

# WORK REVISITED. THE TRIPLE PERFECTIVE DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN WORK: AN ARISTOTELIAN PERSPECTIVE.

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## Abstract

*The term 'work' is today one of the most common words on people's lips all over the world. People talk of going to work, coming from work, looking for work or a job. People leave their families, their homes, and even their children with strangers so as to go to work. Nor is it uncommon to come across people who tell you that they have not had the time to think, be with their spouses, their children, or their friends because of work. Work, therefore, has become a culture of a kind. This paper first focuses on the perfective dimensions of work at the psychic, intellective, volitive, spiritual and material levels, and then moves on to consider work as the apt ambit for the integration of knowledge, ethical and political action and the economic and cultural development of a people or a nation.*

## Introduction

Man is often described as the animal which knows how to resolve problems. The invention of the flint and fire, the arrow and the bow, the raft and the wheel, the dagger, the machine gun and the spaceship are just some of the examples that underscore human ingenuity. In animals we do not find progress of this kind. When faced with difficulties animals do not find lasting solutions to their problems of survival: they either become extinct or mutate. However, in such mutation or even any metamorphosis that may occur to them, they, themselves, play no role. They are simply passive recipients of external forces. Not so man who is endowed not only with an upright position of the body and two very able hands instead of paws, and a mouth instead of a beak or a snout, but, above all, man has a mind and a will with which to think, to plan his course of action and to resolve problems when they arise.

But man is not content in just resolving the problems of survival; often, unfortunately, he is also their greatest architect. The menaces of desertification and pollution of the environment that we are experiencing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the depletion of the ozone layer and the subsequent global warming that is coming upon us; disasters such as Chernobyl, the atomic bomb on Nagasaki or the recent terrorist attacks from Nairobi to New York and London in the last couple of years are also the result of that gift of reason and freedom that characterise man's rational nature. Auschwitz, Rwanda, Bosnia and Iraq are examples which show what work without ethics can do. A French philosopher once said that two kinds of harms beset the human condition anywhere: on the one hand, there are the harms caused by acts of nature, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, tsunamis, drought, and so on; then there are, on the other hand, the other kind of harms which are of the most terrifying kind: the harm that we human beings cause to one another (Bok 2000:60). With Cicero one can truly say that man, through his own activity, sets, a destiny for himself (De officiis, II, 4, 15), for good or for destruction.

The term 'work' is today one of the most common words on people's lips all over the world. People talk of going to work, coming from work, looking for work or a job. People leave their families, their homes, and even their children, with strangers, so as to go to work. Nor is it uncommon to come across people who tell you that they have not the time to think, be with their friends, or their children because of work. Work, therefore has become a culture of a kind. Some people can hardly talk to a stranger without first knowing what he or she does for a living. Many people fanatically pursue careers as if a good job were the sole key to happiness, a happiness understood to derive either from the 'status' of the job itself or from the goods and status that wages can buy.

A quick look at the history of work reveals that throughout history work has been either praised or cursed, but few have escaped it or had the luxury of deciding whether they should work or not. When asked why they work, most people will look at you with surprise. Those who are more open will tell you outright that you are asking an unfair and ridiculous question; ridiculous because they expect you to know that if they do not work they cannot make a living. This economic interpretation of work has become so strong in contemporary society that we tend to equate work with 'being on a job'. So deeply entrenched is this outlook on work that it is difficult to find people, at least in Kenya, who are willing to do something on purely voluntary basis, and when this happens, such persons are either suspected of having a 'hidden agenda' of a self interested kind, or being simpletons.

However, going beyond economics, we need to ask: is there another reason why man should work? This question was posed to a group of MBA students taking Business Ethics and, as can be expected, the majority of them affirmed that, if they had money enough to support their families they would never raise a finger. Pressed further, however, these same students agreed that they do not simply work because of a salary. It is a fallacy, therefore, to equate humankind's need to work with the need for material resources. There is a fallacy whenever a certain belief is held erroneously. It is a fallacy because on analysis of the reason why human beings work, we can discover that the economic factor is just one of various others. One good example is the proven testimony of so many people who feel utterly frustrated if their work does not challenge them; for example, if at their place of work there is very little to do, or if they are not given a job that is at par with their professional level of preparation, even if the remuneration they get is good. Such people feel bored, tired and unhappy. Many others would, if it was within their power, refuse to work in a place where they felt manipulated and exploited by their employers, no matter how well paid they were. This goes to show that in work and in a job, money is just a part of the reason for working, and that is because work is not only the source of our daily bread, but also, to a great extent, it is a sort of challenge as to what we can do. In it one finds an opportunity to increase what one is, inwardly and emotionally. Work gives us an opportunity to contribute something to society either materially or conceptually, as well as to grow inwardly by exercising some dormant capacities that can only grow through being exercised: talents, abilities and mental capacities.

## 1. What is work and what counts as work?

Work means different things to different people. A good place therefore to begin the exploration of its meaning is by looking at what words like work, labour, toil, and job mean. Another way of investigating the meaning of the word 'work' is by perusing the dictionaries of the English language. This, however, is not as easy as it sounds. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, offers nine long pages on work. The Random House Dictionary of the English Language lists fifty four different definitions, while *Webster's New Unabridged Dictionary* gives forty-five. This goes to show that, if one did not already have some idea of what work is dictionaries alone would not help much. It also goes to show that the meaning of a word has more to do with the way we use it and how others have used it in the past. Dictionaries, therefore, while explaining the meaning of a word also provide instructions on how to use a term.

In the terms work, job, labour and toil, we find that there is a sense in which they mean 'work' in general, and another sense in which they imply a certain attitude or condition added to the activity of work. Thus, the word 'work' is not only a kind of activity but a set of ideas and values related to that activity. For example, a construction worker digging the foundations of new building, a hawker selling her wares, a professional footballer playing for *Manchester United* or *Gor Mahia*, a nurse taking care of a patient in a hospital, a philosopher preparing her next lesson on Hegel and a mother preparing dinner for her family are all working. It is our attitude towards a task or activity that often determines whether we call it work, leisure or play. We usually not call watching movies, reading short stories, dancing at a party or participating in a gourmet competition work! Yet these too are human activities. The latter are usually listed under the category of leisure. In all the activities of the first set there is a common denominator which shows that all those people feel that they owe it to someone, even if that someone is the world at large, to do what they are doing. But, in the second set of examples, the activities in question are undertaken for another reason a reason we could call one's mere enjoyment or past time. That is to say, these activities are not carried out for their own or other people's welfare or necessity. They are carried out for pleasure.

Some scholars have added to the notion of work the fact of effort and self-exertion. However, this explanation fails when it comes to such leisure activities as sports which also require physical exertion. 'Toil' is described as exhausting labour or effort. The term work on the other hand does not necessarily drag in all these negative notions. *Chamber's Dictionary of the English Language* simply describes it as physical or mental effort to make or do something. Hence we talk of work being good, meaning that it is done well. We express pride in a piece of work and feel ashamed at some other work which we or someone else has done because we realise that it does not meet the standards expected of the worker in question or it compares poorly with other similar works done by our equals. There are some kinds of work which we enjoy doing, whereas others require great and sometimes unpleasant efforts. The word toil refers more to this latter type of work. Labour, on the other hand, is usually associated to physical work.

We could not correctly say that all 'work', 'labour' and 'toil' mean the same thing. However, despite their different nuances, all those activities are the result of a process which sometimes demands more mental activity and other times more of bodily energy and dexterity. That process, whether mental or manual, originates in the mind and is directed to the attainment of a desired end. Sometimes that process originates in the mind and ends in the mind. This would be the case, for instance, of a person studying something for an examination. Other times a process that starts from thinking passes on to decision making and this is accomplished in some practical action. We are familiar with activities which need much less thinking or planning because, after the initial organizational planning, their exercise becomes more of a routine, demanding more physical effort and less mental activity. The important link between all these forms of human activity is that they are all planned processes that transform something. In any one of them, *work is a process*. Sometimes it is a mental process, other times it is both mental and physical; other times it is more physical than mental and in all cases, the process produces more or less fatigue. Hence, the most common and best definition of work is 'a planned process that transforms something. In these pages we shall be looking at what it is it they transform and how.

## II. Work from a social science perspective

Research made on work within industrial society, coming especially from the social sciences has attempted to find out whether work emancipates or rather alienates the human person, and by extension, society. Principally the question has been: does modern society increase or decrease creativity in work, and if so, why, how, and with what consequences? From that focus, much arguing has resulted with two prominent theses taking the lead:

- On one hand there are those who emphasize the increasing alienation that takes place at work and they point to the separation that exists between the worker and the purpose and product of his activity (Ciulla 2000; Donati 1996). Examples of such alienation, they say, can be seen in the tensions within firms, and in the labor market, the problems of absenteeism, job dissatisfaction and so on.
- On the other hand, there are those who believe that, with growing technological automation, we are heading to wonderful creative possibilities for the man of the future, so wonderful that the man and woman of tomorrow will be liberated from the material and physical anxiety related to work because work will no longer be a laborious chore but rather a field for imaginative expansion yielding pleasure and gratification.

These two theories, as Donati (1966) correctly points out, stem from the same stock: the belief that 'unlimited growth of production, whether of material goods or of information is the ultimate emancipating factor or secret to happiness. However, modern perspectives concerning work are showing this not to be the case. With regard to the first perspective, for instance, the hypothesis regarding work appears to be negative because work is often

conceived in terms of master/serf/servant relationship. On its part the second thesis considers work as a purposeless expenditure of energy. This dichotomy in the social sciences is being overcome from studies emerging mainly from philosophy and theology such as those from, among others, John Paul II (1979), Illanes (1994), L Polo (1987), R. Alvira (1988 & 1992), Jacinto Choza (1987), and Scott (2006) and closer home the thesis of F. Wokabi (2002) which are gradually revealing that there is increasingly more awareness of the fact that work is being appreciated more and more in its multidimensional reality; that is to say, its biological, psychological, social, economic, cultural and spiritual dimensions. This is understandable if we consider that wherever there is equilibrium between freedom and necessity, and a willingness to make an effort—regardless of risk and responsibility—there will be creativity; and in creativity, man realizes part of his potential whose results give him satisfaction and joy.

That does not take away the reality of tiredness in work. No doubt, most workers, including students, home-managers and others who work in jobs that are erroneously dubbed marginal, with respect to the ordinary production of goods and services, execute their duties in constrained and sometimes alienated situations that offer little or no space for the expression of their interior wealth in terms of initiative, creativity, imagination, and so on. There have been attempts to alleviate that estrangement through various work mechanisms designed to make the work of such people more interesting. Among such efforts one can mention work models and motion studies, job rotation, name change to remove stigma often associated to certain types of work, and so on, but these changes by themselves do not seem to have changed people's attitude to their work. It is gradually emerging that the real solution to the problem lies more in social relations, self esteem and the possibility of understanding the role of work itself with regard to those two things.

The opinion discussed in the present paper is that the corrective of this negative approach to work does not seem to be in changing a job's name from say, calling a person dedicated to cleaning a 'housekeeper'—which in fact he is—or a watchman a guard—which he also is—or personnel management to human resource management—which again it is—and so on, but rather the emphasis needs to be in introducing a greater understanding of the role, meaning and place of human work in one's personality and development, as well as the part it plays in interpersonal relationships beyond those exclusively dictated by purely economic considerations such as productivity, efficiency, competition, and the like. This means departing from the individualism typical of the capitalist economic system described by Max Weber (1969) because in this system and its approach to work, despite the fact that it can, and indeed has caused admirable economic growth in the Western countries where it has been practiced, a close scrutiny of how it functions manifests a fundamentally irrational pattern and development, a pattern which from an ethical point of view, has been shown to function through the widespread exploitation of man by man and of everyone by everyone, including oneself (Stackhouse & Stratton 2003, Davis 2003).

On the opposite side we find the communitarian system typical of Western and Eastern

socialist states where work is collectivized with the expectation of making it more inclusive and realistic. Yet, here too, the rationale underpinning the objective of work still remains tied to economic considerations just like it does in capitalism. From a purely humanistic point of view, one could say that the only difference between the two appears to be that rather than advocate for private property and individualistic welfare, the communitarian centralized work patterns which include communal ownership of both the means of production and the benefits make work even more materialistic than does capitalism. For example, whereas the rigid capitalistic organization of work causes a universal alienation, communism inhibits all incentive to work, a consequence which is only too obvious if one looks at the development of the Eastern and Western block in Europe during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the final plight of communism from 1989 onwards. From a humanistic point of view both capitalism and socialism fail to regard work as a true social relation between two human subjects be they producers and buyers, employers and employees or both, who are truly interdependent and mutually value-adding. Hence, as Donati (1996) and Bandow (2003) observe, if work is to be re-valued as a truly human activity it is necessary to create a work milieu and understanding of work as an activity that fosters rather than inhibits complete human development and virtue.

### III. Work from a metaphysical perspective

Philosophers divide actions into various categories. There are those activities whose direct effect is to develop the mind making it more agile and sharp; other activities develop our capacities to judge and choose between various options of a course of action, while others are directed to the material transformation of some objects. All the three kinds of activities are dimensions of worthy work: worthy if and only if, they are the outcome of a human intention aimed at a specific end. Work that has a deliberate purpose is what is referred to as 'human action.' Similarly, any action that has a deliberate purpose is called 'human work', a distinction which is necessary because some people may argue that animals also work. We refer, therefore, to work as a reasoned kind of activity. Because it is 'reasoned', through it the agent knows and wants to effect some change into something or to produce something. For that reason, in a long ethical tradition that has its most eloquent supporter in Aristotle, especially in his best known work, the *Nicomachean Ethics* (N.E.), all human action has a moral dimension. If the action is good and well intended it makes the person who carries it out good. The same happens if the work being done is bad; for example, somebody torturing another person physically or mentally. Human actions are the seedbed of virtues. They either lead a person to a greater excellence as a person, or to his regression. Thus, explains Aristotle:

Every craft and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason, the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim (...). Now, as there are many actions, arts and sciences, their ends also are many; the end of the medical art is health, that of shipbuilding a vessel, that of strategy (military) victory, that of economics wealth (...)" (N.E. I, 1, 1094a1—19).

Personal fulfilment and happiness are attained through a process and only if the process or the activity meets the criterion of *arête*. The nearest translation of that Greek term into modern languages is 'excellence'. Excellence is discovered through appropriate inquiry into what human beings are (*their nature*) and what human beings are for (*their ultimate end*).

- On account of their nature, human beings are rational and social animals.
- On account of their ultimate end, human beings seek happiness: that is to say, they seek to flourish or to develop to their plenitude through their shared essence within a polity.

When we transport this pursuit of *arête* to work, we find that all work must in some way have some social dimension, either as direct practical service or because it contributes to augment that kind of knowledge that can enlighten the human mind regarding truth, the key to man's proper *telos* or end which is ultimate happiness.

As we have seen, work is an activity which requires effort and rational self application to something, with the view of realising something or of obtaining something; an activity with a purpose. To be good work, it is necessary that that purpose be in harmony with the human nature and its *telos* or proper end (Alvira 1988:23). St. Thomas Aquinas, the best interpreter of Aristotle, points out that it is proper of every being to act in accordance to its manner of being. In that case, the highest perfection of man in accordance to his rational nature is the completeness of his rational or intellectual and mental powers, and since those powers are directed to knowledge of the truth, its highest perfection is '*eudaimonia*' (N.E. 1, 1097215—30). The ancients called it 'contemplation' meaning that the mind dwells on and enjoys the most perfect being possible; this, the only thing that ultimately is pursued for its own sake, is also work in its own way. Of all earthly creatures only man is capable of contemplation. Consequently, man's capacity for work is a requirement of his nature intended to complete him or to perfect him *qua* man and thus to serve his highest end: knowledge and love of the truth. This is what we mean by 'perfective activity'. But in order to benefit from that capacity it is necessary that there should be the intention and will to do so and to do it well. This may not always be easy. Often we do not want to study, for instance. Or, for that matter, even to think. We may not feel like it, and yet we know that that feeling is not as important as what we want to accomplish. Here we have the contradiction between the 'feeling' and the 'will'.

The will is the volitive power, that helps one to push back the 'feeling', in this case, the feeling not to study, in order to follow the reason—specifically the intellect—which indicates the benefits of doing what we ought to be doing. The will is that power also called intellectual appetite that governs not only reason (mind) but also the passions, emotions or feelings. When the former director of Starehe Boys School died in Kenya recently (2005) many of his students remembered what they had heard him say so often: 'wherever you be, whether as a managing director of an important corporation or a minister of the government, if you are asked to wash a tea cup, be sure to wash it better

than any cup has ever been washed. These may not be his exact words, but they convey what desire (will) can do to transform an action from just an action to a good action. There are times when most people feel that they do not want to do things. The danger of work is to simply follow that feeling for that reason the advertisers of 'Sprite', the soft drink, have it wrong when they tell us to "obey Your Thirst" because there are passions and feelings which, if they are obeyed, hurl man down from the pedestal of rationality. It is rationality that tells us that although at times we wish we did not need to work, our nature requires us to do so in order to keep healthy, agile, decent and developing.

***Work: ambit of the exercise of knowledge and freedom***

To work is to occupy oneself in some meaningful activity. To 'occupy oneself', to 'exert self' or to 'apply-self', in carrying out some job requires that there be an end, a purpose to be achieved. Thus, says Aristotle: "every knowledge and every pursuit aims at some good" (N.E 1, 3, 15b) Work, therefore, is linked to an already established purpose or achievement. If we see a person doing something and when we ask him what he is doing or why he is doing it he tells us that he does not know, we conclude that that person is either lying or that he is out of his mind. This fact points to a relation between knowledge and activity. To establish a purpose in carrying out an activity responds to the already much discussed topic on the complexity of the human being regarding nature and freedom.

The human being, as any other natural being, enjoys the gift of a received existence or being; he is, consequently, one with Nature, on account of his materiality or 'bodyliness' and apart from the world of Nature on account of his spirituality which is manifested through his rationality and the kind of actions that emanate from him due to that rationality. An important effect of the exercise of this rationality is that the human person has a natural habit, aptitude or inclination to want to do things, to want to be actively engaged in doing something in his surroundings. The Greeks called that natural inclination 'hexis', (ἡξιό). That means that through his activity man can add something both to his own received nature and to the nature around him. Through those activities man forges for himself a personality and a life style. These activities are the result of his freedom and they make his position in the world different from that of the non human reality around him. In this sense we speak of the relation between man and the environment as that of stewardship. Man creates a habitat for himself with and in what surrounds him 'the environment'.

The acts by which the human being is able to do this are the ones which manifest that he possesses a higher intelligence and a capacity for 'self mastery' which he can use well or abuse. The acts which we have called 'human work' are what enable him to complete his 'given' nature. Through them and by them he assimilates the non-human nature into the activities of his 'freedom'. That is what we often refer to as development: he 'develops' the reality around him by elaborating it. This assimilation is, however, a two way thing because in transforming the reality about him, that reality also transforms man through the effort he has to make in order to master it. Thus, man is forever in a perfective process. A Swahili proverb expresses this notion very clearly: 'kabla hujafa hujambika', meaning

that so long as the human being, any human being, is alive he can be perfected. A similar Digo proverb adds that '*mlatzo ni mwenga* (<sup>1</sup>)', meaning that in this, all human beings are the same otherwise they would not be human. This understanding, extended to work, should be for every human being an incentive to want to advance and to improve whatever achievements have already been made through human effort; never to want to destroy them.

Classical philosophy, handles this complexity of man and his activities by categorizing them in three levels:

- To one category, the first one, are placed those activities whose final '*telos*' or proper end is pure by intellectual. Aristotle called this kind of activity 'theoretical' from the Greek term *theorein* which means contemplation. This is the domain of knowledge for its own sake (Aristotle NE 6, 1096b10—35; 1097a5—10, (Lobo 2002:21-25))
- Closely related to theory, are all those activities which deal with theory directed to action or *praxis teleia*—theoretical activity. The term *praxis*, the way it is used here, is derived from the Greek terms *praxis* (action) and *prakta*—achievable action—(NE 1.6.1096b33—34) whose Latin translation is *agere* and *actum*, meaning to do and differentiating 'to do' from 'to make' (Polo 1988). From them we have the English terms 'action' and 'practice'. To this group belong activities concerned with the various forms of human practical endeavour such as ethical and political matters, as well as all juridical forms of enquiry. As the realm of action, *praxis* is also the level of moral evaluations. Good actions are those which conform to the standards of right reason or right measure. Rationality comes from the word *ratio*, Latin for 'measure' or 'rule'. For example, a good teacher is the one whose students learn and achieve the standards set for the students of that particular level and age. A just person is the one whose actions always demonstrate fairness. Whichever way that weighting may go, it is made clear that 'human actions' including work, always have a perfecting or ethical significance. Similarly, a person is happy or less happy at work in proportion to how he or she understands her work. When a person has acted in conformity to the truth and expectation of the reality of their work, that person will be at peace, even though the remuneration may not be all that should be desired. On the other hand, a person who has been dishonest, besides the damage that this action may indirectly cause to the common good will often suffer from fear and suspicion. Through their own actions at this level, a person will either grow—mentally, psychologically and spiritually—or become interiorly stunted and externally disgruntled.
- The third level of 'human action' that applies also to work is what Aristotle called *poiesis* or technical action (NE 6.4.1138b18—34). Here too Latin comes to our assistance by having translated those terms to something more akin to the English language, that is 'facere', from which we get such words as 'factory', 'fact', 'manufacture' and others. 'Facere' simply means 'to make', but a kind of making that involves the body more

1. I owe this proverb to a Digo colleague from the Department of Philosophy at Kenyatta University.

than the mind. What Karl Marx referred to in his theory of alienated efforts of the worker was this kind of activity. (De Haro (1977). Material work is work that involves production, or manufacture of goods. At this level too, there is need to use knowledge, albeit of different levels with the resultant transformation of something external, particularly the transformation of nature for utilitarian or economic purposes. It is the level of production directly involving corporeal powers. To it belong the kind of activity we call technique, technology, art, and skills. An important moment in *poietic* cognition is where it links up with theory and praxis, for instance, in the decision of the criteria to be used in the application of theory to production or to technology. Art and design belong here too. Engineering and architecture also have their domain here. The important thing to take into consideration while working in this kind of activity is to link up theory and praxis knowledge, intention and action. That is why, even for the most apparently simple job, a certain amount of training is necessary in order to create in the work a certain amount of self - worth and self - esteem.

### *Work can and ought to be enjoyed*

In his study on work, Alvira (1988) relates fatigue, effort and self-exertion to a person's capacity to understand and enjoy what they are doing. According to him, the degree of fatigue one experiences when working is proportionate to that person's capacity to enjoy doing what she is doing. A person fully concentrated in seeking ways to alleviate the pain of a sick person will find no extra time in her hands to think of tiredness or boredom. For her, time tends to just fly. It is only later that she may realise that she is tired. Similarly, a mother taking care of her child rarely remembers that she is getting tired.

Based on this common experience of what happens when someone is totally engrossed in an activity, Alvira (1991) argues that the essence of work originates in distance: the distance that separates a point of departure to the point of arrival or terminus. Hence, work is 'temporarity' -from *tempus* or time. Time is described as duration or the temporal distance from a 'before' to an 'after'. Like in any other kind of distance, that implies that work is a process of moving from one point to another point, even if that point is only a mental one. Work and time are in this sense related.

When one enjoys doing a job the distance towards the destination or terminus of the activity seems to either be too short or not to matter at all. On the other hand, for a person who hates his work that distance seems to be endless. A person's attitude to her work, therefore, determines what they reap from it. If the motive for work is solely reduced to pure economics, the most probable thing is that that person may not enjoy their work too well. Time will seem to drag, and any loopholes to kill time will always be entertained. If, on the other hand, the motive for work is more enlightened and focused, it is likely that the 'distance' and 'time' of work are themselves appreciated as opportunities to gain and give something to society. The distance is thus travelled more comfortably and cheerfully. Work in this sense can also be said to constitute a polarity between challenge and response. That is to say, where there is love, work absorbs; time comes to a standstill

and the fatigue which sooner or later must be felt is at that point inconsequential.

At this level it is important to mention that work, the process to cover the distance to the desired goal, is simply a means to something else. That something else is what we have now to examine.

All human work can have as its end either the appropriation of something, in which case the end is already thought out; or the transformation or production of something new. In either case the agent has to attend not only to the end in view but also to the means that are required in order to achieve his goal. Viewed from this optic most kinds of work are only means towards some aspiration. Most work is done as a means to some other end and this end is also often a means in relation to some other aim and so on. In other words what we term *end* at any given moment, is in reality, only a means towards some other ends, and those also to some others, such as the sustenance of the family, prestige or power and so on.

Work, from the *production* point of view, and inasmuch as it is 'human action', with intentionality and volition, requires the existence of a last and definitive product. If it did not, production then would be the sole purpose of work, in a continuous circular manner, with no end beyond more production, more consumption and more production '*ad infinitum*'. That would leave us with work, (distance and temporality) as a continuous process. To conceive work this way, where there is no final goal outside production and consumption would convert man, and his essence to a working thing: a *homo faber*, a subject of continuous, never ending activity. This, to a great extent, is the approach adopted by Karl Marx because for him man is matter. His 'worker', therefore can not have any ultimate good—contemplation—because such a thing does not exist. Work and economy are therefore conceived to be ultimate ends (Marx 1976, Magill 1990 and Alvira 1992).

Production as the main end of work without any further aim beyond consumption of the products thus produced—food, houses, clothes, vehicles, electronics—and so on, seems to be an irrational argument. It is irrational in the sense that it makes little sense for man to have been endowed with reason (spiritual power) that can only serve his material (physical) necessities such as the need to eat, have shelter, have means of transport and communication, and so forth. That would make man a 'pure worker', bee-like, one who has to suffer continuous distance and temporality, toil and effort without any final goal. One needs to look beyond production and possession of these things to understand why man should work.

Even from the point of view of *appropriation* in the purely material sense of 'possession', a complete and sufficient meaning to this human activity requires that there be a possession which is both complete and final: to possess all, and to be assured of its perpetual security. But all material reality is characterised by contingency, the need for continuously 'making available', replenishing, repairing, up-dating. All this goes to show that work in this last sense, with material appropriation as its target, cannot be the end either but only a means.

### III. Perfective Dimensions: Being more through human work.

If we want to obtain any other significance of work beyond the satisfaction of the immediate material necessities then we have to look for another explanation for it. Helen Alford and Michael Naughton (2001: 42-44) distinguish and rank two types of goods that are pursued through business activity. This same distinction can shed some light on why man needs to work. They divide human goods into two categories which they call foundational goods and goods of excellence respectively.

A foundational good is one that we need in order to obtain other goods. For example, a good that interests us principally for 'X' reasons, when we employ it we gain something else. We need money in order to buy food, clothing, pay rent... We do not need money just in order to have it. Money is useless if there is nothing to buy with it. If housing, clothing, transport, et cetera, were available free of charge we would not need any money at all. Thus, many material goods which involve their consumption, occupation, or exchange, such as money, real estate, capital equipment—all fall into this category. They are necessary for survival for without life, no other goods can be pursued. However, eating, breathing, and drinking are essential things that human things, animal things and plant things all do. Hence, although essential, they are not specifically 'human actions' unless they serve also to support the self – conscious, rational and deliberate development that distinguishes human beings from animals and plants. They also assume the category of human actions when they promote or support human actions such as friendship, personal cultivation, moral self-possession, and so on. We pursue these latter goods more for their own sake rather than for the sake of eventual exchange for other things. They may also serve other purposes in our lives.

These foundational goods however, can be ennobled by being assimilated into our pursuit of the goods of excellence in work. They are thus raised to the higher level, the level of goods of excellence; the perfective dimension of human action. A contemporary Spanish philosopher, Leonardo Polo (1988), explains this with slightly difficult language but the significance of his meaning is worth of note. His thesis is that the true reason why work is possible is because rationality or whatever other characteristic makes man specifically human is linked to him in the manner of 'having': of possessing in his being a rational principle or 'logos'. 'Having' (habere) here means two things: there is a mode of 'having' which is meant having a capacity. In this sense, we talk of human beings being rational, that is to say, having the capacity of rationality, even if at a given moment they are not actually using that capacity. For example, a child has the capacity, potentially; an adult has the capacity even if he is asleep and not therefore using it at that time. To have capacity in this sense, means that one has the ability to add something to one's existence, something such as knowledge, love, and all kinds of virtues. Man comes to the world with this capacity but without its fulfilment. Part of that fulfilment happens through his deliberate actions such as work. Consequently, man has been given the opportunity to contribute to his own completion through the participation in self-realization using the various powers with which he has been naturally endowed. It is in this sense that some

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people talk of the fullness of personhood as the ability to effectively exercise one's rational, creative, volitional and emotional faculties. These are goods of excellence.

Foundational goods belong to the corporeal mode of 'having'. They are acquired through activities geared towards the dominion or mastery of nature for human benefit. Goods of excellence on the other hand are those which make us better as persons. These involve the intentions and motives of our actions. They can be described as 'having' through the volitive power, the will, and the use of freedom, to do good to other people. They can be extended to the affective states, the emotions and the passions. Here, 'having' consists in the acquisition of stable qualities or habits of the mind and of the will, which we call *virtue* (Aristotle Book II, 1, 1103a15—25). This kind of 'having' is often referred to as 'being more', or 'having more'. However, although all these dimensions of 'having', that is to say, adding something to one's own being, are specifically human, there is a hierarchical relationship between them in such a way that some are mere means for the sake of the acquisition of others.

### *Happiness through Human Work*

From the discussion above, we can see that human work has more meaning than just the consumerist one. By it man exercises a human privilege: that of dominion over 'nature', understood as his habitat, by making it better adapted for his habitation. Unfortunately, he can also use those powers to destroy that habitat. What is clear is that man was not intended to live with Nature as do the animals. That is why only he among the other colleagues in Nature has the ability to transform it and, in addition, use and enhance it by conferring to it a nobler purpose: usefulness to man.

Furthermore, by his work, man ennoble the gifts that he has received, and that make him superior to the irrational beings. These gifts are his mind—intellect and will—and his dexterities. Man also gets to know himself better through his activity which we have called work. Through it he creates a personality in himself, a personality which was initially in him in potential sense, but which he now brings out. By work, man also 'creates' something external by transforming the things on which he works. It is in this sense that we say, man either ennoble or debases himself by his actions. Through his tri-dimensional capacity for action, man fashions a destiny for himself: to be happy in work within a framework of self-realization or to be a slave to work, seeing it as a perpetual punishment, a process with no ulterior explanation beyond effort, struggle, possession and more struggle to possess again.

True happiness consists in the possession of what is most appropriate to man as a spiritual being. Consequently, it must be the case that its possession should be permanent, not prone to being easily lost. Now, for something to remain permanently possessed, it must be possessed or 'had' (from 'having') in the being of the agent with firmness and as part of one's nature. This is characteristic of virtue, both intellectual virtue—which consists of good habits of the mind and work - and moral virtue which consists of good habits of

character or moral conduct. A virtuous person, particularly as regards moral virtue, is free and happy. The absence of virtue such as: inconsideration, intemperance, precipitancy and so on, are sources of problems and of unhappiness and conflicts among people.

Since man is a social being, work is also a service to other people and a sign of friendship and benevolence to them. In it, besides the use of the object of his production, the virtuous person sees and seeks something beyond the mere possessing. He aspires to share his gift, the gift of what he is, what he possesses, with other human beings. This gift is to be found in his knowledge or learning, talent and virtue, so that they too may 'have' and be happy. In this sense, work is a service and one of the most important contributions one can make to the common good. In and through work one can, if one wants, appropriate and possess things—mechanical works, to serve others more efficiently. He or she one can produce beautiful works of art, artistic works of other kinds, sports not only to enjoy them himself but also so as to offer them to other people as a symbol of friendship. Thus, says Grimaldi, "the necessities of our subsistence are more of an occasion rather than the reason for work (cited in Alvira, 1991: 27). Through work we add something to our being, thus becoming more. In this sense it can be said that human beings only find happiness in giving something of what they are to other persons. The most available manner of doing this is through work understood as service to the common of the 'universal family' of mankind. This also explains why human beings, no matter how powerful or rich, need other human beings for whom they can do something. In the technical and moral level this understanding of work should lead one to want to excel. This requires the development of certain habits or virtues and the conscious rejection of those habits that are opposed to excellence.

Outstanding among the desirable habits to form are industriousness. Industriousness is an inner state that enables a person to apply herself to a specific piece of work and to work at it in an orderly and systematic manner. A lack of know-how at a job can be an obstacle to industriousness, but more often the problem lies in the inability to exert oneself either because of a lack of vision of the whole picture or because one does not really identify with the job they are doing or because they feel frustrated in one way or another. From a sociological point of view, one solution to this problem is to foster social relations that boost the self - esteem of people in their work. If work is seen as a social relation it powerfully conditions and gives meaning to human potentiality; relationships stimulate workers to want to do the best, if through it they understand themselves as having an opportunity to exhibit their self - image through creativity, inventiveness and personal responsibility for their work. The first and most crucial relationship is obviously that of a person with their immediate authority or the people who benefit from their service through some gesture of appreciation. Appreciation helps industriousness and diligence. Diligence means working conscientiously or lovingly. There is a great difference between work done lovingly and work done because it has to be done. Common language calls this working 'with the heart' or 'without a heart'. Work done diligently has a greater perfective effect.

Work also effects progress. Progress implies movement in some kind of consistent direction. Along with this, progress also implies some improvement. Improvement, in turn, points to a standard that is not itself changing, some standard by which one can tell whether things are improving, at a standstill or deteriorating. However, progress is not the same thing as change in the sense that change does not always imply movement in any consistent direction; change can go forwards, in which case there is development, but it can also go backward, in which case there is regress, or just it lead to something different. Consequently, not all change is desirable.

#### IV. Work and Ethics

Both Science and Technology can be used to do good or evil. Practical wisdom should thus enter to guide, moderate and show the truth of, and suitability of certain practices, to see whether they are simply changes or changes that bring developments of the human person. If it is accepted that there can and does exist an absolute Truth, as an end and not a means, then modern science, as the application of knowledge to a portion of the greater reality cannot be something totally apart from that greater Truth. Its use by man, therefore, needs the rules and the norms of morality. It is in this sense that, something which might appear to be, from the technical point of view, a great success—a great development—could be, in the moral sense, an aberration. The manipulation of information technology, genetic engineering and the various modalities of economic corruption are just a few examples. Owing to their nature, science and technology should submit to the *moral good*, of man. Hence, technology should be subject to ethics. If there is an aspect of truth that is of primary and absolute value, there has also to be aspects of moral good that are absolute. The value attaching to efficiency or technique is, therefore, what is always relative. In the same way as technology is subordinated to science, so too should all positive sciences—natural or human—as fields of human work, be subordinate to moral values. Just as when technology lends a deaf ear to science it is not difficult to see what happens—for instance, medicine devoid of scientific knowledge—similarly damage is bound to occur when technology either disassociates its activities from ethics, or follows an ethic which ignores the practice of virtues. The reader wishing to delve more into this field need only read various articles with regard to in vitro child making and the lives of in vitro children now turned teenagers to see the ethical implications of an otherwise scientific break through.

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