of labour, in general to improve the purposive-rational application of means in gaining control over nature and over co-operating human beings. [19]

John Thompson, in Critical Hermeneutics, [20] sets out to demonstrate that the "substantive" distinction between communicative and instrumental action, the only one in his view adequate to underpin the role of the distinction in Habermas' social theory, is untenable. [21] Firstly, starting from an apparently paradigmatic instance of "pure" instrumental action - a chemical engineer following a technical rule to produce a product - he points out that the use of the rule by the chemist still exhibits normative, "dialogic", and conventional elements, elements that Habermas specifically excludes from the category of instrumental action. The following of the the rule by the chemist involves communication, and is therefore in some sense dialogic; moreover he is constrained in his choice (of it rather than of some other rule to achieve the same effect),

[18] Not Giddens' use of this term; see note 27 below.
[21] Ibid., pp. 130f.
by convention as well as by the force of reality. [22] Secondly, Thompson detects strategic elements in virtually all examples of social action, [23] and points out that 'everyday action is thoroughly infused with the pursuit of individual ends'. [24] Thus on two counts he rejects Habermas' thesis that labour and interaction represent two distinct sorts of action. [25]

It seems that Thompson has set up a false dichotomy, however. He assumes that Habermas' distinction could amount 'merely' to 'two tables of characteristics', unless it were possible to instantiate a 'pure instance' of one type of action without any admixture of the other. [26] Yet such an assumption is unjustifiable; Habermas neither claims nor needs to claim this in order to make his distinction sociologically significant. [27] A reading of Habermas that has him successfully steering a course between Thompson's Scylla and Charybdis is quite adequate to the contention that the two component elements in human praxis are rationalizable in different sorts of action system: in systems of social labour and in institutional frameworks respectively. And it is this contention — that social labour and institutional change are rationalizable according to different logics — that is crucial for Habermas' social theory.

Thompson's second point, however, that all supposed instances of communicative action contain purposive-rational elements, does highlight

[22] Ibid., pp. 131f.
[23] Ibid., pp. 132f.
[24] Ibid., p. 132.
[25] Ibid., p. 133.
[26] Ibid., p. 130, my stress. Habermas does in fact cite one example of "pure" instrumental action: the working of machinery (TRS, p. 87; Habermas 1971b, pp. 337-339).
[27] Part of the confusion seems to have arisen out of different understandings of the term "analytic". For Thompson this term seems to imply the opposite of "substantive", used in the Oxford Dictionary sense of 'expressing existence; having a separate and independent existence'. For Habermas however, in the context to which Thompson refers, the term is used as in its application in chemistry to refer to the splitting up of compounds: 'Nor do I deny that normally instrumental action is embedded in communicative action (productive activity is socially organized, in general). But I see no reason why we should not adequately analyze a complex, i.e. dissect it into its parts' (PKHI, p. 382, note 27, quoted in part in J. Thompson 1981, p. 130).
a further lack of clarity in Habermas' account of action concepts, concerning the level on which each of them is to be understood.

It has often been far from clear, as Habermas himself admits, [28] whether his concept of communicative action applies to the process of reaching agreement/understanding itself, or to the actions that are subsequently governed by this agreement, or to both. His recent formulations explicitly reject the first in favour of the second or third of these options. They explain communicative action as a form of co-ordination of (purposive) actions, and deny the exclusive equation of communicative action with speech acts. [29] For example:

I shall speak of communicative action whenever the actions of agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding .... [whenever] action participants are not primarily oriented to their own individual successes; they pursue their individual goals under the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions. [30]

Again:

in communicative action the interpretative accomplishments of actors and the corresponding communicative acts have the status of a mechanism for co-ordinating action which is shunted into the creation of consensus. The goal-directed actions that the actors perform in carrying out their linguistically co-ordinated plans exhibit, as do all actions, the structure of purposive activity. [31]

This to some extent circumvents Thompson's objection - that all everyday action is infused with the pursuit of individual ends - by accepting it. It is not that pursuit, but the method of co-ordination of these pursuits between individual actors, that is the crux. [32] However, this elucidation does indicate an asymmetry in the level of analysis.

[29] RC, pp. 264f.
between instrumental and communicative action that Habermas fails to make sufficiently explicit, [33] an asymmetry that to some extent justifies the complaint that we are not here dealing with two types of action in a straightforward and equivalent sense. [34] There are two matters that require elucidation here.

Firstly, in his 1981/2 work, Habermas devotes most attention to the distinction between communicative action and strategic action, which he regards as two distinguishable types of interaction. [35] Each is characterized, he insists, by a different attitude of actors to other actors ('orientated to consensus' or 'strategic-objectivating'), [36] and by a different co-ordination mechanism (interpretative accomplishment of actors or "objective" mechanisms such as the market). [37] However, in the light of the above, it is clear that each sort of interaction is a complex entity. Communicative action, for example, involves both "communicative acts" and goal-directed action-units of individual actors. Instrumental action, on the other hand, is not such a complex entity, consisting only of instrumental action-units of intervention in the physical world. Instrumental action and communicative action are further combined in social labour. [38] We thus have a three-tier typology of action-concepts, with "instrumental action" and "communicative action" occupying different levels:

LEVEL 1 (level of basic action-units): instrumental acts or action (goal-directed interventions in the material world) versus communicative acts (acts of reaching understanding with another actor about something in the material, social, or subjective "worlds"). [39]

[33] Thompson's diagrammatic representation of the relation between them is misleading in this respect (J. Thompson 1981, p. 140).
[34] Giddens 1982a, p. 108.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., p. 265.
[38] Ibid., p. 268; compare Habermas 1984a, p. 571.
[39] Habermas is not unaware that any human communicative act also involves a goal-directed intervention in the physical world, for example the vibrating of the air during talking. His point is merely that the communicative act itself is not reducible to the description of any such intervention, and follows its own (communicative, dialogic) logic.
LEVEL 2 (action at the level of individuals and their conscious orientations): strategic action versus communicative action.

LEVEL 3 (action at the level of social groups or societies): social labour (material reproduction of the lifeworld) versus symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld or institutional framework. [40]

The relationships between the action concepts across these levels remain, however, rather obscure.

Secondly, Habermas also offers a further analysis of communicative action that is not immediately reconcilable with this schema. In accordance with his contention that linguistic expressions refer simultaneously to the objective, social, and subjective worlds, he maintains that communicative action may be resolved into components of action related to these three worlds: components that may be termed teleological, norm-regulated and dramaturgical respectively. [41] This analysis is on a different level, he insists, from the distinction between strategic and communicative action. While the latter terms denote 'two genuine types of interaction', the former are

the results of an idealising abstraction. The pure cases of constative speech actions, normatively regulated action and self-presentation each emerge from one of the three analytic viewpoints from which any communicative action must be simultaneously open to analysis. [42]

The details of Habermas' distinctions in action concepts thus remain far from clear, and his terminology frequently misleading. However, I would like to defend the irreducibility of the distinction encoded (however inadequately) in Habermas' terminology of instrumental and communicative action, against the more monistic accounts offered by Thompson and Giddens. Thompson's definition of 'action itself, whereby agents

[40] I shall consider the shortcomings of this particular dichotomy in sections 4.5 and 4.6.
[41] TCA1, pp. 84-101; compare RC, pp. 265f.
[42] RC, p. 266. Even in this case, however, Habermas' use of the term "analytic" is not the one that Thompson suggests; see note 27 above.
participate and intervene in the social world', [43] and Giddens' definition of 'action or agency as the stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world', [44] elide a crucial distinction. [45] Giddens' failure to distinguish clearly the logic of the use of "authoritative resources" from the logic of the use of "allocative resources", his apparent assumption that the grammar of the words "power" and "domination" are the same in the two cases, [46] seems to suggest, as Habermas says, that

speaking and acting subjects 'produce' their social life-context in a way similar to that in which they make products of instrumental action. [47]

For all of its dangers of slipping into an unacceptable dualism, Habermas' account does have the virtue of underlining the distinction between these two processes. This in turn guards against a tendency that Giddens shares to some extent with Heidegger, Marcuse and the early Marx: a tendency to deny the neutrality of the exploitation of nature with respect to human interests. [48] This leads on to the subject matter of the next section.

4.3 Habermas and the natural world

Habermas' acceptance of instrumental rationality as embodying an appropriate human relationship to the natural world, and, relatedly, his view of the nature and legitimate scope of the natural sciences, [49] have been subjected to much criticism. Objections include the following:

[45] Thompson usefully challenges the analogy between language/text and action offered by Winch, Ricoeur and others, but fails to elucidate either the differences between non-verbal action and speech, or the basis upon which distinctions in non-verbal action might be made (Thompson 1981, pp. 140-144).
[46] See, for example, Giddens 1984, pp. 257f.
[49] See 2.2 above.
(1) that the transcendental schema employed in Knowledge and Human Interests to locate the objectification of nature is untenable,

(2) that to deny all value to nature independent of human valuation is psychologically inadequate as a basis from which to reform human practices so as to avert ecological catastrophe,

(3) that a communicative ethic is defective in denying any intrinsic value to non-human nature, and

(4) that ecology, or even biology in general, is a science that cannot be contained within the parameters of "Galilean" science, [50] and indicates the possibility of the "new science" of which Marcuse speaks.

I shall consider each in turn, the first two only very briefly.

Habermas' equivocation about the status of the proposed knowledge-constitutive interests [51] was noted in 2.2.1 above. Although most critical effort has been directed towards questioning the viability of the interest in emancipation, [52] the ambiguity surrounding the proposed interest in technical control of the environment has not gone unnoticed. As McCarthy comments:

Habermas appears to be caught in a dilemma: either nature has the transcendental status of a constituted objectivity and cannot, therefore, be the ground of the constituting subject; or nature is the ground of subjectivity and cannot, therefore, be simply a constituted objectivity. [53]

The attempt to elide, by way of evolutionary theory, the distinction between the Kantian thing-in-itself on the one hand, and the objective world constituted by transcendental consciousness on the other, seems doomed to failure. This criticism appears to be well-founded; but in any case in his recent work Habermas seems to have abandoned the idea of

[50] For this term, Whitebook 1979, p. 54.
[51] A category still retained in the 'Postscript' (PKHI, p. 370), but later abandoned.
naturalistically grounded knowledge-constitutive interests (and indeed the idea of epistemology in the classical sense altogether), replacing them with a schema of different "formal-pragmatic attitudes" linked with his theory of language. [54]

Secondly, various writers have found Habermas' attitude to nature psychologically inadequate to the task of averting impending ecological catastrophe. Joel Whitebook, for example, doubts that 'the conflict between society and nature is going to be resolved without a major transformation in our social consciousness of the natural world - e.g., a renewed reverence for life' that transcends Habermas' 'anthropocentric framework'. However 'plausible and internally coherent' Habermas' position might be on a philosophical level, it remains inadequate 'at the level of social psychology'. [55] However, Whitebook's proposed alternative seems to be beset by a major contradiction. He would have us desert our consciously anthropocentric viewpoint, precisely in order to pursue unconsciously the ultimate anthropocentric imperative - the survival of the human race itself!

In the 1982 'A Reply to my Critics', [56] Habermas begins his answer to the third objection by adopting an uncompromising position that limits ethical considerations exclusively to relations between persons:

Just as the transcendental-pragmatic theory of knowledge considers that the logic of the objectivating sciences binds the knowing subject to an attitude, from the perspective of which nature as an absolute purpose drops out, so too ethical universalism (likewise situated in the Kantian tradition) supposes that the norm-conformative attitude of morally acting subjects restricts their view to interpersonal relations - here, too, nature-in-itself cannot become a theme. [57]

From this standpoint, the question of an ethical relationship with non-persons (animals, plants, rocks etc.) simply does not arise. Yet,
Habermas continues, in response to attacks by Whitebook [58] and Ottmann, [59] does this not yield a blatant anthropocentrism that contradicts our intuition that an ethic of compassion is also required? [60] Should we not extend the category of "neighbour", beyond the (even only potential) participants in our communication community, to include all creatures that are affected by our actions and with whose suffering we can empathise? [61]

In reply, Habermas does give a little ground, extending the category of "person" to include young children ('those who can be released into autonomy and responsibility') [62] and, more interestingly, the dead, with respect to whose sufferings an anamnetic compassion that transcends pure ethics is appropriate. [63] I will pursue his comments here in section 6.5.3 below, in connection with the need for a constructive use of the category of self-sacrifice. Yet on the issue of the intrinsic value of animals (and hence also of plants and minerals) he remains adamant. As they cannot be imagined as even counterfactually belonging to our communication community, [64] they could only be accommodated under a paternalistic, naturalistic ethic. But such an ethic abandons the grounding of the idea of equality that is available in the concept of communicative action, [65] and is justifiable only by a retreat to 'the substantial reason of religious or metaphysical world-views', [66] world-views that represent a learning stage definitively transcended at the Enlightenment. Moreover, common sense indicates that once we admit empathy as appropriate with respect to some animals, there is no logical place to stop in extending our empathy to more and more alien reaches of nature. Obviously at the plant level empathy clashes seriously with 'the

[58] Whitebook 1979, pp. 52-64.
[60] RC, p. 245.
[61] Ibid., p. 248.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., pp. 246f.
[64] Ibid., p. 247.
[65] See 3.3 above.
firmer imperatives of the self-preservation of the human race', [67] which demonstrates that the empathetic imperative cannot be carried to its logical conclusion. Thus (he seems to imply) it is better not to start at all; better to remain with an uncompromising anthropocentrism that sets no limits to an instrumentalism of nature in the service of human needs.

Habermas' argument here is only partly convincing. The final reductio ad absurdum, in particular, does not work: is not ethics always conflictual, always a matter of compromise between opposed imperatives? While the judgement that (say) a mental defective ought to count as counterfactually part of our communication community, whereas a dolphin (say) should not, seems to be far more a matter of convention than Habermas imagines. [68] Moreover, if with Habermas we admit an anamnetic imagination as at least ethically relevant (even if in some sense transcending the realm of ethics as such), it is hard to see why other sorts of imagination - such as the 'imagined possibility of conversation' that Rorty would extend to animals [69] - should be ruled out.

To be fair to Habermas, he does not completely rule out the possibility of a 'norm-conformative attitude to this domain of external nature'. [70] What he does deny is that such an attitude can

yield any problems susceptible of being worked up cognitively ... stylised to questions of justice from the standpoint of normative validity .... be carried out at the same level that Kant attained in his moralisation of social relations and Newton obtained in his objectivating knowledge of nature. [71]

Such an approach to ethics he holds to be formally equivalent to the proposed "interpretative sciences", that aim at a non-objectifying approach to nature. This takes us to the last objection introduced at the beginning of this section.

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[67] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., p. 190.
[70] RC, p. 248, stress removed.
[71] Ibid., pp. 248f. See further 4.4 below.

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firmer imperatives of the self-preservation of the human race', [67] which demonstrates that the empathetic imperative cannot be carried to its logical conclusion. Thus (he seems to imply) it is better not to start at all; better to remain with an uncompromising anthropocentrism that sets no limits to an instrumentalism of nature in the service of human needs.

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[67] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., p. 190.
[70] RC, p. 248, stress removed.
[71] Ibid., pp. 248f. See further 4.4 below.
The idea that ecology provides an example of a "non-Galilean" science that falsifies Habermas' account of the natural sciences, the fourth objection, seems to be incorrect. John Keane presents an extreme case of this viewpoint, in his essay 'On Tools and Language: Habermas on Work and Interaction'. [72]

Rejecting 'instrumental science' as 'ideological in that it simultaneously conceals and reveals the technical, monologic character of late capitalist society's understanding of external nature as a thing, a bitch to be cajoled, raped and whipped', Keane looks for a new paradigm of natural science, which 'in its very conceptual structure, seeks a non-repressive mastery of external nature'. [73] Such a science would recognize that

as human, social subjects we are also natural beings circumscribed by our participation in the natural world. As a social category, nature is, indeed, our inorganic body. To ravage external nature is therefore to repress and to jeopardize internal human nature. Commoner's four laws of ecology - 'Everything is connected with everything else,' 'Nature knows best,' 'Everything must go somewhere' and 'There is no such thing as a free lunch' - fruitfully express the dialectic of nature and the realms of work and interaction. [74]

This, continues Keane,

implies that Habermas' uncritical evaluation of the analytic character of modern science must be countered via the development of at least one holistically-conceived science (ecology) which can grasp the dialectical operation of this humanized ecosystem. [75]

However:

This does not imply an abandonment of the scientific and technological enterprise, nor a return to primitivism, merely [sic!] a radical alteration in the internal conceptual structure of natural science. It also implies a heightened

[75] Ibid.
awareness of the destructive impact of some forms of human technique and, conversely, the need for cooperation between humans and nature. Thereby the liberation of nature would begin to coincide with the liberation of human beings. [76]

Taken at face value, there is little to commend Keane's position. Firstly, although ecology does indeed deal with complex and interrelated entities (ecosystems), it in no sense violates the canons of traditional natural science. Interconnectedness as such is not inaccessible to standard scientific, quantitative, analysis; neither does ecology demand the positing of a natural subject ('Nature knows best'). As Habermas comments:

The awareness of ecological cycles, of biotypes, of human–environment systems has certainly brought forward new themes, new questions, perhaps even new disciplines. As far as I can tell, however, from the methodological point of view these ecologically inspired investigations move entirely within the inherited framework. [77]

From which it follows that the answer to ecological problems is not communion with nature, or even some 'non-repressive mastery' of it (an interesting conjunction of metaphors!), but better technical control of pollution, and of the use of scarce resources. [78] Secondly, it is not clear why 'a radical alteration in the internal conceptual structure of natural science', namely to orientate it to 'cooperation between humans and nature', does not amount to 'an abandonment of the scientific and technological enterprise'. [79] What is the essence of science and technology that is to be retained through the transition? Presumably the study of nature. But it is the kind of study of nature that distinguishes science from (say) art, and it is the kind of study of nature that Keane proposes to change. To define natural science instead, as Habermas does, as permanently tied to the project of the prediction and control of an objectified nature, [80] seems eminently sensible.

[76] Ibid.
[77] ASI, p. 177.
[78] Compare TKH2, pp. 579f, considered in 3.6.7 above.
[80] See 2.2.1A above.
While denying the substance of Keane's objections, however, we can perhaps use his comments to introduce a development of Habermas' position that remains within his overall conceptual framework. A re-reading of the quotations from Keane above will show him using, for human-nature relationships, terms whose primary reference is the social sphere: "repress", "cooperation", "liberation". [81] Such use of language is perfectly legitimate, provided we realize that the use is metaphorical: a 'speak[ing] of one thing in terms appropriate to another'. [82] Keane's error is to mistake metaphorical for literal description, to imagine that nature is our "body" in the same sense as our own bodies are. So long as we avoid this error, however, and realize that the same 'logic of domination' does not apply in the two cases, [83] such metaphorical use of language can be suggestive and creative, resulting in 'a new vision, the birth of a new understanding'. [84] For there is a sense in which, say, biological control of pests is a "cooperation" with nature, in a way that the use of escalating quantities of pesticides is not. It represents a "going with" rather than a "cutting against" the grain of the dynamics of ecosystems. The metaphorical use, with respect to nature, of terms such as "cooperation", may be heuristically useful; [85] moreover to speak of the "rape" of nature may be a graphic, and therefore motivationally powerful, way of questioning inappropriate approaches to the control of the biosphere. [86] "Inappropriate", that is, rather than "wrong" in the sense that rape is wrong in the social sphere.

I shall consider this matter further in 5.2 below. Meanwhile in the next section, which discusses Habermas' aesthetics, I shall point out a further complication in Habermas' schema: he finds room, in his recent formulations, for the validity of an aesthetic attitude to external nature, to complement the objectifying attitude characteristic of the

[81] Compare 1.3.1 above.
[83] TCA1, p. 379.
[85] Compare Whitebook's comments on the heuristic value of attributing purposiveness to nature, in the context of a discussion of Kant's third critique (Whitebook 1979, pp. 56f).
[86] Compare Lash 1982, p. 9. This may go some way to meeting Whitebook's charge of psychological inadequacy (see above).
natural sciences.

4.4 Habermas and aesthetics: art and labour

Habermas' view of the nature of modernity, as set out for example in the 1980/81 essay 'Modernity versus Postmodernity' [87] in the context of a discussion of aesthetics, seems at first sight to imply a simple view, both of the nature of art, and of the distinction between art and labour. Max Weber, he writes, had characterized cultural modernity as the separation of the substantive reason expressed in religion and metaphysics into three autonomous spheres .... science, morality and art. [88]

As a result of this separation, problems had been rearranged so as to fall under specific aspects of validity: truth, normative rightness, authenticity and beauty. They could then be handled as questions of knowledge, or of justice and morality, or of taste. Scientific discourse, theories of morality, jurisprudence, the production and criticism of art, could in turn be institutionalized. Each domain of culture could be made to correspond to cultural professions, in which problems could be dealt with as the concern of special experts. [89]

This professionalization served in turn to bring out the intrinsic structures of each of the three dimensions of culture. There appear the structures of cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical, and of aesthetic-expressive rationality, each of these under the control of specialists who seem more adept at being logical in these particular ways than other people are. [90]

Correspondingly, the project of modernity initiated by the eighteenth

[87] MPM. The text cited was delivered as a lecture in New York in March 1981. The German text (Habermas 1981c, pp. 444-464), was delivered as a lecture in September 1980, when Habermas was awarded the Theodor W. Adorno prize by the city of Frankfurt (MPM, p. 3).

[88] MPM, p. 8
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
century philosophers of the Enlightenment, [91] which Habermas insists should not be given up as a lost cause, [92] still consists partly in 'efforts to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art, [each] according to their [own] inner logic'. [93]

Such a commitment to the irreducibility of the Enlightenment distinction between science, ethics, and art, and the rationality and forms of action appropriate to each, seems to imply that work and art are clearly separable activities with separable goals: control of the environment directed to self-maintenance on the one hand, and self-expression of subjectivity on the other. Yet that Habermas' view is not quite this simple is indicated by two considerations.

Firstly, Habermas also wants to retain what he sees as a second element in the Enlightenment project. Professionalization, he argues, has opened up a gap between the resultant three cultures of experts on the one hand (scientists, moralists/lawyers, and art critics), and the public at large on the other, impoverishing further a lifeworld already attenuated by the collapse of much of its traditional content. [94] Thus, to complete the Enlightenment project, it is necessary
to release the cognitive potentials of each of these domains [95] to set them free from their esoteric forms .... to utilize this accumulation of specialized culture for the enrichment of everyday life, that is to say, for the rational organization of everyday social life. [96]

In this he takes up a mediating position in the famous Adorno-Benjamin debate about the significance of modern art, insisting with Adorno that modern art must in some sense remain "autonomous", yet in the spirit of Benjamin looking for its reappropriation into the everyday culture from

[91] Ibid., p. 9
[92] Ibid., p. 11
[93] Ibid., p. 9
[94] Ibid., pp. 8f.
[95] I.e. science, ethics/law, and art.
the transcendent isolation to which Adorno had assigned it. [97] Habermas insists that, irreducible as the projects of science, ethics, and art are, the cognitive gains of all three are to be made available for the everyday actions of actors in the lifeworld, which in appropriating them will become "rationalized" in all three dimensions simultaneously. Precisely what this means in practice is problematic, [98] and I shall return to this issue later.

Secondly, there is considerable ambiguity exhibited in Habermas' writings, about the nature of art and aesthetic experience, and their possible relationship with the "third world" of subjectivity. Although in much of his systematic work Habermas has adopted a three-fold schema which owes much to Kant's three critiques, [99] the status of the third category in the schema, which corresponds to Kant's Critique of Judgement, [100] has neither remained constant nor always been entirely clear. In the 1968 Knowledge and Human Interests, for example, the place of art/aesthetics in the Kantian schema is taken by the critical social sciences and the interest in emancipation. One can perhaps detect here a transformation of the stress of Adorno, Marcuse, and Benjamin, [101] in different ways, upon art as a critical-emancipatory force in society. Yet it is the critique of ideology, rather than utopian artistic expression, that is to the fore in Habermas' account at this stage. [102] In his later work, however, aesthetics is drawn back into his systematic treatment which, in its three-fold science/ethics/aesthetics format, appears to be more

[99] Habermas explicitly refers to this schema in the context of art in QC, p. 199. Compare RC, p. 235.
[100] Kant 1952. Corresponding to science is Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (Kant 1933), and to ethics his Critique of Practical Reason (Kant 1956).
[101] For Habermas on Adorno, Marcuse and Benjamin in this context, PPP, pp. 99-109, 165-170, and 129-163 respectively. The last deals with all three thinkers.
classically Kantian.

In this later work, both the relationship of art to a proposed expressive "formal-pragmatic attitude" of the actor, and the nature of the object realm that is supposed to be "expressed" thereby, become rather unclear. Sometimes Habermas seems to be adopting a purely expressivist aesthetic, in which art is concerned with the expression of the subjectivity of the artist. Thus he comments essentially approvingly about the mid-nineteenth century "aestheticist" conception of art as follows:

The autonomy of the aesthetic sphere could then become a deliberate project: the talented artist could lend authentic expression to those experiences he had in encountering his own de-centred subjectivity, detached from the constraints of routinized cognition and everyday action. [103]

And this impression is reinforced both by his use of the terms "aesthetic-expressive rationality" [104] and "authenticity" [105] in this connection, and by his adoption in Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns of Goffman's "dramaturgical action" as representative of the third moment in forms of human action, alongside teleological and norm-regulated action. [106] Thus, in the context of a discussion about the use of reasons in aesthetic criticism, Habermas can write:

In this context reasons have the peculiar function of bringing us to see a work or performance in such a way that it can be perceived as an authentic expression of an exemplary experience, in general as the embodiment of a claim to authenticity. [107]

However, at least two complications show that Habermas does not accept a simply expressivist aesthetic, that he does not want 'to retract all criteria and to equate aesthetic judgements with the expression of subjective experiences'. [108]

[103]MPM, p. 9; compare Habermas' most recent clarifications upon aesthetics in QC, pp. 199-203.
[104]For example, MPM, p. 8.
[105]For example TCA1, p. 20.
[106]TCA1, pp. 85f, 90-94.
[107]Ibid., p. 20, stress removed.
Firstly, he insists upon a distinctive form of aesthetic-expressive rationality, that is not, as in the Knowledge and Human Interests treatment of Freud, simply concerned with establishing the truth of statements about subjective experiences. [109] Habermas maintains, in his latest comments about art, that there is an unmistakeable indicator for the fact that a certain type of 'knowing' is objectified in art works, albeit in a different way than in theoretical discourse or in legal or moral representations: these objectivations of mind are also fallible and hence criticizable. [110]

'Judgements of taste' are distinguishable from 'merely subjective preference'. They are connected to criticizable validity claims presupposing 'non-arbitrary standards for the judgement of art'. [111] Works of art 'raise claims with regard to their unity' as well as with regard to 'their authenticity, and the success of their expressions'. [112] In this we may detect a shift towards a more objectivist account of aesthetics. [113]

Secondly, as mentioned in 4.3 above, Habermas relates art not only to the subjective world, but also to the objective world of external nature. [114] This is summarily expressed in the following table. [115] Note that the category "eroticism" occupies the slot where one might expect to find expressivist art: [116]

[109] Thus in TCA1 Habermas retains both "therapeutic critique" (related to the KHI concept of emancipation) and "aesthetic criticism" as separate categories of argumentation, at the temporary expense of his 3-fold schema (TCA1, pp. 23, 410 note 18).


[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid., my stress. Compare TCA1, pp. 16f, 20, 23.

[113] Compare Habermas' move away from the near-pragmatism of Knowledge and Human Interests towards a discourse theory of truth for scientific truth (2.2.1:B above). Similar tensions seem to result in both cases.

[114] Also, perhaps, to the social world; compare TCA1, pp. 20, 237.

[115] Compare TCA1, p. 238; RC, p. 249.

[116] Compare Habermas 1984c.
Table 6: Formal-pragmatic attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worlds</th>
<th>1 Objective</th>
<th>2 Social</th>
<th>3 Subjective</th>
<th>1 Objective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Attitudes</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Expressive</td>
<td>Art</td>
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<tr>
<td>Objectivating</td>
<td>Cognitive-instrumental rationality</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm-conformative</td>
<td>Moral-practical rationality</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Morality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Expressive</td>
<td>Aesthetic-practical rationality</td>
<td>Eroticism</td>
<td>Art</td>
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In this context Habermas can comment that

the discussion from Kant to Adorno concerning natural and artistic beauty could provide grounds for the thesis that the expressive attitude to external nature opens up a domain of experience that can be exploited for artistic production. [117]

Elucidation of Habermas' position on this point is available in the 1972 essay 'Walter Benjamin: Consciousness-Raising or Rescuing Critique'. [118] Here Habermas seems to adopt into his aesthetics that part of Benjamin's distinctive theory of language which understands language both as expressive of the subjective interiority of the speaker and as an intimation of surrounding nature:

Whatever is expressed in linguistic physiognomy or in expressive gestures generally is not a mere subjective state but, by way of this, the as-yet-uninterrupted connection of the human organism with surrounding nature; expressive movements are systemically linked with the qualities of the environment that evoke them. [119]

As Jay succinctly comments:

What makes this type of combined expression and mimesis so attractive to Benjamin is its priority to the break between subject and object ... that Schillerian motif of reconciliation ... Now, in general, Habermas was sceptical of precisely such claims to reconcile man and nature through a new, nondominating science ... Yet, in this essay, he demonstrates a certain cautious approbation of the goal insofar as it is represented by art. [120]

This is because Habermas sees art as interpreting the world in terms of areas of human needs that are unreplaceable, unsayable in other ways, and progressively squeezed out in the one-sided rationalization of the lifeworld of modernity - needs that are part of the "given" that puts the substance into any recognizably human form of rationalized practice, and whose fulfilment is necessary for happiness. [121] It is the job of art to interpret the world in the light of our needs, by way of 'an increased sensitivity to what remains unassimilated in the interpretative achievements of pragmatic, epistemic, and moral mastery of the demands and challenges of everyday situations'. [122] It effects this by adopting an openness to the expurgated elements of the unconscious, the fantastic, and the mad, the material and the bodily - thus to everything in our speechless contact with reality which is so fleeting, so contingent, so immediate, so individualized, simultaneously so far and so near that it escapes our normal categorical grasp. [123]

[119]PPP, p. 147; compare Jay 1985, p. 130.
[121]Compare PPP, p. 156.
[122]QC, p. 201.
[123]Ibid.
This leads Habermas to a surprising result in his latest work, which amounts to a partial backtracking on his earlier position. After the argument (above) about the importance of the release of aesthetic insights into the lifeworld, he writes as follows:

[Art] then no longer affects only our evaluative language or only renews the interpretation of needs that color our perceptions; rather, it reaches into our cognitive interpretations and normative expectations and transforms the totality in which these moments are related to each other.... the mimetic powers sublimated in the work of art find resonance in the mimetic relations of a balanced and undistorted intersubjectivity of everyday life. [124]

The 'validity claims' and 'truth potential' associated with art and the aesthetic

...may not be connected to (or even identified with) just one of the three validity claims constitutive for communicative action, as I have been previously inclined to maintain. [125]

The one-to-one relation which exists between the prescriptive validity of a norm and the normative validity claims raised in regulative speech acts is not a proper model for the relation between the potential for truth of works of art, and the transformed relations between self and world stimulated by aesthetic experience. [126]

The aesthetic becomes a more fundamental category than Habermas was previously inclined to admit.

These complications, introduced into Habermas' basic schema of validity-spheres and types of action, cast doubt upon the adequacy of the complete separation of art and labour that is implied by his systematic pronouncements. If the aesthetic is not to be restricted to a single validity-sphere, but 'reaches into our cognitive interpretations' and 'transforms the totality' of the human lifeworld, [127] then presumably

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[125]This begins to draw the sting of Bürger's criticism, that Habermas neglects the structural differences between the spheres of science, morality, and art (Bürger 1981, p. 20).

[126]OC, p. 203.

[127]Ibid., pp. 202f.
aesthetic categories have some place in any description of human labour that is adequate to all of its aspects as human labour. I shall discuss this further in 4.7 below. Nevertheless, Habermas' appropriation of the Enlightenment distinction between science, ethics, and art points to an important conclusion: however much social labour may involve artistic or expressive elements, in the sense implied by the early Marx, the rationalization of labour processes and art follow different internal logics, and are not necessarily parallel in their progression. In other words: the non-alienated labour of the early Marx, labour that is both fully expressive of the human essence, and also most efficient at providing the material necessities of existence, is to be rejected as a utopian dream on a par with the dream of a reconciliation with a resurrected nature.

4.5 System and lifeworld: Habermas and functionalism

Habermas, as we have seen in chapter 3 above, would readily concur with Anthony Giddens' statement concerning the need to overcome 'a dualism that is deeply entrenched in social theory, a division between objectivism and subjectivism', [128] a dualism represented on the one side of the divide by functionalism and on the other by the interpretative sociologies. Habermas' attempt to overcome this dualism is represented by his model of society as both system and lifeworld. [129] The attempt has involved him in a qualified acceptance of many of the perspectives of functionalism, even while denying to sociological functionalism the degree of hegemony it enjoys in the work of Luhmann and Parsons. [130] This degree of acceptance of functionalist categories in Habermas' work in general, and in his "system and lifeworld" model in particular, has come under heavy fire from

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[129]See 3.5 above.

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Giddens, [131] who regards the influence of functionalism in sociology as almost entirely pernicious. Three of Giddens' areas of criticism of Habermas' functionalism seem to be especially relevant:

(1) that it takes insufficient note of the Marxian themes of class division, conflict, and power,

(2) that it involves too close a modelling of social systems on biological systems, and

(3) that it retains too many features of evolutionism.

I shall consider each in turn, before briefly assessing their significance.

The first concerns the limited place that Habermas' Parsonian reading of Weber allows to a key Marxian theme: the importance of class division, conflict, and power within societies. [132] Habermas' reading of Weber concentrates instead upon the rationalization of values and social differentiation, which are portrayed as generalized processes of development. [133]

The second concerns Habermas' overclose modelling of social systems upon biological systems, be those social systems societies as a whole, or subsystems within them such as the state and the economy. Volume 2 of Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns presents systems as discrete entities, with distinct "boundaries" across which information and materials are exchanged with an "environment", achieving self-maintenance by homeostasis, with an evolutionary tendency towards greater complexity and specialization, and with "needs" reflected in terminology such as "system imperatives". [134] For at least three reasons, Giddens finds this

[131]For specific attacks on Habermas in this respect, Giddens 1982a, pp. 112-114; 1984, pp. xxxvii; 1985a, pp. 119f. For Giddens' criticisms of functionalism in general, Giddens 1977, pp. 96-129. Giddens' own attempt to overcome the dualism between types of social theory, in his "theory of structuration", is definitively described in Giddens 1984, pp. 1-40 and passim.


[134]See 3.5.3 above.
modelling of social systems upon biological systems misleading.

Firstly, it erroneously implies that the entity "a society" can be as specifically and uncontroversially defined as is the case for a biological organism [135] that a boundary can be located that demarcates clearly "inside" from "outside", "system" from "environment". Such an illusion is fostered to some extent by the comparatively recent phenomenon of the nation-state, with its clearly defined geographical boundaries. But such a picture is clearly untenable for earlier eras of history, where economy, polity, and cultural/religious systems were rarely coterminous in their extent, and often very vaguely defined. [136] Even in the modern world, such a model downplays the significance of inter-societal relationships that blur the clarity of definition of a "society". NATO in the political sphere, the EEC in the economic sphere, and Islamic fundamentalism in the cultural/religious sphere are obvious examples. This assumption of boundedness further encourages the idea that social evolution is mainly an "endogenous" affair, to do with the outworking of "learning processes" parallel to the learning processes undergone by the individual human child. It downplays both the evolutionary importance of inter-societal relationships, and the degree of discontinuity in human history. Giddens' latest major work stresses the importance of the latter with respect to the emergence of the nation state. [137] The caesura imposed on the history of traditional third world societies by the global expansion of western civilization is a clear example of the former.

Secondly, the causal explanatory power possessed by the concept of the "needs" of a system (for self-preservation etc.) is spurious. Reflection shows that there exists no mechanism whereby such "needs" may have causal influence - unless, of course, the needs are perceived by the actors themselves. But in that case the concept of system needs is simply redundant. [138] This will be considered further below.

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[136] Ancient China affords a good example (Giddens 1984, pp. 165-168).
Thirdly, Giddens challenges the status and significance of the "unintended consequences" of which Habermas makes use in his account of system integration. [139] In conceptualizing society as a self-steered system, Habermas concentrates upon the unintended consequences of actions, which are enmeshed "behind the backs" of the actors involved. Giddens agrees that the concept of unintended consequences does indeed have a crucial role in social analysis, [140] but he argues that Habermas' use of it in a functionalist context is unfortunate. For this use ignores the operation of the "double hermeneutic" in the social sciences: the phenomenon (for which there is, obviously, no parallel in the natural sciences) that the theoretical findings of sociologists can make their way into the consciousness of the lay actors themselves, and, by transforming unforeseen consequences into foreseen ones, lead to changes in the very phenomena that the sociologist studies. [141] This reflexive process, that Habermas elsewhere explicitly recognizes, [142] makes very questionable the drawing of too close a parallel between social systems (including the subsystem of the capitalist economy) and the biological systems on which functionalists tend to model them. It ignores the fact that the components of the economic system are human actors.

Returning now to my list at the beginning of this section, the third major area of criticism concerns Habermas' retention of certain of the evolutionary features of Marx's historical materialism, both in his 1975 essay, [143] and in Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns. Specifically, the problem is Habermas' retention of a unitary dynamic (the increase in the forces of production) to account for the precipitation of all of the crucially important evolutionary crises that have occurred in human societies from the beginning up to the present day. Against this Giddens brings both empirical and philosophical considerations.

[139]See 3.5.1 and 3.5.3 above.
[142]TCA1, pp. 109f.
[143]See 2.3.2 above.
Firstly, Giddens argues that any such schema forces history into a mould which is ill-fitting: [144]

In explaining social change no single and sovereign mechanism can be specified; there are no keys that will unlock the mysteries of human social development, reducing them to a unitary formula, or that will account for the major transitions between societal types in such a way either. [145]

Social change is less ordered, less susceptible to overall explanation, than Habermas imagines. [146]

Secondly, the idea of a unitary dynamic is suspect philosophically, for a similar reason to the one raised against Habermas' use of unintended consequences: it ignores the fact that actors within societies are able to model themselves upon social changes known to them that have occurred elsewhere, and thus change the course of history:

Human beings make their history in cognizance of that history, that is, as reflexive beings cognitively appropriating time rather than merely 'living' it .... the reflexive nature of human social life subverts the explication of social change in terms of any simple and sovereign set of causal mechanisms. Getting to know what goes on 'in' history becomes not only an inherent part of what 'history' is but also a means of transforming 'history'. [147]

In this case too, a "unitary dynamic" theory seems to ignore the fact that social systems are made up of reflexive human actors.

Moving now to an assessment of Giddens' contribution, I think we must admit the essential validity of his criticisms of Habermas' evolutionism. This implies a point that is crucial in the context of this thesis: the need to distance ourselves from Marx's priority of labour in social evolution even further than Habermas has already done by his split of logic from dynamics. The implications of this will be further discussed in the next section, and in chapters 5 and 6. However, the primary

[145]Ibid., p. 243.
[146]Contrast, on theories of state formation, CES, pp. 158-160; Giddens 1984, pp. 246-256.
philosophical challenge to Habermas concerns the status and usefulness of functionalist explanation — Giddens' second area of criticism — because this strikes at the heart of Habermas' whole model of modernity.

Giddens' first and third points in this context concern the delineation of "systems" and the effect of reflexivity. Although very important, these could be accommodated within an adapted form of Habermas' schema, by assuming that functionalist analysis is valid in the limit case of a clearly defined social system whose components (actors) were behaving non-reflexively. The fundamental challenge, however, is the second: that functionalist explanation tout court is spurious. If this is true, then even in a limit case it could contribute nothing to social analysis that was not also available in the action framework by the use of the categories of "unintended consequences" and "unacknowledged conditions of action". [148]

There is considerable ambiguity in Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns itself over the status of the functionalist analysis which Habermas offers. [149] This can be illustrated with respect to his account of the economic system. Sometimes Habermas talks of the lifeworld of a social group being in exchange with its environment via its material substrate, this exchange being accessible to a conceptual perspective that reifies the lifeworld itself as a boundary-maintaining system. [150] Usually, however, he talks of the economic process as being the responsibility of a discrete subsystem of purposive-rational action (the economic system), which is differentiated out of the lifeworld. It seems that Habermas equivocates about whether the system/lifeworld distinction is, in Giddens' terms, "methodological" or "substantive". [151]

To assume the latter presents huge problems. One problem with functionalist analysis, given that Habermas regards it as a correlate of


[150]TKH2, pp. 347-349; see 3.6.5 above.
the third person objectifying viewpoint characteristic of the natural sciences, is its lack of theoretical status even in these disciplines. There have been recent attempts, for example by proponents of the famous "Anthropic Principle", to reinstate a teleological element in the natural sciences with real explanatory power. But these attempts have not been widely accepted. [152] Moreover teleological explanations in biology - on which, of course, functionalism originally based its model of a system - are generally recognized to be at best illuminating explanatory fictions, accessible to reduction to non-teleological causal mechanisms. [153] Of course there are phenomena inaccessible to such reductionist explanations, but these are precisely those interactions mediated by symbols: interactions that Habermas subsumes under the category of lifeworld rather than system.

I conclude, therefore, both that there is some genuine ambiguity in Habermas' model at this point, and also that his model is only viable if seen in "methodological" rather than in "substantive" terms. Habermas' claim that systemic rationality is of a quite different conceptual order from instrumental rationality does not seem to be well founded.

This in turn casts doubt upon the idea that social labour is an activity that can be adequately separated off from the lifeworld to be subsumed completely under system parameters. If, with Giddens, we refuse to abstract from the reflexive nature of the human actors that are the components of the economic system, we will have to admit that human labour cannot be conceptualized adequately within a methodological framework that, of necessity, abstracts from this feature of its object realm.


[153] See, for example, Dawkins 1976.
4.6 Modernity and its pathologies

Habermas' model of modernity, as set out in *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, is briefly summarized below as seven propositions:

(1) The progressive rationalization of the lifeworld leads to the growth of autonomous subsystems, specifically the capitalist economic system and the bureaucratic state.

(2) In (unconscious) pursuit of greater and greater efficiency in the material reproduction of the lifeworld, the growth of the economic system tends to reproduce the class system as an unintended side-effect.

(3) Incipient class conflict is headed off by state intervention (the welfare state) which compensates monetarily for the worst excesses of this side-effect; but only at the cost of a "mediatization" (bureaucratization and monetarization) of the lifeworld.

(4) This affects the lifeworld of all members of society, but is felt most keenly by those lower down the class structure.

(5) As (a) increase in productive efficiency is desirable, (b) reproduction of the class system is inevitable, and (c) pacification of class conflict is only possible at the expense of welfare state mediatization, it follows that modernity is inevitably a compromise between system (i.e. economic) and lifeworld imperatives.

(6) The situation becomes critical when economic system crises force greater and greater mediatization in order to keep class conflict pacified; mediatization then passes over into a "colonization" that strikes at the core regions of the lifeworld.

(7) The lifeworld reacts against this by throwing up various sorts of protest movements. These cannot be neutralized by monetary payments, because they concern not patterns of distribution of wealth, but the grammar of forms of life.

This model takes up distinctive positions concerning (a) the importance of systems theory, (b) the importance of social labour in the dynamics of the
modern western societies, and (c) the class/conflict patterns typical of these societies. The last two points are inextricably linked, and I shall consider them together.

Firstly, as regards the systems element in Habermas' work, doubt has been expressed in general in section 4.5 above. In this context I will make one further criticism of his position. Several features of modernity militate against the idea that the economy of any society (that is, any nation state) can be conceptualized adequately as a single system concerned exclusively with the material reproduction of the lifeworld. Such an idea is falsified by such empirical considerations as the importance of the "shadow" economy in modern states, [154] and the growth of transnational corporations with an accompanying degree of "disarticulation". [155] Moreover, in societies where approximately three quarters of wage earners are engaged in providing services, rather than in the manufacture of material goods, [156] it is no longer possible to accept the equation of "the economy" with "the material reproduction of the lifeworld" — an equation that Habermas is inclined to make, having in mind, no doubt, the paradigm of industrial manufacturing. This is all the more so because some of these services operate according to quite different rationality-criteria to those of manufacturing, a point stressed by Offe: In industrial capitalist societies ... scarcity and efficiency problems, which determine the rationality of the production of industrial commodities, are supplemented with problems of order and normalization which cannot be dealt with adequately by means of the technical and economic mastery of scarcity, but rather require a separate rationality of service labour .... [This involves] qualities like interactive competence, consciousness of responsibility, empathy, and acquired practical experience .... This means, conversely, that while the sphere of (public and private) service labour is by no means


[155] The situation where a national economy consists of sectors that are juxtaposed rather than being highly integrated, some sectors being highly integrated in entities with centres of gravity in other nation states; an effect most pronounced in the third world, but noticeable to a degree also in the western democracies (Giddens 1982b, p. 158).

'liberated' from the regime of formal, economic wage-based rationality, it becomes a separate but functionally necessary 'foreign body' which is externally limited (but not internally structured) by that economic rationality .... one can no longer talk of a basically unified type of rationality organizing and governing the whole of the work sphere. [157]

Secondly, as regards the importance of social labour in the dynamics and conflict patterns of the modern western societies, [158] Habermas paradoxically seems to claim both too much and too little. On the one hand, the claim that the dynamics of social labour are responsible, however hiddenly, for the entire conflict pattern of these societies, seems implausible. Such a claim ignores the (at least partly) autonomous lines of conflict due to race and gender, [159] and the role of the nation state and its use of military power in international contexts. [160] Moreover it seems to share, with 'the classical traditions of bourgeois as well as Marxist sociology', the unfounded presupposition that 'labour is the fundamental social fact'. [161] As Giddens remarks:

The fact that human beings must survive in the material environments in which they live tells us nothing about whether what they do in order to survive plays a dominant role in social transformation. [162]

A tacit assumption to the contrary still seems to affect Habermas' latest work. [163] On the other hand, Habermas seems to have underestimated the high degree of conflict in the modern western societies that is still directly and overtly related to the functioning of the economic system in general, and patterns of the distribution of wealth in particular. This perhaps reflects the genesis of Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns in the West Germany of the late 1970's. Certainly now, in the wake of renewed

[157]Ibid., pp. 137-139.
[158]As opposed to its role in social evolution as a whole, for which 4.5 above.
[160]Ibid., pp. 175-178.
[161]Offe 1985, p. 129. His essay 'Work: The Key Sociological Category?' (pp. 129-150) is an attack on this assumption.
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industrial unrest, inner city violence, and soaring unemployment in western Europe as a whole, the idea that the welfare state has effectively pacified all overt conflict over questions of distribution, and that present conflicts are inaccessible to monetary pacification, seems fairly implausible. That Habermas' protest movements are indeed interesting and important, that they are different from the old type of conflict over distribution, and that they are to be explained in terms of a threat to 'grammars of forms of life' by monetarization and bureaucratization, seems plausible at least to some extent and in some cases. [164] Yet we must question both the thesis of the ultimate linkage of these new movements with the imperatives of the economic system, and the thesis that they have effectively eclipsed conflicts over distribution.

4.7 Habermas, Marx, and human labour

In a recent essay entitled 'Habermas and Marxism', [165] Agnes Heller has suggestively contrasted the views of Habermas and Marx on human labour. Heller locates the real centre of Marx's historical materialism in the lives of the proletariat. The dynamic of historical development according to Marx was, of course, to be found in the development of the forces of production; yet it was in the proletariat that 'the substance (work) becomes subject'. [166] This location of philosophy and history in real lives, she suggests, enabled Marx to grasp the tragedy of human progress: progress is contradictory and conditional because 'the producers carry progress on their shoulders, they suffer from the progress which they themselves create'. [167] Moreover, this concentration upon real lives led Marx to consider 'the sensuous, the needing, the feeling human being' [168] who suffers under capitalism, and to stress 'the

[164]But not all. The Peace Movement, for example, is presumably also a reaction to the international anarchy of nation-state violence (compare Giddens 1982b, p. 176).
[166]Ibid., p. 37.
[167]Ibid.
[168]Ibid., p. 22.
anthropological meaning of work'. [169] Work is 'not concerned solely with the appropriation of outer nature', but is also implicated in 'the socialisation of our inner nature as well'. [170] Indeed 'the same feelings - fear, anger, pleasure, disgust - are channelled, repressed and withheld in work as in interaction', and 'the need to "make sense" of our lives always includes the need for creativity .... one of the greatest joys attained by effort'. [171] Thus the category of alienated labour is indispensable. 'Undistorted goal-rationality has been no less and no more present in human history than undistorted communication', and while it is true that 'every instance of human speech is a claim to rational communication', (so Habermas), it is also true that every instance of human work is a claim to goal-rational creativity. Accomplished human freedom means socialisation of our inner nature without repression, both in communication and creation. [172]

After all, were not "creation" and "love" precisely the characteristics once attributed to God, a sure sign that they are our main needs? [173]

Habermas however, continues Heller, in neglecting the early Marx, has also ignored the real flesh-and-blood human being:

Habermasian man has ... no body, no feelings; the 'structure of personality' is identified with cognition, language and interaction .... one gets the impression that the good life consists solely of rational communication and that needs can be argued for without being felt. [174]

Dropping the proletariat, and the concept of alienated labour with them, Habermas also loses, she argues, the sense of the tragedy of progress. Progress now amounts to an essentially disembodied "learning process" without the Marxian contradictions; progress is not conditional, it is

[169]Ibid., p. 34.
[170]Ibid., p. 35.
[171]Ibid.
[172]Ibid.
[173]Ibid., p. 36. An astute theological point, albeit couched in terms of a Feuerbachian reductionism.
[174]Ibid., p. 22.
Moreover, 'by rejecting the paradigm of production he almost completely neglects the anthropological meaning of work'. Defining goal-rational work exclusively as a matter of following technical rules, he reduces its significance to instrumental rationality. Thus he misses the significance of the change in work patterns associated with the arrival of industrial capitalism. Here extreme division of labour means that 'production follows technical rules without any longer being goal-rational from the standpoint of the individual', an individual who now does not understand the purpose of the whole process in which he or she is engaged as a part. Thus 'what is rational socially is no longer necessarily rational individually', which contradicts the need for creativity mentioned above. This distinction between social and individual rationality, Heller concludes, allows us to evaluate the work process not only from the viewpoint of production (as Habermas does), but also from the viewpoint of the producers, and 'allows us to raise a question concerning the possible rehumanization of work in a future society'.

Heller's criticisms of Habermas are only partly convincing. Habermas' recent work in aesthetics dispels the idea that his human being is totally without feelings or needs, and his concepts of anamnestic imagination and the paradoxes of rationalization both indicate that he is alive, at least in some degree, to the tragedy of progress. The interest in Heller's account lies elsewhere:

(1) in her insistence that social labour is performed by people, and thus it matters not only what they make but also how they understand what they are making, thus resisting a reduction of the worker to the equivalent of a mindless machine-component, by adopting (in Habermas')

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[175] Ibid., pp. 37, 40.
[176] Ibid., p. 34.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid., p. 34.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.
[181] See 4.4 above; compare RC, p. 228.
[182] See 4.3 above.
[183] See 3.1, 3.2 above.
terms) a lifeworld perspective on labour, alongside a systems perspective, and

(2) in stressing the need for a concept of human creativity in social labour.

This concept of "creativity", however, is an extremely difficult one to frame adequately, and Habermas is able to launch an at least partially successful counter-attack against the use of the term in the early Marx, on which he assumes that Heller is dependent.

Habermas traces Heller's stress on the anthropological significance of labour back through the early Marx to Schiller and Herder and 'the ideal of an individuality creatively realizing itself: the model of 'human expressivity'. [184] Following Taylor, [185] he then discerns two roots of this ideal:

(1) 'the idealistic activist reinterpretation of the Aristotelian concept of form - individuals can unfold their essence only through their own productive activity', [186] and

(2) 'the mediation of Aristotelian and aesthetic concepts of form through the theory of reflection - the works in which subjectivity is externalized are the symbolic expression of both a creative process and a process of self-formation'. [187]

The result is 'the prototypical status of aesthetic, genial productivity, which makes it possible to unite the autonomy of self-realisation with the spontaneity of self-development, and to remove from the objectivation of essential powers the moment of coercion, of doing violence to external nature or one's own internal nature'. [188] The early Marx had then

borrowed from Romanticism (through Hegel) the expressivist ideal of self-formation, transferred aesthetic productivity to the practical working life of the species, conceived social labour as the collective self-realisation of the producers,

[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.
and, against this background, represented the activity of the modern wage-labourer at once as alienated and as the modern emancipatory force. [189]

Habermas brings several objections to this reading of the early Marx, which he sees Heller as defending. [190] The fundamental one is that this transfer of the ideal of self-formation from aesthetic production to social labour leads to a confused equation of "economic" with "creative" and "self-formative" categories. [191] This equation, he argues, has now been undermined empirically, both by the progressive departure of industrial labour from the model of the craftsman's activity, and by 'the trends towards shortening working time and towards a corresponding devaluation of the relevance of labour within the lifeworld'. [192] Thus 'the production-aesthetic revaluation of industrial labour' has become 'irrelevant'. [193] The whole problem of work-dissatisfaction shrinks to the dimensions of a demand for autonomy in the workplace, a demand which is related to 'the logic of practical discourse', not 'the logic of a labour practice which is supposed to be located somewhere between instrumental action and action orientated to reaching understanding'. [194]

In the light of the discussion of this chapter, we may sum up this exchange as follows. Habermas is correct to insist upon the distinction between economic and aesthetic/self-formative categories, but not on their dualistic separation into work-time and leisure-time respectively. [195] The assumption that the human race must "earn its living" aesthetic-productively is dubious, based as it is upon Hegelian presuppositions about the dialectical self-development of Geist in the

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[189]Ibid.
[190]Ibid., p. 225.
[191]Ibid.
[192]Ibid.
[193]Ibid.
[194]Ibid., p. 312, note 11.
[195]Indeed, his insistence that there can be no 'logic of a labour practice ... located somewhere between instrumental action and action orientated to reaching understanding' (Ibid), is undermined by his 1985 clarifications on the relation of aesthetics to the rest of human life (see 44 above).
Phenomenology, presuppositions that themselves exhibit a doubtful pedigree. However, Heller is correct to call attention to the Marx/Lukacs point that the form of social labour at least partly determines the structure of the rest of life too (the lifeworld in Habermas' terminology). Habermas attempts to consider social labour exclusively under system parameters - that is, under the category of efficiency - but this is inadequate, because the worker brings the lifeworld into work with him or her, and carries it out again formed or deformed by what has gone on in between. That a compromise is inevitable between the efficiency imperatives of social labour and aesthetic-expressive and moral-practical imperatives is true (pace Marx). But that this compromise should be achieved by a total compartmentalization of human existence into work (system) and leisure (lifeworld), as Habermas' systems theory implies, raises a valid distinction to the rank of an unacceptable dualism that threatens the very integrity of the human actor. Work and leisure cannot be thus separated, because they coinhere in the one agent, who must make sense of his or her single life history - a real human being.

Neither writer, however, seems to have developed a credible concept of "creativity" to apply to social labour, one that transcends the defects in the expressivist model that Marx inherited from the Romantics. This remains as a project to be tackled in chapter 6 below.
5. A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THEMES FROM RECENT THEOLOGIES OF WORK IN THE LIGHT OF THE THOUGHT OF HABERMAS

5.1 Introduction

The last two chapters of this thesis aim at the partial reconstruction of a theology of work in the light of the thought of Habermas. Chapter 5 is essentially critical. It subjects the findings of various recent theologies of work to scrutiny in the light of the categories and conclusions of Habermas, and the discussion of them in chapter 4. Chapter 6 is essentially reconstructive. It attempts to elucidate the relevance of five central Christian symbols to a theology of work, in such a way as to avoid the pitfalls set out in chapter 5.

Three preliminary points should be made.

Firstly, to attempt to produce a "theology of work" at all is implicitly to deny that the proper scope of theology is restricted to a study of God and that part of human existence labelled "religious". [1] I will assume that Aquinas was right, on the contrary, to regard the proper scope of theology as including all things in the perspective of 'the truth they bear in the light of God'. [2] I will take this to imply that a theology of work rightly consists in an interpretation of the bearing of the major Christian symbols upon the human activity of work.

But secondly, such a view of the scope of theology raises the question of the appropriate relationship between theology as a discourse and the discourses of the philosophical and social sciences that have occupied the first four chapters of this thesis. What is the nature of the "bearing" that the Christian symbols have upon the activity of work? Clearly what

David Tracy characterizes as the "orthodox" position, where 'the cognitive claims of other modern disciplines and the value claims of the wider culture do not enter into the inner-theological circle except to suggest analogies for systematic reflection or to aid argumentation for strictly apologetic reflection' will not do; [3] but neither will a 'process of explanation [that] makes theology disappear into the perspective of a different discipline, for example philosophical anthropology, psychology or sociology'. [4] Some middle way needs to be pursued that retains the integrity of both forms of discourse, but yet allows some interaction between them. What Tracy calls the revisionist model of theological method, one that owes a great deal to Paul Tillich's notion of correlation, [5] appears to allow such a process, and will be pursued in what follows. Theological method for Tracy is

an interpretive enterprise that attempts to establish 'mutually critical correlations' (in both theory and praxis) between interpretations of our contemporary situation and interpretations of the Christian tradition. [6]

The traffic is two-way; theological method is a critical conversation, not a monologue.

Thirdly, two disclaimers must be entered. In what follows I do not propose to construct a "critical theory of religion": Christianity as seen in a Habermasian framework [7] as opposed to a Platonic, Aristotelian, or Marxian framework. My project is much more limited - to the issue of work. Moreover, I make no attempt to present a comprehensive account of the history of the theology of work, even within the twentieth century. Many major figures, such as Emil Brunner, R.H. Tawney, and Reinhold Niebuhr, and groups of material like the official pronouncements of the Anglican and

[5] Tracy (1975, p. 46) insists against Tillich that the answers supplied by the human sciences must be taken seriously as well as the answers of the Christian message; that it is not enough to let 'the "method of correlation" ... correlate the questions implied in the situation with the answers implied in the message' (Tillich 1978, p. 8).
[7] For which see, for example, Peukert 1984; Siebert 1985.
Roman Catholic churches, are confined largely to the footnotes. The material for chapter 5 has been chosen for its potential to illustrate the main themes of Habermas' thought about work, rather than with an eye to completeness of coverage of the historical discussions. I maintain, however, that many of the most interesting writers and topics relevant to the theology of work have been brought under consideration within these parameters.

Sections 5.2 and 5.3 below pursue, in a theological context, the two fundamental issues that I identified in 1.3 above: the ambiguity of "control", and the centrality of work. Sections 5.4 and 5.5 offer reflections upon selected Marxian and right wing theologies of work.

5.2 Theological rejections of the domination of nature

In recent years the ecological and nuclear weapons issues have precipitated a new status quaeestionis for theology, [8] forcing the topic of cosmology into the forefront of consideration, and the doctrine of creation out of the semi-retirement into which it had until recently slipped. [9] No theology that claims to be contextual can afford to neglect the questions that these issues pose

either by limiting of belief in creation deistically to the original contingency of the universe; or by limiting it existentially to the personal contingency of human existence; or by cutting off church dogmatics so completely from the sciences that the two neither interfere with one another nor have anything to say to one another. [10]

The question of the appropriate relationship of human beings to nature must be posed theologically, as well as philosophically.

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[10] Moltmann 1979a, p. 115. The last is an allusion to Barth's stated position in Barth 1958, pp. ix-x, and is not an adequate representation of his overall position, as Moltmann admits (Moltmann 1979a, p. 189 note 3).
The above analysis, however, has alerted us to the danger of assuming that the same 'logic of domination' is involved in 'the control of external nature, the command over human beings, and the repression of one's own internal nature': of assuming that 'the same structure of exercising force' is involved in each case. [11] And while it may be true, as Tracy and Lash state, that 'all must now share a critique and suspicion of traditional scientific and theological understandings of the human right to "dominate" and exploit nature', [12] we will want to pay careful attention to the semantic content of terms such as "right", "dominate", and "exploit" when used in substantive arguments in this context.

In section 4.3 above I suggested that the status of such terms, when applied to the human relationship to external nature, should be seen as metaphorical. Problems arise, I argued, when metaphor is taken for literal description, for then it is assumed that the same logic is operative in human-human and human-nature contexts. Tracy and Lash, in the essay just quoted, [13] perhaps stop just short of this error. [14] Other theological writers are not so reticent. I will consider two recent examples: one from a group of feminist theologians, and the other from the latest writings of Jürgen Moltmann.

[11] TCA1, p. 379. Theologians frequently cite Marcuse approvingly in this connection (e.g. Miranda 1977a, p. xix), or allude to him (e.g. Boff 1985, pp. 5f, 159f note 2; this note inaccurately conflates the names Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer into 'T. Horkheimer' [sic!]). Boff here seems to accept the account of rationality found in Horkheimer and Adorno's Dialectic of Enlightenment (Boff 1985, pp. 7f).
[14] Although it is interesting to note the shades of meaning in the term "justice" implicit in the following, and to ask how the semantic content of the metaphor might be cashed in each case: 'The reality of impending ecological crisis is so clear that no serious concern with historical justice can long ignore it. The struggle for justice must also include the struggle for ecology - not only to secure justice for other creatures than the human but even to secure the most basic justice of all: a livable environment for future generations of human beings' (ibid., p. 90).
5.2.1 Feminist theologies

Although by no means alone in this, feminist theologians such as Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Dorothee Soelle [15] frequently make the dubious assumption that the logic of the term "domination" is the same in God-human, in inter-human, and in human-nature contexts. In their case the assumption is linked both to a rejection of patriarchal domination, and to a rejection of belief in a transcendent God. This adds another dimension to the questioning of technical reason by the Frankfurt School that I have noted above.

In the case of Mary Daly, the rejection of technical reason has emerged gradually during her shift from "liberal" to "romantic" feminism. [16] In her early (1968) The Church and the Second Sex, [17] she had a positive appreciation of the emancipatory potential of technology for women in society. Thus in this work of essentially "liberal" feminism, she emphasizes that 'the development of technology has made physical strength less and less important not only as a job-holding credential but also as a measure of personal worth', [18] and has potentially freed women from some of the burdens of maternity, [19] including unwanted maternity itself. [20] Here she argues that advances in technology have provided, for the first time in history, the wherewithal ('leisure, mobility, control of our environment' [sic!]) for women to challenge in practice the traditional gender-roles. [21] However, in the move to a thoroughgoing "romantic" feminism in her later works, these insights are abandoned - as Habermas would say, the realization of the real gains involved in modernization is lost - and objectifying technical reason is condemned as

[15] Soelle's work is considered in 5.5.1 below in a different context. For her work in this context, Soelle and Cloyes 1984, pp. 103-113.
[18] Ibid., p. 7.
[19] Ibid., p. 108.
[20] Ibid., p. 91.
[21] Ibid., pp. 152f.
an aspect of "rapism". [22] Along with men, and the Christian tradition tout court, technical reason and all its works come in for repeated, sweeping, and wholesale condemnation. The following extract illustrates well the questionable assumptions about the transferability of the logic of domination that she now makes:

The senior and junior executives of the secular corporations that are the natural offspring and allies of Yahweh & Son are already programming [women] out of any significant role in the future. The gynocidal-and-therefore-genocidal mania of the patriarchs has already been transferred to The Holy Father Computer, who is heir to the papal throne of a secular Christendom that wills to devour the world. The Corporation of God the father has formed a merger with the Earthly Town Fathers .... Together they have sent nocturnal emissions beyond the earth's atmosphere, bringing forth signs and wonders in the heavens .... The Kingdom of Heaven, then, is at hand. Before it is too late, let it be said that Heaven is not a Kingdom. [23]

Rosemary Radford Ruether is a more moderate writer than Daly. She refuses to anathematize the male half of the species, [24] and retains an attitude to the Christian tradition of critical reconstruction rather than wholesale condemnation. [25] Ruether rejects aspects of the romantic feminism of writers like Daly on the grounds that their implications are socially conservative: idealizing the allegedly more organic relationship to the earth of the oppressed classes of pre-industrial eras, they risk 'coloniz[ing] the exploited people [26] anew by fashioning them into the rest and recreation spots for weary white males'. [27] She thus correctly points out that the concept of harmony with nature is susceptible to

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[23] Daly 1973, pp. 184f. The condemnation of the male becomes complete in Gyn/Ecology (Daly 1979), while Pure Lust (Daly 1984) is, if possible, even more extreme.
ideological misuse. [28]

Ruether's rejection of technical reason is not clear cut, and her position on it seems to be finally contradictory. At times she offers a qualified acceptance of the fruits of technological advance, arguing that 'the new earth must be one where people are reconciled with their labor, abolishing the alienation of the megamachine while inheriting its productive power to free men for unalienated creativity'. [29] However, this apparently Marxian position concerning the potential of modern science and technology is heavily qualified by the main thrust of her argument, which is hostile to technical reason. Her proposed model for human-nature relations - 'the cultivation of the garden is where the powers of rational consciousness come together with the harmonies of nature in partnership' [30] - turns out to have all the features of the Marcusian "new science", [31] including the shortcomings that have been elucidated above. Thus her guiding phrase of 'converting our minds to the earth', [32] while allegedly involving 'the more diffuse and relational logic of natural harmony', [33] as opposed to 'the dominant white Western male rationality ... based on linear, dichotomized thought patterns that divide reality into dualisms', [34] can at the concrete level be given little actual content. Her only concrete illustration, the rejection of the practice of planting crops in long straight rows as an example of this "linear logic", [35] seems singularly unconvincing.

Ruether also shares with Daly (albeit in less extreme form) a distinctively feminist view of the concept of God, [36] and of the

[32] Ibid., p. 91.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., p. 89.
[35] Ibid., p. 90.
essential source of all the forms of domination involved with human life. Christianity, she argues, is the result of an amalgamation of the unhelpful dualisms found in Neo-Platonism (exaltation of the intellect over body), and apocalyptic Judaism (image of the male warrior God). These have combined to legitimate both the domination of the female by the male, and of nature by spirit. [37] Particularly in the west, a hierarchy of being has been set up:

God - man - woman - nature

Sexual domination, the domination of nature by mankind, and the domination of mankind by a transcendent God, are mutually reinforcing. [38] Gender relationships are "base" in this schema, to which the other relationships are related as "superstructure", [39] and the liberation of woman is the key step in the dismantling of the hierarchy as a whole. In the process, God becomes immanent "God/ess" - primal "Matrix" - rather than transcendent male deity, [40] and the rationale for the domination of nature in science and technology is lost:

An ecological-feminist theology of nature must rethink the whole western theological tradition of the hierarchical chain of being and command. This theology must question the hierarchy of human nature over nonhuman nature as a relationship of ontological and moral value.... It must unmask the structures of social domination, male over female, owner over worker that mediate this domination of nonhuman nature. Finally it must question the model of hierarchy that starts with non-material spirit (God) as the source of the chain of being and continues down to nonspiritual "matter" as the bottom of the chain of being and the most inferior, valueless,

[38] Ruether points out that in Hebrew the noun for "earth" is feminine, and deduces that the "domination" of the earth by men [sic] is another aspect of the same texture of sexism that is found elsewhere. This explanation is spurious, confusing the distinction between grammatical gender and sex differences (Barr 1961, pp. 39f). In reality, 'the phenomenon of grammatical gender is logically haphazard in relation to the real distinctions between objects or to the distinctions thought to exist between them' (ibid.).
[40] Ruether 1983, pp. 68-71. Note, in the light of 2.2.2A above, Ruether's approval of theological speculation in the Jewish Kabbalah and Jacob Boehme (ibid., p. 60).
and dominated point in the chain of command. [41]

Three things about this model need to be challenged in the light of Habermas' work. Firstly and crucially, whether it is adequate to transfer the social terms "exploitation" and "domination" from the sphere of social relations to that of human-nature relationships in this simplistic way - whether and to what extent such a metaphorical use of the terms is genuinely creative or rather misleading. Secondly, whether it is true that 'the alienation of the masculine from the feminine is the primary sexual symbolism that sums up all these alienations' of 'the subjective self from the objective world', 'the individual ... from the social community', and 'the domination or rejection of nature by spirit'. [42] Put more forthrightly by Daly, whether it is true that 'sexism [is] the basic model and source of all oppression', [43] ultimately responsible for war, racism and the evils of capitalism alike. [44] And thirdly, whether the transcendence of God in the Christian tradition is necessarily or only contingently connected to the legitimation of hierarchical forms of social system.

About the first point, I have said much critically already. About the second, we have seen in chapter 4 the doubtfulness of reducing all of the various aspects of human injustice to one dimension - be it economic, racial, or, as in this case, sexual. Daly, and to some extent Ruether, appear to have accepted an over-simplified base/superstructure view of society from Marxian theory, and merely changed the base. [45] Prima facie it seems no more plausible that economic (or racial) injustices would automatically be eliminated in a society of total sexual equality, than that under socialism sexual injustice will automatically vanish. That the abolition of sexism would have any fundamental effect upon human-nature relationships is also questionable; certainly not if, as Habermas insists,

[41] Ibid., p. 85.
[44] Ibid., p. 177.
technology is a project of the human species as a whole [46] rather than only of (as is claimed in this instance) the male half of it. Something more should be said about the third point, however, which transposes into another dimension the question of the relationship between different logics of control or domination.

Much is made by various feminist theologians [47] of the fact that, in his *Church Dogmatics*, Karl Barth combined a theological defence of the traditional hierarchical gender-roles [48] with a strong emphasis on the transcendence of God. These writers stress the superiority of Paul Tillich's concept of God as immanent Being, which they applaud as 'the basis for a non-hierarchical view of reality'. [49] Thus Romero argues that Tillich's concept of Being captures 'the wholeness of reality, grasped in a unifying experience ... of being at home in the world', and as 'creative Ground ... reflects the mothering and nurturing aspects of reality' from which the Fall alienated us. [50]

This rejection of the doctrine of transcendence fails to convince. It could equally well be argued, firstly that Barth's views on gender roles are contingently rather than necessarily related to his doctrine of God, and secondly that the theological point of the transcendence of God is precisely not the legitimation of human hierarchies, but their criticism. [51] Indeed it is true that the idea of a great chain of

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[46] TRS, p. 87.
[50] Ibid., p. 332.
[51] For an argument that Karl Barth's (non-hierarchical) socialism is an integral rather than an accidental part of his whole theological position, Bentley 1982, pp. 60-78. Christian Duquoc argues, against the French "neo-pagans" whose view of God is similar to Ruether's, that it is not monotheism as such, but the absolutization of the historically particular, that leads to totalitarianism. In his view, the social and political implications of (at least a Christian, trinitarian) monotheism are liberative, although monotheism has frequently been misused ideologically in the past (Duquoc 1985).
being [52] has in the past been used to bolster social domination. But in my opinion a true understanding of the transcendence of God tends to relativize social distinctions rather than to legitimate them, and is thus by implication critical rather than socially conservative. [53] Moreover, the reconceptualization of God as Being, or as 'the God/ess who is primal Matrix, the ground of being-new being', [54] does not really deliver what Ruether claims for it - that it mediates the 'return Home: to learn the harmony, the peace, the justice of body, bodies in right relation to each other .... in the community of earth', [55] the rediscovery of 'our roots in the earth, sky, and water'. [56] Ruether admits this implicitly in her rejection of a total romantic utopianism. Thus, for all talk of 'the integrity of the existing ecological community', of the need to become 'servants of the survival and cultivation of nature', [57] and of the need to 'maximize the welfare of the whole', [58] she still admits that we need to alter nature 'for human use', [59] and that it is more a question of 'humanity and nature recover[ing] their just balance'. [60] Compromise, the category that Habermas insists is necessary between efficiency on the one hand, and other aspects of human life on the other, is implicitly accepted by Ruether. Her "at-home"-ness is qualified, despite rhetorical flourishes that suggest the contrary. [61]

[52] Compare Lovejoy 1936. It is incorrect to assume (so Lovejoy and Ruether) that medieval theologians such as Aquinas took this chain as a material description of layers of reality. Their use of it is rather grammatical/formal. The God/creature difference is far greater for Aquinas than any of the differences between creatures.

[53] Compare Gal 3:28: For Paul, the transcendent [sic] God had established an eschatological community in which there was 'neither male nor female', just as all other human distinctions had been relativized out of existence.

[55] Ibid., p. 266.
[56] Ibid., p. 259.
[57] Ibid., p. 89.
[58] Ibid., p. 91.
[59] Ibid., p. 90.
[60] Ibid., p. 255. For this use of "justice", compare Tracy and Lash above.
5.2.2 Moltmann's theology of creation

In Jürgen Moltmann's 1985 God in Creation, [62] many of the same features appear. Moltmann writes, for example, that 'the modern mechanistic world picture' is 'a view of the world that is one-sidedly patriarchal'. [63] Moreover Barth's doctrine of the sovereignty of God is again rejected in favour of a model of immanence, in this case 'the primal, reciprocal indwelling and mutual interpenetration of the trinitarian perichoresis' that 'all relationships which are analogous to God reflect' [64] - including human relationships with nature. Once again the logic of "domination" is assumed to be the same in many different contexts, and thus problems of human life and their solutions are readily conflated. A good example of this is the conflation of the logic of domination operative in Habermas' subjective and objective worlds:

The alienation of the human being from his bodily existence must be viewed as the inner aspect of the external ecological crisis of modern industrial society. .... If human society is to find a home in the natural environment, the human soul must correspondingly find a home in the bodily existence of the human person. [65]

Similarly, between Habermas' objective and social worlds:

We shall not be able to achieve social justice without justice for the natural environment, and we shall not be able to achieve justice for nature without social justice. For the pattern of exploitation has dominated both human labour and the resources or 'wealth' of nature. [66]

As in the case of Ruether, Moltmann's attitude to work and technology also displays various tensions. This is most clearly brought out in his treatment of human "at-homeness" in nature.

[62] Moltmann 1985b (German 1985a); many of the ideas developed here are stated briefly in Moltmann 1979a, pp. 109-130.

[63] Moltmann 1985b, p. 320. Moltmann seems too prepared to cite Ruether's contentious account of the relationship of Christianity to the gender issue as authoritative (ibid, pp. 298, 357 note 5).

[64] Ibid., p. 17; compare 1981, pp. 139-144.


What we may call Moltmann's "official position" on this issue is drawn directly from Bloch. [67] There is a (not yet manifested) subject in nature, which corresponds to the human subject. [68] The appropriate human relationship to nature is therefore not one of objectifying control and use, as in the classical natural sciences and technology, but one of cooperation and communication:

the systems of matter and life in the natural environment .... possess a subjectivity of their own which is not objectifiable by the human subject. This means that knowledge through domination must be replaced by communicative knowledge: knowledge itself becomes a cognitive living relationship. [69]

A recognition of this natural subject, and a consequential move to an 'alliance technology' that accepts 'the co-productivity of nature as subject', [70] would lead to a replacement of 'our previous technology' which 'stands in the midst of nature like an army of occupation in enemy country, which knows nothing of the country's interior'. [71] The result would be a pacification of the human relationship with nature, a coming home:

we are using the phrase 'home country' [72] to designate a network of social relationships without stresses and strains. I am 'at home' [73] where people know me, and where I find recognition without having to struggle for it .... The home of

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[67] Moltmann 1985b, pp. 42-47. Compare 1.4.3 above. My criticisms here are not meant to denigrate the use made of Bloch in Moltmann's Theology of Hope (Moltmann 1967), which I regard as very fruitful.
[69] Ibid., p. 50. Moltmann here employs a dubious combination of systems theory (for criticism of which see 4.5 above) and philosophy to explicate Bloch's idea of the natural subject. By apparently equating indeterminacy in systems theory, and uncertainty at the particular level (as described by Heisenberg), with the notion of freedom, he is able to argue that material systems exhibit freedom and therefore subjectivity (ibid.). This appears to be a straightforward categorial mistake, as is the further idea that Heisenberg's uncertainty principle implies a communicative relationship of the physicist with nature in modern physics (Moltmann 1979a, p. 128). For this last mistake, compare Häring 1981, pp. 177f.
[70] Moltmann 1985b, p. 43.
[71] Ibid., quoting Bloch.
[72] Heimat (Moltmann 1985a, p. 60).
[73] Zu Hause (ibid.).
the natural environment is just such a network of tranquillized social relationships. [74]

This official picture of a state of pacified and idealized natural relationships, [75] however, is put in question both by Moltmann's application of the term "at home" in an ecological context, and by his treatment of the theme of work. Firstly, the mystical "at-homeness" of Bloch is mixed misleadingly with the (non-controversial) observation that the human being does not only have to work on nature. He also has to be able to dwell in nature. Human society must be adapted to the natural environment. That means that it must observe nature's capacity for regeneration and adjust itself to nature's cycles. [76]

Secondly:

The relationship of the human being to the natural environment is evidently determined by at least two concerns of a fundamental kind — the concern of work ... [and] the interest of habitation. [77]

Moltmann admits that these two basic human interests — firstly of "habitation", and secondly of 'work on nature so as to acquire food, and in order to build up the world', in which 'man is the master, and nature his slave', — 'must be balanced out'. [78] Moreover, 'under the aspect of work', he admits, 'the human being can perceive nature in no other way than as the object that has to be worked on, and as raw material for his own purposes'. [79] Moltmann thus implicitly admits that a "non-pacified" relationship to nature is inevitably part of the human condition.

Evidently, Moltmann's attitude towards human work is confused. From Habermas' perspective, it seems plain that he swings violently between positions that are either too negative or too positive about the

[75] Compare the features of Isaiah 11, alluded to in Ruether 1983, p. 266.
[77] Ibid. The term "habitation" translates the German Wohnen (Moltmann 1985a, p. 60).
[79] Ibid., p. 45.
significance of work and technology in human life. The result, while rich in rhetorical flourish, seems sparse in usable content. This impression of confusion is compounded further by statements in other contexts, where he maintains that work may have a creative and redemptive aspect in and of itself. I will consider this is 5.3.1 below.

5.3 Theological overestimations of the importance of labour

Examination of the contents pages of the works of many of the twentieth century's greatest theologians could easily lead one to conclude that work or labour is only of peripheral theological, or indeed anthropological, significance. [80] The topic is rarely touched on, for example, by Rahner or von Balthasar. [81] At the other extreme, however, theologians who under predominantly Marxian influence have come to appreciate the anthropological significance of labour, are inclined to attribute too much importance to it. They are too readily inclined to attach the interpretation of theological categories exclusively to this aspect of human existence.

In what follows I shall consider three examples of this tendency towards 'the reduction of the self-generative act of the human species to labor'. [82] Two are Marxian in orientation: Pope John Paul II's Laborem Exercens and Jürgen Moltmann's 'The Right to Meaningful Work'. [83] The other, the creation theology of Michael Novak, [84] combines with its Parsonian orientation a transposition of the Protestant work ethic as described by Max Weber.

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[82] KHI, p. 42. See 4.5, 4.6 above.
[83] Wojtyla 1984; Moltmann 1984, pp. 37-58. These two works are also discussed in West 1986a (appended).

5.3.1 Holtmann: the meaning of work

In the essay 'The Right to Meaningful Work', Jürgen Holtmann at first sight seems to be aware of the pitfall in question, and to avoid it. The Marxian concept of self-realization through work must be qualified, he says, because 'it threatens the young, the old, the handicapped, and the unemployed with nonexistence': [85]

No one has to justify himself through work. No one has to demonstrate her right to existence through work! No one has to realize himself through work. Were that true, then the unemployed would have no rights and the handicapped no reality. [86]

Moreover, in theological key, he echoes Karl Barth in stressing the limitation of the importance of work implied by the Sabbath:

Work is thus meaningful not because it alone provides the meaning of life, but precisely because it is limited by the goal of rest and joy in existence. The Sabbath does not simply interrupt work. Rather, work is understood and defined through the Sabbath. [87]

It is a heathen god, he argues, who is 'actus purus, or pure activity', who 'knows no Sabbath'. Such is the Hegelian Geist, but it should not be our pattern as Christians. [88] In the working out of his argument, however, Holtmann does not appear to carry these insights through adequately.

Holtmann starts by noting the status of work in the ancient Greek society of Aristotle. [89] Here work and leisure were divided between different classes, rather than between work-day and rest-day in the one life-history. Work, 'the toil and burden of maintaining and reproducing life', [90] was the lot of the slave, who was disqualified thereby from full humanhood. Labour was 'not true life but only its precondition ...

[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., p. 41; compare Barth 1961, pp. 47-72, especially pp. 50f.
[89] Ibid., pp. 38f.
[90] Ibid., p. 38.
necessary, to be sure, but not itself meaningful'. [91] True humanhood was (unjustly) available only to the leisured classes, whose bodily and spiritual dignity was not so impaired by labour as to render the pursuit of virtue impossible. [92] Labour was thus to be avoided, if at all possible, because it was considered to be dehumanizing.

Moltmann rejects this negative appraisal of the significance of work, and with it the modern tendency to delegate 'vitally necessary and life-sustaining work to other people or to machines'. [93] In his opinion, the Christian tradition indicates that work is itself meaningful. Genesis 2:15 shows that work is an essential part of the created nature of mankind. It is 'not work itself, but work after the fall' that has been subjected to futility. [94] Thus 'the deliverance of human beings from sin actually cannot lead also to deliverance from work, but only to a transformation of their work from curse to blessing'. [95]

Moreover, human work can be correlated with the theological motifs of creation and redemption. Firstly, argues Moltmann, 'in and through their work in the world human beings can and should correspond to the creative activity of God', as is implied in the Sabbath commandment of Exodus 20:9-11. [96] Work and rest are both commanded, and in both human beings, in their way, take part in the creative world process and in the joy of the Creator. In contrast to the ancient dichotomies, this makes work itself meaningful. [97]

Secondly, because Isaiah 53, Philippians 2, and John 19 identify redemption as the 'pain and work of God',

the work word gains a new meaning. It is filled to the highest degree with theological content. Work becomes the embodiment of the doctrine of salvation. [98]

[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., p. 39.
[93] Ibid., p. 40.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid. Compare p. 51.
[97] Ibid., p. 41.
[98] Ibid., p. 42.
As we are to be of the same mind as Christ, it follows that the understanding of our own work is also to be transformed. [99] Not only the apostolic kopos of Paul, [100] but indeed

all work in the world is thereby placed on the level of Philippians 2 and filled with the hope of the kingdom of God. Through faith work is not just relativized or exorcized. Rather, it receives through faith a messianic meaning .... What happens in work is nothing less than co-renunciation with Christ and hope for co-regency with him. [101]

In brief:

The reapplication of this theological meaning of work to human beings induces them, through work and self-giving, to participate in the lordship of Christ in the world and thereby to become co-workers in God's kingdom, which completes creation and renews heaven and earth. [102]

The Calvinist overtones come through well in Moltmann's summary conclusions. In his or her work and through it, a person is 'on the promised road to the kingdom of freedom and human worth'; and 'work in the kingdom of God' is not a title to be reserved for 'missions and the diaconal ministry'. No, all work has an 'eschatological meaning' — and this includes society's 'historical dealings with the natural world'. [103]

I have criticized this article in some detail elsewhere on linguistic, sociological, and theological grounds. [104] I argue that Moltmann's use of biblical texts is suspect, that his conclusions are too open to ideological misuse, and that his tendency to equate human "progress" with the establishment of the Kingdom of God is too pronounced. These matters will be discussed further in chapter 6. At this point I will merely note the suspiciously inflated importance that Moltmann attaches to human labour in both an anthropological and a theological dimension.

[99] Ibid., pp. 42f.
[100] Ibid., p. 43.
[101] Ibid., p. 44.
[102] Ibid., p. 45.
[103] Ibid., p. 56.
5.3.2 Novak: wealth creation

There is some ambiguity surrounding Moltmann's use of the word "work" in the article discussed in 5.3.1, concerning the extent to which it is restricted to activity within the economic system. [105] No such ambiguity is displayed in the creation theology of Michael Novak, however, who wholeheartedly embraces the economic as the realm within which human activity corresponds to divine creativity.

For Novak, 'the human person is a creator and nowhere more so than at his daily economic tasks.' Made in the image of God, each has 'the vocation to work and to create'. [106] This creativity essentially consists in a high (and increasing) rate of economic production, [107] aided and abetted by scientific and technological innovation. [108] In this, says Novak, the person is 'sharing in the creativity of the Creator' and 'fulfill[ing] his vocation'. [109] And in fact it is man's 'capacities for self-reflection, invention and innovation [that] constitute in him imago Dei: the image of God the Creator'. [110]

What is true for the individual is true also for the modern business corporation, and for society as a whole. The modern business corporation is 'a much despised incarnation of God's presence in this world' that reflects the role of the suffering servant in Deutero-Isaiah. [111] 'Its creativity makes available to mass markets the riches long hidden in creation. Its creativity mirrors God's'. [112] Moreover a society in which personal economic creativity is released, such that the entire economy becomes creative, is a society 'constructed ... in the image of the Blessed Trinity, the Creator of all things, Lord of history, Spirit brooding over dark creation'. [113]

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[105] See, for example, Moltmann 1984, p. 56.
[107] Ibid., p. 37.
[110] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., p. 208.
I have commented upon this aspect of Novak's work, and on the use of the term "creativity" in general, elsewhere. [114] Here, apart from once again noting, this time with some irony, that Novak shares with Marx a tendency to reduce the essential dimension of human life to the economic, I will make two comments. The first comment is theological. Barth's pejorative comment, that in embracing the analogia entis and thus 'a general analogy of the world to God ... Liberalism shows a basic readiness in almost every connexion to discover new analogies in the world', [115] seems to be singularly applicable here. This tendency of Novak will be examined further in 5.4 below. The second comment looks back to section 3.3.3 above. We have in Novak's use of the terms "creation" and "creativity" an example of a "situation definition" of an item in the social world that appears to have ideological consequences. Carrying over positive overtones from divine creation into the economic sphere, it draws attention away from the unfortunate side-effects of the operation of the capitalist economic system, specifically the generation of the class system. [116] The result is that Novak legitimates the activities of the multinational corporations, and the structure of American society which is dependent upon them, to a quite unsatisfactory extent.

5.3.3 John Paul II: work and action

Pope John Paul II's Laborem Exercens [117] refuses this blatant and idolatrous legitimation of late capitalist society, being far more sympathetic than Novak to the strengths of the Marxist critique. [118] Nevertheless, it does tend towards a similar 'reduction of the self-generative act of the human species to labor', [119] and a less than cautious interpretation of work in theological categories. Of course, as noted in 1.2.2 above, there is again some ambiguity as to the definition of

[116]See 2.3.1.8 and 3.6 above.
[119]KHI, p. 42.
work, and John Paul II (hereinafter Wojtyla) seems at times to equate it with human action:

The word 'work' means everything that man accomplishes, whatever its nature or attendant circumstances. [120]

However, once again social labour within the economic system is primarily in view, as evidenced for example in his treatment of the role of mothers in society. [121] The worker is primarily the worker of Marxian theory, and perhaps quintessentially the worker extracting raw materials from the earth by physical labour [122] - the one who thereby fulfils the divine mandate to dominate the earth. [123]

Wojtyla's understanding of the centrality of work can be traced to two sources: the first Marxism, the second his "personalist" philosophy, as set out in his early The Acting Person. [124] The latter affects his philosophy of work by way of an unfortunate equation of the concepts of "action" and "work", implicit in the definition of work quoted above, and in need of criticism in the light of Habermas' action theory. Thus, whereas in The Acting Person the person is characterized chiefly by actions [125] through which the person realizes or creates himself, [126] in Laborem Exercens man alone works, and 'in working fulfils his life on earth': [127]

through it he not only transforms nature, adapting it to his needs, but also achieves his own fulfilment as a human being and, indeed, in a sense becomes 'more fully human'. [128]

[121] Ibid., pp. 41f.
[123] Lash notes the "machismo" at the centre of John Paul II's vision of man and his work' (Lash 1982, p. 8). A recurrent theme of the encyclical is that man's vocation is to dominate the earth (e.g. Wojtyla 1984, p. 7), a theme based upon Genesis 1:28. The papal exegesis and hermeneutics is unsatisfactory at this point (Hauerwas 1983, pp. 44-46), although the move away from natural law arguments to a basis in biblical texts is itself interestingly innovative in the genre of papal social encyclicals (Walsh and Davies 1984, pp. xxviiif).
[125] Ibid., p. 11.
[126] Ibid., p. 98.
[128] Ibid., p. 18, stress removed.
This equation of action and work leads to an overestimation of the significance of work in the sense of what goes on within the economic system - work which is then interpreted in theological categories. Work becomes God's first and foremost intention with regard to man. [129] By means of it man can enter into God's salvific plan for man and the world. [130] As God is both Creator and Redeemer, man not only 'shares by his labour in the work of the Creator, in a certain sense continuing to complete and perfect that work', [131] but also 'by enduring the toil of work in union with Christ nailed to a Cross for our sake ... in a way collaborates with the Son of God in the redemption of mankind'. [132] In sum, in work men [133] are 'contributing by their personal industry to the fulfilment in history of the divine plan'. [134] Man should 'recognize the place that his work has not only in earthly progress but also in the growth of the Kingdom of God'. [135]

We may leave as an open question until the next chapter whether, and to what extent, any aspects of human action might be analogically correspondent to the divine action. Here I will simply point out that the bifurcation in the concept of action established by Habermas [136] is a powerful critical tool for use against this sort of theological overestimation of the significance of labour. Wojtyla, lacking this conceptual tool, is obliged to make a double error. Firstly, considering work as primarily self-formative, he detaches its significance too much from its results. Thus work is to be evaluated 'independently of [its] objective content', [137] which in this context means independently of its

[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid., p. 51.
[131] Ibid., pp. 51f, stress removed.
[132] Ibid., p. 57.
[133] The implicit sexism of Wojtyla's view of work is made explicit at Wojtyla 1984, pp. 41f, and noted by Lash (1982, p. 8). In Wojtyla's view, a woman's 'nature' fits her for family life, which is where her 'true advancement' is to be found (Wojtyla 1984, p. 42). Hebblethwaite detects extenuating circumstances for this doubtful view in the Polish situation from which Wojtyla originates (Hebblethwaite 1982, p. 122). For Wojtyla's attitude to women in general, Ibid., pp. 115-127.
[136] See 4.2 above.
product. "Work" is detached from what Weber and Habermas distinguish as
the category of purposive-rational action:

every kind of work is to be appraised according to the dignity
proper to the subject of it ... the result for which he strives
is of no definitive and final significance in itself'. [138]

Then secondly "work", coming to embrace all that is of value in "the active
life", [139] is in consequence overinterpreted theologically. Wojtyla's
theology of work is thus flawed by a basic category mistake.

Further, Wojtyla's position on the importance of labour is (perhaps
inevitably) combined with an undue optimism concerning its results. Indeed
he recognizes that social labour can be dehumanizing, [140] but he shows
little positive awareness of the deeply ambiguous nature of the
achievements of modern technology, and of the processes of economic
development and expansion. [141] As a consequence, his theology tacitly
assumes that work largely escapes the effects of the fall. The effect of
sin, he says, is merely to make the execution of work toilsome, rather than
rendering its results ambiguous or evil. [142] Work becomes, like the
Spirit, an active agent of the new order proleptically present in this age.
All of which needs to be confronted with the ambiguity of modernity,
captured in Weber's paradoxes of rationalization and reinterpreted in
Habermas' model of modernity, [143] and with Habermas' analysis of the
ideological overtones associated with the idea of technical progress in
the modern western societies. [144]

Once again, I have offered further criticisms of this theology of work
elsewhere. [145]

[138]Ibid., p. 12, stress removed.
[139]Barth's term (Barth 1961, pp. 470-564).
[141]See, for example, the optimistic tone of Wojtyla 1984, p. 9.
[142]Ibid., pp. 56f.
[143]See 3.1 and 3 passim above.
[144]See 2.2.2:C above.
5.3.4 Conclusion

Section 5.3 has been an almost entirely critical exercise. It has found the works of Moltmann, Novak, and Wojtyla seriously lacking. Nevertheless, although these writers collectively fail to connect the theological motifs of creation, sabbath, cross, kingdom and vocation to human work in a convincing manner, in my opinion they are right to have made the attempt. For if a "theology of work" consists in an attempted exposition of work as seen 'in the light of God', [146] then it will have to relate work in some way (even if only negatively) to these concepts. In chapter 6 I will take up these motifs again, and attempt to examine human work in their light, avoiding some of the pitfalls outlined above.

Meanwhile, in the rest of this chapter, I will bring the thought of Habermas to bear upon theologies of work that are organized around a single question: capitalism or socialism?

5.4 The theological defence of capitalism

If people decide that the gospel message has nothing to say about such a critical human issue as the choice between capitalism and socialism, then ... its value is nil. [Segundo] [147]

In the introduction to Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, as we saw in 3.1 above, Habermas described two predominant reactions to the troubles of the western democracies since the 1960's - the "neoconservative" and the "antimodernist". [148] Just as the antimodernist reaction has been expressed theologically in the writings of authors such as Daly, Ruether and Moltmann, [149] so also the neoconservative reaction has found expression in several recent theological defences of capitalism. These defences, as Habermas notes concerning their secular counterparts, involve a determination 'to hold at any price to the capitalist pattern of

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[148]TCA1, pp. xlii.  
[149]See 5.2 above.
economic and social modernization', giving 'highest priority to ... economic growth' while 'seek[ing] refuge from the socially disintegrative side effects of this growth' in a rhetorical reaffirmation of now defunct nineteenth century values, values whose basis has been irreversibly eroded by capitalism. [150]

Two book-length examples of this theological genre are Robert Benne's The Ethic of Democratic Capitalism, and Michael Novak's The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism. [151] The two books differ both in tenor and in theological method, Novak being the more strident, the less critical of American society, and the more inclined to utilize theological categories directly in support of his case. [152] But the case they present is recognizably the same. [153] I shall briefly present this common case, before noting their methodological differences, and offering some criticisms in the light of Habermas' work.

5.4.1 The Novak-Benne case

The key plank in the Novak-Benne platform is the "difference principle" as articulated by John Rawls:

Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. [154]

[150]TCA1, p. xli.
[152]Compare 5.3.2 above for Novak's use of the category "creation", for which see also Novak 1982, p. 246.
[153]This case, transposed into theological key, is also recognizably the same as that of F.A. Hayek's The Road to Serfdom (Hayek 1944; compare Hayek 1967; 1978; 1973-79), and Milton Friedman's Capitalism and Freedom (Friedman 1962; compare Friedman and Friedman 1980), on which they are at least partially dependent (Benne 1981, pp. 106f, 146, 224; Novak 1982, pp. 89, 94, 122, 160, 205f). Friedman 1970 presents in nuce the monetarist economic theory upon which Friedman's social theory is based.
The essence of their case is that democratic capitalism, [155] according to these criteria, is both better for the least advantaged, and fairer for all, than the only "live" alternative - the various forms of socialism. Thus it is democratic capitalism, rather than socialism, that is to be positively related to the teachings of the Christian faith.

The problem with socialism, according to Novak and Benne, is that although it intends well - true freedom and equality for all - its results are unfortunate. [156] Firstly, because it embodies a misunderstanding of the importance of the profit motive in the economic sphere, socialist economies are generally less efficient than capitalist ones. Thus, despite socialism's stress on the distribution of wealth, its lower production means that it has less goods to distribute, and the poor are ultimately rendered worse off. [157] Secondly, the hegemony of the political over the economic system under socialism involves a drastic loss of the personal freedom that is one essential (if not the essential) dimension of authentic human existence. [158] Freedom, understood as the possibility for as wide a range of individual choices as possible, [159] is thus compromised in two ways under socialism: directly by state control, and indirectly by loss of purchasing power.

The best possible social system, in contrast, is the pluralist system of the democratic capitalist societies. Here the economic, political, and

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[155]Benne ascribes the origin of this term to Novak (Benne 1981, p. x). It is to be distinguished from both laissez-faire capitalism on the one hand and democratic socialism on the other, and is in essence descriptive of the modern American social system (Benne 1981, p. x; Novak 1982, p. 367) or, more cynically, of an idealized abstraction from it. Habermas' Spätkapitalismus is a rather broader category, as 3.6 above makes clear. Note that Wogaman, who usefully compares five systems of political economy from a Christian perspective, subsumes the American system under 'Laissez Faire Capitalism' (Wogaman 1977, pp. 77-97).


[158]See, for example, Novak 1982, pp. 144, 201; compare Benne 1981, pp. 28, 143. Benne follows Niebuhr, who states that 'the essence of man is his freedom' (Niebuhr 1941, p. 18).

cultural subsystems are separated, and form independent power centres that balance each other out, avoiding undue hegemony of any one individual or group. [160] Here the economic system is forced to pursue the dictates of its own "economizing logic", and thus yield maximum efficiency and growth. [161] Here individual freedom is guaranteed. And here suitable corrective measures can ensure that most people have a roughly equal chance of the upward social mobility that defines success. [162] This fair equality of opportunity is the key element in justice (so Rawls above), which is in turn the implication of a socially incarnated Christian agape. [163] Special consideration may need to be given to groups that have in effect fallen out of this fair social system. Agape demands that they at least be brought up to the starting post alongside everyone else, [164] and this may be true on an international as well as an intranational level. [165] But the system in itself is acceptable.

It follows that the Marxist analysis of the capitalist social system is to be rejected. [166] Far from entrepreneurs being the cause of poverty, their activities are the key element in its solution. [167] And this applies on an international as well as on an intranational level. It is not true that first world wealth, and the activities of the multinational corporations, are the cause of third world poverty, as their Marxist critics suggest. [168] In fact they are benevolent in their effects on the third world, raising per capita income, and therefore the quality of life, in these regions. [169] In essence, what is good for General Electric is good, not only for the country, but also for the Nicaraguan peasant as well — at least in the long run. [170] It also follows that opposition to

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[160] Ibid., pp. 75, 136.
[163] Ibid., p. 44.
[164] Ibid., pp. 239-245.
[165] Ibid., pp. 204-208.
[167] Ibid., pp. 13, 16f, and passim.
economic growth on almost any grounds is misguided. [171] It is economic growth that will ultimately aid the poor and oppressed of the world, not interventionist programmes of redistribution. Economic growth thus becomes an implicate of Christian agape; and as this growth is best attained by the democratic capitalist system, that system is itself to be positively related to the principles of Christianity.

However, the democratic capitalist system, despite its success, is currently under serious threat from an adversarial culture. [172] This cultural phenomenon is spearheaded by a New Class of left-wing academics, who have a vested interest in government interventionism, [173] and who fail to appreciate the dynamics (and therefore the virtues) of the capitalist economic system. [174] The rise of this class, as also the rise of a hedonistic consumerism, [175] is the result of what we might (mindful of Horkheimer and Adorno) term a "dialectic of capitalization": it is an inevitable result of the functioning of the system, which tends to undermine the system at its very foundations. [176] The arguments of the New Class must be exposed by ideology-critique, and the people immunized against them by education in the virtues of capitalism. This is the task that Novak and Benne have set themselves. [177] The advent of the new hedonistic consumerism demonstrates the urgent need for a return to the Protestant work ethic, that viewed work as a divinely ordained duty. [178]

5.4.2 Theological method and critique

While this central case is common to Benne and Novak, the two writers underpin it theologically in quite different ways.

Benne proceeds by reducing the implications of the Christian tradition
economic growth on almost any grounds is misguided. [171] It is economic growth that will ultimately aid the poor and oppressed of the world, not interventionist programmes of redistribution. Economic growth thus becomes an implicate of Christian agape; and as this growth is best attained by the democratic capitalist system, that system is itself to be positively related to the principles of Christianity.

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Benne proceeds by reducing the implications of the Christian tradition

[174]Ibid., p. 3.
[175]Ibid., pp. 250-252.
[176]Ibid., pp. 254f.
to two guiding principles, agape [179] and freedom, [180] which he then applies to social theory by means of the mediating category of Rawlsian justice. [181] Both principles are drawn from the work of Reinhold Niebuhr, [182] whose Moral Man and Immoral Society also substantiates the claim that a pluralist society is needed to counteract the endemic effects of the will-to-power in human groups. [183] Agape in its autonomous form—that is, apart from its transformation into justice—survives only in the injunction to seek and save the lost. [184] This is taken to imply the need to bring the marginalized back into participation in the economic system, which participation constitutes the key aspect of full membership of the social community. [185]

Novak's method is quite different. He proceeds by drawing analogies between several key theological categories on the one hand, and aspects of democratic capitalist societies on the other. We have seen in 5.3 above how he uses the doctrine of creation in this way. In his 1982 work he extends this procedure to include the following:

(1) The doctrine of the importance of results as opposed to intentions is raised to the level of an absolute principle by its correlation with the doctrine of divine providence. The God of democratic capitalism, he argues, is not the Nous of the ancients, 'the all-knowing and all-seeing God of harmony . . . the God of geometry'. An adequate political economy must rather imitate the Providence of

[180] Ibid., pp. 28f.
[181] Benne 1981, pp. 49-68. Benne (e.g. p. 242) is also critical of some of Rawls' points, generally from a more right wing perspective. For a more penetrating critique of Rawls, Grant 1985, pp. 13-47 (reviewed in West 1986d, appended). Benne's method is close to the "middle axiom" method in Christian social ethics, pursued by William Temple and Ronald Preston. Compare Temple 1927, pp. 9-18; 1976, pp. 67-77; Preston 1981, pp. 37-44. Benne calls middle axioms (Preston's term) "middle principles" (Benne 1981, p. 46), or "intermediate principles" (ibid., p. 41).
[182] The principle of freedom from volume 1 of Niebuhr's The Nature and Destiny of Man (Niebuhr 1941, see pp. 14-18), that of agape from An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (Niebuhr 1936).
[183] Niebuhr 1942, pp. xiv, and passim; Benne 1981, pp. 31-34, 125.
[185] Ibid., pp. 230-239, especially p. 231.
Aquinas, that is characterized by practical rather than theoretical wisdom. This (the true) God is 'Lord of the absurd, the idiosyncratic, the slip of the tongue'. He respects 'a world of concrete contingencies, secondary causes, liberties, and sin'. [186] Thus, a political economy whose operation truly reflects the action of God cannot operate according to an all-knowing plan, as does socialism. Its operation will be counter-intuitive.

(2) The doctrine of original sin indicates that capitalism's attempt to progress via the effects of unintended consequences is more Christian than socialism's intentionalist approach to social issues. Socialism (unwisely) meets the sin of selfishness head on, and fails to eradicate it. Democratic capitalism, however, 'regards sin as rooted in the free personality, beyond the reach of any system, an ineradicable given'. Instead it uses 'the workings of unintended consequences' in the economy as 'a way to defeat sin – a way to transform its energy into creative use (and thus to take on Satan the best revenge)'.[187]

(3) The doctrine of the transcendence of God is taken to imply the necessity for a pluralist social system, with a relatively autonomous economy. Only such a society, Novak claims, witnesses to the transcendence of God by refusing to endorse any particular vision of social order. Out of reverence for God himself, the bearing of Christian symbols must be restricted to the moral-cultural system. They should not be allowed to invade the spheres of the polity and the economy. [188]

(4) The form of community embodied in democratic capitalism – 'a political economy differentiated and yet one' [189] – is a reflection of the relationship between the members of the divine Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity implies the rejection of socialism as well as of a rampant individualism. The former yields a

[187] Ibid., p. 82; compare pp. 349-351.
[188] Ibid., pp. 67-70, 351-353.
[189] Ibid., p. 339.
collective rather than a true community, a collective in which individuality is lost and true community becomes impossible. [190]

(5) The doctrine of the Incarnation demonstrates that 'God [does] not overpower history but respect[s] its constraints'. It teaches us to 'face facts' and 'train ourselves to realism'. [191] All traces of utopian hope must be rejected. 'The point of the Incarnation is to respect the world as it is ... and to disbelieve any promises that the world is now or ever will be transformed into the City of God. If Jesus could not effect that, how shall we?' [192] Indeed, 'the single greatest temptation for Christians is to imagine that the salvation won by Jesus has altered the human condition'. [193]

There is so much to disagree with here that one is spoiled for choice. I will limit myself to four comments. Firstly and crucially, Novak's analogical method leads him to legitimate the structure and functioning of contemporary American society much more strongly than does Benne. [194] An obvious problem with his work is thus its inevitably ideological consequences: it serves to legitimate the status quo, including the contingent undesirable features that are built into it. [195] Christianity here loses its critical edge. [196] This is not unassociated, secondly, with the lack of any significant place in Novak's theology for the themes of the cross and resurrection. [197] I have argued elsewhere that, seen in

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[190]Ibid., pp. 337-340.
[191]Ibid., p. 340.
[192]Ibid., p. 341.
[193]Ibid., p. 343.
[194]Benne is alive to some of its shortcomings, (Benne 1981, p. 227), and simply suggests that it represents the most hopeful model to work on in the future - democratic capitalism is to be assessed as 'ambiguously positive' (ibid., p. 3; compare p. 18).
[195]Features to which, incidentally, Novak was fully alive before his recent political volte face (Novak 1969, pp. 17, 29).
[196]See Barth 1957, pp. 75-79 for a pertinent and damning critique of analogy used in this way.
[197]Novak's list of six doctrines that he considers most important in a social context are: Trinity, Incarnation, competition [sic!], original sin, the separation of realms, and caritas (Novak 1982, pp. 337-358). Cross and resurrection are mentioned on page 257 as the starting point for Moltmann's theology, a theology that Novak attacks vigorously (ibid., pp. 255-271).
their social setting, these symbols are both critical of current social practices and indicative of the possibility of social transformation. [198] Novak's omission of them is a serious weakness in any theology of work that claims to be a Christian theology of work. [199] Thirdly, the use that Novak makes of the theme of transcendence seems to be at odds with his understanding of the implications of the Trinity: any doctrine of transcendence as extreme as Novak's would seem to undercut the rest of his strongly analogical method. The last point also concerns transcendence. Allegedly this doctrine legitimates the democratic capitalist social system, which, by freeing economy and polity from the hegemony of the cultural system, ensures that no one vision of society is allowed to dominate. [200] But in effect, of course, this merely allows hegemony to the view of social order implicit in the dynamics of late capitalism. Novak fails to see what Habermas makes explicit: that the capitalist political and cultural systems are formed, to some extent at least, in reaction to the dynamics of the economic system, which remains a chief powerhouse of social formation and social change. [201]

Neither, however, is Benne's theological method adequate. Adopting a christocentric approach, he claims to derive his basic principle of agape from the story of Jesus. [202] Yet Benne reduces the implications of this story to the single applicable principle of agape, only at the cost of abstracting Jesus completely from his social and historical setting in first century Jewish society. This abstraction is shown strikingly in the following passage:

Only the solitary person or, in the case of Jesus, the One acting on behalf of All, can act in a purely agapistic manner. All other actions are qualified by the claims and counterclaims of social existence. [203]

Benne's (docetic) Jesus is not a concrete, situated person as we are,

[199]Ibid., p. 428.
[201]See 4.5, 4.6 above. This remains true despite the qualifiers entered there.
otherwise his actions too would be 'qualified by the claims and counterclaims of social existence' - as of course in reality they were. [204] Correspondingly, his challenge to the power structures of first century society, a challenge implied in his death and resurrection when read in their social setting, [205] is lost. From this follows easily the collapse of agape into a Rawlsian concept of justice [206] that, for all its superiority to the justice of classical political economy, is still essentially individualistic, embodying the social contract myth of the pre-formed, asocial individual. [207]

5.4.3 Critique of the Novak-Benne case

There are many useful points to be gleaned from the work of Novak and Benne: the irreducible importance of efficiency in economic life, the need to consider production as well as distribution in social theory, the all-pervasive social significance of power, and the significance of consequences as well as intentions. These points have already emerged in the discussion in chapters 1-4 above. [208] However, a reading of Habermas suggests several shortcomings in the Novak-Benne account which seriously vitiate the credibility of its overall case concerning the ethical and theological legitimacy of democratic capitalism. Two obvious ones are their tendency to assume that (economic) system imperatives are in harmony with the norms of a free and just community, and their espousal of a conservative achievement-ideology which legitimates the linkage of wealth and status to effort and achievement in the productive process. [209] I shall consider some of their other shortcomings under the broad headings of growth, system, and the Protestant work ethic.

Firstly, as noted at the start of this section, the Novak-Benne case involves giving a high priority to growth [210] while taking insufficient

[207]Ibid., pp. 52-54; compare Rawls 1973, pp. 118-175.
[208]See, respectively, 4.7, 2.3.2, 4.5, 3.5 above.
[209]See, respectively, 3.6, 2.2.2c above.
[210]For example, Benne 1981, pp. 70-72.
note of its unfortunate side effects. It is not just that environmental problems are taken insufficiently seriously, although this is true. [211] Neither is it just that Novak and Benne subscribe to the position attacked persuasively in Habermas' 'Technology and Science as "Ideology"', [212] although this is also true. It is rather that these writers seem not to be sufficiently aware of the ambiguous nature of the modernity that has been generated by, among other things, the growth of the capitalist economic machine. [213] With a tacit reduction of the quality of life to the availability of (individualistically conceived) choices, [214] which are in turn related too simply to the measure of per capita income, [215] Novak and Benne are left with no measure of the costs involved in modernization [216] - for example, the losses involved when a multinational corporation is responsible for the breakup of a tribal society in the third world at the same time as raising the per capita income of its members. [217] Similarly, they are unable to grasp the significance of the protest movements in late capitalist societies, movements that are related, not to the issue of income or the choices that it brings, but to questions of "the grammar of forms of life". [218] As in section 5.3 above, we seem to have here yet another variant of a threatened 'reduction of the self-generative act of the human species to labor', [219] a reduction which, despite its insistence upon the importance of an

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[211] Ibid., pp. 187-194.

[212] See 2.2.2c above; the view that the direction of the development of social systems is inexorably determined by the logic of scientific and technological progress, and thus falls outside of the scope of rational human agreement and control - and the correlative that politics is to be reduced to periodic plebiscites to decide who shall be entrusted with the job of promoting this progress, ceasing to have any influence on the direction that it takes.


[215] For example, Novak argues that the lot of the black American is acceptable because he is 'richer and better educated than any other blacks in the world' (Novak 1982, p. 219).

[216] See 3.6 above on Parsons.

[217] See 3.6,3 above. Benne dismisses 'traditional' societies as characterized most importantly by 'stagnant, subsistence economies'. Escape from these in his view far outweighs the pain of the rupture of traditional communities (Benne 1981, pp. 126f).

[218] See 3.6,7 above.

[219] KHI, p. 42.
autonomous cultural system, [220] underplays the significance of a communicative rationality that is non-reducible to instrumental rationality. [221]

Secondly, despite their welcome insistence upon the social significance of power, it is clear that Novak and Benne operate with a view of the social system that is essentially Parsonian, and as a consequence underplay the significance of class conflict in social evolution and formation. [222] There is a lack of appreciation that late capitalism represents a welfare state compromise that has pacified rather than excised class conflict. [223] As a result, while conflicts of interests between the political, economic, and cultural spheres are recognized, there is little recognition of a genuine conflict of interests within the economic system itself. [224] Injustice in the economic sphere is held to be eliminated once all are given fair equality of opportunity to compete in the labour market. [225] And the roles of entrepreneur, investor, and worker are seen as functionally complementary, as are the roles played by the various organs in a biological organism. [226] Novak and Benne here fall into the trap of regarding society as one single subject, that is, of regarding it falsely — speculatively'. [227]

Thirdly and finally, there appears to be a genuine inconsistency in the Novak-Benne position concerning the role of the Protestant work ethic. What we may call their official position is that the economic system functions most effectively when individual actors are orientated consciously to their own self-interest. [228] This orientation to

[221] See 3.3 above.
[222] Compare 3.6, 4.5, 4.6 above.
[223] See 3.6, 4 above.
[224] There seems to be some inconsistency between admitting the reality of class interest for the New Class, but denying its significance for other groups, e.g. industrial workers. It is therefore interesting that Benne sets New Class interest up as a conflict between the cultural and economic subsystems (Benne 1981, p. 7).
[225] Ibid., pp. 239-245.
[226] This analogy is criticized in 4.5 above.
[227] KHI, p. 54; see 2.3.1 below.
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[221] See 3.3 above.
[222] Compare 3.6, 4.5, 4.6 above.
[223] See 3.6.4 above.
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[225] Ibid., pp. 239-245.
[226] This analogy is criticized in 4.5 above.
[227] KHI, p. 54; see 2.3.1:8 above.
self-interest, they argue, being a result of original sin, cannot be transcended. [229] However their supplementary position is that the efficient functioning of the economic system is under serious threat from the spread of a consumerist hedonism; [230] and that this not only must be, but can be, headed off by a retreat to the Protestant work ethic. [231] This involves a retreat from a doctrine of the efficacy of unintended consequences towards a Kantian ethic: work is to be regarded as a divinely-ordained duty. [232] Moreover it calls into question a key step in their rejection of socialism: the insistence that the human being en masse is too selfish to be capable of orientation to anything other than self-interest, even under the influence of divine grace. But if the worker can be orientated to the duty of seeking the glory of God in work rather than personal profit, he or she can presumably also be orientated to the interests of his or her fellow citizens and members of the world community. Benne and Novak are in danger of wanting to have their cake and eat it as well.

5.5 Marxian theologies of work

At the opposite end of the spectrum to Novak and Benne, various Marxian theologies of work have also recently appeared. [233] At least since Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum of 1891, [234] the effect of the Marxist critique on Christian social ethics has been apparent. This is clear from a reading of official Roman Catholic documents, [235] the work of Anglicans such as William Temple [236] and, in the present generation, Ronald Preston, [237]

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[229]Ibid., pp. 82, 349-351.
[231]Ibid., pp. 254, 258.
[233]For an earlier example of this genre, Chenu 1963.
and the social ethics of Americans such as Reinhold Niebuhr. [238] We have seen, in 5.2 and 5.3 above, theologies that make some use of Marxian categories. Here I shall describe two theologies of work that may be described as thoroughly Marxian. In what follows I shall compare briefly some aspects of Latin American liberation theology with a "first world" Marxian theology of work: that of Dorothee Soelle. I shall suggest that their settings are not unrelated to the differences between them, and that this difference in setting and content can fruitfully be analysed with the help of Habermas' model of modernity.

5.5.1 Soelle: the romantic Marx

In her 1984 To Work and to Love: a theology of creation, [239] Dorothee Soelle combines a feminist perspective similar to that of Ruether [240] with a use of the categories of the early Marx. [241] 'Several years ago', claims Soelle, 'I discovered the meaning of work'. This discovery involved a shift

from a myopic, production-oriented perspective on work to a more human understanding of work. I discovered the meaning of work in its three essential dimensions: self-expression, social-relatedness, and reconciliation with nature. [242]

Each of these three essential dimensions is elucidated in a separate chapter of her book. [243] Here I am interested chiefly in her first dimension: work as self-expression.

According to Soelle, 'good work must ... be understood as an end in

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[238] See especially Niebuhr 1936; 1942. An example is his awareness of the theme of class struggle in Niebuhr 1942, pp. xiv, 113f, etc.
[240] See, for example, Soelle and Cloyes 1984, p. 14, which links transcendence, patriarchy, and the maleness of theologians.
[241] Soelle quotes a long section of the 1844 MSS on page 95 as exemplary for her position.
itself and not just as a means to get something else', [244] and in fact 'responsibility and self-realization are of greater value and importance than the commodities produced'. [245] 'We humans have an undeniable need for self-expression', she continues, and 'labor, in its subjective dimension, is a way to fulfill this need'. [246] Thus:

In understanding what good work means and what it does to the worker, the paradigm of the artist is most relevant .... Art, like all good work, enables us to release the power of our imaginations and to become persons as we use this power ... the worker-artist collaborates with God in creating, and she or he experiences this labor, praxis, self-activity as pleasure and enjoyment. [247]

Clearly what we have here is almost the polar opposite to the theologies of work of Novak and Benne. What is perhaps most striking is that Soelle manages to describe "the meaning of work" without considering that the product is in any way essential to the process. As a consequence she blurs the distinction between work on the one hand, and art or play on the other, a distinction investigated and defended in 4.4 above. There I defended Habermas' implicit insistence, encoded in his maintenance of an internal link between purposive-rational action and social labour, that work is defined over-against these other activities by its orientation to the need to maintain human life by gaining a product. Elsewhere, of course, Soelle does admit that production is necessary: 'We must produce in order to survive'. [248] Yet this aspect of production is not related to her theoretical stance upon "the meaning" of work, and Soelle displays remarkably little interest in production-for-survival in itself, as apart from its social and expressive dimensions. Clearly, there is here a confusion of economic with creative and self-formative categories, based on a romantic confusion between aesthetic-expressive and

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[244]Ibid., p. 88.
[245]Ibid., p. 90.
[246]Ibid., p. 91. 'Subjective dimension' is an allusion to John Paul II's distinction between the objective and subjective aspects of labour (Wojtyla 1984, pp. 8-12).
[248]Ibid., p. 95.

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purposive-rational action [249]

Also of interest in Soelle's account is her selective use of the Marxian categories. Although making much use of the early Marx, relatively absent is Marx's interest in class, and his motivation in respect of the sufferings of the proletariat. [250] To put it in Habermasian terms, Soelle's use of the Marxian category of alienated labour reads rather like a protest against the colonization of the lifeworld, reflecting the class-pacified condition of late capitalist society. [251] The issues she raises are related 'not to distribution problems, but to questions of the grammar of forms of life'. [252] Her claim to have found "the meaning" of work is thus to be viewed with due scepticism, given the obviously "situated" nature of her argument.

This last point is of some importance, and I shall discuss it more fully in 6.1 below.

5.5.2 Liberation theologies: the Marx of the economics

The South American liberation theologians as a group [253] lay much less stress upon this romantic/expressivist aspect of human labour, [254] and concentrate instead upon the issues of class and distribution. This clear difference from Soelle's work can be accounted for by the quite different setting within which these theologies are produced: liberation theology arises out of reflection upon the plight of the poor in the countryside and slums of South America. This socio-economic setting bears perhaps as much resemblance to the classical capitalism of nineteenth century Europe as to twentieth century late capitalism (albeit that the situation is complicated by the role of the multinationals, the different form of the state, and so on). Here class conflict is by no means pacified

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[249] See 3.6.3:B, 4.7 above.
[250] See 2.3, 3.6.3, 4.7 above.
[251] See 3.6, 4.6 above.
[252] TKH2, p. 576; compare 3.6.7 above.
[253] It is, of course, not correct to see these as a completely unified group, and some differences will be noted below.
[254] Although the category "alienated labour" is still frequently used. See, for example, Gutiérrez 1974, p. 295.

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by the activities of a bureaucratic welfare state. [255] In such a situation, characterized by dire poverty afflicting large sections of the population, one is unlikely to think that the product of labour is unimportant; in fact justice in its distribution is the main point at issue. However, while this situation injects considerably more realism into liberation theology than is to be found in Soelle's rather implausible romanticism, [256] it is also responsible for its major weakness as considered in the light of Habermas' work.

It is a moot point to what extent liberation theology may be said to present "a theology of work". Segundo, for example, explicitly rejects this as his intention:

What is designated as 'liberation theology' does not purport to be merely one sector of theology, like the 'theology of work' or the 'theology of death'. Liberation is meant to designate and cover theology as a whole. [257]

And indeed explicit references to the sort of exercise we have seen undertaken by Moltmann, Wojtyla et al., are few and far between. [258] But in the broadest sense of the term we might see liberation theology in toto as "theology of work", in that the problematic for its central oppression-liberation axis is provided by an economic analysis of society.

Now, while it is not true to say that liberation theology represents merely a weakly Christianized Marxism, interested only in social and political liberation, [259] it does share with Marxism an insistence on the primacy of the economic dimension. At the point at which theology intersects with a critique of human society, oppression (and therefore liberation) is defined predominantly in the economic dimension, rather

[255]See 3.6.6, 3.6.7 above.
[256]A romanticism which is, we may note, conspicuously absent from her earlier discussion of work in Soelle 1975, pp. 62-68. Compare Soelle 1983.
[258]But see, for example, Gutierrez 1974, pp. 158-160, 172-174.
[259]See, for example, the statements in Gutierrez 1974, pp. 36f, 71f; 1980, pp. 28f.
than being a matter of (say) race, gender, or the use of military power. [260] The oppressed are the poor; the agent of oppression is the economic system; [261] and integral liberation will involve, if not exclusively consist in, the complete transformation of this economic system that results in poverty for the many:

The lower classes of the populace, forced to live on the margins of society and oppressed since time immemorial ... want to be the active subjects of their own history and to forge a radically different society .... the people must come to power if society is to be truly free and egalitarian. In such a society private ownership of the means of production will be eliminated because it enables a few to expropriate the fruits of labor performed by the many [and] generates class divisions in society .... In such a reordered society the social takeover of the means of production will be accompanied by a social takeover of the reins of political power that will ensure people's liberty. [262]

The choice is stark, and is centred upon two opposed models of the economic system: capitalism (oppressive) or socialism (liberative) - a choice that Segundo can call a 'Crux Theologica'. [263]

These writers need to be confronted with the first and fifth criticisms of Marx that Habermas offers in 3.6.3:B above. [264] These criticisms are not meant to detract from the usefulness of the Marxian critique of the generation of poverty in the South American situation, a critique wielded to great effect by the liberation theologians. Yet they do suggest that caution be exercised in tying theological categories too closely to the concept of revolution as conceived in this Marxian model. [265]

Firstly, these writers are both too negative about capitalism, and too positive about the prognosis for a social revolution led spontaneously by

[260]Compare 4.6 above.
[261]Although Gutiérrez identifies sin as 'the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and all injustice and oppression' (1974, p. 37), it is not entirely clear how this insight is to be integrated into his socio-economic analysis.
[264]See that section for references to TKH2.
[265]Contra, for example, Segundo 1980, pp. 245–249 and passim.
the people. On the one hand they neglect the fact that capitalism has been responsible for the destruction of the old feudalistic class relations that themselves represented oppression in another (directly political) dimension; and they ignore the fact that the capitalist system has the virtue of efficiency to offset against its pernicious side-effects, particularly the generation of the class structure. On the other hand, their implicit theory of revolution assumes (implausibly) that production, and necessary social organization in general, can continue efficiently when the systems of economy and state are taken over directly by "the people" - in Habermas' terms, under the conditions of a collapse of these systems back onto the lifeworld. Missing the fact that any modern society must inevitably be characterized by a high degree of structural differentiation - a differentiation that reduces simplistic talk of control by the people to the unacceptably vague - it wrongly presents the democratically-run socialist future simply as "freedom", opposed to present (capitalist) "necessity".

Secondly, and not unrelatedly, this model's economistically foreshortened social analysis ignores reification effects that are traceable to the administrative rather than to the economic system. As a result, these writers are prevented from taking seriously the lessons to be learnt, both from the evolution of the welfare state of late capitalism, and from the nature of the bureaucratic socialist states of eastern Europe.

We may also add, to go beyond Habermas here, [266] that these writers tend to underplay the role of the nation state, and intentionally applied military power, in modern social dynamics. I have already referred to the relative neglect of the conflict-areas of race and gender in their analyses.

It would be a mistake, however, to see all liberation theology as restricted, in its sociological dimension, to the concepts of Marx himself. At least two examples of further developments are of interest.

[266] See section 4.6 above.
Firstly Miranda, [267] deploying an argument similar to that of Lukács, outlined in 3.4.1 above, rejects the simplistic capitalist=bad / poor=good schema, and argues that attitudes related to the commodity form penetrate to all levels of society. [268] This phenomenon is then interpreted theologically as representing the solidarity of mankind in sin:

> Of course we are dealing with the sin of humankind .... It is superficial to imagine that the spirit of oppression and exploitation has left us unscathed and has infected only that small section of the population known as entrepreneurs. [269]

Thus 'any change in the socioeconomic system' is 'a priori inadequate, if that change does not involve a radical revolution in people's attitudes toward each other'. [270] Here there is a recognition of the deep-seatedness of the problems involved in modernity, a recognition that is perhaps as close to Horkheimer and Adorno as to the early Marx. [271]

Secondly, in his recent Protestantism and Repression, [272] Rubem Alves combines an appropriation of the work of Max Weber, with a sophisticated "critical theory" reading of Marx, [273] in the context of the relationship between Protestantism and modernity. Alves is alive here to the issue of bureaucracy in its Weberian context, and its possible dehumanizing consequences. [274] Here there is an emphasis that needs to be adopted into the classical Marxian analyses of writers such as Gutiérrez, to yield a social theory that seriously recognizes oppression (and therefore liberation) in more than one dimension.

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[268] Ibid., pp. 4f. Miranda in fact traces this insight to Lenin (ibid.).
[269] Ibid., p. 21.
[270] Ibid., pp. 21f.
[271] See 1.4.6, 3.4.2 above.
[274] Ibid., pp. 20f.
6. THEMES FOR A RECONSTRUCTED THEOLOGY OF WORK

6.1 Introduction

A Christian theology of work, I have suggested, should consist in a creative reapplication of certain of the central Christian themes, particularly the themes of sabbath, creation, cross, kingdom, and vocation, to the problematic of human work. In chapter 5 we have seen several examples of such a reapplication, examples which, I have argued, are unsatisfactory in various ways. The task of my final chapter is to attempt this project a little less inadequately. Three preliminary issues require discussion. I shall consider them under the headings of ideology, scope, and status.

A problem that arises, firstly, in any attempt to make constructive use of a tradition [1] - and in this the Christian tradition is no exception - is that language, as well as being the medium of the tradition, may also function as 'a medium of domination and social power', serving to 'legitimate relations of organized force'. [2] As well as elucidating situations creatively, that is, language may serve to disguise injustices:

In so far as the legitimations do not articulate the relations of force that they make possible, in so far as these relations are merely expressed in the legitimations, language is ideological. [3]

It follows that any reapplication of the tradition that occurs under 'conflictual patterns of human existence' such as our own, has its 'truthfulness ... threatened by "ideological distortion"'. Thus the project of forging a theology of work must 'include the attempted critique of its

[3] Ibid.

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own ideological elements'. [4] Hermeneutics must be accompanied by the critique of ideology. [5]

A second, and not unrelated, issue concerns the scope of applicability of the theology of work that is proposed. In 3.6.3:A above, I noted the attack of Marx and Habermas upon the concept of "human work in general", a concept that is independent of the needs, competences, and (crucially) social situation of the working individual. Such an abstraction from reality is not only a dubious quantity in the light of Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblances" noted in 1.2.2 above, it also deserts the 'central thrust' of Marx's 'insistence that it is human beings, not "mind" or "reason", who are the subjects of action and discourse': [6]

The premisses from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premisses from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live. [7]

But if the concept of "human work in general" is thus doubtful, so also must be the concept of "the meaning" of work. [8] And if that is true, then an adequate theology of work cannot consist in a statement of "the meaning" of work in theological categories. Such an idealist notion is to be resisted in the name of an authentic Christian materialism. [9]

This leads to the third issue, the question of status. It would be a mistake to regard the forging of a theology of work as merely a matter of objective and disinterested description - description of the activity of human work in theological terms. [10] Such a view of the theological enterprise falls into the trap of the "positivism" that Habermas so

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[5] Compare 3.3.3 above; West 1985b.
[8] As noted in 5.5.1 above.
[10] I have criticized such a view of the function of language in general, and its use in the theological enterprise in particular, in West 1985a, p. 225 and passim.
persuasively attacked in Knowledge and Human Interests. [11] Moreover, such a model of theological truth ignores the operation of the "double hermeneutic", which I discussed in 4.5 above: the special feature of the social sciences (as compared with the natural sciences) is that their findings, by penetrating the consciousness of the actors that constitute their subject matter, tend to change that subject matter as a result:

Atoms cannot get to know what scientists say about them or change their behaviour in the light of that knowledge. Human beings can do so. [12]

It follows that what Habermas calls the critical social sciences [13] (and in this sense, at least, theology is methodologically a critical social science) cannot be purely descriptive; they are also partially constructive and transformative of the reality with which they deal. Along with describing social reality they also, by virtue of their description, promote or retard the transformation of that reality. Theological description must be ideological [14] or liberative; to be "neutral" is not an option that is available to it.

I shall close with some comments about the structure and argument of this final chapter. My aim is to provide an alternative to the following general picture of the bearing of the relevant theological categories upon the activity of work, a picture which is beset by unavoidable ideological consequences:

(1) Social labour is imitative of, or even a participation in, divine creation.

[11] See 2.2.1A above. This is so despite the doubtful nature of Habermas' anchoring epistemology in the knowledge-constitutive interests (see 2.2.1C; 4.3 above). We may note a partial parallel here with Barth's rejection of the idea that "creation" can be considered in Christian doctrine in abstraction from the framework of Christology (Barth 1949, pp. 50, 52; see 6.3 below), or that theology can operate in autonomy from the interests of the church (Barth 1975, p. xiii). Christian truth for Barth, as truth for Habermas, is situated, framework-bound truth.


[13] See 2.2.1A above.

(2) Its performance contributes directly to the building of the kingdom of God.

(3) It is thus our Christian vocation to engage in social labour as diligently as possible.

(4) The suffering that this entails is a sharing in the redemptive sufferings of Christ on the cross.

I shall argue against such a tying of the theological categories to the performance of social labour, suggesting that these categories should rather be related to the transformation of social relations, of which the "relations of production" form a significant part. In this I shall make considerable use of the thought of Karl Barth, and in particular his Church Dogmatics III/4. [15] There are several striking parallels between Barth's use of the Christian symbols and the thought of Habermas in this area, parallels that I shall point out as and when they appear.

6.2 Sabbath

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.... Observe the sabbath day, to keep it holy.... Six days you shall labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work ... that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a servant in Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out thence ... therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day. [Deut 5: 6, 12-15, RSV]

6.2.1 Sabbath as a hermeneutical issue

The origins of the Jewish sabbath are lost in the mists of antiquity. [16] The Old Testament itself contains two quite different

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reasons for its observance, that link it respectively with the creation (Exodus 20:8-11) and the deliverance from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:12-15), and neither of these meanings of "sabbath" is likely to be particularly ancient. [17] In these texts the rationale for the sabbath observance is harmonized with the theology of (respectively) the priestly and deuteronomic redactors. Thus quite apart from the factors adduced in 6.1 above, the idea of "the meaning" of the sabbath is already problematic. Even within the Old Testament texts themselves "sabbath" is a theme that has undergone a great deal of creative reapplication, and the institution has a history in the community that produced our Old Testament texts which at best we can only sketchily reconstruct. [18]

This history and diversity of the tradition is a factor that is frequently overlooked by commentators, such as Moltmann and John Paul II, who draw a close parallel between the creative activity of God and human social labour. In these cases, either explicitly or implicitly, it is the priestly redaction of the fourth commandment - and the priestly creation account of Genesis 1:1-2:3 which is redactionally related to it - that is taken as normative. Moltmann, for example, writes that "according to the biblical traditions [sic] creation and sabbath belong together"; [19] and, on the basis of Exodus 20:8-11 and Genesis 2:1-3, he assumes that the sabbath commandment legitimates human labour as well as rest:

The commandment to work and rest is based on its correspondence with the creating and resting of the Lord. In work and rest human beings, in their way, take part in the creative world process and in the joy of the Creator .... this

[18] It seems likely that the sabbath acquired its current form and importance only during the Babylonian exile (Ringgren 1969, p. 298). Here, with circumcision, it "won a status confessionis" (von Rad 1962, p. 79). But that a seventh day of rest is relatively ancient is attested by Exodus 34:21 and 23:12, which are thought to predate the Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 redactional forms (Ringgren 1969, p. 202; Schmidt 1983, pp. 89f). The other undoubtedly ancient aspect of sabbath is as a day holy to (special to, set aside for) Yahweh (Schmidt 1983, pp. 90f).
[19] Moltmann 1985b, p. 277; compare p. 5. This is unequivocally true only for the priestly redactor, who has compressed an original eight acts of creation into six days in order to make this link (Ringgren 1969, pp. 106, 201).
makes work itself meaningful. [20]

John Paul II, similarly, regards the sabbath rest of Genesis 2 as legitimating human work along with rest:

It is first by working and then by resting that man ought to imitate God, since God himself chose to present his own creative activity under the form of work and rest. [21]

However, there seems to be no convincing reason why this consensus as to either the normative value of the Exodus 20 text, or its interpretation, should be followed. The deuteronomic version quoted above, although itself redactional, has, if anything, the better claim to be the more ancient: the Decalogue in Exodus 20 remains in the framework of the self-identification of Yahweh not as creator but as liberator from Egypt. [22] And what is probably the oldest form of the commandment that is available to us:

Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in ploughing time and in harvest you shall rest. [Ex 34:21, RSV] [23]

seems to concentrate on the necessity for the interruption of work, [24] even at the most awkward times economically. There is little sense here of a legitimation of social labour; it is simply taken for granted.

Not, of course, that this in itself solves the hermeneutical problem. As little can we always assume that the most ancient interpretation is the most valid, as we can (invoking a theory of doctrinal development) accept the most modern without question. But even in the case of the later texts the Moltmann/Wojtyla position is not convincing. Schmidt denies that Genesis 2:2f contains the idea of 'a divine "order of creation", with an

[22] Kiss 1983, p. 16. The issue of to what extent creation is ever autonomous from redemption in Old Testament thought is not unrelated to this issue, and has a long history in Old Testament scholarship. The classic case for the primacy of redemption was made by von Rad in 1936 (von Rad 1984). Several essays in B. Anderson 1984 continue the argument.
[23] Compare Ex 23:12, also ancient.
alternation of work and rest'. [25] And it is far from clear that a primary intention of the Exodus 20 text is to legitimate human labour by drawing a parallel with the divine creative activity. [26] In the context of the exile, in which this text arose, it is the sabbath rest (forming with circumcision the distinctive sign of the exiled Jewish community in Babylon) that is of major interest. [27] The status of human work itself is arguably not under consideration.

A matter that deserves further consideration here, especially in view of my remarks in 6.1 above, is the social setting within which the priestly and deuteronomistic interpretations of the sabbath commandment arose. I shall defer consideration of this until 6.2.3 below. Meanwhile I shall outline a theological presentation of sabbath that concurs with me in stressing the primary importance of rest rather than work: that of Karl Barth in *Church Dogmatics* III/4.

6.2.2 Sabbath in *Church Dogmatics* III/4

In commenting upon the sabbath commandment, Karl Barth notes that 'in general, theological ethics has handled this command of God ... with a casualness and feebleness which certainly do not match ... its decisive material significance'. [28] Rather than relegating it to its usual backwater, Barth deliberately places it at the beginning of special ethics as a whole, and thus before anything has been said about work. [29] In this he intends to make an important point relevant to the concerns of this thesis, a point which he expresses in a set of rhetorical questions:

Can we really understand the holy day before we have understood the working day and its command, its many commands? Ought not "rest" to be earned by preceding work? Should not what we say about it be in terms of what has already been said

[28] Barth 1961, p. 50. Moltmann 1985b also regards the sabbath theme as important (pp. 276-296), but uses it differently; see 6.4 below.
about work? The question may seem obvious, but it must actually be reversed. Can we understand the working day, the day of labour in relationship to our fellow-men, or any of its commands, before we have understood the holy day? ... Is not this interruption the true time from which alone he can have other time? Is not the paradoxical 'activity' of the holy day the origin of all other activity which seems to have better reason for this designation? [30]

Barth obviously views the sabbath as 'delimiting and relativising' [31] the importance of social labour in the human enterprise. Here there is an implicit rejection of 'the reduction of the self-generative act of the human species to labor', [32] a rejection which has formed a persistent theme of this thesis. We may usefully compare Habermas' insistence on the primacy of lifeworld over system with Barth's insistence that the sabbath constitutes the true time from which all other time is to be understood; and perhaps most interestingly Habermas' relativization of instrumental as compared with communicative action with Barth's insistence that it is the paradoxical activity of the sabbath that is of greater significance than the activity of the weekday.

Correspondingly, Barth denies the parallel between human social labour and God's creation in the form in which it is accepted by Moltmann and John Paul II. Whereas 'every seventh day shall have for the creature the same content and meaning as the seventh day of creation has for God Himself', there neither is nor can be issued 'a corresponding summons to the week's work as a supplementary and imitative participation by man in God's creative work'. [33] Far from being a co-creator in the completion of heaven and earth, [34] man, according to Barth, enters upon a completed creation, experienced as a gift of grace, and initially rests.

Barth correspondingly links the sabbath concept with the theological issue of "faith and works". To see sabbath as a mere rest from prior

[30] Ibid., pp. 50f.
[31] Ibid., p. 53.
[34] Ibid., p. 482; compare Hauerwas 1983, passim.
(temporally and in status) work, he suggests, is to promote Law ahead of Gospel. [35] The Genesis 1:1-2:3 narrative, which has the seventh day as man's first, is on the contrary a way of suggesting that human history really begins with the Gospel and not with the Law, with an accorded celebration and not a required task ... with a rest and not with an activity ... with Sunday and not with a working day which could lead to Sunday only after a succession of gloomy working days. [36]

Indeed:

the first word said to him, the first obligation brought to his notice, is that without any works or merits he himself may rest with God and then go to his work. [37]

Sabbath thus becomes 'the sign of the freedom which God the Creator has assumed to be gracious to His creature and therefore to be his Lord'. [38] And the New Testament, in celebrating this holy day on the first day of the week, far from 'rebelling against the order of creation', was in fact 'acting in profound agreement' with it:

In the resurrection it recognized the fulfilment of the covenant between God and man which was established in creation ... it saw and understood that the seventh day of creation which is to be kept holy as the 'Lord's Day' ... is not only the last but above all the first day of man, and is therefore to be kept as his holy day. [39]

Man is emphatically not to be understood primarily as Homo faber.

I noted above the parallel between Habermas' downgrading of the importance of social labour and Barth's handling of the theme of sabbath. In two ways, however, Barth and Habermas are saying something rather different.

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[36] Ibid., p. 52.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., p. 53. Moltmann (1985b, pp. 294-296) rejects the idea that the Jewish sabbath is to be subsumed under the Christian Sunday as Barth suggests. See further Rordorf 1968; Bauckham 1982a; 1982b; 1982c.
Firstly, as is to be expected, it is not only social labour that Barth relativizes; it is also the significance of the human social lifeworld in its entirety. The sabbath commandment

forbids [man] on this day - in order that he may know it and keep to it all his days - to try to live by the Yes which he can say to himself or to others or to the cosmos. [40] It forbids him to be satisfied with his own Yes. It forbids him faith in his own plans and wishes, in a justification and deliverance which he can make for himself .... The aim of the sabbath commandment is that man shall give and allow the omnipotent grace of God to have the first and the last word at every point. [41]

Among other things, this implies that the sabbath rest, which is to be the orientation point for the human active life, has a quite different texture to the modern (late capitalist!) concept of leisure. [42]

Secondly, Barth avoids the unfortunate effects of Habermas' system and lifeworld model that I have criticized in 4.5 and 4.7 above. Sabbath and weekday are integrated into the one life-history, and the significance of social labour is not separated off within the part of life that is involved in the economic system, and divorced from action concepts:

[Sabbath] does not imply an inorinination or discrediting of man's own willing and working, a negation of his capacity for it, an annulling of the commision to make the best use of this capacity .... It summons him to keep holy the Sabbath day merely in order that it may dismiss and send him forth from it into the other days of the week .... The omnipotent grace of God rules all world-occurrence as providence. But it does so from this starting point. [43]

It is notable here that Barth uses (in Habermas' terms) action rather than system concepts to refer to social labour. Thus, while rejecting the Protestant work ethic as classically understood, he is still able to relate social labour to the idea of vocation, albeit only secondarily.

[40] Note in passing here a schema comparable to Habermas' "three worlds" (see 4.4 above).
[41] Barth 1961, p. 54.
shall consider this further in 6.5.2 below.

But if we may agree with Barth rather than Habermas at this point, we must recognize with Habermas the importance of class in questions of the significance of social labour, [44] a topic that receives little overt coverage in Barth's theology of work. I shall now turn to this issue by way of a reconsideration of the priestly and deuteronomic redactions of the sabbath commandment.

6.2.3 The sabbath commandment and class relations

Once we are able to prise the theme of sabbath away from the doctrinal system which integrates it into an ideological legitimation of human labour by its comparison with divine creation, the deuteronomic form of the sabbath commandment suggests a new integration point for the concept. In Deuteronomy 5:12-15, in accordance with the setting for the whole of the Decalogue in both its Exodus and Deuteronomy redactions, [45] the rationale for the sabbath observance is remembrance, not of creation, but of the deliverance from Egypt - the act that, at least in the deuteronomic theology, was foundational for the redeemed community in its own self-understanding. Here the emphasis is very clearly on the need for rest, particularly for those classes most likely to be oppressed in this regard. But it seems disingenuous to reduce the interest of the commandment to a purely humanitarian one in the modern liberal sense. [46]

I suggested in 6.2.1 above that the social setting of the priestly and deuteronomic redactions of the sabbath commandment might be hermeneutically significant. It is now a commonplace that the social setting of the Israelites in the exile is reflected in the priestly theology, [47] and it is likely that the move from liberation from Egypt to creation as the justificatory basis for the sabbath observance is an aspect of this:

[44] See 3.6, 4.5, 4.6 above.
[46] As, for example, Ringgren 1969, p. 201; Mayes 1979, p. 169.

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What underlies this explanation of the sabbath from creation rather than from history, which is so unusual for the Old Testament? The alteration is understandable from the time at which the Priestly work was written: the exile marked an end to the primeval promises of possession of the land, of the temple and the covenant with David, so that commandments can no longer be connected with a historical event. So a connection is made not with a particular event, but with the history of the world at the beginning. [48]

But if it is true that the setting of the whole Israelite community is reflected in the texts, then it is also likely that the texts will reflect the positions of their redactors within the Israelite social group [49] as a class-divided society. [50] And not only "reflect": in the light of the considerations adduced in 6.1 above, we must be alive to the extent to which these texts functioned to maintain the status quo or to promote change in the society in which they originated.

Paul Hanson's pioneering work The Dawn of Apocalyptic [51] is suggestive in this context, relating many of the post-exilic Old Testament texts to a reconstructed class struggle within the restoration community. [52] Hanson suggests that these texts should be read as the product of two distinct groups. One was the "hierocratic" group, dominated by a Zadokite priesthood that controlled the decisive power-centre of the temple, [53] responsible for such texts as Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 [54] and eventually Chronicles. [55] The other was a "prophetic" group, progressively marginalized, responsible for trito-Isaiah [56] and eventually Zechariah 9-14. [57] In Hanson's view, these texts thus reveal the struggle between these two forces:

the one embodied in the ruling classes and devoted to

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[52] Ibid., p. 212 and passim. Compare in this context Ploger 1968.
[53] Hanson 1979, pp. 209f.
[54] Ibid., pp. 240-262.
[55] Ibid., pp. 269-279.
[56] Ibid., pp. 32-208.
[57] Ibid., pp. 280-380.
preservation of the former institutional structures, the other found among the alienated and oppressed and bent on revolution leading to change of the status quo. [58]

We may, of course, disagree with the details of Hanson's reconstruction, for example his simplification of social conflict to a struggle between just two well-defined groups. But he is surely correct in general that the social setting of texts, within the power relations and struggles of the groups that produced them, cannot simply be ignored as a hermeneutical key.

It is undoubtedly the priestly strand of the Pentateuch that stands closer to Hanson's "hierocratic" group, and the deuteronomic strand to the "prophetic". Thus it is perhaps no accident that the priestly redaction of the fourth commandment lays itself most open to ideological misuse, [59] whereas it is the story of the Exodus - the rationale for the deuteronomic form, and the setting for the whole Decalogue - that provides most inspiration for the political and liberation theologians. One such, who deals suggestively with the sabbath commandment and its setting in the Decalogue as a whole within a Marxian framework, is Friedrich Kiss. [60]

"Work", argues Kiss, 'is always set within a political system', [61] and 'relations of production ... form the empirical basis from which faith and theology proceed'. [62] This, he argues, is well illustrated in the case of the Decalogue as a whole:

"I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of slavery" .... What God says about himself here is a matter of relations of production. God can here only be understood by one who understands the meaning of "the house of slavery: Egypt" .... This is the background of the self-representation of God. From these relations of production he shows, so to speak, who he is. [63]

In the light of 5.5.2 above, we may doubt the validity of this Marxian

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[59] So 5.3, 6.2.1 above.
[61] Ibid., p. 15.
[62] Ibid., p. 16.
[63] Ibid.
reduction of the political relations in Egypt to relations of production. But this exegesis is suggestive in reading the sabbath commandment as embodying an ideal of sabbath that is critical of current social structures.

We can perhaps develop this idea a little more. There appears to be a play on words in Deut 5:12-15 that is theologically suggestive: 'bondage', 'labour', 'work', 'manservant', and 'servant' all translate cognates of the same Hebrew root 'abad. [64] This suggests a very different view of human labour from the one advanced by Moltmann on the basis of Genesis 2:15. [65] Indeed there may have been no work-free age at the beginning, but this does not preclude linking freedom from toil with the idea of salvation in the future. If we may agree with the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews [66] and with Moltmann [67] in seeing the sabbath theologically as an eschatological category - as a proleptic presence of the conditions of the age to come, representing its nature as rest - then sabbath acquires a very different meaning. It becomes a sign of hope for the removal of toil, and especially the toil of the slave and servant: a toil that is figuratively represented by the Egyptian captivity. Work is not here legitimated as sharing in the divine creative activity. Rather its unpleasant and socially alienating dimensions are placed under judgement within the context of the salvation history.

6.3 Cross and creation

The work of man, the transformation of nature, continues creation only if it is a human act, that is to say, if it is not alienated by unjust socio-economic structures. [Gustavo Gutiérrez] [68]

[64] This is not noted by the standard commentaries on Deuteronomy. It seems to be more convincing than Moltmann's Servant/worker parallel criticized in West 1986a, pp. 4f.
[65] See 5.3.1 above.
[67] Moltmann 1985b, pp. 276-296; see 6.4 below.

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6.3.1 Christology as ideology

I have described elsewhere [69] how, by according social labour too great a theological significance, Jürgen Moltmann and John Paul II legitimate the unpleasant aspects of work by comparison with the suffering involved in divine redemption. In their hands the cross - the symbol of the redemptive value of suffering - comes to suggest that work must be a part of the process of furthering the kingdom of God, merely because it is painful:

The sweat and toil which are necessarily involved with work in the present condition of the human race always offer to the Christian ... the possibility of sharing lovingly in the work that Christ came to do. Suffering and death on a Cross were the means by which this work of salvation was done. So, by enduring the toil of work in union with Christ nailed to a cross for our sake, man in a way collaborates with the Son of God in the redemption of mankind .... The Christian finds in human work a small part of the Cross of Christ and accepts it in the same spirit of redemption as that in which Christ bore his Cross for us. [70]

Such a use of the cross in the theology of work, however, tends to be ideological in its implications, because it deals with "pain in general" rather than distinguishing between the different causes of pain. Thus suffering may be legitimated that has little if anything to do with the advancement of the kingdom of God - suffering that is neither transformative nor inevitable. [71] Such a use fails to ask, in specific cases, the reason for the pain associated with work. Is it the result, for example, of unjust exploitation of worker by employer? Does it follow from work that could quite easily be replaced either by machines or by more humane methods of working? Is the necessary pain and toil of work (given the present state of technological development) equitably shared among workforce and society as a whole? [72] In short, it is difficult if not impossible to frame a theology of work that uses the cross in this way

[71] Compare West 1985b, p. 434.
[72] Which, I would suggest, is an implication of Habermas' discourse ethic as applied to the realm of social labour (compare 3.3.3 above).
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[72] Which, I would suggest, is an implication of Habermas' discourse ethic as applied to the realm of social labour (compare 3.3.3 above).
that is not also ideological - that does not 'serve' to sustain relations of domination' [73] - given that the theology is being produced in the setting of 'conflictual patterns of human existence'. [74]

I will suggest, in 6.3.2 below, a way of using the symbol of the cross in this context that avoids this trap to a greater extent. Meanwhile we can note that the problem partly arises from John Paul II's abstraction of the cross from the social context in which it was embedded, and in which it had its initial meaning. [75] Becoming a timeless and universal symbol of the redemptive power of suffering-in-the-abstract, it can be applied to areas of the negative in human life so as to transform them into positives almost at will. [76] The original crucifixion, however, was not such a detached symbol, [77] being rather an event embedded in the social setting of the life and action, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. It is an implicate of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, I would suggest, not that the structures of society are immutable, [78] but that we should "read" what Christian theology holds to be the central revelatory act of God within this concrete setting. [79]

When so read, it is arguable that the primary home of the cross symbol lies in what Habermas would call the social, rather than in the objective or subjective, worlds. In relation to the problematic of work, it is to be applied, not to questions of whether or not technology violates or fulfils inanimate nature (the objective world), [80] nor to questions of whether or not social labour is experienced as painful (the subjective world) [81] - except insofar as these are subsumable under a third question to do with the social world: what this symbol implies about the relations of production, which are one aspect of the power relations within society as a whole. In other words, in a theology of work, the cross should be related

[76] Compare West 1985b, pp. 433f.
[78] So Novak (see 5.4.2 above).
[80] See 5.2 above.
to the issue of class relations. [82] In the terms of Habermas' *Knowledge and Human Interests*, it is a symbol at home within the methodological framework of the critical social sciences, with their epistemological framework of the "interest in emancipation". [83]

6.3.2 Christology and creation

What the meaning of God the Creator is and what is involved in the work of creation, is in itself not less hidden from us men than everything else that is contained in the Confession. [Karl Barth] [84]

When Christian theologians wished to sketch a theology of God the Creator abstractly and directly, they have always gone astray ... Christology, is the touchstone of all knowledge of God in the Christian sense, the touchstone of all theology. [Karl Barth] [85]

It is frequently the case that the topics of creation and creativity are considered in Christian theology in abstraction from Christology in general, and the theology of the cross in particular. [86] Michael Novak's theology of creation is a case in point, as I have discussed in 5.4.2 above. "Creation" for Novak concerns the divine making of the material world on the one hand, and the human release of its material resources on the other. Human creativity becomes a matter of the development of the power of technical control. But, as noted above, such a legitimation of the productivity of human work by the doctrine of creation, in avoiding the topics of class conflict and the ambiguity of modernity, once again tends to descend into ideology. [87] The use of this category to describe economic production [88] disguises, by virtue of the positive overtones carried over from divine creation, the questionable aspects of this

[82] See 6.2.3 above.
[83] See 2.2.1A, 6.1 above.
[84] Barth 1949, p. 50; compare Barth 1958, p. 3.
[85] Barth 1949, pp. 65f.
[86] For the argument of this section, compare West 1986c (appended).
[87] Compare 5.4.3 above.
[88] Compare the use of the term "wealth creation" in Dawson 1984, pp. 13f, 18f.
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enterprise.

Admittedly Novak's is a somewhat extreme case. Yet even Jürgen Moltmann, in his recent God in Creation, [89] abandons his earlier Christocentric approach when he deals with the topic of creation. 'In the 1930s', [90] he writes,

the problem of the doctrine of creation was knowledge of God. Today the problem of the doctrine of God is knowledge of creation .... Fifty years ago, discernment of the triune God revealed in Christ brought the church the assurance of faith; and today, in the same way, discernment of the God who is present in creation through his Holy Spirit can bring men and women to reconciliation and peace with nature. The salutary 'christological concentration' in Protestant theology then, must be matched today by an extension of theology's horizon to cosmic breadth, so that it takes in the whole of God's creation. [91]

The implication is clear: we may talk about creation before we talk about Christology. [92]

Here I want both to reject this abandonment of christocentricity in the doctrine of creation, and to propose a different paradigm for divine creation and the human creativity that may be said to correspond to it. The way is indicated once again by Karl Barth who, as the quotations at the beginning of this subsection show, denies that the doctrine of creation in Christian theology can be autonomous from Christology. I shall supplement this Barthian insight by themes drawn from Old Testament theology and staurocentric Christology.

It is notable that many attempts at a theology of creation start from the creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:3, read primarily as an account of the making of "nature" to which the human drama of redemption is

[90] At the time of the Barmen Declaration (ibid., p. xi).
[91] Ibid., pp. xif, my stress.
[92] This position is further implied by the order of volumes in Moltmann's new "systematics": God in Creation (volume II) precedes Christology (volume III) (ibid., p. xv).
simply to accept this as "the Old Testament concept of creation" is, however, misleading. The creation theme in the Old Testament is perhaps better approached in terms of its treatment in Psalms and Deutero/Trito-Isaiah, whose 'range of genres and dates offers a fairer sample of Israelite thought on creation than does Genesis'.

Two themes are prominent in these texts that I want to highlight: firstly the theme of Chaoskampf, of struggle against chaos, and secondly the idea that the product of creation is not the natural order in and for itself, but the social order of the redeemed Israelite nation. Mythologically these themes are combined, for example, in Isaiah 51:9:

Awake, awake, put on strength,
O arm of the Lord ....
Was it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces,
that didst pierce the dragon?
Was it not thou that didst dry up the sea,
the waters of the great deep;
that didst make the depths of the sea a way
for the redeemed to pass over?

Here the cosmological battle with the sea-monster at creation is run into the foundational redemptive act at the Red Sea, constitutive of Israel as a political entity, and into the future redemptive act of deliverance from the Babylonian exile. Creation and redemption are not artificially separated, but are mutually interpreted; both are seen as parts of God's

[93] This, however, is only one possible reading. See, for example, Westermann 1974, p. 17; B. Anderson 1977; Clifford 1985, pp. 520-523. Clifford argues that Genesis 1-11 taken as a whole is 'a cosmogony' in the sense of 'the bringing-into-being of a people' (1985, p. 520).


[96] They can also be detected sotto voce in Genesis 1, but there are subjugated under an alternative conceptual framework (compare Day 1985, pp. 49-57).


[99] Isaiah 51:9, RSV. For other examples, Clifford 1985, pp. 512-520.

[100] Day 1985, pp. 91-93.
seamless action in the creation of redeemed Israel. [101] As Gutiérrez comments on the Exodus:

because of it, creation is regarded as the first salvific act and salvation as a new creation. [102]

In passing we may note here an overlap with the discussion of the priestly and deuteronomistic redactions of the sabbath commandment in 6.2.3 above; Gen 1:1-2:3 belongs to the priestly theology, while Isaiah 40-66 is, in Hanson's view, the basic text of the marginalized "prophetic" group. [103] But we can perhaps go further, to arrive at an absolutely crucial point in the argument of this chapter as a whole. If, as is widely accepted, the cross is the ultimate symbol of redemption in Christian theology, should we not in the light of the above look here for a transformation of our understanding of divine creation as well - and therefore of human creativity? If it is the case that 'the crucified Christ [is] the foundation and measure of Christian theology as a whole', [104] that 'the paradigm of divine action is the Cross of Christ', [105] that it is supremely here that we are to find the revelation of God, [106] then surely it is here too, in this paradigmatic divine action, that we should find our model for divine creation. Moreover, to the extent that 'creaturely activity can take the form of correspondence to the divine activity' through obedience, such that 'in his place and within his limits [man] with his action is the witness of Jesus Christ and therefore of God's will and work', [107] then the cross will also function as the paradigm for human creativity.

[101] Clifford p. 515; compare Barth 1958, pp. 94-329; creation is the external basis of the covenant, while covenant is the internal basis of creation.
[103] The author(s) of 56-66 being 'a community of those remaining faithful to the tradition stemming from Second Isaiah' (Hanson 1979, p. 44).
[105] Lash 1979, p. 152.
Let us allow that this is the case. I suggest that two results follow. Firstly, the paradigm for the divine creative Chaoskampf becomes the paradoxical activity of God in the cross of Christ. Not the making of the material world, but this creative struggle - a struggle that is the birthpangs of the kingdom of God - should act as the ultimate reference point for assessing allegedly "creative" human activity. [108] Secondly, the homeland of the concept of creation moves from the natural (or subjective) world to the social world. The paradigm product becomes the new eschatological communities, a new social order witnessing to their future consummation in the New Creation of the kingdom of God.

It is that which the Old and New Testaments term "New Creation", [109] I conclude, a concept replete with social and ethical overtones, that is the paradigm for a Christian concept of creation. Creation "refers to the act by which God will remove injustice from the holy city and bring about a truly just and peaceful society". [110] As Barth abbreviates:

divine action is centrally and decisively the coming of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ. [111]

Now, if "creation" is a term concerning the bringing into being of a transformed social order (the kingdom of God), then human social labour can properly be considered "creative" only in a subsidiary sense - the sense in which it can contribute to the formation and maintenance of such an order. [112] Such labour would constitute, as Gutiérrez puts it in the quotation at the start of this section, 'a human act'. But Gutiérrez is using "human" here in a normative rather than in a descriptive sense, and human work can correspond - even secondarily - to divine creation only

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[108] The parallel between my model and Gustav Aulen's theory of the atonement should be plain (Aulen 1931). However, I propose to keep the divine struggle grounded firmly within the socio-cultural setting of the life and death of Jesus, rather than allowing it to become 'a mythological variable to which determinate value can be assigned almost to taste' (MacKinnon 1968, p. 98; compare West 1985b, p. 432).


[112] See further 6.5.2 below.
when 'it is not alienated by unjust socio-economic structures'. [113]

In the next section, I shall argue that this is implicit in the theme of the kingdom of God as preached and enacted by Jesus.

6.4 Kingdom

Every sabbath is a sacred anticipation of the world's redemption. It was with the proclamation of the messianic sabbath that the public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth began (Luke 4.18ff.) Through his giving of himself to death on the cross, and through his resurrection from the dead, the messianic era which he proclaimed was actually initiated ... the first day of the new creation. [Jürgen Moltmann] [114]

I have argued above that the cross, if it is to be used theologically without gross ideological implications, needs to be "read" in the context of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and that this is as true for its role in the theology of work as elsewhere. But this inevitably raises the complex and disputed question of the setting of Jesus' preaching and enactment of his central message of the kingdom of God. Here there is, naturally, not enough room to consider the history of scholarship on this vexed topic! [115] However, as the extract from Moltmann quoted above suggests, there is arguably one element in that proclamation that is of particular importance in the context of this thesis: the theme of the year of jubilee. Consideration of this theme will indicate that the relationship between social labour and the kingdom of God is quite different to that suggested in 6.1 above.


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6.4.1 Jubilee as an Old Testament theme

Many of the themes in the Old Testament exhibit the structure of a looking backwards to an earlier ideal time, be that time primaeval as in the creation narratives, the pre-monarchical period as in Deuteronomy, or the time of Solomon as in Chronicles. Such a looking back, however, rarely functions as mere nostalgia. Implicit is a critique of current beliefs and practices, and it may thus be utopian [116] in its implications. If a more ideal social state was possible once, the implicit argument runs, it must be possible once again. The ideal time thus displays a tendency to be transferred from an ideal past into an ideal future. The ideal king of old is transposed into the messiah of the future; [117] the Garden of Eden is reconstructed into the New Jerusalem. Of course, such beliefs may be misleading; the materials to construct the eternal city may not be to hand, or the complexity of the necessary design may be underestimated. I have suggested this as a problem that besets some of the liberation theologies. [118] But from the point of view of social function, it matters little whether or not the description of the ideal past state is historically accurate. The belief that change is possible, and the model of the alternative to the present given, can themselves act as stimuli to transformative social action. [119] In terms of social function, it matters little whether there ever was a Garden. The important question is: can we construct the City? As Ernst Bloch says, 'the true Genesis is not at the beginning, but at the end'. [120]

[116] I intend "utopian" in the sense defined by Karl Mannheim: 'A state of mind is utopian when it is incongruous with the state of reality within which it occurs .... [however] .... Only those orientations transcending reality will be referred to by us as utopian which, when they pass over into conduct, tend to shatter, either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at the time .... a distinction is set up between the utopian and the ideological states of mind' (Mannheim 1936, p. 173).


[118] See 5.5.2 above.

[119] These models may, alternatively, be rendered 'socially impotent' by being 'confined to a world beyond history and society, where they could not affect the status quo', that is, be "ideological" in Mannheim's sense (Mannheim 1936, p. 173).

The institution of the jubilee year [121] is one such theme. As presented in the Holiness Code in Leviticus [122] it has the appearance of an ancient institution, factually reported, reflecting an ideal egalitarian society of the early settlement period. As a matter of historical fact, there is severe doubt whether its legislation was ever put into practice at all, [123] and its institution even in theory was probably quite late. [124] But as regards its sociological and theological function, that is, perhaps, not the point. [125] Looking back to an ideal egalitarian society of the past, [126] it exercised a critique of present social relationships that could encourage (and was no doubt intended by its author/redactor to encourage) [127] transformative social action in the present. Moreover, with its absorption into the complex of later Jewish eschatological ideas, [128] it formed a component of an ideal future that could, and frequently did, become utopian rather than ideological.


[124] De Vaux 1965, p. 177. It seems probable that the sabbath year (Lev 25:1-7; compare Ex 21:2-6, 23:10-11, Deut 15:12-18; see Andreasen 1972, pp. 79f, 213-216; de Vaux 1965, pp. 173-175) was an ancient institution that fell later into disuse, and that 'the jubilee year was instituted to restore the sabbatical year by transferring the neglected obligations of the seventh year to the fiftieth year' (Andreasen 1972, p. 216).

[125] Contra de Vaux 1965, p. 177.

[126] Gottwald argues for an egalitarian society in the period of the judges (1979, pp. 489-663). Whether or not this is historically accurate, such equality at least formed an ancient ideal (de Vaux 1965, p. 173).


[128] Leviticus 25, in its final form, is probably traceable to a priestly editor of the late exilic or early post-exilic period (Ringe 1985, p. 26). Jubilee ideas were also taken up in another strand of post-exilic thought, that of trito-Isaiah. Hanson suggests that, in the face of the political and economic ascendancy of the ruling hierocratic group, God's redeeming intent was projected onto a future of God's eschatological reign. Jubilary imagery in this context is found in Isaiah 61:1f (Ringe 1985, pp. 28f; compare Hanson 1979, pp. 72-76).
According to Leviticus 25, every fiftieth year was to be proclaimed a year of jubilee, during which not only was the land to be given a year of sabbath rest from cropping, [129] but slaves were to be set free, [130] debts cancelled, and every man restored to ownership of his own property. [131] Each could return to his own land because it belonged to God, and therefore could not be owned absolutely:

for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me. [132]

The only absolute owner of the means of production was Yahweh: an arrangement that de Vaux calls 'the feudal idea ... though transferred on to the theological plane'. [133] Moreover, Israelites could not be cast into perpetual slavery because they were the servants of the God who had brought them out of Egypt:

For to me the people of Israel are servants, for they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. [134]

We may note here close similarities to the deuteronomistic redaction of the sabbath commandment. [135]

It is clear that we have here an attempt to forestall the entrenchment of the class system that was an unintended consequence of the operation of the Israelite economic system:

about once in any man's lifetime the slate was wiped clean. Everyone had the chance to make a fresh start. The rich had to part with the land and slaves they had acquired in the previous forty-nine years, while the poor recovered their land and freedom. The jubilee would have restored some semblance of

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[131] Lev 25:10, 13, 28. The last is the only element of the jubilee legislation not also found in the legislation for the sabbath year.
[132] Lev 25:24, RSV.
[134] Lev 25:55, RSV.
[135] See 6.2 above.

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equality between men. [136]

The development of severe economic inequalities as an unintended consequence of the operation of the economic system - one aspect of the development of a class-divided society - is rejected as an evil by religious legislation that sees it as analogous to the slavery in Egypt. To permit this state of affairs to persist uncorrected, it is here suggested is to contradict the original basis of the Israelite nation, and to be inconsistent with the character of God's self-revelation in that basis - the Exodus. [137] The contrast with the position adopted by Novak and Benne [138] is particularly sharp, and implies a denial that economic efficiency and its benefits are an adequate indicator of human well-being. The jubilee motif embodies the view that egalitarian community has a value that is non-reducible to economic well-being. In Habermas' terms, it implies that communicative rationality is non-reducible to purposive rationality. [139]

6.4.2 Jubilee and Jesus' proclamation/enactment of the kingdom of God

Interest has increased in recent years in the hermeneutical possibilities presented by the jubilee motif for understanding Jesus' proclamation and enactment of the kingdom of God, [140] although possibilities in this direction were recognized earlier. [141] Interest centres particularly on the Lukan pericope of Jesus' sermon at Nazareth, [142] that is intended as programmatic for the subsequent

[137] Compare Ringe 1985, p. 32.
[138] See 5.4 above. Contrast this basis of the Exodus with the social contract myth espoused by Rawls, and taken up by Benne and Novak (5.4.1 above).
[139] See 3.3 above.
[141] For example, Plummer 1896, p. 121; North 1954, p. 228.
ministry, [143] and which quotes from an Isaiah 61 text that is generally thought to have jubilary overtones. [144] Other parallels between the teaching of (particularly the Lukan) Jesus and the jubilee legislation are pointed out, [145] and Yoder even maintains that the setting of the historical Jesus and his ministry is to be seen within the context of a proclamation of jubilee in A.D. 26. [146] Be that as it may, it is clear that jubilary ideas had been taken up into the late Jewish eschatological concept of the kingdom of God, [147] and if the concept of the kingdom is to be "read" in its sociological setting, account should be taken of this fact.

Jürgen Moltmann's God in Creation makes use of this new work in its concluding chapter, 'The Sabbath: The Feast of Creation'. [148] Here, however, in accordance with his stress upon the need for reconciliation with nature that I criticized in 5.2.2 above, Moltmann concentrates upon the year of rest given to the land in the sabbath year and jubilee legislation. [149] The relative neglect of the other aspects of the jubilee legislation leads Moltmann to a rather insipid conclusion to this chapter, a conclusion that also betrays his own socio-economic setting:

The ecological day of rest should be a day without pollution of the environment – a day when we leave our cars at home, so

[145]Yoder 1972, pp. 64-77; Sloane 1977, pp. 111-153. For example Luke 11:4: 'forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us' (Yoder 1972, pp. 66f; Sloane 1977, pp. 139-145; Ringe 1985, pp. 81-84).
[147]IIQ Melchizedek is independent evidence that Isaiah 61:1ff was so understood at the time of Jesus (Sloane 1977, pp. 43f).
[149]Moltmann 1985b, p. 289. This practice is traceable to belief in the need to allow the land to return to its original state so as to regenerate its lost energies through the liberation of its productive powers (symbolized by a fertility god) from the hand of man (Andreasen 1972, p. 214).
that nature too can celebrate its sabbath. [150]

"We" presumably does not include the German Gastarbeiter, let alone the poor of the third world! The eschatological transposition of the sabbath/jubilee motifs here substantially loses its critical edge in the social dimension, as is also shown by the following quotation:

Jesus preached no Gentile Christian freedom from the sabbath .... On the contrary, he raised working days into the messianic festivity of life, of which Israel's sabbath is a unique foretaste. Jesus' proclamation of the imminent kingdom makes the whole of life a sabbath feast. [151]

To pretend that the whole of life is - now - a sabbath feast for those who suffer disproportionately from the operation of the economic system is not only myopic; [152] it is also to miss the implications of the other aspects of the jubilee legislation.

It is better, surely, to recognize the jubilary overtones of the concept of the kingdom of God as operative in Habermas' social world, as an implicit critique of current social relations. If, as I have argued with Barth, the "classic" divine action is to be seen in the establishment of the kingdom of God through the Chaoskampf of the cross, and if this kingdom is in part at least a projection of the jubilee motif, then the cross is to be "read" as part of, and consequence of, the struggle to establish the egalitarian society that formed the ancient Israelite ideal. "Part of", because that struggle needs to be continued; [153] "consequence of", because Jesus' execution was at least in part due to the reaction of vested and powerful interests against any attempt to threaten their privileged position. [154] Naturally, as I have argued above, [155] the economic

[150]Moltmann 1985b, p. 296. Moltmann, unlike Barth (see 6.2 above), does not elide sabbath and Sunday (ibid., p. 294), but he does hold that "the day of "the new creation", i.e. Sunday, 'presupposes the ecological "day of rest" of the original creation', i.e. sabbath, and the sabbath year and jubilee developed from it (ibid., p. 296).

[151]Ibid., p. 292.

[152]Compare West 1986a, p. 5.

[153]See 6.5.3 below.


[155]See 3.6, 4.5, 4.6, 5.5.2 above.
dimension is only one aspect of the power-relations involved here, and we should avoid the economistic foreshortening that reduces all such relationships to relations of production. But the jubilary overtones of the kingdom theme draw attention to the fact that they are an important part of it.

In short, the significance of the theme of "kingdom" in a theology of work is not that on Sundays we should eschew the use of motor cars - if we are lucky enough to have them - nor even that the cause of the kingdom is furthered automatically by industrious work in the economic system. It is rather to question the legitimacy of a society that, by leaving the results of the functioning of that economic system unchallenged, gives some people the option of voluntarily restricting the use of their motor cars, while others go short of the necessities of life. [156] Class, rather than reconciliation with nature, is the key concept here.

6.5 Vocation

The triumph of God is the welfare of men. For this the Christian will be glad to pay the price. [José Míguez Bonino] [157]

6.5.1 The ambiguity of the concept of vocation

William Temple's Christianity and Social Order [158] well illustrates some of the problems that a modern doctrine of vocation can encounter. I shall briefly set out Temple's views, before assessing them.

Although not unaware of the shortcomings of the Protestant work ethic as elucidated by Weber, Temple wishes to retain something of the same idea. There is, he says, an 'obligation to make of the occupation, by which a man

[156] And, moreover, suffer disproportionately in the labour process itself (see note 72 above).
or woman earns a living, a sphere of service'. [159] Indeed, to make the choice of 'the kind of work by which they will earn their living' on 'selfish grounds' is 'probably the greatest single sin that any young person can commit, for it is the deliberate withdrawal from allegiance to God of the greatest part of time and strength'. [160] The choice of occupation (for those with a choice) is to be made in the light of the field in which the young person 'can give his own best service'; [161] this will help to generate a spirit of service in the conduct of business among the leaders of industry and others.

As regards those with little or no choice in occupation, 'circumstances as well as inclination may be the channel through which God's call comes to a man', and this call may well be to 'self-sacrifice as well as to self-fulfilment'. Indeed, as Christianity alone teaches, 'self-sacrifice is in the end the truest self-fulfilment'. [162] Thus, although this must not be used to 'justify an order of society which offers to many men only such forms of livelihood as require a miracle of grace to appear as forms of vocation', nevertheless 'it is possible to accept the one job available, however distasteful or dreary, as God's call to me; and then I shall enter on it in the spirit of service'. [163]

To find a vocation in one's work, continues Temple, is emphatically not to find there 'self-expression or self-fulfilment' apart from self-sacrifice, [164] but to do one's task, 'interesting or dreary, "as unto the Lord"'. [165] In many cases, indeed, the nature of work may render that difficult if not impossible, and we should seek to change work so as to make it easier. But 'for a perfect saint it might be possible to perform the most wearisome and monotonous task "as unto God" because it was his contribution to human welfare'. [166]

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[159]Ibid., pp. 73f.
[160]Ibid., p. 74.
[161]Ibid.
[162]Ibid.
[163]Ibid.
[164]Ibid., p. 95; compare p. 75.
[165]Ibid., p. 75.
[166]Ibid., p. 95.
Moving now to critique, firstly we may welcome in Temple the recognition of the need for a conscious attitude to what for most people occupies a large part of 'time and strength'. I have argued above that Habermas' use of exclusively system concepts for social labour tends towards too great a dislocation in the life history of the individual. [167] Secondly we may welcome, this time with Habermas, the questioning of whether the primary function of human labour is to be self-expressive. [168] And thirdly we may welcome a recognition that a theology of work will need to find room for the concept of self-sacrifice.

In the light of the argument of this thesis so far, however, Temple's position appears unacceptably naive. His exclusive concentration upon the attitude with which work is done ('the spirit of service'; 'as unto the Lord') [169] without consideration of the intended or unintended consequences of that labour, clearly entails a narrowing of horizons. In Habermas' terms, Temple is too preoccupied with action rather than system concepts. [170] It is not only a question of whether work is 'wearisome and monotonous'; it is also a question of whether or not that labour really contributes to 'human welfare' in the fullest sense of that term. [171] And although there is in Temple a welcome stress upon the need to change alienating working conditions, [172] there is no suggestion that this should be a concern of the worker him or herself. For Temple, change is something to be imposed from outside; a position which seems to ignore the reality and importance of the operation of the "double hermeneutic", and fails to take sufficiently seriously the competence of the lay social actor. [173]

Such a deficiency is ironically expressed in a poem by Karol Wojtyla, written before he became Pope John Paul II, entitled 'The armaments factory

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[167] See 4.5, 4.7 above.
[168] See 4.4, 4.7 above.
[170] See 3.5 above.
[171] Ibid., p. 95. For the use of the term "human" in a normative sense, compare Gutiérrez in 6.3 above.
[172] For example, Temple 1976, p. 95.
[173] See 4.5, 6.1 above.
I cannot influence the fate of the globe.
Do I start wars? ....
No, I don't sin.
It worries me not to have influence,
that it is not I who sin.
I only turn screws, weld together
parts of destruction,
ever grasping the whole,
or the human lot ....
Though what I create is not good,
the world's evil is not of my making.
But is that enough? [174]

Clearly it is not enough, and Wojtyla alludes fleetingly to another possible view of vocation in the lines:

I could do otherwise (would parts be left out?)
contributing then to sanctified toil [175]

Here 'sanctified toil' is a similar concept to the work which is a 'human act' that Gutierrez mentioned in 6.3 above, and the worker toys with the idea of the transformative action – action to change social relations – needed to make it possible.

Another Wojtyla poem, 'The car factory worker', similarly indicates the need for a recognition of the significance of the double hermeneutic:

Smart new models from under my fingers:
whirring already in distant streets.
I am not with them at the controls ....
They stole my voice; it's the cars that speak
My soul is open: I want to know
with whom I am fighting, for whom I live.
Thoughts stronger than words. No answers.
Such questions mustn't be asked out loud.
Just be back every day at six in the morning.
What makes you think that man
can tip the balance on the scales of the world? [176]

What indeed? Yet clearly no adequate doctrine of vocation can afford to

[175]Ibid.
[176]Ibid., p. 99.
ignore this question by a retreat to a simple acceptance of 'the one job available' [177] as it is pre-defined by the economic system.

In part, this problem is an aspect of the old question in ethics as to the relative moral significance of intentions or consequences; but it is made more pressing by the realization that the class system is to a significant extent a result of the operation of the system of social labour. We may therefore sum up by saying that Temple is insufficiently aware of the implications of class analysis for any doctrine of vocation: the fact that the class system is to some extent a by-product of the very system of social labour that the worker is being invited to participate in "as unto the Lord". Could this "Lord", we ask, be the Lord of the self-revelation of the Exodus? [178] Temple's exhortation to self-sacrifice, therefore, is open to ideological misuse.

Before considering how the notion of self-sacrifice might be integrated into a more adequate theology of work in 6.4.3 below, a further question arises: to what extent should the concept of vocation be applied to social labour at all? In Habermas' terms, this is an aspect of the question: to what extent should social labour be considered in action as well as in system concepts?

6.5.2 Vocation in Church Dogmatics III/4

A main theme of this thesis has been to emphasize, against the Marxist tradition, that social labour is only one aspect, albeit a very important one, of human existence. Thus, 'if human existence, as it is and as it might be made to be, is the contingent expression of the creative and transformative action of God', [179] then it is the whole of life to which this applies, and the concept of vocation could apply to social labour only in a derivative sense. As Barth rightly says:

we can hardly say that work in itself and as such is the active life which God requires of man. In its limitations it undoubtedly belongs to the concrete content of [a] higher and

[178]See 6.2.3 above.
more inclusive concept .... The life which is obedient to the command of God is much more than work. Even in so far as work is included it is not in itself and as such that which is demanded of man. [180]

The concept of vocation has, over the years, been restricted exclusively to a detached "religious" dimension on the one hand, and completely secularized in the Protestant work ethic on the other. But neither extreme begins to do justice to human life, a life that is irreducible to either one of these two dimensions. [181]

As regards the second of these two extremes, Barth, in Church Dogmatics III/4, is very sensibly suspicious of the Protestant work ethic: [182]

The practical requirements, the ideals and even perhaps the myth of modern Western civilisation with its ethos of work are a very different thing from the command of God .... It was indeed a decisive moment when Luther attempted to ascribe the dignity of worship ... to the labours of the field and workshop and nursery rather than to the monastery. But both then and later was there not a great deal of exaggeration on the part of Protestants in this matter? [183]

Barth correctly notes that the Jesus of the gospels cannot be enlisted in support of a high evaluation of work. Naturally Jesus recognized secular labour as an obvious necessity, but

there can be no evading the awkward fact that He never called anyone directly to this type of work. On the contrary, He seems to have summoned His disciples away from their secular work. And even if He Himself was originally a tektōn (Mk. 6:3), there is no evidence in support of the view that He continued this work after taking up his Messianic office. [184]

There is little succour here for John Paul II's deduction from Jesus' trade

[181]Compare Habermas' insistence on the irreducible validity of communicative and purposive-rational action (see 3.3.2 above).
[182]An ethic that, Barth notes, is taken seriously by writers such as Emil Brunner: 'It is from the Bible that Europe draws her high ideal of the value of all work which helps to create a civilization' (Brunner 1937, p. 387; compare Barth 1961, p. 472).
[184]Ibid.
as a carpenter to the high status to be accorded to the social labour of the working class! [185] Further, this high status can be deduced neither from Paul nor from the Old Testament. Although indeed the apostle Paul urges his congregations to work so as not to be a burden to others, 'his work is done on the margin of his apostolic existence ... Paul has no positive interest either in work itself or in its achievements'. [186] Indeed 'we search both his own writings and the rest of the New Testament in vain for the passion with which the "Subdue the earth" of Gen. 1:28 has been interpreted and applied since the 16th century'. [187] Similarly, and against much modern exegesis:

the same is true of much of the Old Testament. We are surely reading into the saying in Gen 1:28 more than is actually there if we take it to imply that cultivation is the real task which the Creator has set man; and the same applies to the observation in Gen. 2:15 that God put man in the Garden of Eden 'to dress and to keep it'. [188]

Thus although 'there is no doubt that in the Old Testament, too, work is a self-evident necessity of life', which man should accept, 'one of the favourite insights of Protestant ethics, namely, the importance of work to human personality and as a cultural enterprise, is very much in the background, if not completely invisible'. [189] Barth concludes that the high status of work in Protestant ethics is derived not so much from 'biblical influences', but from 'the pressure of recent developments in European economy and economics'. [190] A very Marxian point!

Barth continues with an assessment of 'the older Protestant ethic of work'. [191] It was correct, in Barth's opinion, to suspect the medieval exaltation of the vita contemplativa of being too closely allied to

an ancient Greek and Stoic view according to which the perfect man belongs to the higher classes and has the leisure to

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[187]Ibid.
[188]Ibid.
[191]Ibid.
fashion himself physically, intellectually and aesthetically into a harmonious being, whereas the rest, the real working classes, exist only to procure for the aristocrat, who is occupied with himself and therefore with real living, the basis of existence which he too requires. [192]

On the other hand, continues Barth, it was mistaken both as to the real intentions of 'the best representatives of the vita contemplativa', [193] and also in substituting secular work as 'the decisive and final meaning of human activity'. Its crucial mistake was to relate the authentic Christian vita activa 'immediately and properly only to secular work'. [194]

Barth himself relates the concept of vocation primarily to the coming of the kingdom of God, which, as we saw in 6.3.2 above, is the paradigm of the divine action, [195] to which '[man's] active life must correspond if lived in obedience'. [196] Barth thus refuses to restrict the scope of vocation to the realm of social labour: if anything, he argues, its home is the sphere of the church. [197] Indeed, the paradigm of distinctively human action is not social labour, but 'the simple but very strange action ... of associating oneself with the community of the coming kingdom and of thus confirming in oneself the necessity of the reality of this community on earth'. [198] This, however, is not a retreat from a concept of Homo faber to one of Homo religiosus, because 'the existence of the community, and therefore co-operation in its life, is not an end in itself ... the kingdom of God ... is the most profound need of the world around'. [199]

Barth, therefore, aligns the concept of vocation, not to the performance of social labour as such, to the mere maintenance of human life, but to the need for the transformation of the social world. In the terms of Habermas' Knowledge and Human Interests, vocation is more closely related to the

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[192]Ibid., p. 474; compare Moltmann in 5.3.1 above.
[193]Ibid., p. 473.
[194]Ibid., p. 474.
[195]Ibid., pp. 474f; compare pp. 480, 485f.
[196]Ibid., p. 475.
[197]Ibid., p. 483.
[198]Ibid., p. 493.
[199]Ibid., p. 502.
category of the interest in emancipation than to the category of interest in technical control. [200] Nevertheless, Barth suggests, 'the action of God has a circumference as well as [a] centre', [201] and God is also the King of the universe, the Lord, Sustainer and Guardian, the Regent and Director of creaturely existence as such .... As He intervenes for the world, conducting at its centre His own cause and the world's, He does not cease to care also for its continuance before Him. [202]

Human work, says Barth, can thus correspond to this divine care. While work 'cannot, then, be the centre of human activity', it 'constitutes its circumference, just as the rule of divine providence is not the centre but only the circumference of God's activity'. [203] In Habermas' terms we might say that social labour has meaning in that it is necessary for the maintenance of the material basis of the lifeworld. Its significance is real, but subsidiary. Barth expresses a similar idea in the following passage:

What we now call the work of man corresponds to [God's] providential rule .... Addressing and claiming [man] as his covenant-partner, or, we may now say concretely, as a member of the Christian community, [God] also commands him - in order to make this possible - to exist as His human creature, requiring that his active life should take this human form, and fulfil itself in this form. Work is this human form. [204]

The mid-term between these two Barthian propositions:

(1) that the primary human action we are called to is the transformation of society into the kingdom of God, and

(2) that a presupposition of this is the maintenance of creaturely existence via social labour,

is the problem of the unintended genesis of the class system through social labour. This is a problem which Barth fails to make explicit in

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[200]See 2.2.1:A above.
[202]Ibid., pp. 516f.
[203]Ibid., p. 517.
[204]Ibid., my stress.

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Church Dogmatics III/4, although it is implied in his treatment of the theology of work as a whole.

6.5.3 Vocation in new perspective

Every process of social transformation ... even those so-called non-violent, is costly. There are people and groups that suffer ... Christians should [be] ... ready to go beyond what is demanded, to pay in their own person ... the cost of transformation. [José Míguez Bonino] [205]

It is a common criticism levelled against Habermas that he has no adequate theory of revolution, no theory as to how social change is to be effected. [206] Rejecting alike the revolutionary theories of Marx and Lenin, so the standard criticism goes, and conflating too easily the emancipation of Freudian analysis with social emancipation, he too lightly abandons Marx's "revolutionary praxis" [207] for an argumentative process whose only force is the "force of the better argument". This is to seriously underestimate the recalcitrance of the social material, and the power of ideology and self-interest. Habermas' model of the Ideal Speech Situation, [208] although constituting an attractive model of the ideal social order, [209] lacks any indication of how we are to get there.

In my opinion there is some strength in this criticism, and this is one important area where Habermas has something to learn from a christocentric Christian theology. For along with a lack of a theory of revolution, Habermas also lacks any constructive appreciation of the value of

[208]See 3.3.3 above.
[209]Or, to be more accurate, giving a framework within which concrete instances of alleged ideal social orders can be judged (RC, pp. 227f).
self-sacrifice. [210] This I take to be the value of the theme of the cross in social theory in general, and in a theology of work in particular.

In this chapter I have gradually been developing a new integration-point for the theme of the cross in the theology of work. Extracting it from its role in the legitimation of the suffering involved in social labour as now constituted, I have sought, by linking it with the theme of the kingdom, to reapply it as a symbol of social transformation. The creative *Chaoskampf* of the cross, I have argued, is the Christian paradigm of suffering in order to promote emancipatory social transformation, to promote the cause of the kingdom of God. And as the primary Christian vocation is to identification with the cause of this kingdom, the primary meaning of the theme of vocation must be a calling to sacrificial action to bring this about. The theology of the cross can thus become utopian rather than ideological in Karl Mannheim's sense.

The spirit of this position is well captured by José Míguez Bonino in his *Christians and Marxists: The Mutual Challenge to Revolution*:

To be a believer means to participate in the movement of love which brought Jesus Christ to share our human life ... giving his own life even unto the death of the cross. What is at stake here is not a mere 'imitation' but a participation in the lot of solidary love, the only thing that can really create a possibility of new life for man. For this reason, the Apostle Paul does not hesitate in referring to his own suffering ... as his participation in 'what still has to be fulfilled in the sufferings of Christ'. It is not that Christ left something undone, but that he opened for us a way of serving men in which the disciple enters now, paying the price or, as Jesus himself said, 'taking up his cross'. [211]

In the context of the question of social labour, this is both to deny the

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[210] Habermas does at one point consider 'the suffering and sacrifice of past generations' by virtue of which 'subsequent generations can enjoy an institutionalized freedom', and in this context approves of 'an anamnetic power of remembering that goes beyond the concepts of morality itself', actualized in 'compassionate solidarity with the despair of the tormented who have suffered what cannot be made good again' (RC, pp. 246ff; compare 4.3 above). But the context of this discussion is the question as to whether any world that was based on past suffering could be called just, rather than an attempt to assess the role of self-sacrifice in the present.

identification of vocation with a calling to succeed (or work cheerfully) in a job as defined by the present social order, and also to deny its detachment into a purely "religious" world which fails to impinge upon the world of social labour at all: a version of what I have called the "unacceptable dualism" of Habermas' banishment of action concepts from the realm of social labour. Neither is it to legitimate that element of suffering, involved with social labour as presently constituted, that is a result merely of our level of technological development. Nor is it to condone or reinforce the over-concentration of its unpleasant aspects in the lives of the relatively powerless. In fact it is not to interpret present suffering at all, but to appeal to self-sacrificial action to alleviate it. [212] To this creative act we are called, in fellowship with our crucified King. If the triumph of God is indeed the welfare of men, for this we should be glad to pay the price.

6.6 Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis, I noted the demand from various quarters for a theology of work that is modern, well-structured, universally applicable, and not open to question or doubt. The intervening pages have demonstrated that the exercise of producing such a theology is not as straightforward as many imagine. What I have achieved is at best a prolegomenon rather than a finished theology. Indeed, it is to be doubted whether a "finished" and universally applicable theology in this context could exist other than for those who fail to realize that work must be a contextual activity.

Nevertheless, I have reached several tentative conclusions, both of a positive and of a negative kind, about the activity of social labour itself, and about the possible bearing of the Christian tradition upon it. I have resisted the idea that the control of nature in social labour is wrong, or that there can ever be a (romantic) reconciliation with nature on the basis of a radically different form of science and technology. I have argued that the role of social labour in human life is overestimated

[212]Compare Marx 1977, p. 158.
in the thought of Marx, and even of Habermas, and that as a consequence theological categories should not be tied as closely to its performance as is frequently the case. I have argued that right-wing theologies of work fail to recognize sufficiently the ambiguous nature of modernity, and the role of the economic system within it, and are therefore wrong to legitimize the functioning of the capitalist economic system with the positive use of theological categories such as "creation". And I have argued that theologies of work that are too simply Marxian neglect the dimension of bureaucratic power, and are consequently too optimistic - and theologically too positive - about the prognosis for a transition to socialism.

The pervasive theme of this final chapter has been the critique of ideology. Recognizing that the Christian categories of creation, kingdom, cross, and vocation are frequently construed so as to (albeit unintentionally) 'sustain relations of domination', [213] I have sought to reinterpret their bearing upon the activity of human labour so as to avoid this pitfall. Denying that social labour is, except secondarily, usefully to be considered a process of creation, I have both interpreted the theme of the sabbath as indicating the non-central status of labour in the human enterprise, and proposed an alternative paradigm for creation in the creative Chaoskampf of the cross. Denying that the process of technological advance, and the more efficient labour that it makes possible, in and of themselves constitute advance towards the establishment of the kingdom of God, I have reinterpreted the theme of the kingdom, by way of its jubilary background, as being critical of the class system that is one result of the operation of the economic system. And denying that the primary Christian vocation is to engage diligently in social labour as presently defined by the economic system, I have suggested that our Christian vocation is rather to the promotion of emancipatory social transformation, if need be at the cost of self-sacrificial suffering.

Throughout this thesis, the thought of Jürgen Habermas has determined both the categories and the content of the discussion. There is, indeed, a

great deal more to be said about work, and the Christian theology of it, that has not arisen under the constraint of these parameters. Nevertheless, I have shown that a critical interaction with Habermas' work raises the absolutely central questions that no theology of work can afford to ignore, and indicates the broad outlines of some of the answers. No theology of work that is adequate to its subject matter can neglect the issues that have been discussed, or the challenge of the answers that have been given.
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The amount of published material relevant in some way to the concerns of this thesis is vast, covering several disciplines. The bibliography of the Habermas primary and secondary literature alone fills a sizable hardback volume (Götzten 1982, see below). I have therefore thought it best to restrict the bibliography given below to works cited explicitly in text or footnotes, even in the case of works by Habermas. The bibliography thus makes no claim to be exhaustive.

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ADDITIONAL PUBLISHED MATERIAL

There follows material unconnected with the main thesis that has either already been published, or has been accepted for publication and is forthcoming. This material is also listed in the main bibliography, in the forms given in parentheses in the list below.


2. 'Christology as "Ideology"', Theology, 88 (1985), pp. 428-436 [West 1985b]

3. 'Cruciform Labour? The Use of the Cross in Two Recent Theologies of Work', forthcoming in The Modern Churchman [West 1986a]


5. 'Divine Creation and Human Creativity', forthcoming in New Blackfriars [West 1986c]

Spanners and Symbols:  
God's Action as Communicative Action

P.L. West

Within the framework of the "empiricist" philosophy widely assumed in English theology, there is a serious problem about how to represent God's action in the world. This applies equally to God's action in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and to God's action today through the Holy Spirit. Here I will argue that the problem can be eased by a change of philosophical framework. I will do so in dialogue with Maurice Wiles' *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine* which reveals with outstanding honesty and clarity the difficulties that the empiricist framework throws up.

I

By the "empiricist" framework I mean a general set of philosophical presuppositions that are deeply entrenched within our culture in general, and widespread within our university departments of science, philosophy and theology in particular. Of these (often only implicit) presuppositions I am interested in just two: firstly, that the chief function of language is to represent or "picture" reality; secondly, that "action" must take place via some causal mechanism, the model for which is given by the causal mechanisms of the natural sciences. Thus the only relation that language can have to action is to "picture" it.

This pair of assumptions is peculiarly deadly for theology, because it pushes back our possibilities for conceptualizing God's action to only two. Either we think of God's action as the communication of knowledge about a state of affairs—a picture of reality—or else we must see it as an intervention in the causal nexus so as to rearrange the course of events in the physical world. Each then presents insuperable problems of interpretation, and does not really do justice to what we (or the tradition) would like to say about the action of God.

Consider, for example, the activity of the Holy Spirit in the world today. Wiles first rejects 'the idea of some special relation of God to particular events' as difficult to justify:

The experience of divine guidance or divine providence is so frequent and so fundamental a Christian experience that if it were to be understood as always implying special divine causation ... the occurrences of such special divine activity

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would have to be so numerous as to make nonsense of our normal understanding of the relative independence of causation within the world. (pp. 37f, my stress)

Wiles, as his terminology of ‘causation ... causation’ indicates, conceptualizes a ‘special relation of God to particular events’ as God intervening as one cause among others in the causal nexus. God’s action is assimilated to the dominant world-view of the natural sciences, and then rejected.

Thus Wiles is forced back to the only alternative available within his framework, the communication of information. First he rejects a “mentalistic” adaptation of the first model. ‘God working by the way of love through the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit’ (p. 96) cannot involve an extra, isolable, ‘causal factor’ (p. 97). Rather, revelation occurs when ‘particular events by virtue of their intrinsic character or the results to which they give rise give (like the beauty of the lillies) particular expression to some aspect of God’s creative purpose for the world as a whole’ (p. 38). God’s activity is thus to be understood as a way of speaking about those events in the world through which we glimpse God’s overall sustaining and creative purpose for the whole cosmos. That is, it is to do with the communication of information. But is that all that we—or the tradition—would want to say about the action of God?

Consider, secondly, God’s action in the crucifixion. Once again the dichotomy operates: either the crucifixion must effect an intervention in some “cosmic mechanism” modelled on the mechanisms of the natural sciences, or else it just conveys information.

Wiles clearly rejects the first option, and with it the ancient ‘belief that in the death and resurrection of Christ God worked effectively in history to transform once for all man’s status ... in relation to God’ (p. 62f.). The cross does not represent ‘an objective act of God ... in the history of this world, in virtue of which things are not as they were’ (p. 64). Instead, he holds that ‘Christ’s passion is in some way a demonstration of what is true of God’s eternal nature’ (p. 79). Thus once again God’s action becomes the communication of knowledge about a state of affairs.

Yet this is not quite fair, because Wiles also salvages from ancient theories of the atonement the recognition that ‘the passion of Christ has been remarkably effective as a historical phenomenon in the transformation of human lives’ (p. 80, my stress). This, I feel, points the way forward, because it threatens to burst open the model of the “communication of information”. So the question must be asked: Is it possible to conceptualize God as acting to transform human lives, without conceptualizing him as (to parody a little, but not, I think, enormously) a “celestial mechanic” with the Holy Spirit as his “spanner”?

II

In my opinion, this can only be achieved as the result of a change in
philosophical framework; a change which rejects the two presuppositions of empiricism explored above. Such a paradigm change is provided in the work of the German philosopher/sociologist Jürgen Habermas, and his concept of "communicative action". In what follows, I will try to show that Habermas' "communicative action" affords a less inadequate way of conceptualizing the action of God than the two ways provided by empiricism. To effect the paradigm change will be a two-step process, because our notions of action and of language are both in need of reformulation.

The first step is to break free from the conceptual tyranny of the natural sciences. This is a tyranny that assimilates human action—and God's action—to intervention in the causal nexus presupposed by science and technology. This is the point of the "mechanic and spanner" parody above. Habermas, classically in the book Knowledge and Human Interests, denies that the natural sciences tell us how the world "really is"—i.e. give us a "picture of reality"—for the semi-pragmatist position that they tell us how we may manipulate the world effectively. Scientific knowledge is thus knowledge about how we can use the world: it is knowledge related to the human interest in being able to predict and control the behaviour of the natural world effectively. On this model, scientific knowledge is still real knowledge, but knowledge with a limited scope. It is not the only "real" sort of knowledge, such that all other forms of knowledge must be ultimately reducible to it, or be exposed as nonsense. Rather, it must be kept in its place. And specifically, in this context, its concepts of cause, effect and mechanism must not be allowed to escape from their legitimate field to dictate what God (or man) "acting" must mean.

The second step is to reformulate our ideas about language. Following the later Wittgenstein, Habermas rejects the concept of language as primarily representatory, for language as primarily active in the constitution of, and transformation of, our socio-cultural "lifeworlds". The ordinary use of language then becomes a form of action that does things in the individual and social realms. An obvious example, which Habermas quotes from Austin, is "I do" said in the context of the marriage service. Here the words do not describe a marriage but actually enact it. The words change something in the social world. Habermas maintains that this phenomenon is characteristic (although not always so obviously) of all ordinary use of language. Thus, for the ordinary use of language, he coins the term "communicative action".

Seeing communicative action as action is only possible, of course, because of the flexibility introduced into the concept of "action" above. This flexibility enables Habermas to split the concept of action into two: into "communicative action" and "instrumental action". The latter is intervention in the causal nexus of the physical world, operating by way of empirical restraints in order to achieve unilaterally conceived ends:
“action” much as in empiricism. But it is the new category, communicative action, that is interesting in this context. As noted above, it is a form of action because it “does” things; it is not merely a matter of description. But it is very different from instrumental action for two reasons. First, its medium is symbols instead of forces. And secondly, following from this, it is a form of action that can only be achieved by two (or more) persons: symbols must be understood and accepted for communicative action to succeed. Thus communicative action is conceived of as intervention in the social or “subjective” worlds, in order to achieve a bilaterally conceived agreement, consensus or understanding.

III

I want to suggest that our conceptions of God’s action might be rather less inadequate to their subject matter if we were to abandon the two empiricist alternatives of instrumental action and the communication of information for Habermas’ communicative action. I will suggest four ways in which this new paradigm makes better sense of what the tradition says about the action of God.

First, it makes some sense of the biblical ideas of God’s creative or active word—and of Jesus as the word made flesh—if this word is seen as communicative action rather than mere description or sheer command. This is particularly so because language (in Habermas’ model) is integrally involved with the formation of the individual and of society.

Secondly, it makes some sense of the idea that God’s action can be resisted. If God’s action is implicitly conceptualized as intervention in the causal nexus as one extremely potent “force” among others, then it is hard to see how it could be resisted if seriously applied. But if God’s action is communicative action, and its medium is symbols instead of forces, then this does not apply. Communicative actions couched in symbols can be misunderstood, or rejected, irrespective of the status of their author, because their success depends upon an unforced agreement.

Thirdly, the paradigm of God’s action—the crucifixion—no longer need be either simply the communication of information about God’s nature, or causal intervention in some “cosmic mechanism”; it can be a real intervention by God in man’s socio-cultural lifeworld, but a communicative one. As such it can be a truly creative or transformative action, leading (once understood and accepted) to a transformation of the individual and society. Yet as communicative action it becomes effective only when understood and accepted—otherwise it remains an instance of “failed communication”. Thus what in Wiles’ treatment is split up into two quite separate events—the event of the cross and the modern transformation of a human life—can be reunited into one communicative action. The communicative action of the cross is only complete—only
succeeds—when it transforms the life of a believer who understands and accepts it.

My last example is a good deal more ambiguous. One key to Habermas’ transformation of the concept of language is his contention that language, by virtue of its telos, is not a tool suitable for an individual to “use” so as to “manipulate” other people to his/her own ends. Rather it is a thoroughly social phenomenon that is orientated to the production of community, consensus and understanding—or perhaps we might say in Christian terms “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”. So, fourthly, God acting communicatively in our lives would not imply God manipulating us and aiming at our subjection to his inscrutable will on the model of slave and potentate. Rather it would imply that our true status is that of “communication partners” with him, in a loving relationship that transcends autonomy and subservience in communicative consensus.

Now, of course there is a huge problem here; the problem of safeguarding God’s transcendence, of safeguarding the inherent asymmetry of the God-human relationship. It is no use deposing a picture of God as oriental despot to replace it by one of God as friendly neighbour! Which only goes to underline the obvious fact that no form of conceptualization can be adequate to the mystery of God and his action. However, the model of communicative action may be a little less inadequate than the models of empiricism in this area, because it offers a way of transcending the antithesis of autonomy and subservience. Perhaps using it we could make some sense of the Johannine paradox:

You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing. (John 15:14f)

If God’s action is conceptualized not as the operation of an extremely potent force, but as the offering of communicative action that needs to be accepted by man or woman to succeed—succeed in his/her transformation—then perhaps obedience and friendship are not so antithetical after all.

At one point, Maurice Wiles seems to feel acutely the need for a category such as this. Discussing the action of the Holy Spirit in the believer, he rejects N.P. Williams’ claim that ‘the ultimate kernel of a “special providence” is a direct influence exerted by God upon the personality of a human being’ via ‘deftly administered subconscious impulses’ (p. 96). Such ‘causal operation over and above the specifiable external influences’ would not be ‘a suasion of love’ (p. 97). Wiles is surely right to reject Williams’ model at this point. But what he is rejecting is the product of an empiricist model that reduces action to unconscious manipulation, and the ‘suasion of love’ to the turn of a mental spanner. With Habermas’ model of communicative action this is not necessary.
Communicative action is concerned with rational appeal to the conscious actor, not manipulation of the unconscious behind his or her back; and its medium is the symbol, not a force.


3. Habermas' concept of communicative action is now most accessible in *The Theory of Communicative Action* vol 1, Heinemann (London) 1984 pp. 284—288 and 293—295. This massive two volume work explores the implications of the model of communicative action for modern social theory as a whole.

4. For the sake of simplicity I have neglected Habermas' concept of "strategic action", which denotes language used to manipulate other people for one's own ends.

5. Habermas' term for the realm of experience to which the individual has privileged access. It does not imply acceptance of what he calls the "philosophy of consciousness", i.e. Descartes et seq.

6. To use language thus is a misuse of it that he calls "strategic action". See note 4.

7. "Consensus" is a term in Habermas' vocabulary that suggests the unforced nature of a relationship in which the interests of both sides are taken equally into account in mutual respect.
Christology as 'Ideology'

PHILIP WEST

There is something approaching a consensus in one broad stream of modern theology that 'the paradigm of divine action is the Cross of Christ'. "Here is the revelation of God", writes Donald MacKinnon. Jürgen Moltmann has expressed this succinctly:

New trends of thought have grown up which are concerned to find a consistent Christian doctrine of God. They make Christology the cornerstone of all theology [and] see the heart of Christology in the cross of Christ... Martin Kähler's thesis—'the cross of Christ as the foundation and measure of all Christology'... now appears more radical and comprehensive: the crucified Christ as the foundation and measure of Christian theology as a whole.

I do not want to challenge this cross-centredness. Given certain qualifications I think it is right. Yet to embrace it is to accept the need for continuous and careful re-examination of our conceptions of the significance of the cross; for a deformation at this hub of Christian doctrine is bound to have wide-ranging effects upon the whole.

In this article I shall explore briefly one possible avenue into this critical work—the approach of the 'critique of ideology'. I intend to do so in dialogue with two essays of Donald MacKinnon in Borderlands of Theology which, in my opinion, suggestively indicate the way forward, but yet succumb to some extent to the very dangers against which they themselves warn.
'Ideology' is a term which is widely and loosely used in the modern world. The major political parties regularly accuse each other of 'ideological' intransigence, by which they mean to imply that blind adherence to a set of doctrines has dulled their opponents' political common sense. This use of the term often verges on mere abuse. I will not be using the term ideology in this way. Even in the serious sociological literature, however, 'ideology' has several distinct, even if overlapping, usages—usages that are reflected in the theological literature that is dependent upon it.

Sometimes 'ideology' means, without any pejorative overtones, a set of beliefs or ideas that galvanize a social group into action. The ideal of 'democracy' is ideological in this sense: people are prepared to die for it. Norman Gottwald uses the term in this way in *The Tribes of Yahweh*, to denote the active religious belief of the Old Testament Israelites in Yahweh as a liberating God. Secondly, and more pejoratively, 'ideology' may denote a set of ideas which, unlike a 'utopia', does not lead on to liberating action but remains stuck in the realm of mere thought. This is Karl Mannheim's use of the term in *Ideology and Utopia*, a use taken up by Christopher Rowland in *Christian Origins*. Thirdly, 'ideology' may be equated with what is, in the final analysis, an illusory belief about the way in which society functions, to be contrasted with 'science' which gives the truth about it. This is Althusser's use of the term, taken up by Denys Turner in *Marxism and Christianity*.

I will not be using 'ideology' in any of these senses. Neither will I enter into the debate between them as to the 'real meaning' of the term. Instead, I will present a fourth account of ideology, that given in Anthony Giddens' *Central Problems in Social Theory*, and then follow up its possible implications in the realm of Christology. Giddens' language is difficult for those who are not members of the sociological 'guild', and I shall do my best to translate it.

In the meantime, we can note something that all of these usages have in common: in each case 'ideology' is to do with the relationship between ideas or language and the functioning of society. To ask whether a Christology is 'ideological' is thus to propose one particular type of test for its adequacy; not its continuity with Scripture or tradition, or its coherence on the level of ideas, but its *social implications*.

In *Central Problems*, Giddens offers the following definition of 'ideology': 'To analyse the ideological aspects of symbolic orders ... is to examine how structures of signification are mobilized to legitimate the sectional interests of hegemonic groups' (p. 188). We can paraphrase this as follows. The way in which language is used (for example in christological statements) can have undesirable social consequences. To study how this occurs is to study 'the ideological
aspects of symbolic orders. It is not that the statements in question are just plain untrue or malevolent, but that they tend to give rise to unfortunate side-effects in the social sphere. Thus Christologies (for example) that in all other respects are perfectly satisfactory may be unsatisfactory in terms of their social implications. Such Christologies have an 'ideological aspect'. To study this ideological aspect of language is to see how it operates in society so as to make the interests of ruling ('hegemonic') groups appear as just, right or natural (to see how it 'legitimates' them). Despite the fact that these interests are in part incompatible with the interests of the rest of the community (being merely 'sectional' interests), the language makes it appear that they are interests shared by all. That society, in fact, operates so as to favour the interests of the powerful more than those of the weak is obscured. In other words, in studying ideology we are looking for 'the modes in which domination is concealed as domination... for the ways in which power is harnessed to conceal sectional interests' (p. 193, my italics).

Giddens goes on to draw a distinction within ideology on the basis of whom this domination of the weak by the powerful is concealed from. Less interesting is the case of straightforward propaganda, where language is consciously manipulated by ruling groups so as to keep subservient populations passive. More relevant to the critique of ideology in Christology is its institutional form, where its effects occur without the deliberate intent of any of the participants involved. To study ideology in this sense, says Giddens, is 'to seek to identify the most basic structural elements which connect signification and legitimation in such a way as to favour dominant interests'. These elements are likely to be 'deeply sedimented in both a psychological and an historical sense' (pp. 191 f). That is, they will be of long standing in the tradition and quite unconscious. The Hindu caste system affords a good example of the operation of institutional ideology in this way.

Giddens concludes by listing three ways in which 'ideology actually operates in society'. The first is 'the representation of sectional interests as universal ones' (p. 193). Here he has in mind expressions such as 'it is in the national interest for us all to work harder and tighten our belts', when the belt-tightening is clearly more to the benefit of the rich and powerful than the poor and weak. The second, more obscure, is 'the denial or transmutation of contradictions' (p. 194). This concerns the device of defusing contradictions which have a revolutionary potential by transposing them into another sphere where they can be contained more easily (for example from the economic to the political system). The third, and perhaps the most interesting in this context, is 'the naturalization of the present' or 'reification' (p. 195). This means the representation of contingent social arrangements as 'natural', as governed by laws as unchangeable as the laws of physics and therefore beyond the power of human action to affect—as in the political slogan 'there is no alternative' if and when there is in fact an alternative.
Christology as ‘Ideology’

I want to propose that accounts of the significance of the cross can operate ideologically in each of the three ways that Giddens lists, and I have tried to show this in tabular form in the following way. In the left-hand column I have listed the three ways in which ‘ideology actually operates in society’ according to Giddens. Reading across each row, I then link each form of ideology with a theology of the cross that lays itself open to ideological misuse in this way, and finally on the right suggest how this ideological effect comes about.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of ideology</th>
<th>Theology of the cross</th>
<th>Effect produced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representation of sectional interests as</td>
<td>The cross as example of patient suffering.</td>
<td>Preservation of the social status quo including the structures of domination built into it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>universal ones.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transmutation of contradictions.</td>
<td>The cross as atonement for sin.</td>
<td>Desire for the fulfilment of needs, denied by society, is transmuted into the religious realm as sin and dealt with accordingly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Reification’ or the naturalization</td>
<td>The cross as the symbol of the tragedy of human life.</td>
<td>Evils are an inevitable part of the human condition; they are to be suffered, not removed. or Undue separation of existential and social aspects and concentration on the former.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the present.</td>
<td>or As converter of the negative into the positive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the rest of this article I will give a worked example of how a Christology that in all other respects seems compelling can be criticized on the basis of having ideological implications. I have chosen for this purpose two essays by Donald MacKinnon in Borderlands of Theology; firstly, just because they are so compelling in other ways and secondly, because contained within the essays themselves are methodological pointers which, if applied more extensively, could lead to conclusions different to those of the author himself.

In these essays MacKinnon makes two methodological points that I want to make my own. The first concerns the reciprocal effect of social structures and theological reflection, and echoes Giddens’ connection
of the concepts of ideology and concealment, above. I think it is worth quoting in full:

It is now regarded as a commonplace in critical discussion of Anselm's theology of the atonement that he was in unconscious bondage to the ethical ideas suggested by the social order of his age. But those who are quick to recognize the extent of his limitations in this respect are sometimes less willing to extend similar principles to the criticism of their own ideas. Yet fundamental theology must always reflect both the unacknowledged personal prejudices and the inherent moral assumptions of the theologian. In theology worthy of the name we are always involved with faith seeking understanding of itself; this understanding is rendered perpetually precarious by the relativity that must infect even the most disciplined effort of the one who seeks it. There is no field in which these considerations press more urgently upon the thinker than the doctrine of Christ's atoning work (p. 97).

MacKinnon is appealing for the application of the critique of ideology, not only to the past but also to his own work—and indeed to ours today. Thus I want to claim his blessing for the general intention, even if not the actual content, of this article.

The second point is a condemnation of the abstraction of the cross from its context. MacKinnon considers this in relation to Gustav Aulen's 'classic' conception of the work of Christ. This conception, he says, being 'in form and content so unashamedly mythological', appeals to demythologizing theologians precisely because it lends itself to translation into any terms likely to commend themselves to the translator... To speak of the Cross as 'a victory over the powers of darkness' is to use a mythological variable to which determinate value can be assigned almost to taste' (p. 98). It enables language, as Wittgenstein put it, to 'go on holiday'.14 This amounts to an abdication from 'the task of evaluating Christ's work in ethical terms', in which terms its cross-cultural value is to be located (pp. 98f, my italics). Later, MacKinnon presses the same point in different terms while discussing the events of Good Friday:

Always there has been besetting temptation to convert deed into idea, to fail properly to do justice to what is involved in finding the very foundation of human excellence in a raw piece of history. So the cutting edge of the doctrine is blunted by a refusal to recall the concrete detail of the events with which it deals. So the mystery of God's presence in human existence is diminished through induced forgetfulness of the depth to which he descended (pp. 103f).

However, in the rest of this article I will argue that MacKinnon's own account of the cross also represents an abstraction of the cross from its context, in this case its social context of the power structures within Jewish society; and that this results in a failure to evaluate Christ's work in social or political terms, in which terms its cross-cultural value...
Christology as 'Ideology'

is also to be located. I shall first attempt to present MacKinnon's views, and then offer a critique in the light of the first part of this article.

For MacKinnon, the appropriate category for the work of Jesus is tragedy, not comedy (p. 100). The resurrection is emphatically not a Hollywood happy ending, but an 'amen' that redirects our gaze to Gethsemane and the cross, which are the centre of revelation (p. 95). A 'superficial cosmic optimism' (p. 92) is rejected for the Johannine irony—it is in the crucified Jesus that his paradoxical glory is most fully revealed—an irony which transcends both optimism and pessimism (p. 91). The appropriate category for the resurrection is thus vindication, not reversal (p. 96); a reversal would be, in his phrase, 'in effect a descent from the cross, given greater dramatic effect by a 36-hour postponement' (p. 100). In the career of Jesus we see the paradigm of endurance (p. 93). Only so, enduring on the cross and refusing the happy ending of a 'reversal' resurrection, can he give the penitent robber the promise of his company in paradise, and be the revelation of a God that can touch us in our personal extremities of sin, failure, bereavement and unresolvable conflict of obligations (p. 94). 'Here', he writes, 'is the revelation of God; but here also is that human deed in which the abysses of existence are sounded and the ultimate contradictions of life are plumbed and explored' (p. 104).

In particular, Jesus in the cross shares fully in the human aspect of failure, and indeed embraces it. Thus 'to speak of Christ's readiness to embrace failure and defeat . . . is to state a simple fact' (p. 103). And his paradoxical victory ending in the cry 'It is finished' is 'purchased at the price of appalling catastrophe. Judas has departed into the night, and before Pilate's judgement seat the chosen people have confessed that they have no King but Caesar' (p. 91). The price of revelation and salvation is thus inevitably the events of AD 70 and anti-Semitism. The element of 'sheer waste' and 'failure' in the cross is ineluctible; the cross involves an 'element of abdication of responsibility for his people's welfare' (p. 103). And the correlate of this is that there is no solution to the problem of evil, as any course of action whatsoever involves the tragic surd of the negative.13

Yet, moving now to critique, has MacKinnon set up a false dichotomy here? Is it not possible somehow to avoid surrender to 'idealism-fancy' (p. 101) and 'Hollywood happy endings' that 'obliterate the sombre events' of the cross without embracing the category of tragedy? And does not his concept of tragedy put one foot backwards into the mire of ideology while trying to avoid the trap of a facile optimism? Despite his own warnings of the dangers of converting deed into idea, of failing to recall the concrete detail of the historical events involved (p. 103), he does in effect largely abstract from these, in part I think because of an over-reliance on the Johannine account. The events are stripped down to incarnation, Gethsemane, trial, Judas and cross; and the result of this is the loss of the social setting and power structures that brought Jesus to trial and execution. The cross is thus translated into a metaphor that is in large
part detachable from the historical crucifixion and can go 'on holiday'. The interpreter can apply it to areas of the negative almost according to taste. In MacKinnon's case, at least according to the list from page 94 quoted above, it speaks to us today primarily in an existential fashion rather than addressing our social situation. It becomes first and foremost an interpretative symbol of our personal suffering in the realm of attitudes and ideas, rather than a critical and transformative symbol that galvanizes to action to change the social world.

Moreover, Jesus for MacKinnon dies positively embracing failure; and it is difficult to say this without implying at the same time that the cross transforms failure to change the world into a positive value. This clearly does not do justice either to the Gospel accounts, particularly the Synoptics (and perhaps most of all to Luke–Acts), or to the post-Easter phenomenon of the earliest Church. It is with this phenomenon of the earliest Church, I think, that MacKinnon's model meets the most problems. For was not one of the most striking features of this Church precisely not resignation, even of a non-pessimistic kind, but the creation of a new form of society? In part this dissonance is due to MacKinnon's tendency to collapse the resurrection back onto the cross. To do this is to detach not only the crucifixion but also the resurrection from its context—its social setting in Judaism where, with the giving of the Spirit, it was among other things a symbol of the dawning of the new age, an age characterized significantly by transformed social relations. As such, the resurrection in its setting is the very antithesis of the positive embracing of failure of which MacKinnon speaks; it is more appropriately a sign of the possibility of change in social structures. MacKinnon's use of the resurrection is thus an interpretative move that tends to weaken its power to change the world in the pursuit of a reinterpretation of the world. Thus, I would suggest, MacKinnon's account falls foul of the charge of ideology in two senses.

To some extent this is of Giddens' first type. In talking of the Jewish people and their descendants as a coherent interest group whose interests Jesus neglected, he abstracts from the divisions within Jewish society, and represents sectional interests as universal ones. Yet it is these divisions that Jesus himself seems mainly to have addressed, and the addressing of which led to his execution. It is not Jew/Gentile but righteous/outcast, weak/powerful that are the key differentiands in Jesus' ministry and death. Thus, in MacKinnon's use of the symbol of the cross as the interpreter of personal suffering as such, without asking who is suffering and why, the cross becomes an example of patient suffering that transforms the negative into the positive in the subjective realm, rather than a symbol challenging social oppression. It loses its ability to distinguish between types of the negative that are significantly different in their social contexts. Thus it opens itself to misuse in the service of an indiscriminate valuation of the negative, including the types that are the result of avoidable human injustice.
Yet, as indicated above, my major unease concerns MacKinnon's relationship to Giddens' third type of ideology. His positive evaluation of failure, and insistence that there is no solution to the problem of evil except its paradoxical reinterpretation, encourages a reification of the present. In setting up a dichotomy between facile cosmic optimism and existentialist reinterpretation, the social dimension has largely fallen out of view, and the critical relation of the cross thereto has been attenuated.

IV

To conclude. It is not my case either that the critique of ideology should replace other forms of theological method or that a reduction of the significance of the cross to an existential dimension should be replaced by a parallel reduction of its significance to the social dimension. Neither do I claim that theology should be replaced by sociology.

However, I have argued that the critique of ideology is one valid avenue into the criticism of our concepts of the significance of the cross. And I have attempted to illustrate this claim by a critique of Donald MacKinnon's characterization of the work of Christ as 'tragedy'.

Notes

4. See section III.
11. Put like this it seems odd: is not the 'meaning' of a term given by the use to which it is put? There are, of course, matters of dispute between (say) Althusser and Mannheim in this area; but it does not seem to me to be helpful to present this as an argument about the 'real meaning' of a term.
This reference is not in MacKinnon's articles.


16 So, for example, 1 Cor. 15.20. See Rowland, op. cit., pp. 187–93.

17 A constant theme of Old Testament prophecy and apocalyptic, taken up programmatically (for example) in Luke 1.52f and 4.18. For a model of Jesus' own eschatology broadly in line with this view, see E. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism (London 1985), chapters 1–3, and Rowland, op. cit., pp. 133–54.

18 Compare Marx's famous Xlth thesis on Feuerbach: 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.' See Karl Marx, Early Writings (Harmondsworth 1975), p. 423.

19 On the reasons for Jesus' execution, see Sanders, op. cit., chapters 11 and 12, and Rowland, op. cit., pp. 164–74.
Cruciform Labour? The Use of the Cross in Two Recent Theologies of Work.

Philip West

Two Theologies of Work

For Jürgen Moltmann,

the crucified Christ (is) the specific thing about Christian theology, both as regards its identity and as regards its relevance .... All theological statements point to him, from the doctrine of creation to eschatology, and from the doctrine of the Trinity to the doctrine of sin.

Theology that is Christian, in Moltmann's view, is cruciform. The crucified Christ is the focal point from which Christian theology must radiate out; statements which are not related to this central point have no claim to be specifically Christian. Hence, when Moltmann comes to formulate a theology of work, his methodology is already established: a theology of work, too, must 'justify what it says before the face of the crucified Jesus, to whom, as Christian theology, it appeals'. This project Moltmann has undertaken in an essay on work in his recently translated On Human Dignity, although the materials for a more extensive theology of work are scattered throughout his earlier writings as well.

Moltmann early on in the essay dismisses the ancient Greek idea that work is simply meaningless toil and burden, fit only for slaves; the idea that meaningful life exists only outside of work (pp. 37-39). On the contrary, he argues, the young Marx was correct that work, as a form of self-expression, is critically involved in the self-formation of the worker. To some extent at least, 'I am because I work' (p. 50). This, he continues, coheres with the biblical witness. The fourth commandment justifies human work on the basis that God himself worked for six days in creation (Ex 20:9-11). Thus:

through their work in the world human beings can and should correspond to the creative activity of God, from which the world emerged .... In work and rest human beings, in their way, take part in the creative world process and in the joy of the Creator. In contrast to the ancient dichotomies, this makes work itself meaningful. (pp. 40f)
Moreover, he goes on, there is another group of specifically theological assertions about work in the biblical traditions, that relate work not to 'the effortless creation of God' but to the 'work of redemption'. (p.42) And it is to these we should look to derive a genuine theology of work. (p.43) The model here is the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, who 'is designated as worker, "servant of God", ebed Yahweh. His soul has "worked", and he "carries" iniquities like a porter'. (p. 42) This, he argues, is the model for God's action in Jesus' suffering on the cross: the passion story is patterned on it, Philippians 2 alludes to it, and 'according to the Gospel of John, the crucified one says of his "work", "It is finished"'. (p. 42)

Now, Moltmann reasons, if we are to 'be of the same mind as Christ', (Phil 2:5) then we too must adopt 'this theologically rich understanding of "pain and work"'. (p. 42) But to do so completely transforms the concept of work in Christianity. (p. 43) The human concept of work is transferred to God's redeeming activity and then redirected to human beings who are supposed to correspond to God. (p. 43) Through faith, work is not just 'relativized or exorcized'; no, 'it receives through faith a messianic meaning'. And as a result:

all work in the world is ... placed on the level of Philippians 2 and filled with the hope of the Kingdom of God .... The reapplication of this theological meaning of work to human beings induces them, through work and self-giving, to participate in the lordship of Christ in the world and thereby to become co-workers in God's kingdom, which completes creation and renews heaven and earth. (pp. 44f)

Many of these themes reappear, a little surprisingly perhaps, in another recent theology of work - Pope John Paul II's 1981 encyclical on human work, Laborem Exercens. 6

For John Paul II too, work is (or at least should be) meaningful and self-creative:

Independently of their objective content, the various actions which man performs in connection with his tasks must be utterly at the service of his humanity, realizing it. (p. 11)

when a man works it is not so much objects and affairs that he changes, as himself that he perfects. (p. 55, quoting Gaudium et Spes)
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Moreover, work is a sharing in God's creative activity. In this John Paul II is more explicit than Moltmann:

Made in God's image, man shares by his labour in the work of the Creator, in a certain sense continuing to complete and perfect that work. (p. 51f)

This awareness that man's work is a participation in the work that God is doing must permeate even 'the most ordinary of human activities .... They may rightly consider that by their labour they are unfolding the Creator's work ... and contributing by their personal industry to the fulfilment in history of the divine plan'. (p. 52f, quoting Gaudium et Spes)

As does Moltmann, John Paul II also looks to the cross to provide 'the final words of the Gospel on this matter'. (p. 56) His approach, however, is different. For John Paul II, the sweat and toil which are necessarily involved with work in the present condition of the human race offer the Christian the possibility of sharing in Christ's salvific work:

Suffering and death on a Cross were the means by which (the) work of salvation was done. So, by enduring the toil of work in union with Christ nailed to a Cross for our sake, man in a way collaborates with the Son of God in the redemption of mankind. (p. 57)

In his work the Christian is 'carrying his own cross daily' (Luke 9:23). In human work he finds 'a small part of the Cross of Christ'. (p. 57)

Finally, as does Moltmann, John Paul II relates human work to the Kingdom of God. Christ's resurrection 'advertized' a new heaven and earth 'in which man and the world are made partakers through work's weariness'. As in the Cross, so too in human work is made 'a new good' which is 'already, as it were, a small part of the "new earth" where justice dwells'. (p. 57) And although earthly progress is in fact to be distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, nevertheless every Christian should 'recognize the place that his work has not only in earthly progress but also in the growth of the Kingdom of God'. (p. 58)
For the rest of this article I will argue that both Moltmann and John Paul II misuse the theology of the cross in their theologies of work. My criticisms are linguistic, sociological, and theological.

Linguistic objections

Both writers use the word "work" to describe not only the creative and redemptive action of God but also a wide variety of human activities. And this, of course, is acceptable; the word "work" has a wide semantic field. However, this very width of semantic field makes problematic the deduction of truths about human work from truths about God's work. Consider Moltmann's argument in propositional form:

1. Man works.
2. God also works in creation and redemption.
3. Man ought to imitate God. Therefore,
4. Human work has the same creative and redemptive character as God's work.

This argument will only succeed provided that there is some essence of work, some "work as such", that God's work and man's work share. Only in this case can 'all work in the world' be transformed by reference to Christ's redemptive work. But this is precisely what we cannot assume. It does not even obviously apply to the variety of human activities that the word "work" can refer to (e.g. prayer, housework, working on a building site, writing a book), let alone to God's activity as well. Moreover the unique character of God's creative work appears to be underlined by the use for it in Genesis 1 of the verb bara ("create"), a verb which the Old Testament avoids using with man as its subject.

A different but related point concerns the deductions that can be drawn from the sharing of the same root by two words in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. Consider Moltmann's sentence quoted above:

The chosen one ... according to Isaiah 53 ... is designated as worker, "servant of God", ebed Yahweh. His soul has "worked", and he "carries" iniquities like a porter. (p. 42)

The underlying assumption is that ebed ("servant" or "slave"),
because it shares the same root with 'abad ("to work"), must carry overtones of "work" with it. Yet 'ebed is always in the Old Testament used for "slavery" (including religious slavery to Yahweh), that is in relational contexts, never for "workman" in a neutral sense. Moltmann's assumption is thus unfounded. It derives from what James Barr calls "the root fallacy", which Barr rejects thus:

A moment's thought should indicate that the 'meaning' of a 'root' is not necessarily part of the meaning of a derived form. Still less can it be assumed that two words having the same root suggest or evoke one another.12

Moreover, the verb naša' ("carry") in Is 53:4 is a standard expression for the bearing of the guilt and consequences of one's sin. It is not true to say that an image of "portering" (and therefore of human labour) is being evoked here. What is exceptional about Isaiah 53:4 is the vicariousness of the bearing of sin. Yet while this might be the basis for a very suggestive theology of redemption, there seems to be very little basis here for a theology of work.13

Sociological objections

When Moltmann says that 'all work in the world is thereby placed on the level of Philippians 2 and filled with the hope of the Kingdom of God', (p. 44, my stress) we must surely ask him whether by 'is' he means 'should be'. Does he seriously mean that all work, as now constituted, 'completes creation and renews heaven and earth'? (p.45) If he does, two comments are in order.

Firstly, it ignores types and aspects of work that are objectively destructive - of worker, of society, and of environment. Few people would seriously want, I suspect, to equate open-cast mining with completing the creation, or would suppose the work of AWRE Aldermaston to be filled with the hope of the Kingdom of God - however self-sacrificially the employees were going about their respective tasks in the two enterprises. Moltmann's rhetoric seems to have got the better of him here. John Paul II is more realistic in this respect. He realizes that work can be dehumanizing for the worker. (e.g. p. 10) But even he seems to have something of a blind spot about the deleterious effects of
work on society and environment (see below).

Secondly, both writers lay themselves open to the charge of using theological concepts ideologically - that is, using them so as to aid and abet (albeit unconsciously) the maintenance of an unjust status quo. To equate the "toil" of work with the sufferings of Christ, without regard to its nature and causes in particular cases (Laborem Exercens, p. 57), has the effect of making social injustice in labour invisible. The more unpleasant the work is, the implication seems to be, the more fully it is a participation in Christ's sufferings, and therefore, paradoxically, the more redemptive it is. The negative is transformed in thought into a positive, while leaving the reality exactly as it is. Be that reality just or unjust. Similarly, to say that all work is a participation in the lordship of Christ in the world (Moltmann, p. 45), is to imply that each and every worker is already performing his allotted task in the great harmonious cosmic enterprise; be that worker a South African entrepreneur or a black labourer in his asbestos mine.

No, as Karl Marx has so powerfully argued, it is dangerous to deal in grand abstractions like "work" and "man", and to make theological pronouncements about them in general. We need to ask first what work is being done, being done by what men/women, in what social situation. Who is profiting by their labour? What effect is it having upon them and others? And, as a consequence, should it not sometimes be a case of liberating them from dehumanizing labour, rather than of legitimating it by talk of participation in Christ's cross? Both Moltmann and John Paul II fail to grapple seriously with these questions.

Theological objections

Despite their disavowals to the contrary, both Moltmann and John Paul II seem to equate too closely the establishment of the Kingdom of God with human progress, and correspondingly underrate the seriousness and pervasiveness of human sin. This is especially clear in Laborem Exercens.

John Paul II is essentially optimistic about human work. He shows little positive awareness of the deeply ambiguous nature of the achievements of modern technology
and the processes of economic development and expansion. As a consequence, in his theology he tacitly assumes that work largely escapes the effects of the fall. The effect of sin, he says, is merely to make the execution of work toilsome, rather than rendering its results ambiguous or evil. (pp. 56f) This has two results.

Firstly, it explains his near equation of human progress with the building of the Kingdom of God. As the 'fruit' of human work is a good (p. 57), in contrast to much else in man's activity it must be contributing to the building of the new order. Work becomes, like the Spirit, an active agent of the new order proleptically present in this age. Secondly, it explains his equation of the toil of work with Christ's salvific sufferings on the cross. (p. 57) Without weariness, he notes, 'there is certainly nothing ever to be had'. (p. 57) Christ's cross ceases to be something totally unique, and becomes instead the paradigm of the more general truth that suffering is the anvil upon which human good is forged. Thus, as the 'Paschal Mystery' involves both 'the Cross of Christ' and 'the Resurrection with the power of the Holy Spirit', (p. 56) so too human work involves both 'weariness' and 'a new good' that is 'the fruit of human work'. (p. 57)

Conclusion

In this article I have concentrated on criticism. I have tried to show that neither John Paul II nor Jürgen Moltmann have developed an adequate theology of work from their theologies of the cross. Nevertheless there is something to be learnt from their attempts to achieve this aim. They are surely right that any truly Christian theology of work must view human labour from the perspective of the cross; that labour consistent with the ethic of the Kingdom of God must be "cruciform".

My complaint is not about their diagnosis of the theological task in this area, but about their execution of it.
Footnotes


2. Future of Creation, p. 60.


5. See his 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' of 1844, in Karl Marx: Early Writings, Harmondsworth, 1975, pp. 279-400.


7. Incidentally, John Paul II's use of sexist language (even though in this case he inherits it from Gaudium et Spes) does cohere with his attitude towards women and work: broadly speaking, their place is at home rearing the children. (p. 42) In his defence, it should be noted that Polish women are generally exploited by being forced both to work and to carry the full load of domestic and familial duties. See P. Hebblethwaite, Introducing John Paul II: The Populist Pope, London, 1982, p. 122.

8. Although, of course, the originals are in German and Latin, the same point applies.

9. In Wittgenstein's terminology, "work", like "game", is a word that has no one defining essence or property.
Instances of "games" merely have a family resemblance to one another. Whether or not an activity can count as a "game" is to some extent a matter of convention. Similarly, "work".

10. Recognized by Moltmann (p. 40), but not, I feel, taken seriously enough.

11. For example, in English "to work" (a verb), "a worker" (a noun), and "workable" (an adjective) may be considered to derive from the root "work". In Hebrew, 'ebed (a noun meaning "slave" or "worshipper") and 'abad (a verb meaning "to labour") are derived from the root 'bd.


13. I am grateful to Dr. Graham Davies for these criticisms of Moltmann's text.

14. "Ideology" is a term used in various senses. Here I mean the use of concepts or language to - unconsciously - legitimate an unjust state of affairs by making it seem natural or right or both. See, for example, A. Giddens, Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis, London, 1979, pp. 165-197.

15. For example, from The German Ideology: 'The premisses from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premisses from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live.' D. McLellan (Ed.), Karl Marx: Selected Writings, Oxford, 1977, p. 160.

16. Although John Paul II does deal with them in the earlier part of Laborem Exercens, he leaves them aside in his "appendix" on the spirituality of work. (pp. 50-58)

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A Christian Approach to the Problem of Security?

A Reply to Gordon Dunstan

The holy teaching while remaining single nevertheless embraces things belonging to the different philosophical sciences because of the one formal meaning which is its interest in all manner of things, namely the truth they bear in the light of God. [Aquinas, S.T., 1a.1,4]

There are broadly two conceptions of the appropriate scope of theology on the market today. On the one hand there are those who would equate it with what Gordon Kaufman calls the scientific study of religion, which at most 'purports to interpret the meaning, significance, and value of a particular segment of human culture, the religious sector'. [1] Theology here is to do with God, and that portion of individual and corporate human life labelled religious. The other, following the tradition of Aquinas, refuses this narrowing of horizons. In this tradition, it is not the subject matter (God, religious behaviour) but the perspective from which the world is viewed that gives to theology its distinctive nature and unity. Here theology is concerned with all the matters dealt with also by other fields of human study and endeavour, but in the perspective of 'the truth they bear in the light of God'.

To name only Aquinas and Barth, surely among the most impressive and influential systematicians of this millenium, is to indicate the strength of this second tradition. Both of these theologians, albeit in different ways, reject firmly the suggestion that there are areas of human social life about which there is nothing of interest to say theologically. They resist the forcing of theology back into a circumscribed religious dimension that leaves the political, economic, and even ethical dimensions autonomous. Thus Gordon Dunstan is far from obviously correct when he states, in a recent article entitled 'Theological Method and the Deterrence Debate', [2] that 'there are some human activities which cannot be discussed in Christian terms at all', (p.40) including the activity of warfare and the concerns of security generally. If by this he means that there are some areas of human practice that are autonomous, about which there cannot be any distinctively theological position, upon which the central Christian symbols of the cross and resurrection cannot be brought
to bear, then he is outlining a position that is at best a contentious one. [3]

In what follows I shall briefly set out Dunstan's argument in this short but dense and important article (I), argue that his theological method is flawed at various points (II), and suggest an alternative substantive conclusion in the area of the ethics of deterrence to the one he defends (III).

I

Dunstan's key contention is that

if the language and meaning of Christianity are taken seriously, there are some human activities which cannot be discussed in Christian terms at all. There is no specifically 'Christian' way of waging war, or of amputating limbs, or of fixing oil prices, or of deciding for or against the nuclear generation of energy. (Dunstan, p.40)

In particular, the problem of whether to hold or use a nuclear deterrent

is one of those tragic necessities which ... cannot be categorized at all in Christian terms. There is no Christian solution to it. There is only a choice among evils; and there is the Everlasting Mercy for those who, in good faith, are driven to choose. (p.50)

In such areas theology has no direct bearing at all. In fact it is true, as Lambeth has repeatedly affirmed, that 'war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of Our Lord Jesus', and there is no "Christian" way of prosecuting 'an inherently unchristian pursuit'. (p.40) The Christian gospel is effective here only indirectly 'in the character which it imprints upon Christian men in the relevant exercise of judgement and use of power', above all in the production of the (Aristotelian) virtue of prudence. (p.51)

Dunstan's views on the nature of theology, and on the social relevance of the Old and New Testament witness, are assembled into a coherent picture that backs up this basic contention. "Theology" he defines as 'an intellectual discipline ... possess[ing] an integrity and autonomy of its own in that it handles a corpus or body of material of its own in a
disciplined way ... in its nature, an application of reason to the things of God, primarily the self-revelation of God'. (p.46) Especially in talk of 'a corpus or body of material of its own', this sounds as if Dunstan is opting for my first (restricted) definition of the scope of theology; and this suspicion is confirmed by his treatment of the Old and New Testament traditions. Particularly striking here is his ability to distinguish neatly between the "political" and "religious" experience and action of the Israelites. On the one hand 'their religious experience was of the God who revealed himself to them ... and in this experience of God they came to a responsive judgement upon themselves, upon good and evil, right and wrong, blessing and curse in man', (p.41) while on the other 'their political experience', although 'related to their religious experience', was distinct from it. (p.41, my stress) 'Prescriptions for security', such as 'invade this territory ... go out to battle ... ally yourself with this nation; do not become entangled with another' etc., although 'given also out of religious conviction', were clearly 'political prescriptions'. (pp.41f) Indeed, Dunstan is able to distinguish (and condemn) possible religious solutions in the political arena as those involving 'a passive "faith" in God which would leave the issue to him ... without human political or military activity at all'. (p.42) Such a confusion of categories is the type for the modern confusion of theology and politics.

In turning from the Old to the New Testament, Dunstan detects one striking and relevant difference. Whereas 'the Old Testament is the literature of a political community preoccupied, in every century, with its own security', (p.41) the New, although also 'the product of a community', arose from a community that 'never saw itself as a political community nor acted as one'. (p.42) 'Universalistic' by its very nature, 'the politics of national survival were irrelevant to it'. (p.42) Not only did Jesus 'carefully dissociate himself and his mission from that of a political messiah' (p.42) but, and this is perhaps the most telling assertion of all: there is no evidence at all that the earliest Christian communities took political action to implement their theological transcendence of imposed distinctions, as between bond and free. In all the interpretations which they left us of the death of Jesus on the Cross, there is not one hint of a promise attached to it of political success, or of its use,
actual or potential, as a political weapon; they thought entirely within the purely religious idiom of the various traditions of sacrifice ... (p.43, my stress)

Politically, in Dunstan's view, the earliest Christian communities were quietist, looking for the ultimate promise of the Kingdom of God at the end, but with no attempt to change the structures meanwhile. In the face of sufferings,

such as could be relieved by Christian charity were to be relieved - that is evident everywhere. But of political action to relieve them there is no hint. (p.43)

In the meantime they had a positive appreciation of the value of (secular) political government, as winessed by Romans 13, I Timothy 2 and I Peter 2, appreciating the benefits of the Pax Romana, and refusing legal and military service only because of the 'idolatrous' (i.e. religious) oaths involved. (pp. 43f)

Given this neat split between the political and religious realms, and the accompanying restriction of the legitimate scope of theology to the latter, Dunstan is naturally suspicious about claims to 'a specific "Christian approach" ... to the problems of security', (p.40) because this usually amounts to 'the uncrITICAL extrapolation of words and acts from the theological context of the mission of Jesus ... to the political context of our own day'. (p.51) Usually such allegedly Christian approaches amount to a mere veneer of biblical language covering a solution reached on other grounds; this is the case in particular with 'some of the products of the World Council of Churches' and 'some "liberation theology"'. (pp.40f)

Theology and politics must remain clearly separate. Certainly, 'Christian idealism, founded in faith' may give us 'goals', but it is 'Christian realism' that must dictate political action in the area of security in today's world, and this dictates 'the duty to deploy and control effective power', (p.51) including, regretably, the nuclear deterrent. (pp.49f) It is crucial that we appreciate 'the nature of Scripture, ethics and politics' (p.44) and do not confuse them, for such category mistakes would lead us seriously and perhaps catastrophically astray.

II
It is clear to me, however, that in his clear, confident and wide-ranging picture, Dunstan has made some category mistakes of his own. Perhaps the most glaring is the projection back into the society of ancient Israel of the contemporary distinction between "politics" and "religion". Of course these modern categories may, and perhaps must, be used in our analysis of the Old Testament and the community that produced it; indeed one of the most fundamental gains in the discipline of hermeneutics in recent years is the realization that the interpretation of an ancient text inevitably involves the bringing of our own categories and prejudices to it, that a "neutral" understanding of any text is impossible. [4] But it is a mistake to think, as Dunstan clearly does, that the distinction between religion and politics is really "there" in the Old or New Testament communities in essentially the same way as in modern western societies; that therefore we may divide Old and New Testament verses, motifs, actions and principles neatly into political and religious groups, and "apply" only the political ones to our current security problems.

That the separation out of relatively autonomous political and economic spheres is a comparatively recent development in western social history, rendering modern western societies structurally quite different from all earlier ones, is a commonplace of modern social theory that such an analysis neglects. [5] But even a historically imaginative study of the Old and New Testaments on their own reveals plainly the differences between ancient Israelite society and our own. Mention need only be made of the terms temple and kingship to appreciate that in those societies what we would now call politics and religion overlapped to an alarming extent. It is simply not true that, for the ancient Israelites, cult was a matter of religion while warfare was a matter of politics, as Dunstan implies. War was holy war too, the defence of the temple at once a religious and a political duty, cult also a political sphere of action. The temple-kingship complex was the power-centre of the symbolic order of what we would artificially divide into the religious and political spheres of ancient Israel. [6]

Neither is it true, as Dunstan claims, that the crucifixion of Jesus, that central feature of the Christian religious drama, can be neatly separated from what we would call political overtones. Several major
recent studies, notably those of Sanders [7] and Rowland [8], have stressed the opposite, and in particular that the immediate cause of Jesus' execution was the challenging of the religio-political order of the temple, and its dominant place in maintaining the *status quo* in Israelite society. As Sanders, for example, comments: in discussing 'the principal cause of Jesus' death, it is incorrect to make a rigid distinction between "religious" and "political" reasons'. (Sanders, p.296) No doubt Jesus rejected the idea that the Kingdom of God was to be established by force of arms (Sanders, p.326), but talk of the Kingdom, and the provocative symbolic acts of the triumphal entry and the temple cleansing, by no means betoken a Jesus who 'carefully dissociated himself and his mission from that of a political messiah'. (Dunstan, p.42) [9] Neither can it be maintained that the crucifixion was interpreted 'entirely within the purely religious idiom of the various traditions of sacrifice' (Dunstan, p.43) in the earliest church. Not only was the crucifixion interpreted in a wide variety of frameworks by the earliest Christians, with the use of legal and political as well as sacrificial metaphors, but also sacrifice was itself not a purely religious category in our terms - witness, for example, the martyrdom theology of the Maccabees.

Moving from these general considerations to examine specifically the political half of Dunstan's religion/politics divide, it is clear that here too his analysis is lacking. Firstly, in making a case that the earliest church had a uniformly positive assessment of the autonomous political sphere of the *Pax Romana* (from which he derives the appropriateness of such an attitude for the contemporary Christian) Dunstan operates with his own particular canon within the canon (Romans 13, I Timothy 2, I Peter 2). Largely absent are the synoptic gospels and, perhaps most significantly in this context, the book of Revelation. [10] It is only by ignoring the existence of the latter, and a superficial treatment of the former ('Put up thy sword into its sheath' does not implying Christian pacifism (p.44) etc.) for an exclusive stress on his chosen texts that Dunstan is able to assume the uniformly positive reception of the political *status quo* that is essential to his case. No one reading Mark or Revelation would readily imagine that their authors were as positive about the world powers as Dunstan suggests, or indeed that they subscribed to his view of the autonomy of the political realm.
Secondly, Dunstan's actual treatment of these texts, and of the non-activist stance of many of the earliest Christian communities, fails to take into account the restricted scope for action available to them in their actual setting as compared to ours. Thus Ernst Bammel argues [11] that the positive appreciation of the state in Romans 13:1-7 is to be accounted for by the precarious position of the Christian communities in Rome at the time of writing, and the questionable nature of Paul's bona fides. He argues persuasively that the authentic Pauline position is to be found rather in I Thess 5:3, which is severely critical of the official Roman ideology of the state in the light of the Pauline apocalyptic framework. [12]

And thirdly, it is clear from Dunstan's treatment not only of the New Testament, but also of western history and the current situation, that he holds an altogether too naively positive view of the state. Dunstan's state is the benevolent upholder of the Pax Romana within which citizens are freed to pursue their legitimate activities (including their religion) in security. It can be assumed to represent the best interests of all those it rules. But such a view of the state, traceable to Hegel and Durkheim in terms of the major sociological traditions, lacks perception of the criticisms that have been offered of it in the other major traditions that go back to Weber and Marx. It lacks the Marxist recognition that the state to some extent reflects and defends the class interests of the society that it rules; that it thus upholds the concrete injustices built into any present political order - an insight arguably implicit in the concept of the Kingdom of God that at the end will replace all earthly rule with one of divine justice. And it lacks the Weberian realization of the importance of power, and of the autonomy of the state from the interests of the rest of society - insights again arguably implicit in the New Testament concept of the heavenly "powers". Both traditions cast doubt on the advisability of cutting politics free from the critical edge of the theological tradition as Dunstan proposes. Both cast doubt also on the advisability of trusting the instinct for self-preservation exhibited by the modern nuclear state as being in the best interests of the whole of its citizenry. [13]
Finally to return to hermeneutical matters, and in this I lead on to my positive proposals to be made in the last section, it is misleading to imply that the appropriate categories for the hermeneutical task are "application" and "extrapolation". (Dunstan, p.51) "Creative reinterpretation" might be a more adequate term for the appropriate use of the tradition. Something of this nature can be seen happening to the tradition within the Old Testament itself (consider, for example, the repeatedly complex and creative reapplication of the tradition that has occurred within what we now call the book of Isaiah), between the testaments (for instance the uses of the terms Christ/Messiah and Son of Man), and within the New Testament also. Tellingly, within the canon we can see the tradition, caught up in this hermeneutical process, crossing and recrossing the boundaries of Dunstan's religious and political spheres. And so it should. It is only an anachronistic division of these two realms that could deny authenticity a priori to this process.

III

It is time to present very briefly a positive case. If, as I have argued at length, the biblical traditions are not to be isolated artificially from our modern political concerns, if the contemporary problems of security need also to be seen 'in the light of God', where does that leave us with respect to the deterrence issue? How might Dunstan's legitimation of the use of ultimate power in the interests of our own security look in the light of the foundation story of our religion; or rather, how might someone informed by the story of Jesus of Nazareth react to this position?

The crucial point to be made, surely, is that in the story of Jesus the concepts of power and security undergo a paradoxical transformation, a creative reapplication. [14] Thus the "security" that Jesus talked of in the Sermon on the Mount did not exclude the taking up of the cross to follow him (no doubt a literal allusion to martyrdom in its original application). And the "power" of God was manifested in Jesus being delivered up - acted upon - not in the action of the legion of angels that he declined to invoke. It is a paradoxical power made perfect in weakness (Paul), a glory exhibited in humiliation (John), a lack of anxiety amidst tribulation (Matthew) with which we have to do here. And it is all - if we
can trust the synoptic stress on the content of Jesus' preaching, and the symbolic implications of his final acts - in order that the Kingdom of God might be established: in pursuit of a non-quietist and indeed (non-violent) revolutionary transformation of society, necessitating the criticism of, challenging of, and change of the structures of society in the here and now.

The Christian religion has as its basis a crucified King, whom we believe to be the ultimate revelation of the character of God. It is difficult to see, therefore, 'in the light of God', how prudence can be accepted as the primary virtue, or security as an unquestionable good, or ultimate power as a legitimate means - at least as long as these words retain their usual meanings. If it is true, as Dunstan asserts, that warfare is an inherently unchristian pursuit, there is an alternative to forcing theology back into a circumscribed religious dimension, such that we may prepare for warfare in our defence unhindered by its prescriptions. And that is to renounce the use of warfare - at least warfare of as indiscriminate a kind as that necessitated by the use of nuclear weapons - and suffer the consequences. This alternative may not appear to be palatable, and it would certainly involve the putting of our security on the line. It may, in fact, involve the way of the cross. But it could claim to be a Christian approach to the problem of security, and in my view it is not to be dismissed lightly.

In today's world there is, indeed, 'only a choice among evils', as of course there always has been in every age. The story of Jesus, however, places a large question mark against the pursuit of our own security at the cost of choosing great evil for others. It tells of a man vindicated by God because of his consistent life and death of self-abandonment in the cause of the Kingdom; of a man who lost his life for the sake of the gospel, and found it.

It is reported that he expected his followers to do likewise.

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FOOTNOTES


[3] It clearly has connections with the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms, that is also implicitly under attack in this article.


[9] This is not to accept the case that Jesus was a Zealot. On the Zealot hypothesis, see several essays in Ernst Bammel and C.F.D. Moule (eds.), Jesus and the Politics of his Day, Cambridge, 1984.


[12] He argues further that Romans 13:1-7 and I Peter 2:13ff are traceable to similar Jewish and pagan sources: Paul is here adapting or quoting traditional materials, not giving his own position de novo. For an appreciation of the contingent nature of the Pauline arguments in general, see J.C. Beker, Paul the Apostle, Edinburgh, 1980.

[13] On various views of the state, see Giddens (op. cit.), pp. 17-31 and
passim.

Divine Creation and Human Creativity

Like the man who gathered from the vicar's sermon on sin that 'he were agin it', one gathers from reading the literature that "creativity" is something to be approved of. Exactly what this creativity consists in, however, and how it relates to the concept of divine creation on the one hand, and the spheres of art and work on the other, is far from clear. It is the purpose of what follows to investigate these relationships.

The terms "creation" and "creativity", as opposed to more mundane alternatives such as "making" and "productivity", seem to be used in many contexts because of the positive feel they carry over from the idea of divine creation. It is much harder, for example, to disagree with an activity called "wealth creation" [1] than to object to the same process labelled "making money". "Creation" and "creativity" are thus not merely neutral, descriptive terms: they alter our attitude to the activities that they designate. To designate an activity "creative" is - for good or ill - to legitimate it, not just to describe it.

In some cases, however, the activity so legitimated is less obviously wholesome than is divine creation itself, and the designation then serves to conceal dubious aspects of human behaviour. In such a case, the use of language acquires ideological overtones. [2] In what follows I shall examine three examples of the use of the idea of creation, or the use of the terms "creation" and "creativity", in recent literature. In the first two I shall detect tendencies towards such a descent into ideology. The examples chosen are deliberately extreme in order to make my point. There is, of course, more to be said in defence of elements of the views that I examine.
In the thought of some writers, firstly, creation is equated with the production of novelty, and creativity with a degree of fecundity in this enterprise: creation as 'when something new which was not there before is produced'. [3] This understanding of creativity, although he studiously avoids the use of the term, is implicit in Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. [4] Here Rorty defines the role of the philosopher of the future, the 'edifying philosopher', (p. 370) as one of keeping our ideas in a state of permanent flux. The edifying philosopher is 'the informed dilettante, the polypragmatic, Socratic intermediary between various discourses', in whose 'salon ... hermetic thinkers are charmed out of their self-enclosed practices'. His or her job is to 'keep the conversation [of western culture] going'. (p. 377) Correspondingly, although overtly Rorty rejects the idea of a human essence (including the idea that the essence of the human person is to have no essence), (p. 378) implicitly he characterizes human nature as creative in the sense of generating novelty. Human beings are (normatively) 'generators of new descriptions'. (p. 378, my stress) The 'freezing-over over of culture' (p. 377) which would result from philosophy entering upon 'the secure path of a science', [5] and ceasing to create new ideas, (pp. 369f) would amount to 'the dehumanization of human beings'. (p. 377) For the edifying philosopher, the authentic sense of 'wonder which poets can sometimes cause' comes from a 'wonder that there is something new under the sun'. (p. 370, my stress)

Jürgen Moltmann (in another context) traces this cry for ceaseless movement and activity back to Hegel, for whom Geist was 'pure activity', 'absolute restlessness'. 'This god', he comments, 'who is understood as actus purus or pure activity, knows no Sabbath. In this respect, he is a heathen god'. [6] Yet Rorty's concept of the human spirit is even less satisfactory than Hegel's, because all idea of a goal for the creative process has been abandoned. Rorty's spirit, unlike that of Hegel, has no overall direction underlying its deconstructive activity. Under the stimulus of its philosophical activator it merely flails about, satisfying itself with movement and novelty, either for their own sakes,
or just to prove to itself that it is still alive. Although the conversation of western culture is to be kept going, there seems to be no concern about where it is going to. The truths that edifying philosophy produces are not the point of the philosophical enterprise, but 'only accidental by-products' of it. (Rorty, pp. 378f)

The ideological possibilities of such a concept of creativity should be clear. If, paradoxically, ideas are good because they are new, rather than good because they are - good - and when all possible descriptions of the human good are considered equally deceptive if taken seriously as "true", then the basis for any fundamental change in society is cut away. Not only may some very unpleasant ideas and actions be legitimated in this way (was Hitler "creative"? - he certainly "created" a new form of society!), but the grounds for steadfast and persistent action in support of an ideal are impugned. Christian faith, indeed, is no longer new; but is that adequate reason to abandon it?

My second characterization of creativity is that embodied in the creation theology of the North American Catholic theologian Michael Novak. Here the notion of human creativity is assimilated fully to the economic sphere, and explicitly related to a notion of divine creation.

[7]

For Novak, 'the human person is a creator and nowhere more so than at his daily economic tasks'. Made in the image of God, each person has 'the vocation to work and to create' ('Creation', p. 36). This creativity essentially consists in a high and increasing rate of economic production, aided and abetted by scientific and technological innovation ('Creation', p. 37; 'Corporation', pp. 207f). In this, says Novak, the person is 'sharing in the creativity of the Creator' and 'fulfilling his vocation' as \textit{imago Dei, the image} of God the Creator ('Creation', p. 33). What is true for the individual is true also, Novak continues, for the modern business corporation, and for society as a whole. The modern business corporation is a 'much despised incarnation of God's presence in this world' that reflects the role of the suffering servant in Deutero-Isaiah ('Corporation', p. 203). 'Its creativity makes
available to mass markets the riches long hidden in creation. Its creativity mirrors God's ('Corporation', p. 208). Moreover, a society in which personal economic creativity is released, such that the entire economy becomes creative, is a society 'constructed ... in the image of the Blessed Trinity, the Creator of all things, Lord of history, Spirit brooding over dark creation' ('Creation', p. 37).

Besides rendering the mystery of God's internal nature almost blasphemously mundane - the joke about Yahweh & Son seems far too close for comfort - this account of creativity also operates ideologically. Carrying over the positive overtones attached to divine action into the economic sphere, it draws attention away from the unfortunate side-effects of the operation of the capitalist economic system - specifically the generation of the class system and the impoverishment of the third world - and the dehumanizing aspects of many forms of modern social labour. [8] To say that this economic productivity mirrors divine creation is to obscure, more than to illuminate, its true nature.

Creativity may also, thirdly, be regarded as a matter of self-expression; and this may be so both in the aesthetic and in the economic spheres. Expressivist aesthetics, for example, regards the notion of creativity as belonging to the sphere of art. Thus, to take Jürgen Habermas as an example here, [9] art may be characterized as a matter of the authentic expression of the subjectivity to which we have privileged access. The talented artist, Habermas writes, 'lends authentic expression to those experiences he had in encountering his own de-centred subjectivity, detached from the constraints of routinized cognition and everyday action'; [10] while aesthetic criticism has the function of 'bringing us to see a work or performance in such a way that it can be perceived as an authentic expression of an exemplary experience, in general as the embodiment of a claim to authenticity'. [11] For Marx, on the other hand, it is labour rather than art that is a matter of self-expression. As he says in The German Ideology: 'the way in which men produce their means of subsistence ... is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life'. [12] And it this activity, according to Marx, by which the world
as we experience it - the humanized world - has been created: 'For socialist man what is called world history is nothing but the creation of man by human labour'. [13] Man for Marx is self-created, and human creativity is a matter of self-expression through labour. In much Marxist aesthetics these two (aesthetic and economic) views are combined. Non-alienated labour and art coalesce into the free expression of human creativity with which we will create the world in the socialist utopia.

None of these views that equate creativity and self-expression seem to be particularly satisfactory, however. The last involves a confusion of categories: although labour may have an artistic/expressive element, and art may be functionally useful, it requires an unwarranted belief in a utopian harmony of man with nature to think that the two could ever coincide. But to reduce human creativity to the aesthetic dimension of human existence is also questionable - as questionable in its way as a reduction of it to the economic dimension. If God is not to be seen as the great Economist, neither is he adequately represented as the great Artist.

II

In pursuit of an alternative concept of human creativity I have two suggestions to make. The first is that we re-examine the account of divine creation to be gathered from the texts of the Old Testament, and derive from this a correlative account of human creativity.

Discussion of divine creation has too often been dominated by the assumption that it is mainly to do with the making of "nature", the physical world. In the beginning God created the world, the story goes, and subsequently there was the quite different matter of redemption. In part this story has been based upon an exegesis of the opening chapters of Genesis which stresses creation as \textit{ex nihilo}, primeval, and autonomous from the process of redemption.
To accept this as the Old Testament concept of creation is, however, misleading. The creation theme is better approached in terms of its treatment in the Psalms and Deutero-Isaiah. Here God is neither primarily the maker of "stuff", nor the winder-upper of the celestial clock-spring. Nor yet, however, is he the being that would be projected by extrapolating the accounts of Rorty, Novak, or Habermas to infinity: the infinitely innovative, infinitely productive, or infinitely expressive being. Two themes are prominent in these texts that I want to highlight: the theme of Chaoskampf, of struggle against chaos, and the idea that the product of creation is not the natural order in and for itself, but the social order of the redeemed Israelite nation.

Generally in the Old Testament, creation is a matter of the ordering of chaos, not a bare making of some material that was not previously existent. Yet it is more than just this. In these texts Chaos is personified as the Sea or the Night, and creation becomes a battle or struggle, a conflict of wills in which one party emerges victorious. In this picture, God's creative activity consists in the forcing back of the personified chaos, and the holding of it at bay, to allow a space in which human society can emerge. Both the hostile elements, and human enemies, are subsumed under this category of personified chaos. Every night, for example, the forces of chaos press closer in to constrict, and threaten the ultimate extinction of, human life, only to be forced back again by the divine re-creation of dawn. Political enemies also press in and threaten to destroy the ordered fabric of society, similarly to be pushed back by divine action.

There is thus a blurring of what we see as natural and social categories. On the one hand, creation is seen as involving a divine battle with the armies of chaos. On the other, the redemptive acts of Yahweh are interpreted as creative. The product in both cases is Israelite society, the redeemed people of God. A good example of this interplay is to be found in Isaiah 51, where the cosmological battle with the sea-monster at creation is run into the foundational redemptive act at the Red Sea, constitutive of Israel as a political entity.
Awake, awake, put on strength,  
O arm of the Lord ....
Was it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces,  
that didst pierce the dragon?  
Was it not thou that didst dry up the sea,  
the waters of the great deep;  
that didst make the depths of the sea a way  
for the redeemed to pass over? [Is 51:9]

In this case, creation and redemption are not artificially separated,  
but mutually interpreted. Both are seen as aspects of God's seamless  
action in the creation of redeemed Israel. [16]

The purpose of this excursus into the Old Testament is not to argue that  
we should still personify the Sea and the Night, and thus retain a fully  
mythical world-view. It is rather to note four characteristics of divine  
creation as shown here that might be of interest in the derivation of an  
alternative account of human creativity:

(1) Its home territory is not the realm of ideas (Rorty), of the  
material world (Novak), or of our own existential subjectivities  
(Habermas), but the social world.

(2) Unlike in the self-expressive model, it involves struggle with  
an intractable, or even hostile, (social) material.

(3) Pace Rorty, although innovative, it is also directional: newness  
is not valued for its own sake, but only if it has a specific  
character: the character of the redeemed community, a community  
embodying the divine justice.

(4) The concept of creation is not to separated from the concept of  
redemption.

III

My second suggestion is as follows: if, as is widely accepted, the cross  
is the ultimate symbol of redemption in Christian theology, should we
not, in the light of section II above, look here for a transformation of our understanding of divine creation as well - and therefore of human creativity? If it is the case that 'the crucified Christ [is] the foundation and measure of Christian theology as a whole', [17] that 'the paradigm of divine action is the Cross of Christ', [18] that it is supremely here that we are to find the revelation of God, [19] then surely it is here too, in this paradigmatic divine action, that we should find our model for divine creation. Moreover if, as Karl Barth suggests, our 'creaturely activity' ought to 'take the form of correspondence to the divine activity', [20] then the cross will function as the paradigm for human creativity as well.

Let us allow that this is the case. I suggest that two results follow. Firstly, the paradigm for the divine creative Chaoskampf becomes the paradoxical activity of God in the cross of Christ. Not the making of the material world, but this creative struggle - a struggle that is the birthpangs of the kingdom of God - should act as the ultimate reference point for assessing allegedly "creative" human activity. Secondly, the homeland of the concept of creation moves from the natural (or subjective) world to the social world. The paradigm product becomes the new eschatological communities, a new social order witnessing to their future consummation in the New Creation of the kingdom of God.

It is that which the Old and New Testaments term "New Creation", [21] I conclude, a concept rich in social and ethical overtones, that is the paradigm for a Christian concept of creation. Creation 'refers to the act by which God will remove injustice from the holy city and bring about a truly just and peaceful society'. [22] The models of creativity implied by Rorty, Novak, and Habermas, judged in this light, are lacking. Thus although it is true (so Rorty) that creativity involves transformation or newness, this newness is neither primarily in the realm of ideas, nor un-directional. Although it is true (so Novak) that it is primarily societies rather than individuals that can mirror the creativity of the divine Trinity, this creativity is neither primarily to be located in the economic dimension, nor in the institutional arrangements of late capitalist society. And although it is true (so
Habermas) that creativity involves expression, what is to be expressed is not our decentred subjectivities, primarily in various art forms, but the nature of God in actions constitutive of a certain form of society.

At the end of creation, so we are told in Genesis 1:1-2:3, God surveyed what he had made, and pronounced judgement upon it. He found the result - the embryonic human society represented by Adam and Eve - neither simply new, economically productive, or artistically expressive, but good. I propose that human creativity needs to have a similar character if it is to be worthy of the name.

FOOTNOTES


[9] Habermas' views on aesthetics are in fact more complicated than these quotations suggest. See J. Habermas, 'Questions and Counterquestions', in R.J. Bernstein (ed.), Habermas and Modernity, pp. 192-216, especially pp. 199-203.


[13] Ibid., p. 95.

[14] For the following, compare Clifford, op. cit.


English-Speaking Justice is a republication of George Parkin Grant's 1974 Josiah Wood Lectures, with an introduction by Stanley Hauerwas and Alasdair MacIntyre. As the imprimatur of that editorial team suggests, the book is worth reading. Those who have read MacIntyre's *After Virtue* will recognize the genre.

In the second chapter, which I found the best, Grant provides a useful critique of John Rawls's influential *A Theory of Justice*, chosen as an example of modern English-speaking ethical and political theory. Among other things, Grant accuses Rawls of being parochial in his philosophical diet (ignoring Plato and Aristotle, Marx and Nietzsche), of being unaware of the sociological setting of American thought (ignoring the complicating factors of public bureaucracy and private corporations, and the concrete basis of American liberal life in war and imperialism), of assuming as self-evident (against Socrates and Christ) that 'self-interest in general is the maximising of the cosy pleasures' (p.46), and of operating with an anaemic view of Kant, cut down to the size of modern analytic philosophy.

The point of this critique, as chapters three and four show, is to demonstrate that modern "liberal" thought is intellectually bankrupt. It has survived in England and North America, Grant argues, simply because a society which is economically and politically successful is not forced to think too clearly about its philosophical assumptions. But Nietzsche had already completely undermined the philosophical basis of liberal society in the late nineteenth century, and the cracks are now beginning to show in the facade on the level of legal judgement. The influential *Roe vs. Wade* decision of the U.S. supreme court that 'no state has the right to pass legislation which would prevent a citizen from receiving an abortion during the first six months of pregnancy', (p.69) raises the question of the ontological definition of a "person" which contractual liberal thought cannot answer. The whole edifice is here shown to be without foundation, theoretically unable to resist the Nietzschean challenge.
that the weak should give way to the interests of "the "creative" strong" (p.83). Contractual liberalim must therefore be abandoned for a retreat to the accounts of justice offered by Plato and Christianity - accounts that have in any case always provided liberalism with its actual content.

If Marx, Nietzsche and Plato are the main influences in the book as described so far, the influence of Heidegger shows through, not only in the phraseology, but also in the analysis of the nature and significance of "technology". For Grant, "technology" is not just a matter of constructing bridges, it is the embodiment of a form of reason - in fact Max Weber's Zweckrationalität - that is the key structural feature of modern western civilization, and responsible for much of its ambiguity. In its embodiment in private and public bureaucracies it is seen to be the enemy rather than the ally of the participatory democracy that was the early liberal ideal; and modern forms of cybernetics ('behaviour modification, genetic engineering, population control by abortion' (p.9)) pose the problems it raises even more acutely. Grant sets up the issue of modernity as a straight fight between "justice" as understood by Plato and "technology" as thus delineated. He is pessimistic that the desired victory of "justice" will come from within the intellectually barren English-speaking world.

Any book that attempts to do justice to the complex phenomenon of modernity in only 100 pages is bound to have some defects. I will suggest just two, that centre on Grant's use of the concept of "technology". Firstly, his analysis of technology bears a striking resemblance to that of Horkheimer and Adorno's Dialectic of Enlightenment (which is not mentioned in text or footnotes) and shares its weaknesses. In particular, it assumes too readily that "technology" is an undifferentiated whole that must characterize our attitude to the social and subjective worlds once we allow its validity in our dealings with the natural/physical world. Secondly, by characterizing modernity in terms of the category of technology, Grant downplays the significance of the other changes that have occurred in the transition to modernity, such as the change in the class structure and the rise of the nation state with its monopoly of violence.
Such weaknesses tend to suggest that Grant himself is a little too parochial in his intellectual diet: there has been a considerable amount of water under the sociological bridge that Grant does not show himself aware of. Nevertheless, as a critique of the predominant American ideology the book is interesting, persuasive and timely.

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