

Labor

INTRODUCTION

MEN have dreamed of a golden age in the past when the world was young and everything needed for the support of life existed in profusion. Earth, Lucretius writes, once brought forth

Vineyards and shining harvests, pastures, arbors,
And all this now our very utmost toil
Can hardly care for, we wear down our strength
Whether in oxen or in men, we dull
The edges of our ploughshares, and in return
Our fields turn mean and stingy, underfed.

When the aged plowman "compares the present to the past," Lucretius adds, he realizes that "the past was better, infinitely so, / His father's lot was fortunate," for he lived in the time of earth's plenty.

This ancient myth of a golden age has sometimes taken the form, as with Rousseau, of an idealization of primitive society, uncorrupted by civilization, in which an easy, almost effortless, existence corresponded to the simplicity of man's needs. Rousseau pictures a situation in which "the produce of the earth furnished [man] with all he needed, and instinct told him how to use it," so that "singing and dancing, the true offspring of love and leisure, became the amusement, or rather the occupation of men and women assembled together with nothing else to do."

In our own day, industrial utopias have been projected into a future made free from toil by the adequacy of machines or the efficiency of atomic energy. Long before the industrial era, Aristotle envisioned, as a supposition contrary to fact, a society built upon labor-saving machines. "If every instrument could accomplish its own work," he writes, if "it could obey or anticipate commands, if "the shuttle would weave . . . without a hand to guide it, the chief

workmen would not want servants, nor masters slaves."

In all these conceptions of a better life, labor is eliminated or reduced. The implication seems to be that the labor required for the maintenance of all historic societies is an affliction, a drudgery, a crushing burden which deforms the lives of many, if not all. The pains of toil do not belong to human life by any necessity of human nature, but rather through the accident of external circumstances which might be other than they are. "Work became indispensable," according to Rousseau, only when "property was introduced," and then "vast forests became smiling fields, which man had to water with the sweat of his brow." It was the result of "some fatal accident, which, for the public good, should never have happened." Man might have realized his nature more surely and richly if, like the lilies of the field, he neither toiled nor spun.

The contrary view would maintain that work is not a curse but a blessing, filling man's hours usefully, turning to service energies which would otherwise be wasted or mispent in idleness or mischief. The sinfulness of sloth implies the virtue of work. The principle of activity, according to Hegel, whereby "the workman has to perform for his subsistence," gives man a dignity which "consists in his depending entirely on his diligence, conduct, and intelligence for the supply of his wants. In direct contravention of this principle" are "pauperism, laziness, inactivity."

It is even suggested that useful occupations save men from a boredom they fear more than the pain of labor, as evidenced by the variety of amusements and diversions they invent or frantically pursue to occupy themselves when

work is finished. The satisfactions of labor are as peculiarly human as its burdens. Not merely to keep alive, but to keep his self-respect, man is obliged to work.

"In the morning when thou risest unwilling," the emperor Marcus Aurelius tells himself, "let this thought be present—I am rising to the work of a human being. Why, then, am I dissatisfied if I am going to do the things for which I exist and for which I was brought into the world? Or have I been made for this, to lie in the bed-clothes and keep myself warm? But this is more pleasant. Dost thou exist, then, to take thy pleasure, and not at all for action and exertion?"

The perspectives of theology give still another view of labor. It is not an accidental misfortune which men may some day be able to correct. But neither is it a blessing nor the thing for which man was created. When the golden age of Saturn came to an end, and Jupiter replaced him on the throne of heaven, then, as Virgil tells the story, labor was first introduced into the world. "Before Jove's time,

No settlers brought the land under subjection;
Not lawful even to divide the plain with landmarks
and boundaries:

All produce went to a common pool, and earth
unprompted

Was free with all her fruits.

Jove put the wicked poison in the black ser-
pent's tooth,

Jove told the wolf to ravin, the sea to be
restive always,

He shook from the leaves their honey, he had all
fire removed,

And stopped the wine that ran in rivers everywhere,
So thought and experiment might forge man's
various crafts

Little by little, asking the furrow to yield the
corn-blade,

Striking the hidden fire that lies in the veins of flint.

Here, while labor may in some sense be a punishment, or at least a fall from the golden age, it still does result in benefits. "The Father of agriculture . . . sent worries to sharpen our mortal wits/And would not allow his realm to grow listless from lethargy"; as a result, "numerous arts arose." But although "labor and harsh necessity's hand will master anything," it is still "unremitting labor."

According to Judeo-Christian doctrine, la-

bor is an inevitable consequence of man's fall from grace, a punishment for Adam's disobedience like disease and death. In the earthly paradise of Eden, the children of Adam would have lived without labor or servitude of any sort. But when Adam sinned, the Lord God said unto him: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life . . . In the sweat of thy face, shalt thou eat bread, till thou return into the ground."

That work should be painful belongs to its very essence. Otherwise it would not serve as a penalty or a penance. But, in the Christian as in the Virgilian view, labor also contributes to such happiness as man can enjoy on earth. The distinction between temporal and eternal happiness is a distinction between a life of work on earth and the activity of contemplation in heaven. This does not mean the elimination of leisure and enjoyment from earthly life, but it does make labor their antecedent and indispensable condition. It also means that even in his highest activities—in the development of his arts and sciences—man must be perpetually at work. His achievement of truth or beauty is never so perfect and lasting that he can rest in it.

IN THESE DIVERSE CONCEPTIONS of the relation of labor to human life, work seems to have several different meanings. It always involves activity or exertion. Its clearest opposite is sleep. But other things are also opposed to work—play or amusement, leisure, idleness. When leisure is not identified with idleness, it involves activity no less than work. So, too, many of the forms of play require intense exertion of body or mind. The difference, therefore, must lie in the nature or purpose of the activity.

Aristotle suggests what the difference is when he puts play, work, and leisure in an ordered relationship to one another. Nature, he writes, "requires that we should be able, not only to work well, but to use leisure well." Leisure is "the first principle of all action" and so "leisure is better than work and is its end." As play and with it rest (*i.e.*, sleep) are for the sake of work, so work in turn is for the sake of leisure.

The characteristics of work as the middle term here seem to be, first, that work is activity directed to an end beyond itself and, second, that it is productive of the necessities which sustain life rather than of the goods by which life is perfected. The political or speculative activity which Aristotle considers the proper occupation of leisure is intrinsically good or enjoyable. For participation in such activities leisure—in the sense of time free from labor—is required; but since the good life cannot be lived unless life itself is sustained, labor also is a prerequisite.

Work is thus defined by wealth as its immediate end—the production of the external, economic, or consumable goods which support life. Though play has the immediately enjoyable character of an activity performed for its own sake, Aristotle subordinates it to work, assigning to it the same utility which rest has. Both refresh men from the fatigues of labor and recreate the energies needed for work. “Amusement,” he writes, “is needed more amid serious occupations than at other times, for he who is hard at work has need for relaxation, and amusement gives relaxation.”

The economic sense which connects work and labor with wealth seems to be the primary but not the only sense in which these terms are used in the great books. There is the more general sense of human work as any productive activity in which men exercise some art or skill. The familiar distinction between skilled and unskilled labor may be only a distinction in degree if there is truth in the theory that some degree of skill—some rudimentary art at least—is required for the performance of the simplest tasks of hand and eye.

Kinds of work, according to this theory, can be differentiated by reference to the type of art involved. The ancient distinction between the servile and the liberal arts also divides workers into those who manipulate and transform physical materials and those who employ the symbols of poetry, music, or science to produce things for the mind. This distinction between manual and mental work, based on the character of the work itself, is not to be identified with the distinction between slave and free labor. The latter is based

on the status of the worker. Even in the slave economies of the ancient world, some freemen were artisans, farmers, or sailors, and some slaves were philosophers. Nor is mental as opposed to manual work necessarily directed to the production of the goods of the mind. The white-collar workers of an industrial economy, employed with the symbols of finance, accounting, or management, do mental work which has its ultimate end in the production or exchange of material goods.

THERE ARE STILL other traditional distinctions among kinds of work and types of workers, all of which cannot be put together into a single scheme of classification without much overlapping. Some distinctions, like that between handwork and machine labor or between healthful and unhealthful occupations, turn on the characteristics of the work itself. Some depend on the social conditions under which the work is done or on the relationship between the individual worker and other men. The work to be done may be accomplished by an individual working alone, or by the cooperative labor of many; and, in the latter case, the social organization of the laboring group may involve the ranking of men according to the functions they perform.

Here we get the division into the master craftsmen, who plan and superintend, and all grades of helpers who execute their directions. One meaning of the word “menial” as applied to work signifies the inferior tasks in the hierarchy of functions; but it is also used to express society’s opinion of those who perform certain tasks, such as that of the domestic servant. The distinction between what is menial and what is dignified work varies, of course, from society to society and from one age to another.

The characterization of labor as productive or nonproductive, and of work as useful or wasteful, is based on strictly economic criteria and on considerations of social welfare. The sense in which work cannot be divorced from the production of some extrinsic effect is not violated by the conception of nonproductive labor as work which in no way increases the wealth of nations.

"There is one sort of labor which adds to the subject upon which it is bestowed; there is another which has no such effect. The former," writes Adam Smith, "may be called productive; the latter, unproductive labor . . . The labor of some of the most respectable orders in society is . . . unproductive of any value . . . The sovereign, for example, with all the officers both of justice and war who serve under him, the whole army and navy, are unproductive laborers . . . Like the declamation of the actor, the harangue of the orator, or the tune of the musician, the work of all of them perishes in the very instant of its production."

The standard by which Marx judges the usefulness of labor also implies the economic notion of a commodity. "Nothing can have value," he says, "without being an object of utility. If the thing is useless, so is the labor contained in it." But Marx also adds a criterion of social utility. "Whoever directly satisfies his own wants with the produce of his labor, creates, indeed, use-values, but not commodities. In order to produce the latter, he must not only produce use-values, but use-values for others, social use-values." It is by this last criterion that Marx criticizes the capitalist economy for its "most outrageous squandering of labor power" in superfluous or socially useless production. These distinctions, it should perhaps be said, have largely disappeared from modern economic literature and usage.

THE PRINCIPLE OF the division of labor does not depend upon any particular classification of work or workers according to type. Nor does it belong to one system of economy rather than another. But the ancients, concerned as they were with its bearing on the origin and development of the state, saw the division of labor as primarily of political significance; whereas the moderns are more concerned with its economic causes and consequences.

Thucydides compares the poverty and crude life of the early Hellenic tribes with the wealth, the power, and the civilization of Athens, Sparta, Corinth, and other city-states at the opening of the Peloponnesian War. The dif-

ference is not to be accounted for in terms of the invention of new tools, but rather in terms of the greater efficiency in production which is obtained by a division of labor. This is both an effect and a cause of the enlargement of the community, and its increasing population. The greater the number of men associated in a common life, the greater the number of specialized tasks which can be assigned to different members of the community.

This observation is formulated by Plato and Aristotle in their accounts of the origin of the state. The advantages which the state confers upon its members are in part won by the division of labor in which they participate.

The isolated family, Aristotle remarks, is barely able to supply the "everyday wants" of its members. The tribe or village, which is an association of families, can achieve a little more than bare subsistence; but not until several tribes unite to form a city does a truly self-sufficing community come into existence, and one with an adequate division of labor. Some men, if not all, can then acquire the leisure to engage in the arts and sciences and politics—the pursuits of civilization which have their material basis in sufficient wealth.

The effect of the division of labor on the social structure of the state seems to be generally agreed upon by all observers, ancient and modern. Men are divided into social classes according to the kind of work they do—not only by reference to the type of economically productive labor, but also in terms of the distinction between labor and leisure, or between economic and other functions in society.

All do not agree, however, that such class distinctions are as beneficial to society as the increase of wealth or opulence which the division of labor affords. They not only threaten the unity and peace of the society, but tend to degrade the condition of labor by reducing the individual worker to a cog in the machine. The division of labor frequently restricts him to a slight and insignificant task, repetitively performed, and so makes it impossible for him to develop his skill or to enjoy any pride of workmanship. From a purely economic point of view, Smith advocates the greatest intensification of the division of labor. Each

more minute subdivision of tasks augments efficiency in production. But from the human point of view, he sees that this method of maximizing wealth by dividing men into functional groups—one man, one task—leads to the mental impoverishment of the men, who require a multiplicity of functions for their development.

“In the progress of the division of labor,” Smith writes, “the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labor . . . comes to be confined to a few very simple operations, frequently one or two . . . The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations . . . has no occasion to exert his understanding or to exercise his invention . . . He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become.” The situation seems even worse to Marx. The industrial system, revolutionizing the mode of work, “converts the laborer into a crippled monstrosity, by forcing his detailed dexterity at the expense of a world of productive capabilities and instincts.” Marx’s phrase “crippled monstrosity” can be read into the character of Kafka’s Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis*, in which the reader senses that the monotony of Samsa’s job has contributed to his transformation into a cockroach. The degradation of labor in the modern world is a large part of Kafka’s metaphor of angst.

THE GREAT ISSUES concerning labor seem to be moral and political rather than economic. The consideration of the division of labor from the point of view of efficiency in production remains purely economic only when it is abstracted from any concern about the effect upon the laborer. The analysis of factors affecting the productivity of labor ceases to be merely economic when the hours, conditions, and organization of work are viewed in terms of the workingmen.

The determination of wages by the buying and selling of labor (or, as Marx insists, of labor-power) as a commodity subject to market conditions of supply and demand; the difference between real and nominal wages as

determined by the level of wages in relation to the price of other commodities; the so-called “iron law of wages” according to which wages will be established at the minimum of bare subsistence for the laborer and his family—these are matters which the economist may deal with in a descriptive or historical manner, calculating rates and ratios without regard to questions of justice. But in terms of such formulations questions of justice are raised and become the great issues concerning the rights of workmen to the fruits of their labor, to the security of full employment and other forms of protection, to collective bargaining, to a voice in the management of industry or business.

These are the problems of a capitalist economy, to which the earlier partisans of capital and of labor proposed different solutions. Yet the principles of justice to which the parties in conflict appeal seem to be no less applicable to even earlier conflicts in other economic systems—between master and slave or between feudal lord and serf. All the institutional differences among these three economies should not, according to Marx, conceal from us the profound analogy which obtains in the relation between owners and workers, whether the workers are chattel slaves, peons bound to the land, or industrial proletarians selling their labor-power.

“Wherever a part of society possesses a monopoly of the means of production,” he writes, “the laborer, free or not free, must add to the working time necessary for his own maintenance an extra working time in order to produce the means of subsistence for the owners of the means of production, whether this proprietor be the Athenian gentleman, Etruscan theocrat, civis Romanus, Norman baron, American slave-owner, Wallachian Boyard, modern landlord or capitalist.”

Marx undertakes to explain how the surface difference between slave labor and wage labor conceals the analogy. “In slave labor, even that part of the working-day in which the slave is only replacing the value of his own means of existence, in which, therefore, he works for himself alone, appears as labor for his master. All the slave’s labor appears as unpaid labor. In wage-labor, on the contrary,

even surplus labor, or unpaid labor, appears as paid. There the property-relation conceals the labor of the slave for himself; here the money-relation conceals the unrequited labor of the wage laborer."

Two phrases here—"unpaid labor" and "unrequited labor"—indicate that Marx is thinking in terms of justice. Elsewhere he calls the industrial proletariat "wage-slaves" to emphasize the presence in an apparently free economy of the same unjust exploitation which the word "slave" connotes when it refers to the use of men as chattel. The essential similarity in all forms of economic exploitation—which makes all forms of economic slavery essentially similar—is seen by Marx in terms of the production of a surplus value by the laborer; that is, he produces a greater value in commodities than he needs to support his own subsistence. This surplus value, when appropriated by the owner of the materials and the tools on and with which the propertyless laborer works, becomes an unearned increment, or, in other words, an unjust profit from the work of another man.

In *Animal Farm*, Orwell illustrates how such exploitation of workers is analogous to the abuse of animals by men. Old Major, the prophesying pig who symbolizes Marx, attacks man as Marx attacked the owners of the means of production: "Man is the only creature that consumes without producing . . . Yet he is lord of all the animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that will prevent them from starving, and the rest he keeps for himself."

THE NOTION OF VALUE—the value of commodities and the value of labor itself—is obviously of central importance. As indicated in the chapter on JUSTICE, the formulas of equality, which determine fair exchanges or distributions, require some measure of equivalents in value. What determines the intrinsic value of a commodity according to which it can be compared with another commodity, without reference to the price of each in the marketplace? Smith's answer to this question is *labor*. It is the answer given before him by Locke, and after him by Marx.

"Equal quantities of labor, at all times and places," Smith declares, "may be said to be of equal value to the laborer. In his ordinary state of health, strength and spirits; in the ordinary degree of his skill and dexterity, he must always lay down the same portion of his ease, his liberty, and his happiness. The price which he pays must always be the same, whatever may be the quantity of goods which he receives in return for it. Of these, indeed, it may sometimes purchase a greater and sometimes a smaller quantity; but it is their value which varies, not that of the labor which purchases them." From this Smith concludes that "labor alone, therefore, never varying in its own value, is alone the ultimate and real standard by which the value of all commodities can at all times and places be estimated and compared. It is their real price; money is their nominal price only."

This labor theory of value raises the further question of the value of labor itself. What determines its natural or real price, as opposed to its market or nominal price? On this Marx and Smith appear to part company, which may account for their further divergence when Marx declares that "the real value of labor is the cost of its production, not the average price it can command in the market"; and then goes on to explain how a surplus value is derived by the capitalist who pays for labor-power on a basis of the cost of producing and sustaining the laborer, but uses his labor-power to produce a real value in commodities which exceeds the real price of labor itself.

Smith, on the other hand, holds that "the whole produce of labor belongs to the laborer" only "in that original state of things, which precedes both the appropriation of land and the accumulation of stock." When "land becomes private property," the landlord "makes the first deduction" in the form of *rent*; and the capitalist, or the person who invests some part of his stock accumulation, "makes a second deduction" in the form of *profit*. After rent and profit are taken, the laborer's *wage* represents what is left of "the whole produce of labor."

Yet Smith also says of the landlords that "as soon as the land of any country has all

become private property," they, "like all other men, love to reap where they never sowed." The implication of unearned increment in this remark suggests that Smith is neither disinclined to mix moral judgment with economic description, nor is he at variance with Marx on the principle of economic justice. That Smith regards profit as the price properly paid for the use of capital and that he does not see reaping without sowing as an essential element in profit making may perhaps be read as a challenge to Marx's development of the labor theory of value into a theory of surplus value and unearned increment.

IT IS POSSIBLE, of course, that the difference in the conclusions of Smith and Marx from a common premise can be explained by the different directions their analyses take. It may not represent a direct opposition on a point of fact. The proposition that value derives from labor seems to yield a number of theoretical consequences.

Locke, for example, holding that it is labor which "puts the difference of value on everything," makes this the basis for the right to private property, certainly in its original appropriation from the common domain which is God's gift to mankind. "Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person. The labor of his body and the work of his hands we may say are properly his. Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state that nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labor with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property."

This view is shared by Rousseau. "It is impossible to conceive," he says, "how property can come from anything but manual labor; for what else can a man add to things which he does not originally create, so as to make them his own property?" In the same vein, Smith declares that "the property which every man has in his own labor, as it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable."

What further conclusions follow from this justification of private property as a right

founded upon labor? How is the original right to property extended into a right of inheritance? How does this conception of the origin of property bear on the Marxist conception of the origin of the proletariat—the propertyless workers who have nothing but their labor-power to sell? Denying the charge that communists desire to abolish "the right of personally acquiring property as the fruit of a man's own labor," Marx and Engels make the countercharge that the development of industrial capitalism "has to a great extent already destroyed it and is still destroying it daily." They propose public ownership of the means of production to protect the property rights of labor; they seek to abolish only "the bourgeois form of private property" which, in their view, is a use of property to exploit labor.

The rights of labor seem to be central in any formulation of the problem of a just distribution of wealth. But when other rights are taken into consideration, the problem of economic justice becomes more complex; and different solutions result from differences in emphasis. Even with regard to one group of solutions, J. S. Mill observes that "some communists consider it unjust that the produce of the labor of the community should be shared on any other principle than that of exact equality; others think it just that those should receive most whose wants are greatest." To weigh the merits of competing solutions, as well as to reach an adequate statement of the problem, the discussion of labor must be connected with the discussion of related considerations in the chapters on JUSTICE, REVOLUTION, and WEALTH.

THERE ARE ISSUES of justice concerning labor other than the strictly economic problem of income distribution. In the ancient world, for example, not only chattel slaves but also free artisans were frequently regarded as incapable of participation in political life. Only men of independent wealth had enough leisure for the activities of citizenship which, in the Greek city-states, was almost a full-time occupation. This, according to Aristotle, is one reason for the disfranchisement of the laboring classes who must devote a great part of their energy

to earning a living and who have neither the time nor training for liberal pursuits. "Since leisure is necessary both for the development of virtue and the performance of political duties," citizens, he maintains, cannot "lead the life of mechanics or tradesmen."

Against this oligarchic view (which also involves the notion that wealth deserves special political privileges), the Greek democrats take the position that all freemen should be citizens on an equal footing, regardless of the amount of their property or their conditions of labor and leisure. But the oligarchic principle still tends to prevail among republicans in the 18th century. Kant, for example, holds that citizenship "presupposes the independence or self-sufficiency of the individual citizen among the people." On this basis he excludes from the suffrage, as only "passive" citizens, "the apprentice of a merchant or tradesman, a servant who is not in the employ of the state, a minor (*naturaliter vel civiliter*), all women, and, generally, everyone who is compelled to maintain himself not according to his own industry, but as it is arranged by others (the state excepted)." They are "without civil personality, and their existence is only, as it were, incidentally included in the state."

The preference shown by the writers of *The Federalist* for a republican as opposed to a democratic form of government—or representative government as opposed to direct democracy—rests partly on their fear of the political incompetence, as well as the factional interests, of wage earners and day laborers. While expressing "disapprobation" of poll taxes, they still defend the right of the government to exact them, in the belief that "there may exist certain critical and tempestuous conjunctures of the State, in which a poll-tax may become an inestimable resource." Yet such a tax would seem to be primarily a device for disfranchising workingmen of no property and small income, and in the opinion of a later day along with the disfranchisement of minorities it has been so regarded.

The democratic revolution does not begin until the middle of the 19th century. But even then, Mill, who advocates universal suffrage, argues for the disqualification of paupers or

those on the dole, without raising the question whether the right to work—to avoid poverty and involuntary indigence—is not a democratic right inseparable from the right to citizenship. It is "required by first principles," Mill writes, "that the receipt of parish relief should be a peremptory disqualification for the franchise. He who cannot by his labor suffice for his own support has no claim to the privilege of helping himself to the money of others. By becoming dependent on the remaining members of the community for actual subsistence, he abdicates his claim to equal rights with them in other respects."

The historic connection of democracy with a movement toward political justice for the laboring classes strongly suggests that political democracy must be accompanied by economic democracy in order to attain its full realization.

IN MORE RECENT times, notably in the 20th century, the discussion of fairness or justice and of the factors determining the wage level has greatly receded. Writing at the very end of the 19th century, Veblen did distinguish, in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, between two broad classes of employment—what he called "exploit" and "drudgery." "Those employments which are to be classed as exploit are worthy, honorable, noble; other employments, which do not contain this element of exploit, and especially those which imply subservience or submission, are unworthy, debasing, ignoble." But Veblen did not pursue this distinction to any operative conclusion; reform, let alone revolution, was not part of his interest or system. Here, as elsewhere, Veblen writes as much to infuriate as to instruct. And, partly for this reason, it is the rich—the leisured class—not the workers, that attract his attention. For more on this, see the chapter on WEALTH.

There is from Veblen's writings, however, one comment of enduring value on labor: his identification of, as he terms it, "the instinct of workmanship," otherwise described as "a taste for effective work." This is something that anyone who has read Veblen notices thereafter almost every day. It is the inner-directed desire

of the worker, whatever his or her station or occupation, to be a master of the task and its requirements—to show that he or she, whatever the work, can do it well and with the particular skill and competence that serve the satisfaction of the observer, the employer, and most of all, the worker himself.

A second, more recent view of labor emphasizes not the employment but the social context of the worker and its relation to well-being and personal fulfillment. Tawney deals with this at a level of no slight modern relevance; modern capitalism, as presented in *The Acquisitive Society* (and Tawney's other writings), places a heavy burden of proof on work that contributes to the public components of the common living standard, that is to say productive activity devoted to education, public recreation facilities, health care, libraries, the provision of law and order, and much else. And it accords a moral premium to private effort serving the market economy. This, in turn, penalizes those who depend on public services, such as schools or libraries, and favors those who can afford a private alternative.

More generally, Tawney sees the ruling ideas of the time as sanctioning social indifference and even cruelty on a larger scale with, inevitably, a special impact on those who toil. "Since England first revealed the possibilities of industrialism, it has gone from strength to strength . . . The secret of its triumph is obvious. It is an invitation to men to use the powers with which they have been endowed by nature or society, by skill or energy or relentless egotism, or mere good fortune, without inquiring whether there is any principle by which their exercise should be limited." Central to Tawney's system, as it is to the British Fabian movement of which he was much a part, is a sense of balance. On the one hand is the energy and, needless to say, the will to expression which is to be welcomed; on the other are the restraints that enlarge the liberty and well-being of others, especially those who, lacking the skill, energy, relentless egotism, or good fortune, toil or live otherwise at the mercy of the more favored. Marx saw a solution in revolution and the euthanasia of the ruling power; Tawney, however, sees the solu-

tion in a humanized social and political context. His community or state can be civilized and improved; Marx's must be overturned.

A different view of the position of labor comes from Weber. This view emphasizes the emerging role of bureaucracy—the passage from individual to group or organizational authority. He sees this movement as a broad and immutable trend; he identifies it initially with public service and, in a notable account, reminds the reader that "the bureaucratization of organized warfare may be carried through in the form of private capitalist enterprise, just like any other business." Until the 18th century the regiment was a managerial unit with the colonel, who supplied the uniforms and arms, the entrepreneur. Army procurement is one of "private capitalism's first giant enterprises of a far-going bureaucratic character."

Although the approved ideology still resists it—as did Weber to some extent—he opens the way for recognition of the role of the worker in the modern industrial enterprise. This worker in the characteristic great corporation responds not to the orders and interests of an entrepreneur or capitalist, but to those of a large and complex bureaucracy, where the line between the director and the directed is often indistinct.

WITH THE YEARS of the Great Depression there came a large, even massive, change in the discussion of the position of labor in the modern industrial society. In the United States power as affected by collective bargaining and the role of the trade union in politics—old issues in Europe—was still on stage. But the matters heretofore mentioned receded into the background. In the industrial world the overwhelmingly important issue regarding labor was now its employment. Life might be less than perfect when one was on a payroll, but life was markedly imperfect if one had no job at all. In Britain this had been a problem of some urgency in the 1920s. In the 1930s unemployment became the nearly universal problem of capitalism.

Of the many who spoke to the issue, the most heard voice was that of Keynes. His *General Theory of Employment, Interest and*

Money, published in 1936, not only made employment the major topic of economic discussion, but, for the time, removed nearly all other questions concerning labor.

Prior to Keynes, the accepted, and in some economic thought the all-but-compelled, assumption was of a full-employment equilibrium. Were there, indeed, unemployment, some short-run cyclical problems apart, those so suffering could always get a job by lowering their wage claim. Then it would be worthwhile—profitable—for some employer to hire them. Admittedly unions might negate this remedy; not surprisingly, they were, in consequence, blamed for unemployment.

Keynes identified unemployment with failure of effective demand to carry off the supply of goods and services being produced or rendered. Since the time of the noted French economist and near contemporary of Smith, Jean-Baptiste Say, it had been an economic axiom—Malthus was one of the few dissenters—that production, in the rent, interest, profit, and wages that it paid out, created an equivalent and wholly adequate demand. This was Say's law. From Keynes came the denial of this proposition; from undue savings there could be a shortfall in demand uncorrected by lower interest rates and a greater flow of investment. Correction would come when production and employment spiraled down,

eliminating the excess of saving and establishing a new underemployment or unemployment equilibrium.

From this analysis came the great, at the time even revolutionary, remedy of Keynes. The state should intervene, and through borrowing and spending—running a deliberate deficit in the public budget—offset the deficiency of demand in the private or market economy. So it followed: deliberate deficit spending to increase employment, a nearly unheard-of thing in its day. From this came the yet larger conclusion, which entered fully on public policy in the years following World War II: the state would now assume responsibility for the level of economic activity in the economy and for its rate of expansion. The rate of economic growth would become a prime measure of the success of public policy.

Keynes's *General Theory* is not a book that is always clear as to contention. Like the Bible or Marx's *Capital*, it lends itself to sharp differences in interpretation. As with the Bible or Marx's *Capital*, the resulting debate as to meaning and intent confirmed many as disciples, for having invested time and effort in defending an interpretation, one is thereafter a disciple. As regards employment, labor, and the resulting public attitudes and policy, *The General Theory* remains the most influential economic work of the 20th century.