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HOMO LABORANS: WORK IN MODERN CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT

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IF it is true that Aristotle is the master of them that know, he occasionally has very bad news to impart. An example is found in the eighth book of the *Politics*, where he asserts that:

> [A]ny occupation, art, or science, which makes the body or soul or mind of the freeman less fit for the practice or exercise of *aretê* (excellence or virtue) is artisan-like; wherefore we call those arts mechanical which tend to deform the body, *and likewise all paid employments*, for they absorb and degrade the mind.[1]

And, earlier in the *Politics*, Aristotle remarked that "no man can practice virtue who is living the life of an artisan or hireling."[2]

According to one Christian tradition, labor or work is a consequence of the fall—indeed, a sort of punishment. This is the doctrine of the heterodox fourteenth-century political philosopher, Marsilius of Padua; and it has consequences for his version of the Aristotelian conception of the state as constituted of the following parts or classes: "the agricultural, the artisan, the military, the financial, the priestly, and the judicial or deliberative."[3] Of these, the military, priestly, and judicial-deliberative together constitute the honorable class of citizens and are "parts of the state *simpliciter*." The other divisions constitute the *vulgaris* class, and they are "parts only in the broad sense of the term (*large*), because they are offices necessary to the state."[4]

In the *Paris Notebooks* of 1844, Karl Marx discusses the alienation of labor as a consequence of the capitalist economic system, which divides persons into two principal classes—those who own the means of production and distribution and those who must sell their labor as a consequence of not owning the means of production and distribution. Indeed, he regards the sale of labor as the root of its alienation. In answer to the question, "now what does the alienation of labor consist of?," he replies at length:

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1. ARISTOTLE, THE POLITICS bk. VIII (Stephen Everson ed., Cambridge Univ. 2004) (c. 350 B.C.E.).

2. *Id.* at 58.

3. MARSILIUS, DEFENSOR PACIS 15 (Alan Gewirth trans., Univ. of Toronto Press 1980) (1324).

4. *Id.*

> Firstly, that labour is exterior to the worker, that is, it does not belong to his essence. Therefore, he does not confirm himself in his work, he denies himself, feels miserable instead of happy, deploys no free physical and intellectual energy, but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. Thus the worker only feels a stranger. He is at home when he is not working and when he works he is not at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary but compulsory, forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need but only a means to satisfy needs outside itself. How alien it really is is very evident from the fact that when there is no physical or other compulsion, labour is avoided like the plague.[5]

"The result we arrive at," concludes Marx:

> [I]s that man (the worker) only feels himself freely active in his animal functions of eating, drinking, and procreating, at most also in his dwelling and dress [i.e., in what is now called "recreation"], and feels himself an animal in his human functions.
>
> Eating, drinking, procreating, etc. are indeed truly human functions. But in the abstraction that separates them from the other round of human activity and makes them into final and exclusive activities they become animal.[6]

Unalienated labor, which Marx held can be achieved only through the advent of communism, is the expression of what Marx, using the terminology of Feuerbach, calls the species-being of man. In more classical terminology, this simply is the essence of man—his natural function or, in Greek, *ergon*—the usual literal translation of which is "work." As a trained classicist, Marx is perhaps indulging in a bit of a pun here: the function (*ergon)* of humans is, or should be, their work (*ergon*). It is, he says:

> [I]n the working over of the objective world that man first really affirms himself as a species-being. This production [work] is his active species-life. Through it nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of work is therefore the objectification of the species-life of man; for he duplicates himself not only intellectually, in his mind, but also actively in reality and thus can look at his image in a world he has created.[7]

This conception of work as manifesting, at least in this mortal life, the very function and essence of human persons is eloquently expressed by Blessed Pope John Paul II in the introduction to his encyclical *Laborem Exercens*:

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5. KARL MARX, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, in* KARL MARX: SELECTED WRITINGS 88 (David McLellan ed., 2d ed. 2000).

6. *Id.* at 89.

7. *Id.* at 91.

> Through work man must earn his daily bread and contribute to the continual advance of science and technology and, above all, to elevating unceasingly the cultural and moral level of society within which he lives in community with those who belong to the same family. . . . Man is made to be in the visible universe an image and likeness of God himself, and he is placed in it in order to subdue the earth. From the beginning therefore *he is called to work. Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish* man from the rest of creatures, whose activity for sustaining their lives cannot be called work. Only man is capable of work, and only man works, at the same time by work occupying his existence on earth. Thus work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons. And this mark decides its interior characteristics; in a sense it constitutes its very nature.[8]

In classical economic theory, work is typically conceived instrumentally or, in Pope John Paul's terms, objectively—that is, as a necessary ingredient, so to speak, in the production of wealth in the form of goods and services. As such, it itself becomes simply a commodity or form of capital which, like other ingredients of production—raw materials, tools, machinery, etc.—must be purchased or otherwise acquired in order for the production of goods and services to occur. According to this classical perspective, the worker regards work as something that he or she can sell or otherwise exchange for consumable goods or services—or perhaps exchange for other forms of capital, which in turn may be used as a means for supplementing his capacity for consumption. While not denying the importance of work in this objective or instrumental sense, John Paul emphasizes what he terms the subjective dimension of work—work as an expression of the essence or species-being of human persons. It is particularly when this subjective dimension of work is degraded that labor becomes, in Marx's terminology, alienated.

Following Pope John Paul, I emphasize the subjective dimension of work in the following reflections. In particular, I shall maintain that it is primarily with respect to the subjective dimension of work that the Church's counsel in the form of fundamental moral principles is particularly needed. I shall also maintain that, particularly in the contemporary political and economic environment, we would do well not to conflate two important distinctions: the distinction between working for a wage and being self-employed and the distinction between work that is regarded as a manifestation of our common human species-being and work that is not so regarded—i.e., work that is alienated.

According to the doctrine of natural law accepted by St. Thomas Aquinas, "all things are common." As St. Thomas proceeds to emphasize,

8. POPE JOHN PAUL II, LABOREM EXERCENS ¶ 1 (1981) (footnotes omitted).

this does not at all entail that private property is morally illicit. It merely means that the "division of possessions is not according to the natural law, but rather arose from human agreement which belongs to positive law."[9] Thomas's principal reason for favoring the licitness and indeed, moral desirability, of private property pertain to its relation to the "objective" dimension of labor. With respect to human competence pertaining to *the procuring and dispensing* of external things, individual ownership is desirable because it encourages in persons greater care, industry, and order with respect to these processes. A second competence of human beings pertains to *the use* of external things. In this respect, Thomas says, "man ought to possess exterior things, not as his own [*proprias*], but as common [communes], so that, to wit, he is ready to communicate them to others in their need."[10]

It is customary to date the modern teaching of the Church with respect to labor to the 1891 encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, although there are earlier nineteenth-century Catholic traditions that feed into that encyclical. Leo's principal thesis is "that some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class."[11] He connects this state of affairs very directly to the advent of Modernism in the eighteenth century and the rise of capitalism in the nineteenth:

> [A]ncient workingmen's guilds were abolished in the last century, and no other protective organization took their place. Public institutions and the laws set aside the ancient religion. Hence, by degrees it has come to pass that working men have been surrendered, isolated and helpless, to the hardheartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition. The mischief has been increased by rapacious usury, which, although more than once condemned by the Church, is nevertheless, under a different guise, but with like injustice, still practiced by covetous and grasping men. To this must be added that the hiring of labor and the conduct of trade are concentrated in the hands of comparatively few; so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the laboring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself.[12]

Two general themes seem to me to dominate *Rerum Novarum*. The major one is that distributive justice demands relief for the impoverished working class. While condemning the (Marxist) doctrine that "class is naturally hostile to class, and that the wealthy and the working men are intended by

9. *See* ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, SUMMA THEOLOGICA II^{a}-II^{ae} Q. 66 Art. 2 (Fathers of the English Dominican Province trans., 1981).

10. *Id.*

11. *See* POPE LEO XIII, RERUM NOVARUM ¶ 3 (1891).

12. *Id.*

nature to live in mutual conflict,"[13] and maintaining that "[r]ights must be religiously respected wherever they exist, and it is the duty of the public authority to prevent and to punish injury, and to protect every one in the possession of his own,"[14] Pope Leo maintains that "when there is [the] question of defending the rights of individuals, the poor and badly off have a claim to especial consideration. The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State."[15]

Consequently, Leo is sympathetic to political protection of various rights of members of the working class. This includes regulation of working hours, exploitation of women and children in the workplace, and sanitary and safety issues. With respect to wages, the Pope rejects the *laissez-faire* doctrine that "[w]ages, as we are told, are regulated by free consent, and therefore the employer, when he pays what was agreed upon, has done his part and seemingly is not called upon to do anything beyond."[16] Distinguishing a "personal" character of labor from its character as necessary for biological existence, he argues that there is a:

> [D]ictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man, namely, that wages ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage-earner. If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford him no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice.[17]

However, Leo invokes the idea of subsidiarity to argue that the task of procuring distributive justice for members of the working class must fall, in large part, to various "private societies" and associations of working persons, "[t]he most important of [which] are workingmen's unions, for these virtually include all the rest."[18] A basic rationale for subsidiarity is that associations' subsidiary to—but properly enjoying a certain independence from—the state can attend in a more efficient way to *all* of the particular needs of its members. Such associations are envisioned by Leo as:

> [H]elping each individual member to better his condition to the utmost in body, soul, and property. It is clear that they must pay special and chief attention to the duties of religion and morality, and that social betterment should have this chiefly in view; otherwise they would lose wholly their special character, and end by

13. *Id.* ¶ 19.
14. *Id.* ¶ 37.
15. *Id.*
16. *Id.* ¶ 43.
17. *Id.* ¶ 45.
18. *Id.* ¶ 49.

> becoming little better than those societies which take no account whatever of religion.[19]

It is altogether appropriate, in view of the exigencies of that time, that Pope Leo should have focused on the plight of the working class. This focus naturally led to an emphasis on the objective dimension of work—work as a form of capital from which may be earned that which is necessary for the material sustenance of human persons who work.

However, a secondary theme of *Rerum Novarum* pertains to the subjective dimension of work—its manifestation of human personhood. Here an agrarian model dominates Leo's thinking. Leo traces the origins of all wealth, including capital, not to the soil or to land *simpliciter*, but to the work that renders the land fruitful:

> [T]he earth, even though apportioned among private owners, ceases not thereby to minister to the needs of all, inasmuch as there is not one who does not sustain life from what the land produces. Those who do not possess the soil contribute their labor; hence, it may truly be said that all human subsistence is derived either from labor on one's own land, or from some toil, some calling, which is paid for either in the produce of the land itself, or in that which is exchanged for what the land brings forth.[20]

In opposition to the view that "it is right for private persons to have the use of the soil and its various fruits, but that it is unjust for any one to possess outright either the land on which he has built or the estate which he has brought under cultivation,"[21] the Pope asserts that:

> [T]he soil which is tilled and cultivated with toil and skill utterly changes its condition; it was wild before, now it is fruitful; was barren, but now brings forth in abundance. That which has thus altered and improved the land becomes so truly a part of itself as to be in great measure indistinguishable and inseparable from it. Is it just that the fruit of a man's own sweat and labor should be possessed and enjoyed by anyone else? As effects follow their cause, so is it just and right that the results of labor should belong to those who have bestowed their labor.[22]

It is clear that Leo here has in mind principally what Pope John Paul would later term the subjective dimension of work:

> [W]hen man thus turns the activity of his mind and strength of his body toward procuring the fruits of nature, by such act he

19. *Id.* ¶ 57.
20. *Id.* ¶ 8.
21. *Id.* ¶ 10.
22. *Id.*

> makes his own that portion of nature's field which he cultivates—that portion on which he leaves, as it were, the impress of his personality; and it cannot but be just that he should possess that portion as his very own, and have right to hold it without any one being justified in violating that right.[23]

It is a function of human nature, according to Leo, that "[s]ocial and public life can only be maintained by means of various kinds of capacity for business and the playing of many parts; and each man, as a rule, chooses the part which suits his own peculiar domestic condition."[24] "As regards bodily labor," he adds that "even had man never fallen from the state of innocence, he would not have remained wholly idle; but that which would then have been his free choice and his delight became afterwards compulsory, and the painful expiation for his disobedience."[25]

Deploring the concentration of capital, as the necessary means of both work and material sustenance, in the hands a few, Leo maintains that "[t]he first and most fundamental principle, therefore, if one would undertake to alleviate the condition of the masses, must be the inviolability of private property. This being established, we proceed to show where the remedy sought for must be found."[26] The remedy lies principally in widespread ownership: "[t]he law, therefore, should favor ownership, and its policy should be to induce as many as possible of the people to become owners."[27]

Leo's agrarian model sees sharing in wealth-producing capital largely in terms of sharing in the ownership of land. "If working people can be encouraged to look forward to obtaining a share in the land," he says, "the consequence will be that the gulf between vast wealth and sheer poverty will be bridged over, and the respective classes [i.e., of capitalist and of proletariat] will be brought nearer to one another."[28] Among the benefits of legal and political policies that encourage and enable workers to share in the ownership of land, according to the Pontiff, would be a mitigation of the socially disruptive emigrations of great masses of people experienced during the nineteenth century: "men would cling to the country in which they were born, for no one would exchange his country for a foreign land if his own afforded him the means of living a decent and happy life."[29]

Rerum Novarum became, of course, the source of the economic movement of distributism (or distributivism), a movement particularly associated with English Catholic intellectuals in the early twentieth-century. The

23. *Id.* ¶ 9.
24. *Id.* ¶ 17.
25. *Id.*
26. *Id.* ¶ 15.
27. *Id.* ¶ 46.
28. *Id.* ¶ 47.
29. *Id.*

idea of universal but individual ownership of capital was presented as a superior *via media* between a capitalism in which ownership of the means of production and distribution is concentrated in a relatively small class and a socialism or communism in which the state owns the principal means of production and distribution. The agrarian emphasis of *Rerum Novarum* was typically retained in distributism and is manifest in a slogan that was adopted, but not originated, by G. K. Chesteron: "three acres and a cow."

Having grown up on a livestock farm in the American Midwest, I can attest that this principle would not always yield self-sufficiency; in the desert Southwest where I now live, for example, it would produce a very badly undernourished cow. While distributism's practicality, or lack thereof, has been much debated, my intention is not to enter the lists on that topic, nor to examine its serious theoretic content or even to engage the distributist movement's very interesting history. Rather, I shall emphasize two points. The first is well made by Jay P. Corrin:

> A significant dimension to Distributism was the centrality of its moral underpinnings. In fact, this is what separates Distibutism from conventional economic theory. Whereas modern economic thinking assumes that the study of economy is an autonomous science, classical economic theory as well as Scholasticism—legacies out of which Distributism emerged—view economics as a subdivision of moral philosophy.[30]

At least since *Rerum Novarum*, the Catholic Church has emphasized the moral inadequacy of a conception of economics that presupposes, on the one hand, that human persons are simply consumers of material satisfactions and, on the other hand, that work is simply the production of goods and services that yield such satisfactions. Recognition that work, in what Pope John Paul termed its subjective dimension, has intrinsic value as an expression of human personhood is essential to any adequate economic theory. John Paul emphasizes that Catholics must bear witness to the normative dimension of economic matters, refusing to acquiesce in the proposition that economic science pertains to a sort of self-contained domain of social interaction that is subject to value-neutral "laws." Such an assumption can lead to the belief—in fact, a rather widespread belief, I suspect—that any attempt at economic planning based on moral principles amounts to either impotent idealism or pernicious do-goodism.

The second point that I wish to emphasize actually is illustrated by a small incident in the history of distributism. The point is the danger of emphasizing some aspect of economic doctrine to the point that it becomes an ideological commitment that may obscure Catholic moral judgment. Prior to the British general strike of April 1926, a principal organ of

30. *See* JAY P. CORRIN, CATHOLIC INTELLECTUALS AND THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY 155 (2002).

distributism, Chesterton's *G. K.'s Weekly*, had supported the coal miners whose plight eventually led to the strike. However, in the words of Corrin:

> Chesterton and the Distributists strongly disapproved of a key trade union bargaining demand, namely, its insistence on a minimum or living wage. Focusing on the issue of wages, they argued would only serve to perpetuate the vision of property between employer and employee. Wage bargaining rested on the premise that labor was a commodity, and by engaging in such discussions the trade unions simply perpetuated the worker's alienation from the products of his labor and his dependency on a dominating class. Wages were part of the "bread and circuses" of the servile state, designed in large part to diffuse labor's demand for the more important goal of ownership of the means of production.[31]

In contrast, Chesterton supported the proposal "to gear wages to the prosperity of the mines [because] [t]his appeared to be an opening for eventual joint business partnership, where remuneration for services would be linked to the industry's profits."[32]

It seems to me that Chesterton and his fellow distributists have here, in effect, committed themselves rather too strongly to the premise that work for wages is equivalent to alienated work. If, as in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, most salaried workers were poorly paid wage-slaves in factories and other sweat shops, there would certainly seem to be at least a strong empirical consilience between wage-earning and alienated-laboring. From a later historical period, however, it becomes apparent that the two distinctions that I mentioned earlier should be conceptually separated: the distinction between working for a wage and being self-employed and the distinction between work that is regarded as a manifestation of our common human species-being and work that is not so regarded—i.e., work that is alienated. Failure to mark this distinction easily leads to the distributist tenet that the principal economic ideal should be some form of self-employment for the largest possible number of persons. The additional assumption that the principal form of self-employment in any society must be agricultural yields the Chestertonian ideal of three acres and a cow.

Despite the comment of Aristotle with which I began, it appears that the labor of those who are self-employed can be as wanting as an expression of virtue, and as alienated as the labor of those who work for wages. In all too many instances the work of the small farmer has been unremitting and unremunerative drudgery—which is really no more a matter of the expression of the worker's personhood than the work of the dishwasher earning the minimum wage, or less, in the squalid kitchen of a large New York City restaurant. And does the work of the self-employed

31. *Id.* at 163.
32. *Id.*

day-trader in stocks or, what amounts to much the same thing, that of the self-employed professional gambler, contribute more, in the words of John Paul II, "to elevating unceasingly the cultural and moral level of the society"[33] than does the work of the salaried engineer at Intel? My point here is that the subjective dimension of work, the juncture where moral considerations often impinge on labor, seems to be rather radically context-dependent.

In the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, commemorating the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Pius XI, while asserting that it is "an error to say that the economic and moral orders are so distinct from and alien to each other that the former depends in no way on the latter,"[34] draws an important distinction between issues with respect to which the moral law impinges on economics and technical issues in economics:

> Certainly the Church was not given the commission to guide men to an only fleeting and perishable happiness but to that which is eternal. Indeed "the Church holds that it is unlawful for her to mix without cause in these temporal concerns"; however, she can in no wise renounce the duty God entrusted to her to interpose her authority, not of course in matters of technique for which she is neither suitably equipped nor endowed by office, but in all things that are connected with the moral law.[35]

Thus, fundamental to all teaching of the Church with respect to labor and economic matters is the placing of those matters within the hierarchical moral order of values. In the words of Pius XI:

> [I]t is only the moral law which, just as it commands us to seek our supreme and last end in the whole scheme of our activity, so likewise commands us to seek directly in each kind of activity those purposes which we know that nature, or rather God the Author of nature, established for that kind of action, and in orderly relationship to subordinate such immediate purposes to our supreme and last end. If we faithfully observe this law, then it will follow that the particular purposes, both individual and social, that are sought in the economic field will fall in their proper place in the universal order of purposes, and we, in ascending through them, as it were by steps, shall attain the final end of all things, that is God, to Himself and to us, the supreme and inexhaustible Good.[36]

So, in some sense, the first moral principle of Catholic teaching with respect to economic issues is that these issues cannot be considered, if they

33. LABOREM EXERCENS, *supra* note 8, at Preface.
34. *See* POPE PIUS XI, QUADRAGESIMO ANNO ¶ 42 (1931).
35. *Id.* ¶ 41 (footnote omitted).
36. *Id.* ¶ 43.

are to be correctly and fully considered, from an entirely secular or value-neutral perspective. Like everything else, economics must be fitted into a larger hierarchy of value. There has been a gradual but steady realization in Church teaching of what seems to me to be a direct corollary of this principle: the priority of labor over capital.[37] The primacy of labor does not entail that other forms of capital distinct from labor are unimportant in economic matters or that it is always immoral for a person to subsist on rent, profits, or interest. Rather, it is a recognition of two facts. The first is that other forms of capital typically require transformation by labor in order to become useful for producing consumable goods and services. This doctrine, enunciated by both Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI, is arguably the foundation for John Locke's seventeenth-century labor-theory of property.

The second is a doctrine that finds expression not only in Church teaching but in Marxism. This is the doctrine that, while work can be considered a commodity necessary for the production of goods and services the consumption of which results in satisfactions for the consumer, this is an incomplete or distorted conception of work—a failure to recognize its subjective dimension. From the Catholic perspective, work primarily is—or ought to be—the very expression of our nature as human persons created in the image of a God who creates and redeems (i.e., who works). From the moral priority of persons over things John Paul II derives what he terms a "fundamental principle": "the hierarchy of values and the profound meaning of work itself require that capital should be at the service of labour and not labour at the service of capital."[38]

A third fundamental Catholic moral doctrine pertaining to work is that, just as man is individually responsible and creative but also social, so human work has both an individual and a social dimension. With a view to this doctrine, Catholic teaching since *Rerum Novarum* has generally held, in the words of Pius XI, that the:

> [T]win rocks of shipwreck must be carefully avoided. For, as one is wrecked upon, or comes close to, what is known as "individualism" by denying or minimizing the social and public character of the right of property, so by rejecting or minimizing the private and individual character of this same right, one inevitably runs into "collectivism" or at least closely approaches its tenets.[39]

Although justice, commutative and distributive, is the central virtue pertaining to property and labor, Pope Pius emphasizes the fact that there are other relevant virtues, although the obligations that devolve from them may not in some or all circumstances be the proper matter for legal codification. Thus, he regards the "right of property [as] distinct from its use"

37. See, in particular, LABOREM EXERCENS, *supra* note 8, ¶ 12.

38. *Id.* ¶ 23.

39. QUADRAGESIMO ANNO, *supra* note 34, ¶ 46.

as a proper matter of legal enforcement.[40] But there are other moral duties of "owners to use their property only in a right way," duties which prudence may perhaps dictate should not be made the object of legal enforcement.[41] For example:

> Expending larger incomes so that opportunity for gainful work may be abundant, provided, however, that this work is applied to producing really useful goods, ought to be considered, as We deduce from the principles of the Angelic Doctor, an outstanding exemplification of the virtue of munificence and one particularly suited to the needs of the times.[42]

The public dimension of work requires, in the words of Leo XIII, quoted by Pius XI, that "[h]owever the earth may be apportioned among private owners, it does not cease to serve the common interests of all."[43] As a consequence, says Pius:

> [T]he riches that economic-social developments constantly increase ought to be so distributed among individual persons and classes that the common advantage of all, which Leo XIII had praised, will be safeguarded; in other words, that the common good of all society will be kept inviolate. By this law of social justice, one class is forbidden to exclude the other from sharing in the benefits.[44]

While noting that St. Paul passes judgment "on those who are unwilling to work, although they can and ought to," the Pope emphasizes that "the Apostle in no wise teaches that labor is the sole title to a living or an income."[45] It might perhaps be inferred that some level of material sustenance can rightly be considered an individual entitlement deriving from the social character of work, in general—even for those persons who do not "earn" such a "living or income" by their own labor. It might perhaps also be inferred on the same basis that an individual entitlement to a "living or income"—at least up to some level of sustenance—is possessed by the person whose property ownership obviates his or her need to work for wages. But such inferences should not, I think, properly be regarded as logical *entailments* derived from the fundamental moral principle that work has a public as well as an individual dimension. Rather, they should be regarded as what St. Thomas would call *determinationes* of this principle,[46] the correctness, or prudence, of which will depend on particular circumstances.

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40. *Id.* ¶ 47.
41. *Id.*
42. *Id.* ¶ 51 (footnote omitted).
43. *Id.* ¶ 56; *see also* RERUM NOVARUM, *supra* note 11, ¶ 14.
44. QUADRAGESIMO ANNO, *supra* note 34, ¶ 57.
45. *Id.*
46. *See* SUMMA THEOLOGICA $I^{A}II^{AE}$, *supra* note 9, at Q. 95, Art. 2.

Another Catholic principle pertaining to work, while perhaps not quite fundamental, does seem to be entailed—as what St. Thomas would call a *conclusio*[47]—from other fundamental principles that we have discussed. This is the principle of a right, in the words of Pope John Paul, of "suitable employment for all who are capable of it."[48] John Paul adds that:

> The opposite of a just and right situation in this field is unemployment, that is to say the lack of work for those who are capable of it. It can be a question of general unemployment or of unemployment in certain sectors of work. The role of agents included under the title of indirect employer is *to act against unemployment*, which in all cases is an evil, and which, when it reaches a certain level, can become a real social disaster.[49]

The priority of work to capital and the subjective dimension of work as an expression of human personhood entail, within the context of the principle of distributive justice, that unemployment cannot properly be regarded as a natural economic phenomenon without moral significance. And the social dimension of work entails that unemployment and underemployment cannot be regarded as an issue that pertains only to individual direct employer and employee.

As John Paul makes clear, the moral dimension of work necessitates that the state, individuals, and other organizations cooperate with respect to:

> [*O*]*verall planning* with regard to the different kinds of work by which not only the economic life but also the cultural life of a given society is shaped; they must also give attention to organizing that work in a correct and rational way. In the final analysis this overall concern weighs on the shoulders of the State, but it cannot mean onesided centralization by the public authorities. Instead, what is in question is a just and rational *coordination*, within the framework of which the *initiative* of individuals, free groups and local work centres and complexes must be *safeguarded*, keeping in mind what has been said above with regard to the subject character of human labour.[50]

Just as the principle of subsidiarity in Catholic political theory resists the concentration of supreme political authority in the nation-state, so this principle as applied to economic issues resists the sort of collectivization that would locate all authority for economic planning at the national political level. Indeed, the political principle of subsidiarity, together with the modern Catholic emphasis on the subjective dimension of work, has been

47. *See id.*
48. *See* LABOREM EXERCENS, *supra* note 8, ¶ 18.
49. *See id.*
50. *See id.*

influential in modern "heterodox" economic theory such as that of E. F. Schumacher, whose 1973 book *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* popularized the ideas of de-centralized and human-scale technologies. But at this level of economic theory, there arise technical and empirical issues about which experts can and do disagree. From the perspective of the Church, recognition of the necessity of a general moral framework for discussing such issues is of paramount importance.

This point has been emphasized by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. As Cardinal Ratzinger, he published a short article in the journal *Communio* in which he developed the thesis that a point in common to both classical capitalist or "liberal" economic theory and classical Marxism is that, although they are premised on two different varieties of determinism, the determinism of both "includes the renunciation of ethics as an independent entity relevant to the economy."[51] Rejecting this idea, then-Cardinal Ratzinger concludes that:

> It is becoming an increasingly obvious fact of economic history that the development of economic systems which concentrate on the common good depends on a determinate ethical system, which in turn can be born and sustained only by strong religious convictions. Conversely, it has also become obvious that the decline of such discipline can actually cause the laws of the market to collapse. An economic policy that is ordered not only to the good of the group—indeed, not only to the common good of a determinate state—but to the common good of the family of man demands a maximum of ethical discipline and thus a maximum of religious strength.[52]

In a lucid survey of "values economics" and modern Catholic theology, the economic thought of Benedict has been summarized by Larry Catá Backer as follows:

> The search for the good is paramount: and religion serves as the only true superior source of the values and morals through which the good can be known. The execution of that good, of course, can be left to the technically proficient, as can the development of those processes, rules and alternatives. That is of less concern to the Church.[53]

The final fundamental Catholic principle pertaining to work that I shall discuss is one with respect to which the Church has particular competence at both the general and particular level. This is the principle that

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51. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Church and Economy: Responsibility for the Future of the World Economy*, 13 COMMUNIO 199, 202 (1986).

52. *Id.* at 204.

53. Larry Catá Backer, *Values Economics, Theology and Legitimacy: Catholic Social Thought and its Implications for Legal Regulatory Systems*, *in* 5 ECONOMICS, MANAGEMENT, AND FINANCIAL MARKETS 17, 40 (2010).

work has a *spiritual* dimension. In the fifth and final general subdivision of *Laborem Exercens*, entitled "Elements for a Spirituality of Work," John Paul II develops several themes centered on the premise that, through reflection on these spiritual elements, "the *work* of the individual human being may be *given the meaning which it has in the eyes of God* and by means of which work enters into the salvation process on a par with the other ordinary yet particularly important components of its texture."[54] Created in the image of God, man "received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all that it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness; a mandate to relate himself and the totality of things to him who was to be acknowledged as the Lord and Creator of all."[55] The principal point is that work is a way of imitating God, "since God himself wished to present his own creative activity under the form of *work and rest*."[56] Furthermore:

> Awareness that man's work is a participation in God's activity ought to permeate, as the [Second Vatican] Council teaches, even "*the most ordinary everyday activities.* For, while providing the substance of life for themselves and their families, men and women are performing their activities in a way which appropriately benefits society. They can justly consider that by their labour they are unfolding the Creator's work, consulting the advantages of their brothers and sisters, and contributing by their personal industry to the realization in history of the divine plan."[57]

In section 26 of *Laborem Exercens* (entitled "Christ, the Man of Work"), John Paul meditates on Christ's work, not only during his public ministry, but during the much longer period of his hidden life at Nazareth. The gospel proclaimed by Our Lord is, John Paul says, a "gospel of work," because:

> [*H*]*e who proclaimed it was himself a man of work*, a craftsman like Joseph of Nazareth. And if we do not find in his words a special command to work . . . at the same time the eloquence of the life of Christ is unequivocal: he belongs to the "working world", he has appreciation and respect for human work. It can indeed be said that *he looks with love upon human work* and the different forms that it takes, seeing in each one of these forms a particular facet of man's likeness with God, the Creator and Father.[58]

But Christ, the man of work, was also a man of sorrows, pains, and fatigue; and in the final section of *Laborem Exercens*, John Paul considers "another aspect of human work, an essential dimension of it, that is profoundly imbued with the spirituality of the Gospel. All *work*, whether manual or intel-

54. *See* LABOREM EXERCENS, *supra* note 8, ¶ 24.
55. *Id.* ¶ 25.
56. *Id.* ¶ 25.
57. *Id.* ¶ 25 (quoting POPE PAUL VI, GAUDIUM ET SPES ¶ 34 (1965)).
58. LABOREM EXERCENS, *supra* note 8, ¶ 26 (footnote omitted).

lectual, is inevitably linked with *toil*."[59] The Pope's main theme in this last section is that the fatigue, disappointment, and even pain that frequently accompany the toil of work not only manifests man's fallen nature but also presents an opportunity:

> Sweat and toil, which work necessarily involves [in] the present condition of the human race, present the Christian and everyone who is called to follow Christ with the possibility of sharing lovingly in the work that Christ came to do. This work of salvation came about through suffering and death on a Cross. By enduring the toil of work in union with Christ crucified for us, man in a way collaborates with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity.[60]

There can be no doubt that John Paul is here deeply influenced by the thought of St. Josemaría Escrivá, who began to develop a profound theology of work long before the Second Vatican Council. Calling work a "magnificent reality," St. Josemaría teaches that:

> [I]t is an indispensable means which God has entrusted to us here on this earth. It is meant to fill our days and make us sharers in God's creative power. It enables us to earn our living and, at the same time, to reap "the fruits of eternal life" [John 4:36] for "man is born to work as the birds are born to fly" [Job 5:7].[61]

Catholic moral theory involves the recognition that "alienated labor" is tied to a variety of economic issues which should be examined from a moral perspective. But St. Josemaría reminds us that there is an ineliminably supernatural dimension to the problem of alienated labor. While admitting that persons work for diverse reasons and many of them "regard their work as something that has to be done and cannot be avoided," he replies that:

> This is a stunted, selfish, and earthbound outlook, which neither you nor I can accept. For we have to remember and remind people around us that we are children of God, who have received the same invitation from our Father as the two brothers in the parable: "Son, go and work in my vineyard" [Matthew 21:28]. . . . Occasionally we may rebel, like the elder of the two sons, who replied to his father, "I will not" [Matthew 21:29], but we will learn how to turn back repentant and will redouble our efforts to do our duty.[62]

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59. *Id.* ¶ 27.

60. *Id.* (footnote omitted).

61. JOSEMARÍA ESCRIVÁ, *Working for God*, *in* FRIENDS OF GOD: HOMILIES 85 (1981).

62. *Id.* at 86.