

FUTURE WORK:
Jobs, self-employment and leisure
after the industrial age

by

James Robertson

Section 2

This section contains Parts 2 and 3, including Chapters 5 to 10. Notes and references for the chapters in this section can be found at the end of this document.

Sections 1 and 3 containing all the other chapters can be downloaded from <http://www.jamesrobertson.com/books.htm>

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PART 2

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF WORK

In Part 2 we examine how people's perceptions of work have changed in the past, especially in the transition from the middle ages to the modern period culminating in the industrial age. Against that historical background we consider how people's perceptions of work may be expected to change again in the post-industrial transition.

Chapter 5 discusses how the Protestant work ethic evolved, and what pointers this gives us to the emergence of a new work ethic for the post-industrial age. Chapter 6 relates the change in perceptions of work to the change in worldview and in values that took place as the middle ages came to an end. It suggests that a comparable change in worldview and values is occurring now which will help to shape the new post-industrial work ethic. Chapter 7 discusses the changes that have taken place since the middle ages in our ways of evaluating work as part of the development of economic theory and practice. It suggests that a further change of this kind will be one aspect of the transition from employment to ownwork.

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The Work Ethic Evolves

From time to time in history an old worldview is replaced by a new one. A change comes over the way people perceive themselves, other people, their society, the natural world around them, and the supernatural or the divine. Thus the dominant perceptions and attitudes of the industrial age have been different from those of pre-industrial times, and those of post-industrial society are likely to be different again. These shifts of perception, shifts from one worldview to another, that mark the transition from one age to another, correspond to what are now known as paradigm shifts in science. (See Appendix 1 for a note on paradigm shifts.)

Ever since the hunting and gathering way of life gave place to settled agriculture — that is, since Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden — work has played a central part in the lives of most human beings. Our experiences and perceptions of work are shaped by, and help to shape, all our other experiences and perceptions. They are of a piece with our experiences and perceptions of ourselves, other people, society, nature, and supernature. So if the industrial-age paradigm of work as employment is to be replaced by a post-industrial paradigm of work as ownwork, this is likely to be part of a larger change of worldview associated with the transition to a post-industrial age.

In this chapter and the following two we shall explore a number of ways in which people's outlook changed between the middle ages and the industrial age, and may be expected to change again now. We shall look at the links between these changes and people's perceptions of work and their attitudes towards it. The rise of the Protestant work ethic is a good point at which to start.

The Protestant Reformation

At the heart of the Protestant Reformation was a shift in people's perception of reality. Medieval society had been predominantly religious; people then perceived this life as a preparation for the life hereafter; they perceived the life hereafter, and the duties and activities centring around it, as more real and more important than the worldly duties and tasks pertaining only to our life here on earth. The shift began when Luther, rebelling against the sterility and corruption of the Catholic Church of his time, preached that the monastic life had little value as a means of justifying oneself to God, and that monastic renunciation of the duties of this world was a selfish withdrawal from more important obligations. Luther argued that the fulfilment of worldly duties was the way to live acceptably to God; that these duties stemmed from obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world; that to fulfil them was his calling; and that every legitimate calling had worth in the eyes of God.

In thus shifting the emphasis to worldly work, Luther was helping to reshape people's perceptions of what was real. A similar shift is under way today. People are beginning to perceive that real life and real work are lived and done by persons, in touch with themselves, with one another, and with the natural world and universe around them; they are beginning to be aware that real life is not, after all, to be found in the organisational world of business, government, and finance. These, like the church hierarchies of the late middle ages, are becoming increasingly remote; they have to call on increasingly elaborate structures of theoretical argument — now economic, then ecclesiastic - to bolster their legitimacy; and they are becoming increasingly bogged down in problems of their own making. Just as Luther taught people to see the Catholic Church as a buffer between themselves and reality, so we are beginning to see the organisational structures of the formal economy as buffers between ourselves and reality today.

Calvin took the Lutheran rethink a stage further. He preached predestination: some people — the elect — were predestined to be saved; the rest were predestined to be damned. The psychological effect of this doctrine was what Max Weber called

"the unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual", following an anxious path towards a destiny decreed from eternity. This new experience of individualism and spiritual isolation brought a less personal attitude to the fulfilment of daily tasks and social obligations, and a sense that "labour in the service of impersonal social usefulness" was what promoted the glory of God. To stave off their anxiety, people needed proof that they were among the elect. So the "self-confident saints whom we can rediscover in the hard Puritan merchants of the heroic age of capitalism" committed themselves to intense worldly activity to disperse religious doubt and bring the certainty of grace.¹

Initially, then, Calvinism embraced worldly work not because it was thought to be a *means* of attaining salvation, but rather because it was seen as a *sign* of salvation to come. It was seen as the technical means, not of purchasing salvation, but of avoiding the fear of damnation. However, this distinction was easily blurred. In the course of time many Protestants came to believe that God helps those who help themselves. They came to assume that work could actually contribute to their salvation, not just give them confidence that they were already saved. So the idea of self-help began to modify the earlier Lutheran concept of a calling.

Luther had kept to the traditional medieval view that each person should remain in the calling in which God had placed him, and that people should confine their activities within the limits imposed by their station in life. Luther had taken for granted what Tawney calls "the traditional stratification of rural society. It is a natural, rather than a money economy, consisting of the petty dealings of peasants and craftsmen in the small market town, where industry is carried on for the subsistence of the household, and the consumption of wealth follows hard on the production of it, and where commerce and finance are occasional incidents rather than the forces which keep the whole system in motion". Calvinism, on the other hand, was largely an urban movement Based originally in Geneva and gaining its most influential adherents in cities like Antwerp, London, Amsterdam and Edinburgh, its chief appeal was to the new classes who engaged in trade and industry, and to whom the traditional

scheme of social ethics seemed most out of date. The Calvinists recognised the necessity of capital, credit and banking, large-scale commerce and finance, and the other practical facts of business life. As Calvin himself put it, "What reason is there why the income from business should not be larger than that from landowning? Whence do the merchant's profits come from, except from his own diligence and industry?".²

Luther's idea of a calling as a fixed station in life thus began to give way to a new idea of a calling as a vocation to make good. Having been an obligation to remain in one's station, a person's calling now turned into an obligation to improve it. In due course, the calling turned into a drive to make money, and build up monetary wealth. As the Puritan divine, Richard Baxter, said, "If God show you away in which you may lawfully get more than in another way (without wrong to your soul or any other), if you refuse this and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling, and you refuse to be God's steward, and to accept His gifts and use them for Him when He requireth it: you may labour to be rich for God, though not for the flesh and sin."³

So the Puritan divines preached that, to be certain of your state of grace, you must do the works of Him who sent you as long as it is yet day. Unwillingness to work was a sure symptom of lack of grace. It was work, not leisure and enjoyment, that served to increase the glory of God. Wealthy and poor alike had a duty to work. Worldly work came to be seen as the purpose of life, ordained as such by God.

Attitudes to Time and Money

Most people in pre-industrial societies were aware of time as the rhythm of the natural world. Their clock was the sun and their calendars were the moon and the stars and the changing seasons. They managed their work accordingly. Only in places like cities and monasteries, where the rhythms of human life were distanced from the rhythms of nature, were other ways needed to mark the passage of time. The first people to live with careful measurement of time were, in fact, the medieval monks. They used church bells to help them to manage their time methodically in the service of God.

Methodicalness in the measurement and management of time

became one of the two characteristic features of the industrial age. The other was a corresponding methodicalness in the measurement and management of value, i.e. the greatly enlarged part played by money in everyone's life.

In the countryside this can be seen most clearly in the triumph of the money economy over the casual 'uneconomic' rhythms of peasant semi-subsistence. In the industrial areas it can be seen in the extension of the discipline of the factory bell or clock from working to leisure hours, from the working day to the Sabbath, and in the assault upon 'Cobbler's Monday' and traditional holidays and fairs.⁴

In the middle ages, monastic asceticism under such Catholic orders as the Benedictines, the Cistercians and the Jesuits had developed a systematic method of rational conduct, with the aim of freeing the monk from his own irrational impulses and his dependence on the world and nature. It trained him to work methodically in God's service and thereby to secure the salvation of his soul. This active and methodical self-control was taken over by the Puritans and re-directed towards activity within the world. "Those passionately spiritual natures which had formerly supplied the highest type of monk, were now forced to pursue their ascetic ideals within mundane occupations." In place of a spiritual aristocracy of monks outside and above the world, there was now a spiritual aristocracy of the predestined saints of God within the world.

Christian asceticism, at first fleeing from the world into solitude, had already ruled the world (which it had renounced) from the monastery and through the Church. But it had, on the whole, left the naturally spontaneous character of daily life in the world untouched. Now it strode into the market-place of life, slammed the door of the monastery behind it, and undertook to penetrate just that daily routine of life with its methodicalness.⁵

So the Puritan divines laid great stress on the value of time. Waste of time, for the puritan conscience, became the first and deadliest of sins. Life was all too short; there was little time to make sure of one's own salvation; to waste such time as one had was a sin: "Those that are prodigal of their time despise their own souls." Even contemplation was valueless if it was at the expense of one's daily work and the active performance of God's

will in one's calling. Richard Baxter exhorted his listeners to "keep up a high esteem of time, and be every day more careful that you lose none of your time than you are that you lose none of your gold and silver." Benjamin Franklin went one step further, asking his readers to "remember that time is money. He that idly loses five shillings worth of time loses five shillings, and might as prudently throw five shillings into the sea". The idea that every hour lost was an hour lost to labour for the glory of God, was transformed into the idea that every hour lost was an hour lost to the making of money.

Thus the shift from the earlier qualitative awareness of time in tune with the earth's diurnal and seasonal rhythms, that characterised pre-industrial ways of life, to the later obsession with quantitative time that has characterised the industrial age, paralleled and reinforced the comparable shift in people's understanding and awareness of value. Whereas in pre-industrial times the value of most things, including work, was qualitatively experienced in the satisfaction of needs, the inhabitants of late industrial societies have become obsessed with the money value of everything, including work. The effect of the Cartesian split, in this as in other spheres, has been to exalt quantitative calculation at the expense of qualitative experience.⁶

A Work Ethic for All

After the Reformation there was a much greater gulf between the predestined Puritan elect and the damned remainder of humanity than there had been between medieval monks and the society around them. Conscious of divine grace, the Puritan elect had little sympathy for their sinful neighbours, but hated and despised them as enemies of God condemned to eternal damnation. This harshness towards the less fortunate was reflected in harsher policies towards the poor.

In the middle ages, as Tawney says, "popular feeling had lent a half-mystical glamour to poverty and to the compassion by which poverty was relieved, for poor men were God's friends". Latimer had preached that "the poor man hath title to the rich man's goods; so that the rich man ought to let the poor man have part of his riches to help and to comfort him withal". But now it was a different story:

That the greatest of evils is idleness, that the poor are the victims, not of circumstances, but of their own idle, irregular and wicked courses, that the truest charity is not to enervate them by relief, but so to reform their characters that relief may be unnecessary - such doctrines turned severity from a sin into a duty and froze the impulse of natural pity with the assurance that, if indulged, it would perpetuate the suffering which it sought to allay.⁷

In short, with the Protestant Reformation came the view that the elect should insist on work, not only for themselves, but also for the poor. In England an Act of Parliament was passed in 1649 for the relief and employment of the poor and the punishment of beggars, under which a company was to be established with power to apprehend vagrants, to offer them the choice between work and whipping, and to set to compulsory labour all other poor persons, including children, without means of maintenance. Milton's friend Hartlib expressed the mood of the times: "The law of God saith, 'He that will not work, let him not eat.' This would be a sore scourge and smart whip for idle persons if none should be suffered to eat till they had wrought for it."

Meanwhile, against this background of harshness towards what would later become the working class, Puritan divines like Baxter were developing the concept of a calling into a regular specialised job. "Outside of a well-marked calling the accomplishments of a man are only casual and irregular, and he spends more time in idleness than in work . . . (The specialised worker) will carry out his work in order, while another remains in constant confusion and his work knows neither time nor place . . . Therefore is a certain calling the best for everyone." Baxter also anticipated Adam Smith by more than 100 years in pointing to the division of labour as the source of improvement in production and economic growth.⁸

Thus, on the one hand the Puritan ethic justified the profit-making business activities of the employer as a sign that he was among the elect, while on the other the ethical importance (later strengthened by Methodism) of a fixed calling and unremitting work, justified regular, specialised work for the employee.

A specifically bourgeois economic ethic had grown up. With the consciousness of standing in the fullness of God's grace and

being visibly blessed by Him, the bourgeois businessman... could follow his pecuniary interests as he would and feel that he was fulfilling a duty in doing so. The power of religious asceticism provided him in addition with sober, conscientious, and usually industrious workmen, who clung to their work as to a life purpose willed by God.

On the one hand, the religious conversion of large numbers of working-class people to the Protestant work ethic undermined their resistance to exploitation and was thus against their own best interest. On the other, the Protestant bourgeois work ethic in due course brought forth working-class consciousness in opposition to itself. But the centrally relevant fact for us, thinking about the future of work today, is that from the Protestant work ethic stemmed the basis on which work in late industrial societies has been organised, that is the assumption that work means employment and that every normal adult of working age should have a job. The crucial point is that this new work ethic, shaped by the experience and perspectives of a non-conformist minority in the middle ranks of society, provided the form of work that eventually dominated society as a whole. In shaping a new work ethic for the post-industrial age, will non-conforming people from the middle ranks of society today have a comparable part to play?

Change as Liberation and Progress

Medieval society was hierarchical and, for the most part, rigid and static. God was understood to have placed people in their respective ranks; the monarch, together with lords and prelates, high and mighty, was at the top; the poor and lowly were at the bottom; and everyone else was on rungs of the ladder in between. Only in exceptional cases would someone move up or down. This social order was thought of as remaining unchanged. It reflected the medieval perception of the universe as hierarchical and static, with God at the top with his court of archangels, then the angels, then humans (a little lower than the angels and a little higher than the beasts), then the beasts, then plants, and so on down the full range of God's creation. Work in such a society and such a universe was the work required of you by your place in it. It was governed by the obligations attaching to your place - for example, the obligations of the peasant to his

lord, and vice versa. Most men and women unquestioningly took up the same work as their parents, as successive generations followed in the footsteps of those who went before.

Industrial society, by contrast, has been more flexible and evolving. Relaxation of the medieval obligations which kept people in their place brought more freedom of movement, and those who could grasp the opportunities this gave began to see work as a way of bettering themselves. For those who thus experienced the coming of industrial society as opening new dimensions of freedom, its evolution was perceived as progress. In fact, the dominant ethos of 19th-century Britain was an ethos of progress — the progress of science and industry in harnessing the resources of the natural world to human use, and the progress of imperial power in bringing European civilisation, the pax Britannica, and the Christian religion to 'lesser breeds without the law'. The middle-class outlook of that time saw work as a contribution to progress in these senses, and many middle-class people dedicated themselves to their work for that reason as well as for more selfish ones.

There was, however, the other side of the coin. As the old obligations of social superiors to social inferiors crumbled, the new mobility had disastrous effects on many people, especially in the lower ranges of society. As they were pushed down the ladder they suffered deprivation, injustice, and loss of self-respect. Those on whom the evolution of industrial society imposed new dimensions, not of freedom, but of necessity, experienced it as the reverse of liberation and progress. They came to perceive work as something that they, in their position in society, were forced to do for other people better placed than themselves. The prevailing working-class attitude to work became very different from the dominant attitude based on the outlook of the more fortunate middle classes. We shall return to this in Chapter 8.

Work Ethic or Leisure Ethic?

The Protestant work ethic took a particular historical form, which subsequently developed into the formalised version which dominates late industrial societies today. Strictly speaking, this is now an employment, or job, ethic, rather than a work ethic in the

true sense. Most people believe they *ought* to have a job and try to get one and keep one, but the majority of people *in* jobs are probably not very deeply committed to their work. The true work ethic is now more likely to be found among self-employed people and others who have decided not to work in a conventional job, but rather to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to their own chosen sphere of work, than among employees. It is based on the perception that work is a good and valuable activity for what it achieves. It is perceived as activity that meets needs — other people's as well as the worker's — and, in meeting those needs, brings with it a sense of self-esteem and (in most cases) social belonging. People who subscribe to the work ethic see work as activity that gives meaning to their lives and brings opportunity for their own development and self-fulfilment.

Such people may perceive work, as did the medieval Benedictine monks, as a way of offering their life in worship and prayer to God; or, as other Christians have seen it, as a way of taking part in God's creation, as co-creators with God. This Christian view of work has been powerfully reaffirmed in recent years:

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 the society within which he lives in community with those who belong to the same family. And work means any activity by man, whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature or circumstances; it means any human activity that can and must be recognised as work, in the midst of all the many activities of which man is capable and to which he is predisposed by his very nature, by virtue of humanity itself. 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 work⁹

These are the opening words of the Encyclical Letter, *Laborem Exercens*, of Pope John Paul II, published in 1981. I personally doubt whether the purpose of human life is to 'subdue the earth'; and I see the sharp distinction between humans and other

creatures as a survival from a hierarchical worldview which is on the way out. Nonetheless, the work ethic is powerfully affirmed: work is activity that contributes to the purposes of life; if you think your life has (or should have) any purpose beyond the mere living of it, your work will be (or should be) activity that contributes to that purpose; therefore your work will have (or should have) some kind of spiritual significance for you.

Marxists agree with Christians that work is the central activity of human life which distinguishes humans from other creatures such as ants and bees. But whereas Christians perceive human work as a process of co-creation with God, Marx saw it as a process whereby human beings create themselves and, increasingly, the world around them:

Labour is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature. He confronts the materials of nature as a force of nature. He sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body, his arms, legs, head and hands, in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs. Through this movement he acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature.¹⁰

Work, for Marx, was the process of human self-creation.

There is also a more ecological view of the centrality of work to human life. In contrast to the Christian and Marxist views, this sees working as participating in the processes of nature, rather than subduing and changing them. As Khalil Gibran puts it,

"You work that you may keep pace with the earth and the soul of the earth. For to be idle is to become a stranger unto the seasons, and to step out of life's procession that marches in majesty towards the infinite. To love life through labour is to be intimate with life's inmost secret".¹¹

Among those who have subscribed to the work ethic are many who have drawn attention to the distinction between good work and bad. For example, while the dominant strand in Christian thinking about work sees it as a blessing, another strand sees work as an unavoidable curse laid on humanity by God as punishment for Adam's original sin. William Morris echoed this

distinction when he defined work as being of two kinds,
"one good, the other bad; one not far removed from a blessing,
a lightening of life; the other a mere curse, a burden to life. . . .
Worthy work carries with it the hope of pleasure in rest, the
hope of pleasure in using what it makes, and the hope of
pleasure in our daily creative skill. All other work but this is
worthless; it is slaves' work — mere toiling to live that we may
live to toil".¹²

E.F. Schumacher similarly contrasted good work with bad. An example of bad work, he said, is the mindless repetitive boredom of working on a factory assembly line, which destroys initiative and rots brains. Good work, by contrast, is that which achieves the three main purposes of human work: first, to provide necessary and useful goods and services; second, to enable every one of us to use and thereby perfect our gifts like good stewards; third, to do so in service to, and in cooperation with, others, so as to liberate ourselves from our inborn egocentricity. Schumacher went on to say that "this threefold function makes work so central to human life that it is truly impossible to conceive of life at the human level without work". And then he quoted Albert Camus: "Without work, all life goes rotten. But when work is soulless, life stifles and dies."¹³

Awareness that work can often be bad may lead people to discard the work ethic altogether and replace it by a leisure ethic. Bertrand Russell, for example, distinguished between two kinds of work, as follows: "First, altering the position of matter at or near the earth's surface relatively to such other matter; second, telling other people to do so. The first kind is unpleasant and ill-paid, the second is pleasant and highly paid." In fact, Russell was making several distinctions here: apart from those between pleasant and unpleasant, and well-paid and ill-paid work, there were the distinctions between the work of subordinates and the work of superiors, and between physical and non-physical work. But the important point is that, in contrast to Morris and Schumacher who were concerned with 'useful' work and 'good' work, Russell was writing 'in praise of idleness'.¹⁴ Whereas Morris and Schumacher both thought work was essentially good, the aristocratic Russell thought work essentially something to be avoided.

Whereas, in general, the people in the middling ranks of society tend to subscribe to a work ethic, those at either end of the social spectrum are *more* likely to rate leisure higher than work. Aristocrats are inclined to think of work, as the ancient Greeks and Romans did, as something to be done by inferiors and slaves and to be avoided by self-respecting citizens; and courtiers, playboys, rentiers and financiers have always tended to think of work as something which less fortunate or less intelligent people should be persuaded or cajoled into carrying out on their behalf. At the same time, the poorer sections of society have often been inclined to agree with Snoopy that "work is the crab-grass in the lawn of life", to be cut to the minimum if not rooted out altogether. They have tended to feel that "if work were a good thing, the rich would have found a way to keep it to themselves".¹⁵

A question for the future, then, is whether a leisure ethic or a revived work ethic is more likely to prevail. Those who support a HE future in which most people will live lives of leisure, believe that a leisure ethic will be one of its most important features. On the other hand those who support a SHE future in which ownwork will play a growing part in many people's lives, believe that a new work ethic will be central to it.

Meanwhile, the third, Business-As-Usual, view believes that work in the form of employment, though often having little value in itself, will continue to be necessary for instrumental reasons—as a means of earning a livelihood or achieving some other desirable end. Some may welcome that kind of work as an opiate, as a means of enabling them to forget or ignore the anxieties, miseries or meaninglessness of their lives. Many workaholics regard work in this way. Voltaire, at the end of *Candide*, expressed it thus: "Work wards off three great evils: boredom, vice and poverty . Let us work, then, and not argue. It is the only way to make life bearable."

Many young people will no doubt continue to perceive a job as what initiates them into adulthood and enables them to escape from the narrow confines of their family into the wider world. Many men, and many women, may still see comparatively orderly routine jobs in factories, offices and the like as a means

of at least temporary escape from the anxieties, traumas and muddles of children, housework, and family life. Traditional supporters of law and order will continue to favour work — for other people, that is — not so much for its own sake as because they think the Devil finds mischief for idle hands to do.

A New Work Ethic

These different views about work and leisure will all exist in the future as in the past. Different people will continue to have different attitudes. Some people will be responsible and hardworking, others will be irresponsible and lazy. Some will be ambitious, others easily contented. Some will be conscientious, others happy-go-lucky. Some will see work as a good thing, to be welcomed with enthusiasm. Some will see it as a bad thing, to be avoided whenever possible. Some will take a more neutral view, accepting work as a fact of life, and trying to make the best of it. These differences will simply reflect the fact that different people have different physical and mental capacities, different temperaments, different opportunities, different experiences, different positions in society, and different cultural backgrounds.

But, overriding these differences of outlook between different people, a new work ethic will almost certainly emerge. It is likely to be more powerful than either the existing job ethic or whatever leisure ethic may develop, reflecting the fact that the development of ownwork will have a deeper impact on the way people live and organise themselves, and will be a more important factor in shaping the future, than either the continuing existence of employment as a form of work or the expansion of leisure.

The new work ethic will be based, as was the Protestant work ethic when it was new, on a fresh perception of reality. Increasing numbers of people are already beginning to perceive that real life is not to be found in the formalised activities of business, government and money. In late industrial societies these have become overdeveloped to a point where they treat people, not as real people, but as organisational abstractions like employees, customers, managers, pensioners, and so on. Real life is rather to be found in the informal spheres of activity where people confront themselves and one another as real people. Just

as the Lutheran ethic taught that worldly work was more real than withdrawal into the artificial, abstracted sphere of ecclesiastical life, so the new work ethic now will teach that to immerse oneself in today's organisational world is to sink into a world of abstractions and turn one's back on real life; and that real life means real experience, and real work means finding ways of acting directly to meet needs - one's own, other people's and, increasingly, the survival needs of the natural world which supports us.

The direction in which the new work ethic will lead us will, however, differ in vital respects from that which the Protestant ethic opened up. For example, the Protestant ethic emphasised quantitative values, as in its new concern with money and time, and it placed great weight on individualism and the impersonal approach. In these and other respects it reflected the new worldview that was taking shape at that time. As we shall see in the next two chapters, the pendulum now has begun to swing the other way. This will profoundly affect our work ethic and the way we value such things as money and time.

However, there are two important features which the emergence of the new work ethic today will have in common with the emergence of the Protestant work ethic in its time.

First, as we noted earlier, the Protestant work ethic was pioneered by a non-conforming minority from the middle range of society, who turned away from the old ways of doing and thinking and opened up new ways. The same thing is beginning to happen today as non-conforming minorities, mainly of middle-class people, turn away from the old orthodoxies of the industrial age and begin to open up new, saner, more humane, more ecological ways of doing and thinking. The differences are, of course, profound. Today's pioneers are not, in the main, individualists, obsessed with the question of their own individual salvation. On the contrary, they are powerfully moved by the prospect of a richer personal and spiritual life which community participation seems to offer, and which the conventional way of life in industrialised society largely precludes. Nor do they make the harsh distinction between themselves as elect and other people as damned that their Puritan predecessors made. They

know that, if humankind is to change direction and set out on a new path of progress, this must be an enterprise in which everyone has an opportunity to share.

The second point in common is that the new work ethic will mean a great liberation of human energies into new and useful activities, just as the Protestant ethic did in its time. But whereas then liberation for some was at the expense of lost freedom for others, this time it will be possible for all to share in liberation from the forms of dependency now imposed by being employed, or not, as the case may be. The only freedom that will be lost will be the freedom to exploit other people and keep them dependent. Whereas the Protestant work ethic could be used to keep the many dependent on the few and to compel the many to work for the few, the new work ethic will be based on the principle of enabling all people to become more self-reliant.¹⁶

6

Changing Worldview,
Changing Values*The Industrial-Age Outlook*

In the middle ages people perceived themselves as belonging organically to a natural and social order which was divinely sanctioned, hierarchical and unchanging. They worked, and perceived their work, accordingly. Their outlook was personal. They thought of God as a separate, supremely powerful person, who had brought them into existence as part of his creation and was able either to condemn them to everlasting punishment or to raise them to perpetual bliss. They thought of their social and economic relations as relations between people, and saw society as consisting of persons and being governed by particular persons. It is true that medieval religious culture had attempted with fair success to depersonalise mountains, rivers, trees, houses and other places which earlier pagan cultures had identified with living spirits. But, nonetheless, people perceived themselves as having been given their own particular place as human beings a little lower than the angels and a little above the beasts, in the predominantly personal world of God's creation.

The Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation and, ultimately, the industrial revolution brought a complete change of outlook. We distanced ourselves from the natural universe around us and came to regard ourselves as separate from it. Since then, from a position outside nature, we have measured it and studied it, exploited it and harnessed it. We have treated nature as an object in relation to ourselves, by bringing to bear upon it the objective processes of science and the manipulative processes of technology. We have regarded nature as a machine, to be understood and explained from outside by natural scientists, and to be worked from outside by engineers, industrialists and factory farmers. We have treated other species as things, to be captured, observed, vivisected, used and destroyed to suit

human purposes. This perception of nature as something apart from ourselves has had a tremendous impact on what we have thought of as work, and on the kinds of work people have done and have valued during the industrial age.

Similarly, we learned to distance ourselves from other people and society. We learned to think of ourselves as separate individuals and of other people as impersonal role-players, like consumers and employees. We learned to think of society as a machine. We learned to suppose that people and society could be understood by observation from outside by economists, market researchers, political scientists, and other social scientists; and we learned to suppose that they could be manipulated by intervention from outside by businessmen and politicians. One result is that many people's work today is concerned with observing people at a distance and dealing with them impersonally as consumers, employees, voters, pensioners, housewives, social welfare clients, viewers, and so on.

The industrial age has also taught us to distance ourselves from ourselves. For example, it has taught us to think of our bodies as machines, to be understood and manipulated by observation and intervention from outside — as in the diagnoses and treatments of conventional medicine. This conceptual model of ourselves in relation to our bodies reflected the Cartesian duality, and led us to think of ourselves as a 'mind in a machine'. Then, as psychologists taught us that our minds too can be manipulated from outside by drugs and other interventionist treatments, we came to perceive ourselves as separate, not just from our bodies, but also from our minds. So, in our work, we came to use our bodies, and then our minds, as instruments of work — as if the physical work done by our bodies and the brainwork done by our minds could be distanced from our real selves. The growing separation between work and what many people perceived as their real life, paralleled this growing separation of ourselves from our bodies and our minds.

Finally, the medieval concept of the divine as a person gave way to a dominant concept of the universe as a vast impersonal machine: "Man at last knows that he is alone in the unfeeling immensity of the universe, out of which he emerged only by

chance".¹

The medieval universe, and the medieval social order, was assumed to enjoy a stability that was morally sanctioned by a personal God. The removal of those moral sanctions brought new perceptions of freedom, both to act and to be acted upon. The perception that one could be a subject, or an object, or both, became much sharper. People came to see themselves, as active subjects in relation to the natural world, which they increasingly perceived as the impersonal and mechanistic object of their actions. In relation to other people they saw themselves no longer as co-existing in the position in the social order in which God had placed them, but as either subject or object — either, from a more powerful position in society, acting upon other people and directing or manipulating them, or, from a less powerful position, being acted upon and directed and manipulated by them. To begin with this was reflected in new personal relationships between masters and men. Then, as the structures of later industrialised society became increasingly depersonalised, people came to see themselves either as helping to operate the mechanisms of business, government, finance and other component parts of the society machine, or as being acted upon and manipulated by these mechanisms. The first attitude is part of the outlook of the managerial and professional classes, the second an aspect of working-class consciousness. In either case, the effect on people's perception of work has been profound.

A Post-Industrial Worldview

There are already signs that the post-industrial worldview may be fundamentally different in many ways.

A sign of our changing perception of our relationship with nature is the upsurge of concern in recent years about the countryside, the way we treat other living creatures and the land, our destruction of species (of plants as well as animals), the threat to the tropical forests, desertification, pollution, the exhaustion of the Earth's natural resources, and so on. The outlook of many of the environmentalists who voice these concerns is still, perhaps, largely mechanistic. They perceive

planet Earth as a machine which we may be in danger of running into the ground. But, there are other signs that a more truly ecological attitude to nature is taking firm root.

For example, scientists are beginning to discuss the 'Gaia hypothesis'.² They are discovering that the entire range of living matter on Earth, including the human species, can be regarded as a single living entity, capable of manipulating the Earth's atmosphere to suit its overall needs and endowed with faculties and powers far beyond those of its constituent parts. This has already proved a valuable hypothesis to scientists, and has suggested experimental questions and answers which have been scientifically fruitful. Another example is the revival of interest, especially in North America, in the traditional North American Indian attitude to the natural world. Chief Seattle's oration of 1852 speaks to us today: "This we know. The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life. He is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."³ Yet another example is the discovery of modern physicists that the universe has to be "experienced as a dynamic, inseparable whole, which always includes the observer in an essential way".⁴ Emphasis is now beginning to shift from consciousness of being apart from nature to consciousness of being a part of it; from external observation to direct experience; from instrumental intervention to direct involvement. If this shift of emphasis continues, it is bound to have a powerful effect on the values we give to different kinds of work.

Something very similar is beginning to happen to our perceptions of society. For example, 'barefoot economists' are beginning to live in communities, helping to animate local self-development from within.⁵ This contrasts sharply with the work of conventional economists, who manipulate statistical aggregates and impersonal instruments of policy from outside. In the sphere of politics, local participatory politics is spreading as a response to the inadequacies of representative national politics carried out by professional politicians at a remove.⁶ In general, the idea is gaining ground that the best way to help people is by working *with* them, not *on* them or *for* them; and that the best

way to understand society and to change it is from within, by living the change and being personally part of it ourselves. In short, direct involvement is coming to be seen as a more effective approach to social change than trying to manipulate change by political and economic intervention from outside. This too is bound to have a powerful effect on the values we attach to different kinds of work.

There are comparable signs that the post-industrial transition will also bring a more holistic perception of ourselves. 'Holistic health', 'alternative therapies' and 'humanistic psychology' are some of many new approaches which are beginning to treat body, mind and spirit as a unity. 'Transpersonal psychology" and 'psycho-synthesis' are two of many new disciplines that aim to teach us to integrate ourselves.⁷ This new perspective on personal health and development is likely to affect increasingly the kinds of work we value, and the kinds of work we are prepared to set our bodies and minds to do.

Finally, it seems that a comparable change is already beginning to affect our perceptions of the supernatural and the divine, and that the concept of a pitiless impersonal cosmos from which we are excluded may well be replaced by that of an evolving superpersonal universe of which we ourselves are part. Gaia is one way of describing this. Teilhard de Chardin's cosmogenesis is another.⁸ As the 'consciousness revolution'⁹ encourages increasing numbers of people to cultivate the experience, well-known to mystics through the ages, of being in a state of oneness with the cosmos, a new perception of the divine is beginning to crystallise as an evolving collective consciousness which we ourselves help to create, by the way we live our lives and develop our own potential. This brings together the Christian concept of human beings as co-creators of the world with God, and the Marxist concept of human beings as creators of themselves and the world. It will powerfully affect the way we think about the purposes of life and work, and the kinds of work we value.

The post-industrial universe and the post-industrial social order thus seem likely to be experienced not as hierarchical or fixed or as morally sanctioned by an external personal God, as in

the middle ages; nor as a competitive arena in which one has either to act or to be acted upon, as in the industrial age. A more ecological understanding of our relations with other species and the natural world will mean our seeing ourselves as co-existing with them 'as part of the same web', rather than seeing them merely as potential objects of our actions. Similarly, we shall tend to perceive society as a web of social relationships in which each person interacts to a greater or lesser degree with each, and no longer as a machine that enables some to act upon others. The important purposes of work will then be seen, not as finding new ways of taming the natural world and exploiting it for our own use,¹⁰ but as creating permanently sustainable ways to live in harmony with it; and not as achieving economic or social or political success at the expense of our fellow humans, but as finding ways to ensure that the free development of ourselves will contribute to the free development of our fellows, and vice versa.

Shifting Values

There is now a fair amount of evidence that some such shift of values as I have been outlining has begun to take place in the industrialised world over the last 20 years. It has been most intensively studied in the United States, but the same broad pattern of change seems to hold good for other countries too.

The Stanford Research Institute (SRI) has for many years been looking at American values in the context of business marketing. Three of their main categories for consumers are: 'need-driven', 'outer-directed', and 'inner-directed'. The consumption habits of the need-driven are determined by their need for basics and their lack of money; those of the outer-directed are determined by their need to belong, to emulate the trend-setters, and to be seen as achievers; and those of the inner-directed are determined by their need to express themselves, to experience and participate, and to be socially conscious - for example, by supporting 'such causes as conservation, environmentalism and consumerism'. (A fourth category, 'integrated', is for the "rare people who have it all together. They wield the power of outer-directedness with the sensitivity of inner-directedness". But there are not many of these paragons and they cannot be identified empirically!)¹¹

An important finding of these studies is that a shift is taking place from outer-directed to inner-directed values. The following lists are presented to suggest the nature of this shift:

Past Symbols of Success

Fame
Being in *Who's Who*
Five-Figure Salary
College Degree
Splendid Home
Executive Position
Live-in Servants
New Car Every Year

Present Symbols of Success

Unlisted Phone Number
Swiss Bank Account
Connections with Celebrities
Deskless Office
Second and Third Home
Being a Vice President
Being Published
Frequent World Travel

Future Symbols of Success

Free Time Any Time
Recognition as a Creative Person
Oneness of Work and Play
Rewarded less by Money than by Respect and Affection
Major Societal Commitments
Easy Laughter, Unembarrassed Tears
Philosophical Independence
Loving, and In Touch with Self

The message is reasonably clear, even if the focus on *symbols of success* suggests that the people by whom and for whom these studies were carried out may not yet have shaken off outer-directed values!

In his recent book,¹² Duane Elgin (formerly a researcher at SRI) discusses the "whole pattern of practical changes that a growing number of people are making in their lives . . . This innovative way of living is termed Voluntary Simplicity". Elgin estimates that some ten million people in the United States were wholeheartedly exploring a life of voluntary simplicity in 1980,

and that this could well "become the dominant orientation for the majority of the adult population of many Western developed nations by the year 2000". The emerging system of values associated with voluntary simplicity, which Elgin contrasts with the industrial value system, is very similar to the value system implied by the SHE vision of the future (see Chapter 1).

In another recent book Daniel Yankelovich, of the American opinion-polling firm of Yankelovich, Skelly and White, confirms this shift away from (in his terms) instrumental, materialistic, technological, self-denying values to values centred around self-fulfilment. The new values, he says, are based on the need for activities that have value in their own right and on the idea that people have value in themselves. In an even more recent report on 'Work and Human Values' of which Yankelovich was one of the authors, this emerging new value system is called 'expressivism' (corresponding to 'inner-directed') in contrast to 'material success' (corresponding to 'outer-directed'). The five core values of expressivism are described as:

- (1) emphasis on inner growth rather than on external signs of success;
- (2) living in harmony with nature;
- (3) autonomy, as opposed to dependence on authority;
- (4) hedonism;
- (5) community.¹³

So far as the more fortunate groups in society are concerned this shift in values was no doubt prompted at first by the experience of material security. In the United States of the 1960s, the young people — who are today's middle-aged — were the post-scarcity generation. They took for granted that their material needs would be met, and their aspirations shifted to the non-material aspects of life. However, in the 1970s the limits to conventional economic expansion began to close in, and it was not long before the industrialised world, including the United States, faced the prospect of neo-scarcity. Assuming that the shift from the old technological, materialist values to the new ecological, non-materialist values continues, this will be only partly because the new approach has come to seem desirable. It will also be partly because it has come to be accepted as necessary.

This shift of values will probably continue. But the process is likely to be confused. There could be increasing diversity in the values and aspirations of different persons, different groups and — to some extent — different countries. For one thing, development of a greater variety of communications media will help to show people many different possible life-styles, in contrast to the dominant set of standards communicated by the mass communications of the mass consumption society. On the other hand, if economic and employment prospects continue depressed, the revival of material priorities such as having a well-paid job and the consumer lifestyle that goes with it, which has been evident in some sections of the population in, for example, Reagan's America and Thatcher's Britain in the last few years, could continue. There could thus be an increasing polarisation of value systems and a sharper division between those who hold to the old technological, materialist values and those who do not. This would be reflected in deepening disagreement about the value of work in general and about the relative value of work of different kinds.

Masculine And Feminine

One of the most important components of the shift that is now taking place from the old value system to a new one is the shift from masculine to feminine values. More people are coming to perceive the present human crisis — the arms race, third world poverty, exhaustion of natural resources, destruction and pollution of the biosphere, mass unemployment, diseases of civilisation, and so on — as a crisis of masculine values. More people are realising that the industrial age has been a very masculine age, and that this is a source of many problems now.

Thanks to Jung and other psychologists, it is now widely accepted and understood that within each one of us, whether we are men or women, there is both a masculine and a feminine side. This duality must be kept in balance if we are to be a full person, whole, healthy and fulfilled, and capable of functioning well. A man whose feminine side is suppressed and undeveloped and altogether subordinated to his masculine side as he struggles his way through the stressful world of telegrams and anger, will find himself arid and unfulfilled when eventually the mid-life crisis

hits him and he wonders what it's all for. And the woman whose masculine side is correspondingly undeveloped may find that she is unable to organise herself to cope with the practicalities of life in a largely man-made world.

This masculine/feminine polarity can be found in societies, too. According to Erich Fromm in *The Sane Society*,¹⁴ a patriarchal society is characterised by respect for man-made law, by rational thought, and by sustained efforts to control and change the natural world; whereas a matriarchal society is characterised by the importance of blood ties, close links with the land, and acceptance of human dependence on nature. Patriarchy attaches high value to order and authority, obedience and hierarchy; whereas matriarchy lays stress on love, unity and universal harmony. The healthy society is one in which both the masculine and feminine principles are developed and in balance with one another.

Late industrial society has become so unhealthy in this respect, the masculine and the feminine have split so far apart, and the masculine has come to dominate the feminine so much, that it is hardly too much to feel that we now live in a nightmare fantasy world. The nightmare is all too real; the outcome could be the nuclear holocaust.

In *The Imperial Animal* Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox describe the nature of the fantasy. Human males have:

all the enthusiasms of the hunting primate, but few of the circumstances in which this reality can be reflected. So they create their own realities; they make up teams; they set up businesses and political parties; they form secret societies and cabals for and against the government; they set up regiments; they make up fantasies about honour and dignity; they turn their enemies into 'not men', into prey. They generate forms of automatic loyalty and complete dedication than can spread the Jesuitical message of the Church Militant and also send screaming jets to a foreign country. All a country needs is a couple of dozen males who take their fantasies about their own omnipotence so seriously that they spend money, kill people, and even commit Abraham's presumptuous conceit of sacrificing their sons to voices of grandeur they think they hear."

Meanwhile, as Virginia Woolf pointed out in *A Room of One's Own*, the human female has aided and abetted the human male in these dangerous fantasies:

Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. Without that power, probably the earth would still be swamp and jungle. The glories of all our wars would be unknown Mirrors are essential to all violent and heroic action. That is why Napoleon and Mussolini insist so emphatically upon the inferiority of women, for if they were not inferior they would cease to enlarge How is a man to go on giving judgement, civilizing natives, making law, writing books, dressing up and speechifying at banquets, unless he can see himself at breakfast and dinner at least twice the size he really is? ... The looking-glass vision is of extreme importance because it charges the vitality; it stimulates the nervous system. Take it away and men may die, like the drug fiend deprived of his cocaine.¹⁶

How is this split between the masculine and the feminine to be healed? How is a more androgynous balance to be created? In the rest of this chapter we shall explore these questions in the context of the future of men's work and women's work.

Men's Work and Women's Work

In every society in the past it seems that the tasks done by men and the tasks done by women have been clearly distinguished from each other. Here, for example, is an account of the bushmen of Southern Africa at work:

A woman gathers on one day enough food to feed her family for three days, and spends the rest other time resting in camp, doing embroidery, visiting other camps, or entertaining visitors from other camps. For each day at home, kitchen routines, such as cooking, nut cracking, collecting firewood and fetching water, occupy one to three hours of her time. This rhythm of steady work and steady leisure is maintained throughout the year. The hunters tend to work more frequently than the women but their schedule is uneven. It is not unusual for a man to hunt avidly for a week and then do no hunting at all for two or three weeks. Since hunting is an unpredictable business and subject to magical control, hunters sometimes experience a run of bad luck

and stop hunting for a month or longer. During these periods, visiting, entertaining, and especially dancing are the primary activities of men.¹⁷

In pre-industrial Europe, too, there was a clear division of labour between women and men in traditional rural areas.¹⁸ Everywhere the pattern seems to have been much the same. Inside the house, women were responsible for child-rearing, cooking, cleaning, and for cottage-industrial tasks like spinning, knitting, glove-stitching and lace-making, whereas the only indoor task for men apart from house construction and repair seems to have been lighting the oven. Outside the house, women were responsible for wood-gleaning, water-carrying, vegetable-growing, weeding, and poultry and dairy work, whereas men were responsible for digging, ploughing, scything, slaughtering, and cattle-marketing. Whereas men were responsible for managing the farm and doing the farm accounts, women were responsible for managing the household. These sex roles were absolute and had to be strictly observed. The community punished with ridicule those who attempted to break them down. A husband who milked the cows, carried water or washed dishes would become a local laughing-stock. Men and women each had their own station, laid down by custom and tradition, and they were not expected to work outside it. In this, the situation in the household reflected the organisation of work in society as a whole.

Within their own particular domain women had a great deal of power to manage their tasks without men's interference. Nonetheless, it seems to have been the case in most societies that men's work role and status came to be considered superior to women's. Edward Shorter describes how "the systematic subordination of women by peasant men that we commonly encounter" in pre-industrial Europe was sanctified by the rituals of daily life. For example, wives did not join their husbands at meals, but waited on them.

In the pre-industrial household, then, as in society as a whole, the organisation of work seems to have reflected the distribution of power and status. Just as masters were more powerful than slaves, and lords than serfs, in society as a whole, so men's

status was higher than women's in the household. It is arguable how far this was a question of physical strength. It is certainly true that strength was a powerful asset in pre-industrial conditions, and also that many husbands could exercise physical force over their wives. But the superiority of men's work status also reflected the fact that they were responsible for paying taxes and rents, and for dealing with officialdom. They were head of their household in the eyes of the world. Responsibility for their households' links with the outside world also meant they had to spend time in the local tavern, sitting around and drinking with their friends. In pre-industrial, as in industrial, times men tended to have more leisure than women.

The fact that men were primarily responsible for relations between their households and the world outside, and especially for their monetary relations with it, meant that, when subsistence work gave place to wage labour and when, as the industrial age came in, employment became the dominant form of work, it was natural for the man of the household to slip into the role of wage-earner and breadwinner. So the gap in status between men's work and women's work widened further. Women's roles may have already been seen as subservient to men's in some respects, but now the unpaid work of women inside the home was seen as merely ancillary to the paid work of men in the world outside.¹⁹

This widening gap in status between the work thought typical of men and the work thought typical of women was symptomatic of the growing dominance of the masculine over the feminine in post-medieval life and thought. The outlook of medieval society may have had a masculine bias, as we have seen, but the importance of the feminine was at least recognised; witness the status given to the Virgin Mary in medieval Catholic theology alongside the masculine Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. After the Reformation, Protestant thinking swept even that aside, as an increasingly masculine society reshaped its theology to reflect its values.

Equal Opportunities

The downgrading of women's work in comparison with men's was directly connected with the central change in the

organisation of work that came in with the industrial age — that is, the downgrading of unpaid, informal work (which remained the typical province of women) in comparison with paid work in formal employment (which became the typical province of men).

From this it has followed naturally that, when women subsequently began to campaign for more equal rights and opportunities with men in the sphere of work, they concentrated on improving the position of women in formal employment. Some progress has been made during this century. Statistically, the number of women in the 'labour force', i.e. in formal employment, has risen. In many countries legislation has been passed and official agencies have been set up to ensure that discrimination against women in employment does not take place. Awareness of the nature of discrimination against women, and of its importance as an employment question, has become widespread.

But although some progress has been made, there is still a long way to go before women enjoy equal rights and equal opportunities with men in formal employment. This can be seen at a glance from the fact that the annual earnings of women who have jobs average out at around 60% of men's annual earnings. And it is well known that women are poorly represented in the top jobs in almost every walk of life. There are two underlying reasons why women have not made more progress in formal employment. The first is that, because the formal economy is still implicitly regarded as the sphere of men, the work done there (i.e. employment) is organised in ways that suit the needs of men, not women. The second is that, because the informal economy continues to be implicitly regarded as the sphere of women, women's responsibilities there, for home and family life, are greater than men's; and this means that, in general, the degree of commitment that women can make to their work in the formal economy is less than men can make. It adds up to a double burden for many women. Their jobs and the pay that goes with them are, on average, less good than those of men; and they have less leisure than men because of their larger share of responsibility for the informal work at home.

This situation is not peculiar to western capitalist countries. A

recent book on *Women, Work and Family in the Soviet Union* makes it clear that:

while Soviet authors routinely decry the double burden which working-women continue to bear, and enjoin men to assume a greater share of responsibility for domestic chores, few directly confront the fundamental sources of the problem. The household continues to be viewed as preeminently a female domain, and the family as a female responsibility. The fundamental assumption of Soviet economic and family policy—that women, and women alone, have dual roles — is a continuing barrier to fundamental improvements in women's position.²⁰

In poorer countries the position is just as bad, if not worse. The bias in favour of the formal economy, which is a basic cause of the discrimination against which women have to contend, can be even more stark:

The task of water-carrying is one of the most arduous and indispensable of daily tasks in areas with no piped water. It is almost always the responsibility of women, sometimes assisted by children. Even when a dwelling is located near a water source, drawing water and taking it to the house is a heavy chore. But vast numbers of people live at some distance from a source and the job of lugging containers of water on head or back often takes hours each day. Yet, of 70 developing countries covered in an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) survey, only six included the value of water drawn and carried to the point of use in their definitions of goods and services produced. In one of the six, Kenya, the survey found that "since women have virtually no employment opportunities in certain pastoral areas of the country, the collection of water in these regions is excluded from economic calculations by government statisticians". In the same region, however, if a man did the same task in exactly the same way, it would be counted as work.²¹

So, looking to the future, what approaches are there to this whole question of the double burden of women's work, and the double discrimination women now suffer as junior partner in formal employment and senior partner in the informal work of the home?

The first approach, corresponding broadly to Business As Usual, accepts that the present preponderance of the formal

economy will and should continue, and regards the present balance of women's employment and household roles as more or less satisfactory. It focuses on incremental changes that will lighten both sides of the burden; further reforms that will continue to improve women's rights and opportunities in employment; and further improvements in services and facilities, public and private, like nursery schools and supermarkets, that will make it easier for women to manage the household.

The second approach, which connects in certain respects with the HE view of the future, envisages the continuing extension of formalised work, and its further encroachment into what is left of the informal sphere. The campaign for wages for housework is an example of this approach. Like many other feminist campaigns it aims to secure more equal treatment for women with men in a man's world which is characterised by the dominance of the formal economy and of paid employment over all other kinds of work. Andre Gorz interprets this campaign for wages for housework from a Marxist point of view as the "height of alienation", which is reached "when it becomes impossible to conceive that an activity should have a goal other than its wage, or be grounded upon other than market relations". He suggests that, following the strict logic of the capitalist market, the women who support this campaign are calling, not just for the right to work as if they were typical men, but also for proletarianisation as an advance over slavery. They are demanding state remuneration as a means by which to have their work recognised as an impersonal service to society as a whole, and not as a personal service owed by them to their husbands and families. As Gorz says, this approach is in conflict with any attempt to achieve a more balanced, freely chosen distribution of tasks on a personal basis between equal male and female partners.²²

The third approach, corresponding to the SHE view of the future, envisages just such a balanced, freely chosen sharing of work between men and women, perceiving each other as equal partners. It foresees the crucial area for progress in this respect as being the informal economy. We saw in Chapter 2 that a revival of the informal economy will provide the key to a revival of the formal economy and thus of the economy as a whole. Just so, a revival of participation by men in the work of the informal

economy will open up more equal opportunities for participation by women in the formal economy and a more equal balance between men and women in the economy as a whole. It will represent a feminisation of economic life.

The Feminisation of Work

Three factors now point towards the coming feminisation of work. The first is a question of values. The second is the information revolution. And the third is to do with changes already taking place in the patterns of work.

First, then, the conventional attribution of higher status to men's work than to women's work is increasingly coming to be seen as perverse, as the tasks which have typically fallen to women are coming to be seen as more important than many of those which have typically fallen to men. Virginia Novarra²³ gives a good summary of the tasks which women have been expected to perform as their contribution to keeping society going. She refers to these as 'the six tasks'. The first is bearing children. The second is feeding people. The third is clothing people. The fourth is tending the weak and the sick. The fifth is bringing up and educating young children. The sixth is being in charge of the household. Novarra also mentions the role of emotional shock-absorber and comforter that women are expected to play for their husbands and children and friends.

Some of these women's tasks, like bearing children, are not even regarded as work. But they are all directly concerned with meeting essential human needs. Life could not go on without them. By contrast, as Novarra points out, much men's work is in 'surplus' occupations, in the sense that the physical needs of the people engaging in them, e.g. for food, clothing and shelter, have to be met from other people's surplus production. Occupations of this kind include warfare, religion, law and government, and science, learning and the arts — all of which have been regarded as masculine occupations. In the industrial age men's work has become more abstract, impersonal and instrumental than it was in pre-industrial times. Men have typically shuffled things around in factories, they have shuffled papers around in offices, they have shuffled money around in

banks, and they have shuffled ideas around in universities. Women, on the other hand, have been directly concerned with meeting the needs of people.

As values shift away from the masculine towards the feminine, many typically masculine kinds of work are already beginning to be seen as less useful and more damaging, and the general image of traditional men's work is becoming less attractive. This will be compounded by the second of the three factors I mentioned, the impact of new technology on the traditional work activities of the macho male. As automation and the microprocessor become more deeply entrenched, the old heavy industries — coal, steel, ship-building, engineering, construction, and so on — will continue to require less work from physically sturdy males. Something like a crisis of masculine identity may have to be surmounted. I have sometimes wondered, as I have been working on this book during the British mineworkers' strike of 1984, whether the battles between the pickets and the police may be symptomatic of a crisis of male identity of that kind. At all events, we seem to be entering a period when deeply disturbing questions are beginning to arise about the value of the work that has been typical of men and about the need for men to do that kind of work in the future.

The third factor is the growing realisation that women's experience of work is likely to have greater value and relevance for many people — including men — in the future.²⁴ Increasing numbers of people are beginning to feel that the normal pattern of working life in the future will not be modelled on the existing pattern of life-long full-time employment that has been typical for men in industrialised societies, but on the more flexible mixture of part-time employment, family work at home, and voluntary work, mixed in with spells of full-time employment, that has been more typical of many women's working lives in recent decades.

7

The Valuation of Work

Changes in people's outlook and system of values from time to time over the centuries have prompted discussion of a whole series of essentially technical and philosophical questions about how work and its results are to be valued. The history of economic thinking is shot through with attempts to tackle these questions, ranging from the medieval theory of the just wage and the just price to the late-20th-century conundrum of how to find a sound basis for a national incomes policy.

These questions presented themselves in one way during the middle ages and in another during the industrial age. Now, as we enter the post-industrial age, they are beginning to present themselves in another way again.

Briefly, medieval society assumed that economic relations were governed by a moral law, objective and God-given; and that everything, including work, had its proper value and its just price. To charge more or give less than the just wage or the just price was a sin. Authority, including theological authority, gave guidance on how to decide what was just. In the industrial age the moral and theological approach was replaced by a scientific, humanistic approach. Objectively existing real values and natural prices were assumed to underlie actual economic transactions, and it was assumed to be an aim of economic science to discover what these real values and natural prices were. All value was assumed to be created by human work. And the further assumption was made that value-creating work had to be productive, in the sense of harnessing the physical resources of nature to human use. In the later industrial age the first and the third of these assumptions were modified. The search for real values and natural prices was abandoned, and economists concentrated their attention on how prices, including the price of work (i.e. wages and salaries), actually behaved. It also became

accepted that working to provide a service could create value, no less than working to produce tangible goods.

Now, as we move into the post-industrial age, further changes may be expected. The assumption that all value is created by human work seems increasingly questionable, as much traditional work becomes unnecessary and as shortages of natural resources like good land, clean water, and clear air make the value of those things plain. Growing concern is expressed that conventional economic thinking is not sane, or humane, or ecological: it ignores the value of much useful work, especially informal work, that meets human needs; it ignores the value of social justice; and it ignores the value of conserving the planet and its resources. In short, the assumptions of industrial-age economics are now being questioned seriously, and a new approach is beginning to attract support — not authoritarian as in the middle ages, nor supposedly objective in a scientific sense as in the industrial age. This new, more independently personal approach reflects the shift from outer-directed to inner-directed values discussed in the last chapter. It encourages people to rely more on their own sense of values, in contrast to prevailing money values, as a yardstick for assessing the work which they and other people do. It is, obviously, linked with the move towards ownwork.

The Theory of the Just Price

To the medieval mind economic activity was subordinate to morality and the hope of religious salvation. As Tawney put it, "There is no place in medieval theory for economic activity which is not related to a moral end." For that reason the appetite for economic gain, no less than the sexual instinct or the propensity to physical violence, was hedged around by moral rules and religious prohibitions.¹

These rules and prohibitions owed their effectiveness to the fact that medieval society was personal, hierarchical and static, as well as fundamentally religious. People knew personally the people with whom they entered into economic transactions — for whom they carried out work or who carried out work for them, to whom they sold or from whom they bought. "Much that is now mechanical was then personal, intimate and direct, and there was little room for organisation on a scale too vast for the

standards that are applied to individuals." And people knew what was due to them in their station in life. These things did not change. This social setting reinforced the religious ideas of a just wage and a just price.

It was St. Thomas Aquinas who defined the just price by laying down that the price for which something was sold should correspond with the labour and costs of the producer. This foreshadowed the labour theory of value later developed by John Locke and Adam Smith, and adopted by Karl Marx. As interpreted in the middle ages, it meant that the profits of trade had to be justified by treating them as the wages of the trader, and that it was reprehensible to seek trading gains in excess of a reasonable remuneration. The trader must seek gain, not as an end in itself, but as the wages of his labour. Prices should be such, and no more than such, as would enable each man to have the necessaries of life suitable for his station. Prices should be fixed by public officials in the light of available supplies and the requirements of the producers. Failing that, the individual must fix prices for himself, guided by a consideration of "what he must charge in order to maintain his position, and nourish himself suitably in it, and by a reasonable estimate of his expenditure and his labour".

In later centuries there grew up on the medieval theory of the just wage and the just price that whole regulatory superstructure of guilds, corporations and other institutions of the mercantilist state that eventually formed a systemic obstacle to further economic progress. It had to be by-passed and cleared away as part of the great transformation that brought in the industrial age. Just so today there has grown up on the theoretical foundations of industrial-age economics the institutional superstructure of business, finance, trade unions, professions and government that now constitutes a systemic obstacle to further economic development and social progress. It, in its turn, will have to be by-passed and cleared away as part of the great transformation that will bring in the post-industrial age. But that is to jump ahead.

The Labour Theory of Value

John Locke developed Aquinas' theory of the just price into the labour theory of value, according to which it is work that creates

value by harnessing the resources of nature to human use. "It is labour indeed that puts the difference of value on everything. . . . If we will rightly estimate things as they come to our use and cast up the several expenses about them — what in them is purely owing to Nature and what to labour — we shall find that in most of them ninety-nine hundredths are wholly to be put on the account of labour." Locke regarded labour as the basis of property too. Whatever a man "removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with it ... and thereby makes it his property". "Though the water running in the fountain be everyone's, yet who can doubt the water in the pitcher is his only who drew it out? His labour hath taken it out of the hand of Nature where it was common, and belonged equally to all her children, and hath thereby appropriated it to himself."²

Adam Smith agreed with Locke in giving pride of place to work as the source of value. The introduction to *The Wealth of Nations*³ begins with the following words: "The annual labour of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all the necessaries and conveniences of life which it annually consumes, and which consists always either in the immediate produce of that labour, or in what is purchased with that produce from other nations." Smith then goes on to discuss the causes of improvement in the productive powers of labour, and Book One, Chapter One, contains his famous discussion on specialisation and division of labour as the source of increasing wealth and economic growth. As the following paragraphs show, Adam Smith went to great pains to argue that wealth and value are based on work, and that wealth — as well as being ultimately derived from work — is to be measured by the amount of other people's work it enables its possessor to command.

Every man is rich or poor according to the degree in which he can afford to enjoy the necessaries, conveniences, and amusements of human life. But after the division of labour has once thoroughly taken place, it is but a very small part of these with which a man's own labour can supply him. The far greater part of them he must derive from the labour of other people, and he must be rich or poor according to the quantity of that labour which he can command, or which he can afford to purchase. The value of any commodity, therefore, to the person who possesses it, and who means not to use or consume it himself, but to

exchange it for other commodities, is equal to the quantity of labour which it enables him to purchase or command. Labour, therefore, is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities.

The real price of everything, what everything really costs to the man who wants to acquire it, is the toil and trouble of acquiring it. What everything is really worth to the man who has acquired it, and who wants to dispose of it or exchange it for something else, is the toil and trouble which it can save to himself, and which it can impose upon other people. What is bought with money or with goods is purchased by labour as much as what we acquire by the toil of our own body. That money or those goods indeed save us this toil. They contain the value of a certain quantity of labour which we exchange for what is supposed at the time to contain the value of an equal quantity. Labour was the first price, the original purchase-money that was paid for all things. It was not by gold or by silver, but by labour, that all the wealth of the world was originally purchased; and its value, to those who possess it, and who want to exchange it for some new productions, is precisely equal to the quantity of labour which it can enable them to purchase or command.

Wealth, as Mr Hobbes says, is power. But the person who either acquires, or succeeds to a great fortune, does not necessarily acquire or succeed to any political power, either civil or military. His fortune may, perhaps, afford him the means of acquiring both, but the mere possession of that fortune does not necessarily convey to him either. The power which that possession immediately and directly conveys to him, is the power of purchasing; a certain command over all the labour, or over all the produce of labour, which is then in the market. His fortune is greater or less, precisely in proportion to the extent of this power; or to the quantity either of other men's labour, or, what is the same thing, of the produce of other men's labour, which it enables him to purchase or command. The exchangeable value of everything must always be precisely equal to the extent of this power which it conveys to its owner.

But though labour be the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities, it is not that by which their value is commonly estimated. It is often difficult to ascertain the proportion between two different quantities of labour. The time spent in two different sorts of work will not always alone determine this proportion. The different degrees of hardship endured, and of ingenuity exercised, must likewise be taken into

account. There may be more labour in an hour's hard work than in two hours' easy business; or in an hour's application to a trade which it cost ten years' labour to learn, than in a month's industry at an ordinary and obvious employment. But it is not easy to find any accurate measure either of hardship or ingenuity. In exchanging, indeed, the different productions of different sorts of labour for one another, some allowance is commonly made for both. It is adjusted, however, not by any accurate measure, but by the higgling and bargaining of the market, according to that sort of rough equality which, though not exact, is sufficient for carrying on the business of common life.

In spite of this lack of precision. Smith insisted that labour, "never varying in its own value, is alone the ultimate and real standard by which the value of all commodities can at all times and places be estimated and compared. It is their real price; money is their nominal price only".

For Marx, as for Locke and Smith, the one and only source of value was productive labour used to harness material resources to satisfy human needs. He regarded uncultivated land, for example, as "not being a value" because no human labour has been incorporated in it. But, whereas Smith hoped the labour theory of value would provide a firm basis for measuring wealth, including the wealth of the nation and the national product, Marx developed it to explain the nature of exploitation in a capitalist society.⁴

In a capitalist society, Marx argued, the wage-earner has to sell his labour-power (not his labour, as such), because he has nothing else to sell. According to the labour theory of value, the value of labour-power is, like the value of all commodities, determined by the labour needed to produce it. The production of labour-power involves keeping the worker fit for work and enabling him to reproduce a new generation of workers. Thus the value of the labour-power which the employee sells to his employer is equal to the cost of the employee's subsistence. Exploitation arises because, having purchased the wage-earner's labour-power for the cost of his subsistence, the employer is able to use the wage-earner's labour to create greater values than that subsistence cost. If, in half a day, the worker's labour can produce products of a value equivalent to his subsistence cost,

the other half-day's unrequited labour creates surplus value for the owner of the means of production for whom the worker is working.

The labour theory of value, as developed by Smith and Marx, reflected the outlook of the early industrial age in several respects.

First, it assumed that a product or commodity had a real value, which might differ from the actual price obtained or given for it. The actual price could be affected by local or temporary conditions in the market, or by fluctuations in the value of money. But, other things being equal, there would be a tendency for actual prices to approximate to real values. This economic idea of real value (or natural price, as it was sometimes called) was of a piece with the political ideas of natural laws and natural rights behind the American and French Revolutions. Both were consonant with the prevailing model of science. The idea that real values lay beneath the surface phenomena of market prices, and that these real values could be calculated (in terms of the labour used to create them), paralleled the teaching of Newtonian science that beneath the surface phenomena of the natural world there lay real matter in the form of atoms whose properties and behaviour could, at least in principle, be observed and measured. However, Smith and Marx failed to find away to measure the real value of products as distinct from their price, because they could not establish an objective measure of labour input which could serve as a basis for calculating real values. The later neoclassical economists gave up both the search for real values and the labour theory of value, and concentrated on studying prices - a good example of the prevalent industrial-age tendency for attention to migrate to that half of the Cartesian dualism that could be quantitatively measured.

Second, the labour theory of value assumed that valuable or productive work was work that harnessed *material* resources and produced *material* objects to satisfy human needs. Even when John Stuart Mill argued later that the work involved in the training of workers might be regarded as productive, he felt it necessary to add: "provided that an increase of material products is its ultimate consequence".⁵ This assumption had its roots in the religious doctrine of earlier times, which taught that God had

given man dominion over nature. The more recent scientific tradition, articulated by Francis Bacon in the early 17th century, took this further and urged man to extend his mastery over the forces of nature by means of scientific discoveries and inventions. The tremendous breakthroughs of the early industrial age in manufacturing and transport confirmed the success of this approach. Progress was now seen to be based on the development of human capacity to harness the material world to human use. No wonder Marx responded to Hegel's perception of labour — man's physical commerce with nature — as the process by which humanity externalises itself and develops its own essence, and came to see man's work upon nature as the condition of all spiritual human activity, by which man creates himself as well as nature. Contemporary Catholic thinking still endorses this outer-directed view of human development.

Man has to subdue the earth and dominate it, because as the image of God he is a person, that is to say a subjective being capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself, and with a tendency to self-realisation . . . Understood as a process whereby man and the human race subdue the earth, work corresponds to this basic biblical concept only when throughout the process man manifests himself and confirms himself as the one who dominates.⁶

The later neo-classical economists abandoned the idea that only material production creates value. They accepted that the provision of services creates value too. Nonetheless, the early emphasis on work as physical production supported a perception of wealth as consisting of material things which has lasted until today. In the 18th and 19th centuries this also linked with the primacy given to property in the political sphere.

Third, the labour theory of value attached no value to unworked natural resources, such as water or air or uncultivated land. Land did, of course, have a price. In Britain the enclosures of common land in the 17th and 18th centuries meant that most land was privately owned. Like work and money, land had become a commodity that could be bought and sold. But Smith and Marx could still argue that the real value of land stemmed from the work that had previously been put into it. In their day natural resources seemed inexhaustible, and could be treated as if they would continue to be freely available for ever. Only now,

toward the end of the 20th century, are we beginning to question this.

Fourth, the labour theory of value assumed the primacy of work in the formal economy which produces goods and services for exchange, over work in the informal economy which produces goods and services for direct use by the producers themselves or by their family, friends and neighbours. It is true that, in discussing the values created by work. Smith explicitly distinguished between use-value and exchange-value: "The word 'value', it is to be observed, has two different meanings, and sometimes expresses the utility of some particular object, and sometimes the power of purchasing other goods which the possession of that object conveys. The one may be called 'value in use'; the other, 'value in exchange'." But Smith set the pattern for all economists after him, including Marx, by limiting himself to investigating "the principles which regulate the exchangeable value of commodities". He was not interested in the workings of the informal economy where production is for direct use, but only in the workings of the formal economy in which goods and services are produced for exchange. He assumed that "after the division of labour has once thoroughly taken place" we must largely depend on the formal economy for the necessities of life. This assumption still dominates discussion of economic matters today, and it is only in the last few years that it has begun to be seriously questioned.

Finally, a feature of the labour theory of value stressed by Adam Smith in the passage quoted earlier was the idea that wealth was to be measured by the amount of other people's work it enabled the possessor to purchase or command. To be wealthy was to be able to have a lot of other people working for you, indirectly if not directly. This interpretation of wealth fitted the dawning age of employment no less than it had the ages of serfdom and slavery that were past. It has certainly not yet been abandoned. But it has lost some of its pertinence in the last 200 years, and it is likely to be questioned more positively as the post-industrial revolution proceeds. We shall return to this point at the end of this chapter.

The Neo-Classical Economists

The neo-classical economists, as I have said, abandoned the

search for real values and natural prices. Instead, they concentrated on the study of market prices. In a narrow sense this cleared the decks. Economists were now able to study how actual, observable economic transactions took place and how actual, observable prices behaved, without the distraction of wondering what unobservable real values and natural prices were lurking beneath them. (In fact, many economists decided to study how prices *would* behave in a non-existent, mathematically rational world. But that is another matter.)

From a broader point of view, however, it was unfortunate that economists dropped their concern with values. This automatically restricted their sphere of interest to the formal economy (in which prices operated), to paid work, and to 'demand' that was backed by money. It confirmed the exclusion from economics, not only of questions about the possible need to conserve unworked natural resources, but also of questions about the unpaid work of the informal economy by which people provide goods and services — utilities, use-values, or satisfactions — directly to themselves and one another. It restricted economic activities to two categories only. The first, production, was assumed to be wealth-creating; the second, consumption, was assumed to be wealth-consuming. It attributed no economic significance to production for use (as opposed to production for exchange) or to activities carried out for their own sake. Strictly speaking, it also excluded from economics all needs and wants (such as those of poor people) not sufficiently backed with money to generate effective demand for the goods and services required to meet them. This last exclusion was later rectified, in part, by the development of public sector economics and the use of government taxation, borrowing and spending to create new patterns of effective demand (and provide public services) to meet needs which an uncorrected market economy would have ignored. Nonetheless, by disclaiming any interest in non-monetary values, the neo-classical economists disqualified themselves — and their successors to this day — from discussing the widening range of needs which cannot be satisfied by monetary purchases or by services provided at public expense. These include personal needs, e.g. for responsibility and self-confidence; social needs, e.g. for mutual respect and mutual co-operation; and environmental needs, e.g. for the conservation of

natural resources.

However, one useful consequence of the abandonment by the neo-classical economists of the idea of real value and their concentration on money prices was that they no longer attributed value to material products only. The criterion of whether something had value now became whether people would buy it. If there was a demand for a service, and people would pay for it, then it had value; and the work that went into providing it could be regarded as productive. In economic terms, it was the production of utilities or satisfactions that mattered, not the production of material objects as such. As Alfred Marshall put it, writing in 1890, "Man cannot create material things, he really only produces utilities. . . It is sometimes said that traders do not produce: that while the cabinetmaker produces furniture, the furniture dealer merely sells what is already produced. But there is no scientific foundation for this distinction. They both produce utilities, and neither of them can do more."⁷

The classical distinction between productive and unproductive labour, as labour which produces material products and labour which does not, thus evaporated. "We may define labour", Marshall said, "as any exertion of mind or body undergone partly or wholly with a view to some good other than the pleasure derived directly from the work. And if we had to make a fresh start, it would be best to regard all labour as productive, except that which failed to promote the aim towards which it was directed, and so produced no utility".

This development in neo-classical economics prefigured the great growth of service trades and industries in the 20th century. By 1950 or thereabouts service-led economies had emerged in industrialised countries like the United States and Britain — service-led in the sense that services became the main growth area for employment and the largest sector of economic activity. Today most of those who foresee a return to economic growth and full employment rely on a further expansion of the service industries — including what they call the information, knowledge and leisure industries — to achieve it. Indeed they believe that most new wealth will now be created by the production and sale of information, knowledge and leisure, and they attach a high value to work done in these spheres.

The Supremacy of Quantitative Values

The abandonment by the neo-classical economists of the idea of real value and their concentration on money prices can be seen as a final step in the shift from qualitative values to quantitative values that distinguished the outlook of the industrial age from the outlook of the middle ages.

The supremacy of quantitative values is reflected in Lord Kelvin's famous dictum that "when you can measure what you are speaking of and express it in numbers, you know that on which you are discoursing, but when you cannot measure it and express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a very meagre and unsatisfactory kind". Applied to economic and social life this means: when you can measure the value of what you do for other people and they do for you (i.e. work), the value of what you possess (i.e. wealth), the value of what you receive (i.e. revenues or income), the value of what you give out (i.e. costs or expenditure), and the difference in value between revenues and costs (i.e. profit/loss), you know where you are and can work out what you ought to do; but when you cannot measure these things your life will be in a muddle.

Our calculus for measuring economic and social values is, of course, money; and the growing role of money in our lives, and the growing role of financial institutions in society, are direct reflections of our increasing concern for quantitative values. Moreover, the growing importance of money is directly linked to the central feature of the development of work during the industrial age, i.e. the shift from unpaid work done by people for themselves and one another, to paid work in the form of jobs organised by employers. This is now coming to be described as a shift from informal work to formal work, or from work in the informal economy to work in the formal economy.

This concept of a dual economy, meaning that the economy should be regarded as divided into two spheres, formal and informal, is already playing a significant part in economic discussion, and will almost certainly become more important in the next few years.

The formal and informal sectors of the economy are to be seen as two different spheres of activity, two different aspects of

every-day life. Everyone in an industrialised society is involved in both of these spheres of activity to a greater or lesser extent. The balance between formal and informal (e.g. the division of time spent in the one sphere and in the other) is different for different people, but everyone takes part to some extent in both. Everyone spends some time on activities that involve earning or spending, and everyone spends some time on activities that do not.

In practice, it may be difficult to draw a hard and fast line between formal and informal activity. This is particularly true of neighbourly or family activities which are accompanied by unrecorded cash payments — for example, for casual work done by, say, window cleaners or jobbing gardeners. Sometimes this blurring of the boundary between formal and informal activity results in what is called the black economy — referring to activities which should be declared as formal, so that they can be taxed or otherwise regulated, but are not declared and are thus illegitimate. But although the boundary between the informal and the formal economy is often blurred, the informal economy is best understood as consisting of the whole range of perfectly legitimate household and neighbourhood activities which are carried out on a person-to-person basis and are taken for granted as being a part of everyone's life.

As the emphasis shifted during the industrial age from informal to formal activity, it came to be assumed that the formal economy was the only part of the economy that mattered. In late industrial societies economists have ignored the contribution of informal economic activities to the wellbeing of people and of society as a whole. They have contented themselves with studying the part of the economy in which activity could be counted — i.e. in which figures could be attached to the amounts of money earned and spent, to the number of jobs provided by employers, to the quantities of goods produced, and so on. Politicians likewise have concentrated on debating how the formal economy can be improved — how to create measurable economic growth and to raise employment levels, whether to cut taxes or raise government borrowing, and so on. They too have ignored the role of the informal economy in the lives of people and society. They have never thought it worth while to discuss what balance we should aim for between formal and informal activity

or, for example, whether the formal economy now plays too large a part in most people's lives.

Thus the orthodoxy of the industrial age has been that the formal economy is the only real economy, and that respectable thought and action on economic and social questions should concentrate only on those activities that have a money tag attached. It has come to be assumed that the only real work is the work which is done in the formal economy - in other words, that paid employment is the only really valid form of work.

The Failure of Quantitative Evaluation

What value should we place on different kinds of work? How much should workers in different fields be paid?

The problem of the just wage returned with a vengeance in late industrial society under the guise of 'incomes policy'. In practice, of course, no government has really tried to introduce an incomes policy with the primary purpose of matching levels of pay fairly with the value of the work done. Some recent governments have even claimed that, although their decisions affect people's income and pay levels, they do not have an incomes policy at all. The primary aim has always been to contain inflation, by keeping pay rises down.

An incomes policy has usually involved introducing a norm — a certain percentage figure which has been intended to govern the average rise in pay levels over a stated period of time. Then — and this is where the process of relative evaluation comes in — exceptional groups of workers have been permitted higher pay rises on specific grounds. For example, in Britain in 1965-70 exceptions were based on: increasing productivity; the need to attract workers to areas of shortage; the need to raise low pay to a level that would maintain a decent standard of living; and the need to bring the pay level into line with what was paid for comparable work elsewhere.

Aubrey Jones, who was chairman of the National Board for Prices and Incomes in Britain at that time, noted that some countries — for example, Holland and certain socialist countries — had tried to establish national job evaluation schemes which would grade jobs throughout the country on a single scale.⁸ But, while a job evaluation scheme can help to create a sense of

fairness within the comparatively narrow context of a particular organisation, a comprehensive national job evaluation scheme could never be made to work. This is not just because of the complexity of reconciling the conflicting claims of efficiency and fairness on a national scale — including the need that pay should reflect the changing demand for work of different kinds, encourage and recognise productivity, and be comparable with that of other groups of comparable workers. It is also because the remoteness and complexity of a job evaluation scheme on this scale would offer an irresistible challenge to everyone to find ways of getting exceptions made to it in their own favour.

It is not surprising that an incomes policy has never been successful for anything longer than a short emergency period. After all, a propensity to maximise value is an inevitable part of any situation in which quantitative, as opposed to qualitative, values take pride of place. In such a situation people are bound to try to maximise their income, especially when they see those richer and more powerful than themselves doing that all the time. The failure of the incomes policy is symptomatic of the problems that arise once too much emphasis is placed on quantifying the value of work. There are several possible approaches to these problems.

The first is directed to the money system itself. The argument is that, money being the calculus we use to measure value, it is vital that the money system should operate fairly and objectively. Money values should reflect the actual values and preferences that people have; for example, people's pay should reflect the value of the work they do. As things are, however, everyone knows that the money system does not work this way. Some people get highly paid for work of little value, while others get paid much less for work of much greater value. The people who run the money system — bankers, stockbrokers, and so on — do not run it professionally, with the aim that it should operate fairly and efficiently in the interests of society as a whole. They operate it in such a way as to cream off above-average incomes and capital gains for themselves and their clients. In this sense, the present money system is fundamentally corrupt, although the great majority of the people concerned are not personally corrupt or fraudulent in a technical, legal sense. The conclusion of this argument is that reforms in the money system will help to solve

some of the problems that now bedevil attempts to quantify the value of work. We shall return to the question of money in Chapter 8.

A second approach is directed to the concepts of macro-economics, and in particular to the concept of economic growth based on measurement of Gross National Product (GNP). The argument is that economic growth, as calculated by economists today, is not a measure of increasing wellbeing or of increasing value in anything other than in a purely artificial sense. On the one hand, it fails to record wellbeing and value created by informal economic activity; so that, for example, if increasing numbers of people grow more of their food for themselves and buy less of it from the shops, the statistics will record a decline in the value of economic activity. On the other hand, it includes as gains the monetary value of many activities that should properly be regarded as costs; so that, for example, if increasing numbers of accidents and misfortunes call forth an increased level of rescue, repair and medical activity — which might properly be regarded as a cost rather than a benefit — the statistics will record an increase in the value of economic activity and therefore of wellbeing. This misleading conceptual framework tends to distort the values given to different kinds of work throughout the economy. Not only is formal work in general valued more highly than informal; but, to take a specific example of two kinds of formal work, the remedial work of curative medicine is valued more highly than the health-creating work which would make the curative work unnecessary. The conclusion is that new indicators of economic performance and social wellbeing must be developed in place of the statistical concepts we use today.

The third and most fundamental approach is based on the need to create a new balance between quantitative and qualitative evaluation. The argument is that, whatever reforms are made in the money system and in the statistical basis for measuring the value of work done, these external ways of measuring value quantitatively can never be more than pseudo-objective. They will always be to some extent arbitrary and distorted. There is no objective way of reflecting accurately the system of values prevailing in a particular society at a particular time, as is shown by the failure of earlier medieval and Smithian/Marxian attempts to define a just wage and an

objectively valued unit of labour input. And, even if there were, such a method of valuation could not accommodate either the unconventional values of minority groups and individuals, or the changes that take place in a whole society's system of values over the years. A free society of intelligent men and women must recognise that people's own sense of values will sometimes be at variance with the externalised systems of values reflected in the money system and the prevailing conceptual basis of economic and social theory and statistics. It should encourage them to follow their own inner knowledge in this respect, except when they would be harming others when doing so.

Pointers for the Future

Reform of the money system and changes in the conceptual basis of economic thinking are, then, two types of change which will be needed as we try to adapt to a new future for work, and to develop new ways of evaluating it. We shall return to both in subsequent chapters. But even more important will be for increasing numbers of people to develop a clearer sense of what we really value, and to create conditions in which more and more of us can exercise this sense of value both in decisions about our own work, and in our assessments of other people's.

We no longer believe in the idea of a God-given just wage. We no longer believe that the products and services which people work to provide have objectively quantifiable *real* values, distinct from actual costs and prices. We no longer believe, however, that we can simply rely on the system of costs and prices that actually exist, to define our values for us. We make a distinction between value and price, and we regret that economics has lost sight of it. We know what Oscar Wilde meant when he said that a cynic is someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. We know that, as things are, many people are paid more highly for doing work of less value, while many others are paid less well for doing more valuable work. We regret that, as things are, a huge amount of time and energy is wasted in argument and dispute about levels of pay.

In an age, such as the post-industrial age will be, in which the development of ourselves through our own experiences and activities is seen as a primary purpose in life, it is likely that relatively less store will be placed on *having* than on *being*. It will

become less valuable to have other people working for us, than to be able to undertake important activities and life-experiences for ourselves. It will come to be experienced as less valuable to consume the planet's resources unnecessarily, than to act in ways that conserve them. Above all, it will come to be seen as desirable to work in personal and local contexts. A more direct meeting of real needs than most formal work achieves today will enable people to make and share with one another direct, intuitive, qualitative valuations of the work they do.

PART 3

THE END OF THE EMPLOYMENT EMPIRE

The power structures of late industrial society have been based on the fact that employment has been the dominant form of work. Among these structures of power, three, in addition to employers in general, have been pre-eminent: the organised labour movement; the financial system; and the system of representative politics and bureaucratic government. During the industrial age these have developed as the most powerful branches of an ever more dominating empire on which people have become increasingly dependent. The transition from the industrial to the post-industrial age, and from employment to ownwork, will involve a reversal of that industrial-age trend.

It is, in fact, helpful to see the transition from employment to ownwork as the end of an empire — the breakdown of the employment empire and the liberation of its subjects from their present dependence on it. The process of transition will then have two different aspects, depending on where you stand. First, it will involve managing the breakdown of the old empire, in other words its decolonisation. Second, it will involve liberating yourself — and helping to liberate other people — from being dependent on it. This way of understanding the nature of the transition will underlie our discussion of its practicalities in Part 4.

Meanwhile, in Part 3, we explore the implications of the transition to ownwork for organised labour, for the financial system, and for politics and government. How will it be likely to affect them? And what part may they be able and required to play in bringing it about?

8

Labour

The working class and the organised labour movement were created by the industrial revolution. They have been phenomena of the employment age. Their early history is a testament to the courage of working-class leaders, to the endurance of working-class people, to the vision they continued to nurture of creating a better society, and to the working-class culture they founded on collective solidarity and mutual aid. You cannot read about it — in books like E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* — without being deeply moved.

By the early-20th century the organised labour movement had so developed in strength that it had become established as a power in the land. In Britain in the 1920s its links with the Labour Party brought it into the counsels of government, and in the second half of the 20th century it has been treated in most industrialised countries as one of the major partners in economic life, along with employers and government. By the 1960s the trade union movement in Britain was already coming under criticism for exercising unaccountable power, and attempts began to be made to limit by changes in the law the damage which could be caused by unnecessary and irresponsible industrial action in the form of strikes. Now, in the 1980s, as the end of the employment age comes nearer, a question mark hangs over the whole future of the working class and the organised labour movement.

If a key feature of the bourgeois work ethic in the early days was individual self-help, a key feature of the working-class ethic in the early days was collective mutual aid. In principle, a post-industrial work order, characterised by ownwork in place of employment, will need to be based on a combination of self-help and mutual aid in a new ethic of co-operative self-reliance. In Chapter 5 we suggested that some aspects of the Puritan work ethic might contribute directly to this. What strands in working-

class culture, as it has now developed, could be woven into the fabric of the new work ethic? How far is the trade union movement likely to contribute to the development of ownwork? And, conversely, how far is it likely to regard the prospect of ownwork as a threat to its own continuing existence and survival?

Defensive Posture

There is a great difficulty here, which must be faced at the start. This is the essential defensiveness of the working-class outlook. It derives from the dominant working-class experience of being forced to respond to changes imposed by others, and compelled to act within a structure of society not created by themselves. This habit of perception and response, though entirely understandable and in no way to be blamed, could nonetheless be a dangerous weakness at a time when a new order of society and a new work order are coming into existence. It could easily channel energy into resisting inevitable change, instead of helping to shape the future that is to be. The response of the organised labour movement to today's unemployment crisis can be interpreted this way.

The fact, of course, is that the history of the last 200 years is studded with attempts by working people to resist having changes forced upon them that were damaging and unfair. The very origin of the working class was in the expropriation of common rights to land, the transformation of independent craftsmen and tradespeople into dependent wage-workers, and the gross exploitation in mines and factories of men, women and children — many of whom could see before their eyes in the space of a few years that their poorly paid labour had made their masters rich.

Consciousness of belonging to the working class grew out of the shared experience of those who suffered injustice at the hands of others who felt no sense of humanity or social obligation towards them. E.P. Thompson¹ refers to a journeyman cotton spinner of 1818 who based the sense of grievance of working people on:

the rise of a master-class without traditional authority or obligations; the growing distance between master and man; the

transparency of the exploitation at the source of their new wealth and power; the loss of status and above all of independence for the worker, and his reduction to total dependence on the master's means of production; the partiality of the law; the disruption of the family economy; the discipline, monotony, hours and conditions of work; loss of leisure and amenities; the reduction of man to the status of an instrument.

In social, economic, political and cultural terms, the changes of the early industrial age impinged on most working people as changes for the worse — whatever economists' calculations may show about the standard of living, and in spite of the fact that some men and women experienced these changes as a liberation from the rural hardships and social immobility of earlier times.

The best-known example of working-class resistance to change was the Luddite movement of the early 19th century. The Luddites were resisting not only the introduction of particular types of new machines, but also the development of the factory system and the degradation that it meant for the lives of working people. They were resisting the destruction of community, and the replacement of what was left of the old social fabric based on reciprocal rights and duties by the harsh impersonal imperatives of *laissez faire*.

E.P. Thompson sees Luddism as a moment of transitional conflict. On the one hand the Luddites were some of the last guildsmen, looking back to old customs and the paternalist legislation of the past. On the other hand, he says, many of their demands - for example, for a minimum wage, arbitration, the right to have trade unions — pointed forward to the more democratic industrial society of the 20th century, in which economic growth and the pursuit of profit would be regulated by social constraints. That no doubt looks true from a historical point of view, as we look back on the Luddites with the benefit of hindsight 170 years later. But from their point of view at that time, the Luddites were surely pitting their energies *against* the changes then being imposed. They were not concerned to create a new society based on a positive vision of a future different from the present and the past, with which they were familiar.

This oppositional, defensive stance of resistance to change has remained an important aspect of working-class attitudes and Marxist thinking right to the present day. And with good reason.

As writers like Harry Braverman² and Mike Cooley³ convincingly show, the original expropriation of the capacity of working people to control their own work, by the enclosure of land and the coming of the factory system, has been continued in management practices and management innovations ever since. The object of these has always been to give managements greater control over the work of their employees.

The outstanding example has been Taylorism, the scientific approach to the management of other people's work which was developed by Frederick Taylor in the United States in the 1880s and the 1890s. Before Taylor, managements had introduced various ways of controlling their workers: having them work in the factory rather than at home; dictating the length of their working day; supervising them, setting production minimums and making other rules that discouraged slacking; and so on. But, as Braverman says, "Taylor raised the concept of control to an entirely new plane when he asserted as an absolute necessity for adequate management the dictation to the worker of the precise manner in which work is to be performed."

In the late 20th century Taylor's approach has been taken to extraordinary lengths. As Mike Cooley puts it, "So totally does the employer seek to subordinate the worker to production, that he asserts that the worker's every minute and every movement "belong" to him, the employer ... The grotesque precision with which this is done to workers can be seen from ... particulars of the ... 32.4 minute rest allowance deal for body press workers on the Allegro car:

Trips to the lavatory	1.62 minutes
For fatigue	1.3 minutes
Sitting down after standing	
too long	65 seconds
For monotony	32 seconds

and so the grotesque litany goes on."

Throughout the industrial age, what Braverman calls the step-by-step creation of a labour force in place of self-directed human labour was resisted at every step by those on whom it was imposed. But, increasingly, as the strength of organised labour grew, each step became the subject of negotiation between

employer and employees, with the latter eventually agreeing to sell some loss of their previous control over the work process, in return for an increased wage. Resistance to change shaded into negotiation about the terms on which change would be accepted.

So workers no longer questioned that work should take the form of employment. Antagonism remained between employee and employer, and many employees got little or no satisfaction from employment. But the memory and the vision faded of ownwork as a better way to work. And now, as the age of employment comes towards an end, resistance to change understandably centres on the threatened loss of jobs. Ivan Illich need not be surprised that the rioting cottagers of the early industrial years, defending their right to work for their own subsistence and protesting against being reduced to the status of wage-workers, are now replaced by the striking and picketing employees of the late industrial years, defending their right to wage-work and protesting at the loss of jobs.⁴

The Lucas Initiative

How deeply this defensive stance is rooted in a sense of dependency on the status quo and the need to preserve it, is illustrated by the outcome of one of the most imaginative initiatives taken in recent years by organised employees. This was the workers' corporate plan drawn up in the 1970s under the auspices of the Lucas Aerospace Shopstewards Combine Committee. The plan formed the basis for the campaign for the right to work on socially useful products. The Lucas workers proposed a new range of socially useful products which they and their company could produce, including a 'hobcart' for children with spina bifida, a life-support system, energy-conserving products, a hybrid power pack, all-purpose power generation equipment for third world countries, a road/rail vehicle, kidney machines, and telechiric devices. In Mike Cooley's words, they showed that they were able to propose "a whole series of new methods of production where workers by hand and brain can really contribute to the design and development of products, and where they can work in a non-alienated manner in a labour process which enhances human beings rather than diminishes them".

The Lucas initiative attracted widespread international

attention. It was perceived as an exciting pointer to a future in which production would be geared to social uses, and workers would have much more opportunity to work on products which they regarded as valuable, in ways which were more under their own control.

In spite of first appearances, however, the Lucas workers' initiative turned out to be essentially defensive. In evaluating what it achieved, Hilary Wainwright and Dave Elliott stress that it had its origin in the fight to save jobs.⁵ Their verdict is that the "plan for socially useful production enabled the Lucas workers to defend the status quo on jobs, until an increase in orders for military aerospace systems reduced the immediate pressure for redundancies". That was important for the Lucas workers. But it was not a positive outcome to a campaign to stop working in armaments production and convert to making socially useful products.

In assessing the extent to which that more far-reaching aim of the Lucas workers was achieved, Wainwright and Elliott conclude that the tangible achievement was small. "In summary . . . Lucas as a company has developed some of the ideas in the corporate plan in some form or another, in the main outside the Aerospace division. But, with the exception of the electric vehicles, these and its other diversification efforts have not been backed with substantial resources — and most have now been wound up." The problem, as Wainwright and Elliott — and the Lucas workers themselves — saw it, was the capitalist stance of Lucas. The crucial reason why the company never seriously considered the workers' corporate plan was that "for top management, the right to manage does not simply mean the freedom to get on with the technical tasks of management without interference. It is the right to manage in the interest of the shareholders".

I once asked one of the leading members of the Lucas Aerospace Shopstewards Combine Committee whether those who initiated the Lucas workers' corporate plan had ever considered leaving the company and setting up a workers' cooperative to produce some of the socially useful products that the plan had proposed. He told me that this was ruled out. The original aim behind the corporate plan had been to safeguard Lucas workers' jobs. If the leaders of the initiative had left the company to set

up a co-operative, they would have left their fellow workers in the lurch. Thus the Lucas workers felt precluded from exercising any direct autonomous power of decision over their own work, and from taking effective steps to create for themselves the right which they sought to work on socially useful products, if necessary by leaving their capitalist employer, Lucas. Their only course of action, as they and their supporters saw it, was an indirect one. They should work for a new socialist politics in the hope of one day getting a sympathetic socialist government elected that would give them the right they sought.

The sense of dependency underlying their solidarity is suggested by the following statement by Ernie Scarbrow, the Secretary of the Combine Committee: "It is outrageous that our members in Lucas Aerospace are being made redundant when the state has to find them £40 a week to do nothing except suffer the degradation of the dole queue. In fact the £40 a week amounts to about £70 a week when the cost of administration is taken into account. Our workers *should be given* this money and *allowed* to produce socially useful products such as the kidney machines" (my italics).⁶

This sense of dependency has been a natural part of the outlook of the labour movement and the working class. It is amply justified by the facts of practical life and by the experience of working people over the last 200 years. The same cannot be said for the equivalent sense of dependency when it is expressed by more privileged people. Take, for example, the people in charge of a firm of high-powered research consultants, who "were longing to prove themselves by solving major social problems; but they were hardly ever *given* anything but industrial and business questions" (my italics). I wonder whether, in reporting this, Robert Jungk⁷ believed that these people really could solve major social problems, or whether he saw them - as I do - as helpless, spoilt, overgrown boys complaining that the grown-ups wouldn't allow them to play more glamorous games with their sophisticated toys.

The reason why the element of dependency and the lack of autonomy in the outlook of organised labour is so significant is because it could prove to be a damaging source of vulnerability in the transition to a new work order. In a situation of failed

dependency such as we are living in today, it becomes increasingly fruitless to make claims on institutions which are becoming increasingly incapable of meeting them. The energy spent on demanding that other people should organise socially useful work — or, for that matter, almost anything else — for us is likely to be more effectively spent organising it for ourselves.

Work Rights and Responsibilities

The right to work on socially useful products is one among many rights that have been claimed for employees. In fact in the 200 years since most people lost the right of access to land and the other means of production with which they had supported their work, and thus became dependent on employers to provide them with work, there has been notable progress in people's rights as regards employment. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789 did not even mention rights at work or the right to work. Compare that with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, Article 23 of which declared:

- (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration, ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
- (4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

The right to a job; the rights of employees to decent conditions of work, to organise in trade unions, and to negotiate terms and conditions with their employer; equal employment rights, if not positive discrimination, for disadvantaged sections of society — including women, racial and religious minorities, and handicapped people; the right to be compensated for being unfairly sacked; the growth of trade union strength; the development of industrial relations procedures; new laws to regulate employment; the efforts of progressive employers to

improve the 'quality of working life' — all these are new and important. They have helped to reduce injustice and improve conditions of work for many people.

But there is another side to the coin.

The assumption underlying these developments has been that work takes place in the context of employment; most people cannot aspire to work on their own account. Only a privileged few can claim the right to be responsible for directing their energies to purposes they themselves regard as valuable; for everyone else the purpose of work will be instrumental, and the ends served by it will be those of their employer. In extending employment rights and improving employment conditions, governments and employers have done so from on high — their standpoint has been essentially superior. In struggling for new employment rights and better working conditions, employees and employee organisations have done so from below — their standpoint has been essentially subordinate. They have sought, and have achieved, improved security and protection for second-class citizens in a society in which they have been conditioned to accept the status of employee.

Rights raise the question of responsibilities. It would be cynical to say that rights are what people claim for themselves and responsibilities are what they impute to others. But there is an element of truth in this. In fact, the context in which new rights have normally been won is bound to encourage this way of thinking. Subordinates normally win new rights from superiors, and superiors are then regarded as responsible for safeguarding the new rights. The general tendency in late industrial society to be more concerned about rights than responsibilities is connected with the fact that most people now perceive themselves as dependent. We no longer feel capable of taking responsibility for meeting our own needs. We depend on shops to provide us with food, on the education profession to provide our children with learning, on the medical profession and the drug industry to provide us with health, on the state to provide us with welfare — and on employers to provide us with work. So, being dependent and perceiving ourselves subordinate, we claim rights to everything we need, and we perceive the people who manage the institutions of society — whoever they may be — as

responsible for supplying it to us.

However, rights — like values, and the work ethic — evolve. In medieval times people thought that rights were determined by the hierarchical social and religious order then prevailing. By the 18th century the concepts of natural rights were coming in. The assumption was that rights existed objectively as part of the natural order, and that the use of reason could establish what they were. These concepts of natural law and natural rights underlay the American Declaration of Independence ("we hold these truths to be self-evident"), as well as the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. Today there is a further change. Our understanding of rights is becoming more subjective and developmental. We know that new rights develop and evolve from the actions of people who feel that the new rights should exist, and who then proceed to claim them and establish them by their own commitment and action.

There are signs that the next major extension in the field of rights may be the right to be responsible. This is perhaps especially apparent in the sphere of health — "Whose Life Is It, Anyway?" — where people have already begun to claim the right to take decisions about their own medical treatment. More generally, Article 29(1) of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights comes near to declaring a right to be socially responsible, when it states that "everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible". In fact, the right to be responsible, that is the right to be a full-grown person, may well turn out to be one of the central, energising concepts of the post-industrial revolution. In the next few years it will certainly affect many people's attitudes to work, and their perceptions of what kinds of work are worth doing and how. It is a right that increasing numbers of people will not simply claim from their bosses or from the government. They will take action to establish it for themselves, by moving to work, or by organising work for themselves, which they regard as useful and valid. It could prove to be one of the most powerful factors in the transition to ownwork.

Depersonalisation

The idea of a right to be responsible involves a personalisation of work which, unfortunately, cuts right across the engrained thinking of the labour movement.

In Chapter 5 we saw that, as the Protestant work ethic evolved, it brought with it a shift in the bourgeois consciousness from a way of perceiving things personally to a way of perceiving them impersonally. The sense of mutual personal obligation between oneself and the people affected by one's activities was replaced by a sense of impersonal duty to do one's worldly work. That impersonal duty evolved into a simple drive to amass impersonal money-measurable wealth, and then into a sense of managing businesses — and society as a whole — as if they were impersonal machines.

In tune with the same spirit of the age, working-class consciousness became depersonalised also. As the bourgeoisie turned into impersonal servants of the state, so workers turned into impersonal instruments of their class. Proletarian depersonalisation followed from the dwindling sense of personal autonomy and the growing sense of personal dependency, experienced by working people as the industrial age progressed. As a modern Marxist writer explains, once the process of proletarianisation had stripped workers of all autonomous capacity to produce their own means of subsistence, the political imperatives of the class struggle prevented the labour movement from allowing the desire for personal autonomy to enter into their thinking.

Autonomy is not a proletarian value ... Being a proletarian implies that the only weapon you can turn against your exploiters is the quantity of interchangeable work and working power into which they have made you. The ideal militant is therefore the person most able to internalise this situation. He or she no longer exists as an autonomous individuality but is, instead, the impersonal representative of a class ... The ideal militant must therefore repress his or her subjectivity and become the objective mouthpiece of the class ... Rigidity, dogmatism, wooden language and authoritarianism are inherent qualities of such impersonal thinking devoid of subjectivity.⁸

The labour movement, and the socialist and Marxist strategies for change that were founded on it, came to take it for granted

that work would continue to be organised impersonally as employment, and that society would continue to be governed impersonally by the state. In the course of the 19th century, the co-operative vision of men like Robert Owen that work might be organised as ownwork, and the vision of the utopian socialists that society might be so organised that people would take personal charge of their own lives in community, were left aside as little more than romantic dreams. Mainstream reformist thinking and mainstream revolutionary thinking in the labour movement became mechanistic and impersonal.

Reformist strategies have centred around the development of organised labour power - for example, by trades unions operating at the levels of the workplace, the firm, the industry, and the nation — to negotiate on workers' behalf with industry and government, both in the context of industrial relations and — through political parties like the Labour Party — in the wider political sphere. These strategies have had some success, within their self-imposed limits. They have been one of the factors which, over the last century and a half, have led to better conditions of employment and a better standard of living for employed people. But they have done little to help employed people to recover control over their work and a sense of responsibility for it. They have not been intended to do that.

Revolutionary strategies have centred around the development of organised labour power that would take over, rather than negotiate with, employing organisations and the state. Thus the syndicalists based their strategy on the aim of workers' councils taking over the organisation of production, factory by factory. 'All power to the Soviets' expressed the intention that workers should not only manage production, but should also organise the whole of social life. The strategy that shaped the Russian Revolution was for representatives of the proletariat directly to take over the state.

The syndicalist aim of taking power over production at the level of the place of employment was never successfully achieved on any scale, and — unless the Yugoslav system of self-management is regarded as an exception to this — has now lost its meaning as far as the mass of employees is concerned. Today, as Andre Gorz points out, "workers' councils — which

were the organs of working-class power when production was carried out by technically autonomous teams of workers — have become anachronistic in the giant factory of assembly lines and self-contained departments". The factory itself is no longer an autonomous economic unit, but just one element in a larger production and marketing chain, dependent upon a centralised management co-ordinating dozens of productive units for its supplies, outlets, product lines, etc. The only power that employees can have within the framework of employment is a negative and subordinate sort — the power to resist the demands of management and to submit demands of their own.

The Leninist strategy of taking over the state in the name of the proletariat failed even more completely to give back to workers the power to control their work. As Trotsky put it, "We oppose capitalist slavery by socially regulated labour on the basis of an economic plan, obligatory for the whole people and consequently compulsory for each worker in the country." This involved "the militarisation of labour" and "the centralised distribution of labour-power in harmony with the general State plan". The role of trade unions was not to struggle for better conditions of labour, but "to organise the working class for the ends of production, to educate, discipline, distribute, group, retain certain categories and certain workers at their posts for fixed periods". As Kolakowski says, Trotsky depicts the state of proletarian dictatorship "as a huge permanent concentration camp in which the government exercises absolute power over every aspect of the citizens' lives and, in particular, decides how much work they shall do, of what kind and in what places. Individuals are nothing but labour units".⁹

The depersonalisation of work had been taken to its extreme. It was a far cry from Marx's original vision of socialism as humanisation, a restoration of people's control over their own powers and their own creative energies, a "return to a situation in which only individual human subjects truly exist and are not governed by any impersonal social force".

Transformation of the Working Class

The working class came into existence in response to the new pattern of work, based on employment, brought in by the

industrial revolution. It consisted of the great mass of people whose work was needed and exploited by people more fortunate than themselves. Now, as the employment age comes to an end, what part is likely to be played by working people and the institutions of the labour movement in the transition to a new work order?

In his moving book. *Unemployment*, Jeremy Seabrook includes the following testimony to working-class values:¹⁰

That practice, those values, the power of people to mitigate each other's suffering and console each other, to abate the worst visitations that either nature or their human oppressors can devise, constitute an abiding response to human existence itself. The way those people lived has a resonance and power that goes beyond the experience of the working class in one part of the world for a mere couple of centuries or so ... The values which the old working class embodied in its resistance to the circumstances of life retain an inspirational, spiritual significance.

Today, however, the situation of many working people, and the nature of the working class as a whole, is quite different. People who have good jobs are now members of a privileged class. Acting through the trade unions and the labour movement they use their power, as middle-class professionals use theirs, to negotiate better deals for themselves. As employment continues to contract, the trade unions and the labour movement will find it very difficult not to fight to maintain the position of their well-established members. In doing so, for example by continuing to demand higher levels of pay and by taking industrial action with the aim of preserving existing jobs, they will probably help to accelerate the decline in employment.

The post-industrial counterpart to the proletariat of the mid-19th century will increasingly consist of the growing numbers of people who are unemployed, i.e. people whose work other people are no longer willing to organise and exploit, and whom the industrial-age ethic leaves feeling valueless, having nothing — not even their working-time — to sell. In *Farewell to the Working Class*, Andre Gorz describes this element of the old working class as a new "non-class of non-workers", encompassing "all those who have been expelled from production by the abolition of work, or whose capacities are underemployed as a result of the industrialisation of intellectual work".

In their two books, *The Collapse of Work* and *The Leisure Shock*, Clive Jenkins and Barrie Sherman, writing from a progressive trade union point of view, argue that the work ethic must be replaced by a usefulness ethic and that the positive use of leisure time must be what provides the basis for usefulness. They foresee a future in which leisure and work will be indistinguishable and in which almost all work will be voluntary work, and they recognise that the need for less formal work raises fundamental challenges to all our systems. Their contribution to the debate is important. But they do not have a great deal to say about the role of the working class in the changes they foresee, or about the impact these changes will have on working-class values and outlook.

Jeremy Seabrook is pessimistic. He mourns the passing of the old working-class values. He finds, as one would expect, that people out of work are "insulted by the rhetoric about leisure — it looks too much like futility". But he is in no doubt that the solidarity and sharing, "the living practice in the daily existence of millions of working people of the values of dignity, frugality, stoicism", have fallen victim to the blandishments of the consumer society and the welfare state. "This has been the greatest loss of all because it means that the option of that alternative as something that could have grown organically out of the way people lived out their lives has been crushed ... The damage to the function of the working class is profound and vast. It isn't confined to the work role, but to everything that stems from it, above all to its capacity to forge a more human alternative to capitalism."

However that may be, Andre Gorz is quite clear that "the priority task of the post-industrial Left" must be "to extend self-motivated, self-rewarding activity", and he says that this "expansion of the sphere of autonomy depends upon a freely available supply of convivial tools that allow individuals to do or make anything whose aesthetic or use-value is enhanced by doing it oneself". Gorz speaks of the abolition of work and the need to ensure that the resulting availability of free time leads to the development of autonomous activity. For him "the abolition of work does not mean abolition of the need for effort, the desire for activity, the pleasure of creation, the need to co-operate with others and be of some use to the community ... the abolition of

work means the freeing or liberation of time ... so that individuals can exercise control over their bodies, their use of themselves, their choice of activity, their goals and productions".

Although he calls it abolition of work, Gorz is talking about what I mean by ownwork. The important point, and here I agree with him, is that the post-industrial counterpart to the working-class movement of the early industrial age will be composed of people who cannot get jobs but have managed to liberate themselves from the job ethic — people for whom exclusion from employment has triggered a vision of a better society and a better future in which ownwork will be the norm. They will share this vision with the non-conforming middle-class people who, as I suggested in Chapter 5, deliberately choose to be independent of employment and to embrace the post-industrial ways of life that go with that independence.

In conclusion, therefore, the decline and accelerating breakdown of the industrial way of life and work is likely to affect in two different ways those who feel themselves to belong to the working-class tradition, just as it will affect in two different ways people who have tended to think of themselves as middle class.

First, there is every likelihood that the institutions of the labour movement, just like the institutions of conventional business and finance, will resist the transition to ownwork as strongly as they can. There is a danger here that the organised labour movement, while inadvertently helping to speed the loss of jobs and the long-term decline in employment, will call successfully on the working-class tradition of defensive solidarity in the face of change to resist the new work order that must take the place of employment. Millions of people could then find themselves stranded in a state of failed dependency on an old work order that is passing away in spite of all their efforts to cling to it. History would then repeat itself. The great structural changes in society brought by the post-industrial revolution would be almost as devastating for the unprepared, less privileged sections of society today as were the changes which the industrial revolution brought 200 years ago.

Second, however, there will be increasing numbers of people who identify themselves with a working-class background, and whose exclusion from employment will begin to combine with a

growing sense that there is a better way to live and work, less dependently, more personally, and more in tune with real needs. For them, the inspirational significance of the old working-class values of solidarity and mutual aid could have a very positive part to play in the transition to the new work ethic and the new ways of organising work. These values are, in fact, already clearly apparent in combination with a new sense of initiative, a new sense of responsibility and a new perception of real needs, in a number of inner city communities - such as those mentioned in Chapter 11 - which have decided to help themselves since no one else seems willing or able to do so.

9

Money

Money Now Dominant

Money plays the central role in late industrial society that religion played in the late middle ages. Then the local church was the most prominent building in most villages; today the prime sites in every high street are occupied by branches of banks, building societies and other financial concerns. The centres of medieval cities were dominated by cathedrals; today's city centres are dominated by the tower blocks of international banks. Today's army of accountants, bankers, tax-people, insurance brokers, stock jobbers, foreign exchange dealers and countless other specialists in money, is the modern counterpart of the medieval army of priests, friars, monks, pardoners, summoners and other specialists in religious procedures and practices. The theologians of the late middle ages have their counterpart in the economists of the late industrial age. Financial mumbo-jumbo holds us in thrall today, as religious mumbo-jumbo held our ancestors then.

The expanding role of money in the lives of people and in the organisation of society has been a characteristic feature of the industrial age. It was people's growing dependence on paid labour, when they were deprived of access to land, that created the social conditions necessary for urban industrialism to flourish in the first place. In pre-industrial times people needed little money, because they provided most of the necessities of life for themselves and one another. Now, in late industrial society, people depend on either purchasing the necessities of life or being provided with them by public services paid for with public money.

The expansion of the role of money, then, was connected historically with the rise of employment. It was linked with the growing number of people who depended on money incomes from employment. Now the dominant form of work is paid work,

and most people receive their incomes that way. They are either wage-earners or salary-earners themselves, or they are dependents of wage- and salary-earners. Those who receive no income or an insufficient income from paid work are eligible to receive an income from the state, in the form of unemployment or welfare benefits. But they are still regarded as unfortunate exceptions to the general rule. More fortunate exceptions, but exceptions nonetheless, are people who either earn an income from self-employment or receive an unearned income by way of interest or dividends on their own private capital.

As the role of money has become greater in the lives of people and society as a whole, the institutions set up to handle money have become bigger and more important. In step with increasing centralisation in industry and government, the financial institutions themselves have become more centralised. Small local banks, for example, were taken over by bigger banks and turned into local branches of national banking networks. Only in very exceptional cases are local financial institutions found today with the function of channelling local money into investment in support of local work.

The investment of money has thus become less personal and less local, as has the spending of it in supermarkets as contrasted with local corner shops, and the earning of it from faceless employing organisations. The impersonal character of investment has been reinforced by the industrial-age assumption that employing organisations will provide the capital assets - land, buildings, equipment and so forth - needed to support people's work. So, as increasing numbers of employees have acquired savings to invest, the assumption has been that they would not be interested in choosing to invest those savings to support their own or anyone else's work. Just as employees have been content to hand over responsibility to an employer to organise and control their work, so savers have been content to hand over responsibility to a bank, or a pension fund, or a building society, or some other financial institution, to control the use of their money.

Finally, as the role of money has become larger and larger in our lives, the possibilities have continually grown for making money out of money rather than out of useful work. The huge

growth in money markets and other financial markets throughout the world has been one result of this. The ever growing demand for capital assets like land and property, not only in order to use them but in the hope of selling them at a capital gain, has been another. This last, by raising the value of useful assets like land to artificial heights, has not only put them beyond the means of many people, thereby limiting their access to the physical capital they would need in order to work on their own account. It has also been one of many contributing factors to the massive expansion of borrowing and debt — personal, corporate, national and international — that has taken place in the last 40 years, and is perhaps the prime example of the growing dependence on money that now dominates most people's lives.

Possibilities for the Future

The characteristic features of how our use of money has developed during the industrial age thus include the following:

- (1) The role of money in our lives, and the importance of finance and financial institutions in society, has continually grown.
- (2) Most people's incomes have been directly linked with work, which has typically taken the form of paid employment.
- (3) The capital assets needed for production and work have belonged to employers, and have been provided by them.
- (4) Financial institutions have become more centralised, and less interested and less capable of providing channels for local investment in local work.
- (5) People's attitude to their savings has become impersonal. People have become content to allow financial institutions to control the use to which their savings are put.
- (6) The increasing switch of effort to making money out of money, and the expansion of debt that has come with it, mean that the work of increasing numbers of people in the financial services industry has lost all direct connection with the meeting of real needs or with the provision of real goods and services.

Each of these industrial-age developments raises questions for the future. Will the role of money continue to grow — or has it reached its peak? Could it, perhaps, decline? Will people's incomes continue to depend on work - or will they, to a greater extent than now, become delinked from work? Will the capital

base for production and work continue to be provided by employers — or will people increasingly provide it for their own work? Will financial institutions remain centralised — or will new institutions take shape for channelling local investment into local work? Will people continue to have an impersonal attitude towards their savings — or will they want a greater say in the uses to which their savings are put? Will the number of people employed in the financial services industry continue to grow — or may it perhaps contract?

The three different views of the future of work discussed in Chapter 1 give different answers to these questions. Some of these were touched on in Chapter 4.

The Business-As-Usual view assumes that money will continue to play a large part in our lives, and that most people's incomes will continue to be linked with their work. Full employment will be restored, partly by reducing average working hours and partly by replacing lost manufacturing jobs with new jobs in the service and information industries, including financial services. The capital needed for production and work will continue to be provided by employers. People's attitude to their savings, and the structure and aims of the financial services industry, will remain much as they are today.

The HE vision of the future foresees money playing an even larger part in most people's lives than it does today. People will have more leisure, and will need more money to spend on it. Moreover, many essential activities which people still do today unpaid — such as parenting, housekeeping, comforting, preparing meals, looking after children and elderly people, providing hospitality at home to friends — will be transformed into paid work. Either the same people will be paid for doing these things who now do them unpaid, or these activities will be replaced by commercial and professional services. In the first case, parents and housewives and househusbands will be paid for carrying out their functions. In the second, meals will no longer be prepared at home, but brought in or eaten out; professional bereavement counsellors will replace relatives and friends as a source of comfort and support in time of need; and so on. So people will have to pay, either directly or through taxation, for many services which today we still provide free for ourselves and

one another. Money will thus play an even larger part in our lives than it does today.

Where does the HE vision see people getting the extra money from to pay for all this? This is not always very clear. Sometimes HE proponents seem to fall back on a Business-As-Usual approach: the link between incomes and work will be maintained; incomes will rise as new jobs get created and as more people get paid for activities they now do unpaid; so, in general, people will be able to buy more goods and services and pay more taxes. But often, as we suggested in Chapter 4, the HE vision implies the opposite of this: the necessary work of society will be done by a smaller and smaller number of experts, and the rest of the population will live lives of leisure. The link between work and income will be broken for most people. They will need a new source of income in the shape of a Guaranteed Basic Income (GBI). But, as we saw in Chapter 4, there would be difficulties about this in a HE future.

So far as the other questions are concerned, the HE vision implies that the financial structure of society stays much as it is today only more so. Ever larger amounts of investment will continue to be channelled into ever larger and more capital-intensive projects controlled by ever fewer people. The centralisation and impersonality of the financial system will become even more marked. Ever greater emphasis will be placed on making money out of money, as electronic systems of transferring money make it possible for money to be switched instantaneously from any account in any part of the world to any other.

Money and Ownwork

The SHE view, of a future in which a shift from employment to ownwork is an important trend, gives different answers to these questions.

As we have seen, it envisages a post-employment society, in which the stark choice between employment and unemployment, work and leisure, will increasingly be replaced by a wide range of flexible options for work and useful activity, including part-time employment, self-employment, irregular and casual employment, co-operative and community work, voluntary work, do-it-yourself

activities, and productive leisure, as well as full-time employment. This shift towards ownwork implies a shift towards self-help, mutual aid, and household and local self-sufficiency, together with some lessening of dependency on goods and services which are either purchased directly or are paid for at public expense. In contrast with the HE vision, the SHE vision thus foresees some substitution of *unpaid* activity for *paid* activity, and therefore some decline in the role of money in our lives. It also foresees that unpaid work will be valued more highly than today, and consequently that there will be some further weakening of the present link between employment and income.

A shift towards ownwork will not, of course, imply that people will stop using money altogether in post-industrial society, any more than people lost all concern for religion when the middle ages came to an end. Nor will it imply that in post-industrial society people will altogether stop earning money from work. It merely implies that the continuing expansion of the role of money and of financial institutions in our lives will cease, and that the link between money incomes and work will become weaker for more and more people.

This weakening of the link between income and work will be achieved by extending today's entitlements to unemployment and social security benefits and other transfer payments. Whereas today these payments provide an income to particular categories of people — pensioners and the unemployed, for example — who do not earn a sufficient income from work, the transfer payments system would be extended to provide a GBI to all citizens unconditionally, regardless of what work they do, if any. Chapter 4 contained a preliminary discussion of the GBI idea. A fuller discussion will be found in Chapter 12.

It will not, however, be only for the distribution of income that new arrangements will have to be made. As ownwork becomes more widespread, the distribution of capital will be affected. Many more people than today will need access to the physical and financial capital needed to support their work. A post-industrial society in which ownwork is the norm will have to discard the industrial-age assumption that it is for employers to provide the capital needed for work. It will increasingly be for people themselves to possess and have access to these capital

assets, including land, either as individuals working on their own account or as members of co-operating groups. A new approach to distributing capital will be just as important as a new approach to distributing income.

One aspect of this new approach to distributing capital will affect the control of savings, and the channels through which investment is made. We have already noted that, in the industrial age, just as people have become conditioned to give control of their work to employers, so they have become conditioned to give control of their savings to financial institutions. Just as people have allowed employers to decide on the purposes to which their work will be put, so they have been content to allow banks and other financial institutions to decide on the purposes to which their savings will be put. People have been content to relinquish the vital power to use their own money on projects which they themselves value. All they have asked is that they receive the going rate of monetary return by way of dividends or interest, and that the capital value of their savings be maintained. In post-industrial society, however, just as the SHE vision foresees employment being largely replaced by ownwork, so it foresees a rising demand for new channels of investment which will enable people to direct their money into projects that reflect their own preferences and choices, including projects of their own. Today's 'socially responsible investment' initiatives, that enable investors to avoid investing in industries, countries or projects they dislike, such as armaments, South Africa and nuclear power, are a step in this direction. But new channels will also be needed which will positively enable people to invest in specific types of preferred projects, such as renewable energy, alternative technology or community enterprises.¹

The spread of ownwork will mean that, not just individual people, but local communities too, will increasingly demand to use their money on projects that serve needs and preferences of their own. The financial system and financial institutions that have developed in late industrial society make little provision for the reinvestment of locally generated money in local projects and local initiatives. Just as local work has increasingly come under the control of national and multinational companies and government agencies based elsewhere, so local money has increasingly been channelled through national financial

institutions located elsewhere, into projects that have no connection with local purposes and needs. New channels will be needed through which local capital can be invested in local work.²

The growing desire of people to direct their spare money into projects of their own choice will in part be a growing desire to invest their money in local economic and social enterprises which will help to improve the locality in which they themselves live, and help to put it on a satisfactory and stable economic and social base. It will thus directly reinforce the shift towards greater local economic self-reliance more generally. The personal and local thrust of ownwork will thus help to modify the impersonal outlook and centralised institutional structure on which the present financial system is based.

Just as the shift towards ownwork will tend to reduce the present dependence of individuals and households on earning and spending money, so investment in local work to meet local needs will tend to reduce the dependence of localities on earning money from outside employers in order to spend it on imports from outside suppliers, and to increase the local circulation of local money. This will not only be a good indicator of the improving health of the local economy. It will also tend to redirect activity into what are personally and locally perceived as real needs, and away from impersonal efforts simply to make more money out of money regardless of the value of the activities generated thereby.

Positive and Negative Effects

Thus, as the post-industrial revolution gathers pace and brings an expansion of ownwork with it, there will be both positive and negative consequences for the present system of money and finance.

On the positive side, the growth of ownwork will create a growing demand for access to personally controlled capital to support it, as well as a growing demand for advice on the financial management of ownwork. This is likely to include advice on ways of living better on less money, on the pros and cons of investing capital to support ownwork that reduces the need for subsequent spending and therefore for subsequent earning, and on the right balance between paid and unpaid work, and between

purchased consumption and self-produced goods and services.

Also on the positive side, the growth of local financial and economic self-reliance will create a growing demand for channels through which to invest local funds locally. New local financial institutions will spring up all over the place, and will have to be properly managed.

But this growth of new financial services and institutions at the personal and local level will be paralleled by a decline elsewhere.

For example, if paid employment ceases to grow and goes into a steady decline, the regular flow of money into pension funds in the form of pension contributions will also cease to grow and will go into decline. The funds available to pension funds for investment will fall off. Not only will the role of pension funds themselves be affected. The demand for — and therefore the value of — the things that pension funds invest in, that is to say equities, gilt-edged stock and property, will also be affected.³ Again, to take a second example, if more people spend more of their time and energy working to build or part-build their own houses, and less time and energy working for employers for pay, the demand for mortgage money for home-buying and the ability to pay off such mortgages will decline. The role of the building societies in borrowing money and lending it for house purchase will also decline. Again, thirdly, if more local money circulates locally instead of through national and international channels, the cash flows handled by national and international institutions will fall, their role will decline, and the capital values of the kind of investments into which they channel money will tend to fall too. Localities, like people, will become less dependent on the services of outside financial institutions.

These three examples illustrate the general point. A significant shift from employment to ownwork will bring a decline in the use of money by households. A significant shift to greater local economic self-reliance will bring a decline in the circulation of money between different localities. These two developments together will mean a significant decline in, or at least a significant slowing down in the growth of, the flow of money through society at national and international levels.

This will call in question the position of many of today's financial institutions whose viability depends on the expectation

of continually rising cash flows. It will also call in question many of today's capital values, e.g. of commercial properties and agricultural land, which also reflect the expectation of continually rising cash flows and rates of return. Finally, it will call in question the solvency of many people and organisations, and also nation states, whose ability to pay off their present levels of indebtedness (and even to service their present debts) depends on the expectations of continually rising money incomes based on continually rising cash flows.⁴ Thus, among other things, it could increase the likelihood of an international banking collapse, already threatened by the inability of many third world nations to repay their present crippling levels of debt to western banks.

A 'Dissolution of the Monasteries'?

Money, as I have said, has played the central role in late industrial societies that religion played in the late middle ages. People's lives in societies like ours have revolved around money, as people's lives in medieval society revolved around religion. Money has been among our main worries, as religion was among theirs. Great institutions and a wide range of professions and sub-professions have grown up to handle money on behalf of the dependent majority, as formerly they grew up around religion. Ambitious men have based their search for power on money, as formerly they based it on religion. Just as the ecclesiastical and monastic institutions of the late middle ages came to be regarded as exercising unaccountable power, so today's financial institutions are widely seen to exercise great power, for example in the creation of credit, in the allocation of investment funds, and in their effect on society as a whole, without being properly accountable or under social control. In principle, as I have argued elsewhere,⁵ the monetary and financial system could be and should be one of society's most effective mechanisms of social choice, a scoring system openly and fairly allocating purchasing power to people according to their entitlement and giving them freedom to use it as they choose, and an allocation system for distributing resources and investment where they are most needed. In practice, it is nothing of the sort.

The dissolution of the monasteries was an event that clearly marked the decline of religion in the transition from medieval to modern times. May the post-industrial counterpart to that event

prove to be a monetary and financial collapse so severe that governments will have no option but to take direct control of the monetary and financial system? Such a collapse might be precipitated by a combination of: an international banking breakdown; a collapse of agricultural land values following withdrawal of today's high levels of agricultural support from public funds, as under the Common Agricultural Policy in Europe; a collapse of industrial and commercial property values, following recognition that conventional forms of economic growth and conventional levels of cash flow growth will not come back; and growing awareness that increasing numbers of financial institutions, like pension funds, as well as ordinary businesses and individuals, may be unable to meet their obligations. The most likely date for such a collapse, to be followed by a government takeover and subsequently by financial decentralisation and reform, is probably the early 1990s when the current Kondratieff downwave nears its trough. There is little doubt in my mind that at least some later historians would look back on such an event as marking the end of the era which we call the industrial age.

It will, I hope, prove possible to avoid a disastrous collapse of that kind. But the institutions of money and finance have been a central part of the whole empire of organisations and institutions and professions that have grown up in the industrial age, and on which the citizens of industrialised countries have become dependent. If the end of that empire is now drawing near, urgent questions must be faced. What must we do to liberate ourselves from our present dependence on money and financial institutions, so that their decline and possible collapse will leave us comparatively unscathed? How should those who manage these institutions manage their decline? How should they set about decolonising their present empire in good order, and so forestall the possible calamity of its disorderly collapse?

Politics and Government

The dominant forms of politics and government today are part of the social structure of the employment age. Today's mass political parties and government bureaucracies are products of the factory mentality. The growing formalisation of politics and government over the last 200 years reflects the growing formalisation of work as employment. We have become dependent on professional politicians to do our politics for us, just as we have become dependent on employers to organise our work. In their turn, our government employees and career politicians have become dependent on politics and government to provide them with their work and livelihood.

How, then, will the existing forms of politics and government be affected by the transition to ownwork? And what part are they likely to play in helping the transition to come about, or in hindering it?

Political Alignments during the Industrial Age

It is quite clear that changes in the prevailing pattern of work in society tend to be followed, some time after the event, by corresponding shifts in political alignment. This is natural enough, since both the prevailing pattern of work and the prevailing political alignment are connected with the distribution of power in society. Here is a brief account of the two main political shifts that took place in Britain during the industrial age.

When most people still worked on the land, the main political divide was between Tories and Whigs. Both represented landed interests. The Tories represented the interests of the monarchy and the rural squirearchy and the Whigs represented the interests of the landed aristocracy. The first shift took place when work moved away from the land into manufacturing industry in

the cities. The old political opposition between Tories and Whigs was then replaced by a new opposition; the Tories were transformed into Conservatives, representing the whole agricultural and landed interest (including the interest of the big aristocratic land-owners); and the Whigs were replaced by the Liberals, representing the new urban manufacturing interest. That realignment took place in the politically turbulent years of mid-19th century Britain, roughly between 1830 and 1860.

The second shift in political alignment, completed about 60 years later in the mid-1920s, reflected the emergence of formally organised employment as the dominant form of work. The Conservatives now sought to represent the interests of all employers, industrial as well as agricultural; and Labour, representing the combined interests of all employees, replaced the Liberals as the main opposition to the Conservatives.

These two structural realignments in politics that took place during the industrial age were fairly and squarely based on shifts in the relative importance of land, capital and labour, the three traditional factors of production around which the economic thinking of the industrial age has revolved. The Tory-versus-Whig alignment matched the dominance of land. Then, reflecting the growing importance of industrial and financial capital, the Conservative-versus-Liberal alignment matched the conflict between the old landed interest and the new capitalist interest. Then, again, reflecting the growing importance of labour and the new perception of land as just one form of capital, the Conservative-versus-Labour alignment matched the conflict between capital (including land ownership) and labour.

Possible Futures for Politics and Government

It may be possible to show that some connection exists between the successive long waves of economic prosperity and decline — the Kondratieff cycles discussed in Chapter 2 — and the successive shifts from one structure of political alignment to another, that have taken place during the industrial age. In that case, we might perhaps find that the next political shift is due within the next five or ten years.

However that may be, as we think now about the future of politics and government, the industrial-age experience does

suggest some questions. First, has any new factor of production recently emerged whose importance could override the existing capital-versus-labour alignment? Second, will the link between political alignment and factors of production continue to hold? Or will it prove to have been valid only in the production-oriented culture of the industrial age? Third, will the processes of politics and government in the post-industrial period continue to be cast in the institutional mould they have acquired during the industrial age?

Keeping these questions in mind, let us now explore what the three views of the future — Business As Usual, HE and SHE — could imply for the future of politics and government.

The Business-As-Usual view is the view held by most Conservative and Labour supporters. They assume that institutionalised politics will continue to be the norm, and that the main political division will continue to be based on the dominant work patterns of the late industrial age. In other words, they assume that employment will remain the dominant form of work and that the prevailing political alignment will continue to reflect the conflict of interest between 'the two sides of industry', capital and labour, employer and employee. They assume, if they ever think about it, that ownwork will remain a utopian dream for the vast majority of people; and, as they begin to realise that ownwork could be a possibility for growing numbers of people, their automatic reaction will be to resist it.

The HE view of the future perceives that the present political alignment is out of date and that its replacement by a new one is due — or overdue. It maintains that for many years, knowledge and skill — including managerial and professional expertise — have been just as important a factor of production as capital and labour. The emergence of this new factor of production has been paralleled by the emergence of the services and information industries as the sector of work most typical of late industrial society. It has been reflected in the rise of a new class of scientists, engineers, managers, experts, professionals, service technicians and organisation men, whose economic and political interests are neither those of capital nor those of old-fashioned labour.¹

In some countries the structure of politics began to respond to

this change many years ago. In Sweden and West Germany, for example, the rise of the new class and the importance of their field of work has been reflected in the emergence of Social Democratic parties and governments. But in Britain, among other countries, the corresponding shift in the structure of politics has hardly yet begun.

Eventually, the political realignment that would go with the transition to a HE future would no doubt reflect the emerging division of society between the minority who would design and plan and manage and operate a capital-intensive economy, and the majority of leisured consumers and dependents to whom they would provide goods and services. The new line-up would be between politicians representing the interests of the two main factors of production - skilled managerial and technical workers, and capital on the one side, and politicians representing consumer and welfare and environmental interests on the other.

Signs of a possible coalition between all the main factors of production could be seen in the drift towards closer cooperation between government, industry and trade unions that took place in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s with the establishment of bodies like the National Economic Development Council (NEDC), and which has been taken rather further in the economic planning arrangements that now exist in countries like Sweden, France, Japan and Germany. At the same time, in all the industrialised countries there have been unmistakable signs that pressure groups and action groups, representing consumer, welfare and environmental interests against production interests, are moving towards closer cooperation with one another.²

But, while the HE view implies a new *alignment* in politics, and an alignment based on production-versus-consumption interests, rather than on one production interest versus another, it implies no real change in *the processes* of politics and government. The institutionalisation of politics and government during the industrial age already reflects the basic structure of a HE society, split between a managerial and professional elite on the one hand and the rest of the population on the other. Politics and government have already become services (or, if you prefer, commodities), provided by cadres of (professional politicians and bureaucrats with privileged access to information and

communication channels, to the rest of us political drones whose participation in politics consists mainly of watching television, reading newspapers and casting our votes from time to time.

The SHE vision of a society in which ownwork will be the norm foresees, as does the HE vision, a shift to a new political alignment no longer based on the conflict of interest between employers and employees. But it goes further than that. It foresees, as the HE vision does not, a radical change in the political process itself. The SHE vision foresees that politics, like work, will increasingly become an activity which people take charge of and organise for themselves. This implies a shift away from national representative politics and centralised bureaucratic government to direct, participatory politics and government at local and neighbourhood levels. It implies that people will take more control over all the decisions that affect their lives, as well as over the work they do. It implies a deinstitutionalisation of politics, just as the shift from employment to ownwork implies a deinstitutionalisation of work. It is likely to be resisted, not only by the political representatives of capital and labour, and by those of the skilled managerial and technical interest, but by professional politicians and government officials generally, regardless of their particular political stance. After all, their own positions depend on a continuation of the existing processes and institutions of politics and government, and on the continued assumption that their kind of employment remains the best way to do their kind of work.

A Scenario

History shows that changes in political alignments, and changes in government policies, take place some time after the changes in the dominant pattern of work which they reflect. The existing power structure, based on the pattern of work that is on the way out, resists the consequences of change as long as it can. Political structure adapts to changes in work structure only after a time-lag.

A good 19th-century example of this is the repeal of the Corn Laws. By restricting imports into Britain, the Corn Laws had kept up the price of home-grown corn. This had served the interests of a predominantly agricultural society, in which most people

worked on the land. But it raised the price of food for urban industrial workers, and was contrary to the interests of an industrialising society. The dominant political parties of the time, Whigs and Tories, both had their power base in the old agricultural interest, and contrived to put off repealing the Corn Laws until 1846, by which time the industrialisation of Britain was already far advanced. And it was not until later even than that, that the old Tory-versus-Whig line-up in British politics finally broke down, to be replaced by Conservatives versus Liberals.

In the same way today the Conservative and Labour interests try to preserve a structure of politics based on capital versus labour, employers versus employees, long after this has ceased to match the actual pattern of work in society — which already involves most people, including most 'top people', being employed in professionally managed organisations rather than by capital-owning employers. This structural inertia is strengthened by the fact that most leading people in all walks of life, together with their juniors who hope to follow them up the career ladders of business, government, trade unions and the professions, owe their positions and their prospects of further advancement to the structures thrown up by a society in which employment has been the dominant form of work. So they too tend to resist the transition to a post-employment way of work and life.

By refusing to recognise that a historic transition from an agricultural to an industrial society was taking place, the Whigs and Tories and the rest of the early-19th-century establishment caused unnecessary hardship to the growing number of urban industrial workers who then represented the wave of the future. Just so, the various sections of today's establishment are causing hardship to the growing number of people who now represent the wave of the future — those who don't have jobs — by refusing to recognise that an equally historic transition is taking place from the age of employment to a new work order. They will almost certainly continue to do so until they are compelled to recognise that the old work order has broken down.

Then, as the prospect of restoring full employment fades away, a choice will present itself between the work pattern offered by the HE vision (a two-class society split between managerialist workers and workless drones) and the work

pattern offered by the SHE vision (ownwork as the norm). The consequent political realignment may then tend to take shape broadly as follows. On the one side will be those mainstream elements in the Conservative, Labour and Social Democrat traditions which are rooted in the institutions of late industrial society and its Business-As-Usual and hyper-expansionist tendencies. On the other side will be the alternative, decentralising elements in those three parties, together with many Liberal and Ecology Party supporters and people of no party-political allegiance. The first side will be a broadly conservative grouping: representing managerialist, trade unionist, financial, professional and other organisational interests; supporting continuing centralisation and dominant/dependent social and economic relationships; and reflecting institutional values. The second will be a broadly radical grouping: representing consumers, welfare and environmental interests and the decentralist aspirations of local communities; supporting the spread of self-reliance and mutual aid in place of dependence on institutions; and reflecting personal values.

The first of these two realigned groupings will not question the existing processes of representative politics and bureaucratic government. It will simply set itself to manage them.

For the more radical grouping, however, things will not be so simple. On the one hand it will contain conventional politicians and pressure-groupers. Their main aims will be to create new structures of power representing consumer, welfare, local and environmental interests in the existing political arena, and to force through changes in existing public policies. Personally, many of them will be pursuing a more or less conventional career in professional politics and government. Although they will be eager to represent the new post-industrial coalition of interests, they will be eager to do so through the old political processes.

On the other hand, the new radical coalition will also contain people who perceive the existing processes of centralised, institutional politics and government as part of the problem — a powerful obstacle to creating the new structural relationships in society which will enable people to take more control over their lives and work. Such people will want to promote withdrawal from dependence on institutionalised politics and government, as

a key element in a strategy of social change which will also involve withdrawal from dependence on employment as the accepted way of organising work. For them it will be a top priority to supplement and eventually to replace the existing political and governmental processes with new post-industrial forms of politics and government based on personal and local activity, just as it will be a top priority to replace conventional jobs with new post-industrial ways of working.³

This division within the radical movement in the transition to a post-industrial society will have 19th-century echoes. Then, in the transition to the new industrial society, there was a comparable division between the rising middle-class and working-class interests within the radical movement. Then the division was between parliamentary reformers who wanted the new industrial interests to be effectively represented in the existing political system, and people like the Chartists who wanted a much more fundamental restructuring of society.⁴ The division now is going to be between those who want the new post-industrial interests to be effectively represented through the existing political system, and those who believe these new interests require a more fundamental restructuring of society - including deinstitutionalisation of the system of politics and government itself.

Collapse or Decolonisation

Thus the political and governmental context in which the transition towards ownwork will take place is bound to be uncertain and shifting, obstructive and unreliable. Not only will the transition to ownwork be resisted by those with a direct interest in keeping employment as the dominant form of work. But because ownwork will imply an increase in personal and local autonomy in a political as well as an economic sense, the transition to it will also be resisted by those with a vested interest in the existing processes of representative politics and bureaucratic government. Only when the prospect of breakdown, both of employment as the main way to organise work and of existing forms of politics and government as the main way to run our affairs, begins to loom large, will resistance to the idea of ownwork begin to soften. Only when the collapse of an empire begins to seem imminent, does orderly decolonisation come to be

seen as a desirable goal.

Once that stage is reached, however, new opportunities open up for those who have prepared themselves to play a positive part in the decolonisation process. At that point the coming decolonisation of work will offer growing opportunities for achievement and success to those politicians and public officials who have prepared themselves for the transition to ownwork, who have thought out the changes it will require, and who are able to introduce and carry them out. The same will be true for people in the organised labour movement and the financial system (see Chapters 8 and 9), and also for people with responsibility for personnel management in employing organisations. What all this will mean in practice is discussed in Part 4.

Notes and References for Section 2

Chapter 5

- (1) Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Unwin, 1930.
- (2) R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, Penguin, 1938.
- (3) Quoted in M. Weber, *Protestant Ethic*.
- (4) E.P. Thompson, *Making of the E.W.C.*
- (5) Quotations in this paragraph and the next are from M. Weber, *Protestant Ethic*.
- (6) A good short account of Cartesian dualism is in Fritjof Capra's *The Turning Point*, Wildwood House, 1982. References to Cartesian dualism in the context of economics will be found in Hazel Henderson's *The Politics of the Solar Age: Alternatives to Economics*, Anchor Doubleday, 1981; and Guy Dauncey's *Nice Work If You Can Get It*, National Extension College, 1983. In brief, Descartes founded modern science and philosophy on the assumption that reality consisted of two separate realms — mind (*res cogitans*) and matter (*res extensa*). His method involved the application of mathematical reasoning to indubitable observations. Later scientists came to assume that scientific knowledge must be based on the use of this method in the study of matter, and expelled other insights, including moral, spiritual and intuitive understanding, from the realm of knowledge. Following this pattern, economists have studied only the formal economy, and have relegated the informal economy to the realm of superstition, hearsay and old wives' tales.
- (7) Quotations in this paragraph and the next are from R.H. Tawney, *Religion*.
- (8) Quotations in this paragraph and the next are from M. Weber, *Protestant Ethic*.
- (9) *Laborem Exercens*, Encyclical Letter of The Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on Human Work, Catholic Truth Society, 1981.
- (10) Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, Penguin, 1976.

- (11) Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*, Heinemann, 1926. The prophet is here responding to a ploughman's request, 'Speak to us of Work.'
- (12) William Morris, 'Useful Work Versus Useless Toil', 1885, reprinted in *William Morris: Selected Writings and Designs*, ed. Asa Briggs, Penguin, 1962.
- (13) E.F. Schumacher, *Good Work*.
- (14) Bertrand Russell, 'In Praise of Idleness', 1932, reprinted in *Why Work? Arguments for the Leisure Society*, ed. Vernon Richards, Freedom Press, 1983.
- (15) A Haitian proverb quoted by Clive Jenkins and Barrie Sherman in *The Collapse of Work*, Eyre Methuen, 1979, and in *The Leisure Shock*, Eyre Methuen, 1981.
- (16) Marx described his vision of communism as follows: "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." Communist Manifesto, 1848.

Chapter 6

- (1) Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity*, Collins, 1972.
- (2) J.E. Lovelock, *Gaia: A new look at life on Earth*, OUP, 1979.
- (3) Chief Seattle's oration is quoted in Duane Elgin's *Voluntary Simplicity*, Morrow, 1981.
- (4) Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, Wildwood House, 1975.
- (5) For example, Manfred Max-Neef, *From The Outside Looking In: Experiences in Barefoot Economics*, Dag Harnmarskjold Foundation, Uppsala, 1982.
- (6) For a balanced discussion of the possibilities, see the chapter on participatory democracy in C. B. Macpherson's *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy*, OUP, 1977. Also see the chapter on 'Politics' in Kirkpatrick Sale's *Human Scale*, Secker and Warburg, 1980.
- (7) For an overview, see Marilyn Ferguson's *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, Tarcher, 1980. Also see Brian Inglis's *Natural Medicine*, Collins, 1979.
- (8) The word 'cosmogogenesis' is used by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in *The Phenomenon of Man*, Collins, 1959, and other works, to describe the process by which the universe evolves out of matter

into life and consciousness and on towards superconsciousness and divinity.

- (9) A good account of this is in Peter Russell's *The Awakening Earth: Our Next Evolutionary Leap*, RKP, 1982.
- (10) A good discussion of 'the conviction that the human species should and will conquer nature through the progress of modern science and technology' is in William Leiss's *The Limits To Satisfaction*, Marion Boyars, 1978. A well-known advocate of human mastery over nature for the 'relief of the inconvenience of man's estate' was Francis Bacon in the early 17th century.
- (11) These findings on 'The New Consumer Values' were communicated by Paul E. Shay to the Annual Conference of the British Advertising Association in April 1978. A fuller account is in Arnold Mitchell's *Who We Are: The Values and Lifestyles of Americans*, Macmillan, 1983.
- (12) D. Elgin, *Voluntary Simplicity*.
- (13) Daniel Yankelovich, *New Rules: Searching for Self-Fulfilment in a World Turned Upside Down*, 1982; and *Work and Human Values: An International Report on Jobs in the 1980s and 1990s*, Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, Stockholm, 1983.
- (14) Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, RKP, 1963.
- (15) Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox, *The Imperial Animal*, Paladin, 1974.
- (16) Virginia Woolf, *A Room Of One's Own*, Penguin, 1945.
- (17) Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, Tavistock, 1974. Sahlins is quoting from a study by Richard Lee.
- (18) See E. Shorter, *Making of the Modern Family*.
- (19) For the relative degradation of women's work brought about by industrialisation see Ivan Illich's *Shadow Work and Gender*, Marion Boyars, 1981 and 1983. The same process is accelerating in third world countries today. See, for example, Valentina Borremans' *Technique and Women's Toil*, Tecnopolitica (Apdo. 479, Cuernavaca, Mexico), 1982.
- (20) *Women, Work and Family in the Soviet Union*, ed. Gail W. Lapidus, Sharpe, 1982.
- (21) Kathleen Newland, *The Sisterhood of Man*, Norton, 1979.
- (22) Andre Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class; An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*, Pluto Press, 1982.
- (23) Virginia Novarra, *Women's Work, Men's Work*, Marion Boyars, 1980. See also the chapters on work in Sheila Rowbotham's

Woman's Consciousness: Man's World, Penguin, 1973.

- (24) I owe this point to Sheila Rothwell, 'Flexible Working Patterns for the Future'. Information about this and other papers given at The Other Economic Summits in June 1984 and April 1985 is available from TOES, 42 Warriner Gardens, London SW11 4DU.

Chapter 7

- (1) The quotations in this paragraph and the next two are from R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*.
- (2) John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*.
- (3) Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Penguin, 1970.
- (4) K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1.
- (5) John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, Longmans Green, 1926. (I owe this reference, and reference (7) below, to William J. Barber's useful *A History of Economic Thought*, Penguin, 1967.)
- (6) *Laborem Exercens*, see Chapter 5, Note (9).
- (7) This and the following quotation are from Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, Vol. 1, Macmillan, 1961.
- (8) Aubrey Jones, *The New Inflation: The Politics of Prices and Incomes*, Andre Deutsch, 1973.

Chapter 8

- (1) E. P. Thompson, *Making of the E. W. C.*
- (2) H. Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*.
- (3) Mike Cooley, *Architect or Bee, The Human Technology Relationship*, Langley Technical Services, 1980.
- (4) I. Illich, *Shadow Work*.
- (5) Hilary Wainwright and Dave Elliott, *The Lucas Plan: A New Trade Unionism in the Making?*, Allison and Busby, 1982.
- (6) M. Cooley, *Architect or Bee*.
- (7) Robert Jungk, *The Everyman Project: Resources for a Humane Future*, Thames and Hudson, 1976.
- (8) A. Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class*.
- (9) Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, Vol. 2, OUP, 1978.
- (10) Jeremy Seabrook, *Unemployment*, Paladin, 1982.

Chapter 9

- (1) Existing examples include: Mercury Provident Society, Orlingbury House, Lewes Road, Forest Row, Sussex RH18 5AA; Calvert Social Investment Fund, 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington DC 20006, USA.
- (2) David Cadman: 'Towards An Ecology Of Finance', *Town and Country Planning*, September, 1983. Bob Swann's (Box 76, RD3 Great Barrington, MA 01230, USA) 'Bookshelf' includes useful material on 'community banking'. URBED (Urban Economic Development, 99 Southwark Street, London SE1 OJF) and the Foundation for Alternatives (The Rookery, Adderbury, Banbury, Oxfordshire) are both concerned with new ways of financing local initiatives.
- (3) David Cadman and James Robertson, 'Before the dinosaur became extinct. . .', *The Guardian*, 2 December 1982.
- (4) No lasting solution to the international financial crisis, highlighted in the past few years by the debt problems of countries such as Poland, Mexico and Brazil, is in sight. Current agricultural land values are artificially high owing to agricultural support policies (such as the Common Agricultural Policy in the EEC) which are financially and politically unsustainable, and also owing to farming practices which are likely to be scientifically and economically unsustainable in the long run — see, for example, Richard *Body's Agriculture: The Triumph and the Shame* and *Farming in the Clouds*, both published by Temple Smith, 1982 and 1984.
- (5) James Robertson, *Profit Or People? The New Social Role of Money*, Calder and Boyars, 1974.

Chapter 10

- (1) This new class exists in communist as well as capitalist countries, as the Yugoslav writer Milovan Djilas was one of the first to point out in his books, *The New Class and The Unperfect Society: Beyond The New Class*, Unwin, 1972.
- (2) Notable examples of this trend are the activities of Ralph Nader in the United States, and in the United Kingdom of Des Wilson, who has in recent years led successful pressure groups on housing, the environment and open government.

- (3) Already the question of how far to operate through the existing political processes and how far to withdraw from them has arisen among supporters of the Green Party in Germany and the Ecology Party in Britain. See Jonathon Porritt: *Seeing Green: The Politics of Ecology Explained*, Blackwell, 1984; and Fritjof Capra and Charlene Spretnak, *Green Politics: The Global Promise* (British ed.), Hutchinson, 1984.
- (4) See, for example, the account of the Reform Bill crisis of 1832 in E.P. Thompson, *Making of the E. W. C.* For a good account of the process of social, economic and political change in 19th-century Britain see H. Perkin, *Origins of Modern English Society*.