HOMELESSNESS AND THE MODERN CONDITION: THE FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

• David L. Schindler •

"The point . . . is that we must follow
Christ into the heart of the culture, and
stay there to the end."

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We tend often today to divide personal–"private" ethical issues, such as those of sexuality and life, from the "public" issues of economic and social justice, or again to detach questions regarding personal conversion from those regarding corporate action and the transformation of structures. We need to reject these dichotomies, in order to be faithful to the Church's mission, or radical missionary opening, to the world, as intended by *Gaudium et Spes*. I will attempt to defend this proposal in terms of the family's involvement in the economic world. My proposal is simply this: that the love proper to that most basic, particular, and intimate dwelling place called the home is appropriate not only for the family in its nature as a (so–called) "private" institution, but also for each member of the family as he or she is involved, as a consumer and a worker, with "public" institutions.

In the present forum, I can offer only an outline of an argument. I will do so in four parts: a concrete description of the family designed to suggest the core of my proposal (I); a statement of

my presuppositions about the nature of the family and of its relation to the broader culture, drawn from three different sources (II); a brief description of the family's "domestication" of space and time, and its implications for the economy (III); a summary proposal of what Parts I, II, and III entail in terms of the Church's social or "worldly" mission (IV).

I: Toward a "Civilization of Love"

Familial relations consist above all in giving and receiving life, in the integral totality of all of life's dimensions. It is of the essence of this life and these relations that they take real time and real space. They require, at the most basic level, a patient—contemplative —openness to the other *as other*; enduring commitment; a sustained presence of each to the other, most of all in times of intense joy or suffering; attention to detail; special care in critical moments of dependence and vulnerability (for example, in the period of gestation or the first years of life or in the case of serious illness or disability);[1] a deep sense of gratitude and humility, of the primacy of the "useless" (e.g., play, beauty): in sum, a style of life governed above all by an awareness of (familial) reality as essentially generous and relational.

What all of this means can be illustrated simply (if partially) by the cooking of a meal. A dinner that is truly "homemade" as distinct from "store-bought" begins from scratch, and involves a different sense of time, space, matter, and motion. Taking time to prepare the meal is understood most basically not as a loss, but as a necessary condition for preparing a dinner of quality: a dinner that is attentive to the particular tastes and desires of this unique—small and local—community, and especially to the health requirements of this community's weakest members. Patient attention to detail in this context is thus not only not insignificant, it is everything: it is the condition for producing a meal in its integrity. A home-cooked meal, in short, itself represents an economy (οἰκονομία) that recognizes the values of the modern economy (e.g., financial concerns), but integrates these into the deeper and more comprehensive reality of the meal as gift.

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[1]Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999).

Evidently, much more could be said and other examples given here. I wish only to say enough initially to illustrate the burden of my proposal: the love proper to families, which is to say the life that is constitutive of the familial *communio personarum*, generates a new and distinctive sense of place and indeed of institutional structure: it transforms the space, time, matter, and motion—the very "things" or "material objects"—in and through which personal-familial love is exercised. This transformation may properly be termed a "domestication" of space and time.

II: Homelessness as the Modern Condition

Obviously, my brief preliminary description of the family and of the core of my proposal requires further elaboration, particularly in terms of the Church's mission. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to state, and to explain more amply, the presuppositions of my argument—which I will do in this second part—as well as to set forth its precise burden, which will be the task of Part III. I turn, then, to the statement of my presuppositions.

(1) (a) Toward the end of his extraordinary discussion of slavery and racism in *The Hidden Wound*, contemporary writer and cultural essayist Wendell Berry offers the following summary comment regarding our current cultural situation:

> Mostly, we do not speak of our society as disintegrating. We would prefer not to call what we are experiencing social disintegration. But we are endlessly preoccupied with the symptoms: divorce, venereal disease, murder, rape, debt, bankruptcy, pornography, soil loss, teenage pregnancy, fatherless children, motherless children, child suicide, public child-care, retirement homes, nursing homes, toxic waste, soil and water and air pollution, government secrecy, government lying, government crime, civil violence, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, abortion as "birth control," the explosion of garbage, hopeless poverty, unemployment, unearned wealth.[2]

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[2]Berry, *The Hidden Wound* (New York: North Point, 1989), 131.

A long list, indeed, which is remarkable, among other things, for the way it juxtaposes problems that most of us conceive separately and prefer to treat piecemeal. But that is just Berry's point: our practice of isolating these problems from one another already signifies a failure to understand them properly—because the problems, at a deep level, bear a unity. They all have to do, finally, with a dis-integration: an absence of community.

Berry concludes *The Hidden Wound* by saying that "we must be aware . . . of the certainty that the present way of things will eventually fail." On the one hand, he says, "if it fails quickly, by any of several predicted causes, then we will have no need, being absent, to worry about what to do next." On the other hand, "if it fails slowly," there is the possibility that "it may fail into a restoration of community life," provided, however, "that we have been careful to preserve the most necessary and valuable things" (137).

(b) According to Berry, the lack of authentic community in the contemporary world originates decisively in a dualism within theology or religion itself. As he puts it in "A Secular Pilgrimage," "perhaps the great disaster of human history is one that happened to or within religion: that is, the conceptual division between the holy and the world, the excerpting of the Creator from the creation."[3]

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[3]Berry, *A Continuous Harmony: Essays Cultural and Agricultural* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1972), 3–35, at 6. This dualism "between Creator and creature," which unravels into a series of further dualisms—between "spirit and matter, religion and nature, religion and economy, worship and work, and so on"—"is the most destructive disease that afflicts us" ("Christianity and the Survival of Creation," in *Home Economics* [New York: North Point, 1987], 105). Although the religion Berry has most in mind here is a Puritan Protestantism, modern Catholicism has had its own version of the dualisms to which he refers. It suffices to note the work of Henri de Lubac, and recall the great resistance which greeted de Lubac's attempts to recover the social-cosmic dimension of Catholicism and of the Eucharist (in *Catholicisme* and *Corpus Mysticum*, for example), and to retrieve a more organic and concrete form of the God-world relation (in his work on grace and nature in *Surnaturel* and *Le mystère du surnaturel*, for example). De Lubac's concern, not unlike that of Berry, was to draw attention again to what had been largely lost from view in the modern era, namely, God's original and intrinsic, if wholly unearned and unanticipated, invitation to the world to share in his own life and hence holiness. De Lubac understood this invitation in terms of the sacramental mediation of the Church in a way that Berry does not address. The point is simply that de Lubac and Berry are, notwithstanding, in profound agreement regarding the need for Christianity to reject the dualism that undergirds a conception of salvation as individualistic and, as it were, world-less.

"The churches . . . excerpt sanctity from the human economy and its work just as Cartesian science has excerpted it from the material creation. And it is easy to see the interdependence of these two desecrations: the desecration of nature would have been impossible without the desecration of work, and vice versa."[4] In a word, the excerpting of the Creator from his creation prevents creation—the world—from being understood as a dwelling place destined for holiness.

At the heart of this division between the creator and his creation, and hence between the holy and the world, according to Berry, is the loss of the idea of home and indeed the separation of our economy—by which term Berry refers to our entire way of relating to the world of things and of work—from the idea of familial or marital community. "The history of our time," he says, "has been to a considerable extent the movement of the center of consciousness away from home."[5] "What passes now for economics . . . has strayed far from any idea of home, either the world or the world's natural ecosystems and human households."[6]

Thus we might say, in light of Berry, that a key to under-standing contemporary American culture lies in its homelessness: homelessness, that is, understood first not as an affliction of a discrete group of people living in the streets but precisely as the modern condition of being or style of life (it is of course crucial to see that the two are intrinsically related: that was the point of the text from Berry cited at the outset). Homelessness as Berry understands it consists in an abstract and mechanistic pattern of being, thinking, acting, and producing that makes human beings rootless, in a world stripped of its intrinsic creaturely order. In the following passage, Berry gives some indication of what this means:

> The modern house is not a response to its place, but rather to the affluence and social status of its owner. It is the first means by which the modern conquistador, seated in his living room in the evening in front of his TV set, many miles

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[4]Berry, "God and Country ," in *What Are People For?* (North Point: New York, 1990), 96–97.

[5]Berry, "Living in the Future: the 'Modern' Agricultural Ideal," in *The Unsettling of America* (New York: Avon, 1977), 53.

[6]Berry, "Preface," Home Economics, x.

from his work, can easily forget where he is and what he has done. He is everywhere or nowhere. Everything around him, everything on TV, tells him of his success: *his* comfort is the redemption of the world. His home is the emblem of his status, but it is not the center of his interest or his consciousness. . . .

The modern specialist and/or industrialist in his modern house can probably have no very clear sense of where he is. His sense of his whereabouts is abstract: he is in a certain "line" as signified by his profession, in a certain "bracket" as signified by his income, and in a certain "crowd" as signified by his house and his amusements. Where he is matters only in proportion to the number of other people's effects he has to put up with. Geography is defined for him by his house, his office, his commuting route, and the interiors of shopping centers, restaurants, and places of amusement [and, we might add today, by the virtual time and space of his computer]—which is to say his geography is artificial; he could be anywhere, and he usually is.

This generalized sense of worldly whereabouts is a reflection of another kind of bewilderment: this modern person does not know where he is morally either. He assumes, as he has clearly been taught to assume, that as a member of the human race he is sovereign in the universe. He assumes that there is nothing that he *can* do that he should not do, nothing that he *can* use that he should not use. His "success"—which is at present indisputable—is that he has escaped any order that might imply restraints or impose limits. He has, like the heroes of fantasy, left home—left behind all domestic ties and restraints and gone out into the world to seek his fortune.[7]

(2) In an argument that I take to be convergent in important respects with that of Berry, philosopher Virginia Held suggests that we should replace "the paradigm of economic man" that is dominant in contemporary Western society with "the paradigm of mother and child."[8] She asks

how society and our goals for it might appear if instead of thinking of human relations as contractual, we thought of them as *like* relations between mothers and children. What would social relations look like? What would society look like if we took the relation between mother and child as not just one

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[7]"Living in the Future," 52–54.

[8]Virginia Held, *Feminist Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 195.

relation among many, but as the *primary* social relation? And what sorts of aspirations might we have for such a society? (195).

"To see contractual relations between self-interested or mutually disinterested individuals as constituting a paradigm of human relations," she says, "is to take a certain historically specific conception of 'economic man' as representative of humanity" (194). This contractual paradigm of "economic man" understands relations between persons as "exchanges between *individuals*" (197). This is different from relations between persons in a family, which are "partly constitutive of what they *are*" (ibid.)—and thus not primarily voluntary in nature (204). The happiness of a person engaged in mothering is not the result of an "egoistic bargain" (205). Neither the mothering person nor the child are replaceable commodities (206). Their obligations to each other are not met by merely leaving each other alone (207). "The relation between mothering person and child also yields a new view of power" (209). "The power of a mothering person to empower others, to foster transformative growth, is a different sort of power from that of a stronger sword or a dominant will. And the power of a child to call forth tenderness and care is perhaps more different still" (209). "[N]o one can become a mothering person without becoming sensitive to the needs of relatively helpless or less powerful others. And to become thus sensitive is to become vulnerable" (210). Thus "[t]he morality that could offer guidance for those engaged in mothering might be a superior morality to those available at present. It would be a morality based on caring and concern for actual human others, and it would have to recognize the limitations of both egoism and perfect justice" (211).[9]

In sum, Held proposes that, in approaching social problems, we begin in a way that directly opposes our customary way of beginning: instead of assuming the primacy of the contractual, voluntary relations proper to abstract individuals, and relegating the constitutive—and hence more intimate—relations proper to mother-

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[9]Regarding the "limitations of . . . perfect justice," see Pope John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*: "Society can become ever more human only if we introduce into the many-sided setting of interpersonal and social relationships, not merely justice, but also that 'merciful love' which constitutes the messianic message of the Gospel" (1413). It is not necessary for our purposes to sort out the differences between Held's understanding of these "limitations of perfect justice" (cf., for example, her discussion on 210–11) and that of John Paul II as expressed here.

child relations to the margins (i.e., the "private" realms) of society, we should start rather with these latter relations and see them as in a significant sense prior to and fundamental for all the relations characteristic of human society.[10]

(3) We come, finally, to the theological presuppositions shaping my argument, which can be seen in statements regarding the family in recent ecclesial documents: "The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit."[11] "The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial commu-

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[10]Regarding the mother-child relation as paradigmatic for society, Held adds this qualification: "There may then not be one type of human relation that is paradigmatic, but to think of relations between mothers and children *as* paradigmatic may be an important stage to go through in reconstructing a view of human relationships that can be adequate from a feminist point of view" (*Feminist Morality,* 195–196). Furthermore, she contrasts the "practice of mothering" with being "women in the biological sense," such that the term "mothering person" is to be taken in a "gender-neutral way" (197–98; but cf. the discussion on 17–18); and she suggests as well that, although she used to look at "the relation between man and woman . . . as a possible model for transformed relations in the wider society," she now thinks that "this possibility is more remote and uncertain, and less illuminating than the relation between mothering person and child" (212).

My own sense of family relations—and not only the mother-child relation—as paradigmatic for the wider society is indicated in the discussion of theological presuppositions to follow. Regarding the issue of "mothering" as gender-neutral, it seems to me crucial to recognize that, although the constitutive familial relations of giving life and caring as described by Held are indeed common to both men (fathers) and women (mothers), these relations still assume naturally (and not only culturally-conventionally) different forms in fathers and mothers. The difference between fathers and mothers, in other words, reaches to the heart of what is meant by, and of every task and disposition involved in, giving life and caring—both within the family itself as a (so-called) private institution, and as each member of the family faces the broader culture. It is, however, neither possible nor necessary in the present forum to provide a full account of this difference-within-unity—which is distinct from Held's implied simple unity—between fathering persons and mothering persons.

On the meaning of fatherhood as understood in the present pontificate, see John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*; "The Radiation of Fatherhood," in Karol Wojtyła, *Collected Plays and Writings on Theatre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 323–364; "Reflections on Fatherhood," ibid., 365–368.

[11]*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2205; cf. *CCC* 1702; John Paul II, "Letter to Families" [=LTF], 6.

nion, and for this reason it can and should be called a *domestic church*."[12] "The family is the *original cell of social life*. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and the gift of life." "This partnership of man and woman constitutes the first form of communion between persons."[13] It is important to see the link among these ecclesial statements. Because the family, in its most basic reality as a communion of persons, is the sign and image of trinitarian communion whose sacramental icon is the Church, it is the "domestic church"; at the same time, the family is the original cell of human society. The family, in other words, as a communion of persons, reveals the realities of God, the Church, and the basic unit of human society to be (in truly analogous ways) realities of love, and it thereby becomes the original and foundational form for what Pope Paul VI termed the "civilization of love."[14] It is in being itself—as a reality of love in this sense—that the family helps to bring about "the transformation of the earth and the renewal of the world, of creation, and of all humanity."[15]

III: Community and the "Domestication" of Space and Time

It is not my purpose here to try to harmonize on all points the three sources I have invoked. There are important differences among them, and one need not agree with them all in every detail.[16] I mean only to take something basic from each in an effort to delineate the burden of my argument. Berry describes our current social problems in terms of a lack of community, which he considers above all as "a movement of consciousness away from home" and hence as a kind of homelessness. Evidently, given this diagnosis, the proper response to these problems lies above all in a renewal of the reality of "home." What this means is indicated negatively in Berry's description of

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[12]*Familiaris Consortio* 21; cf. *Lumen Gentium* 11; "Follow the Way of Love: Pastoral Message to Families," U.S. Bishops (17 November 1993); LTF, 19.

[13]Cf. *Gaudium et spes* 12. Cf. *CCC* 2207; LTF, 13.

[14]Cf. "Homily for the Closing of the Holy Year" (Dec. 25, 1975): *AAS*, 68 (1976): 145. John Paul II states that the civilization of love "in the final analysis is nothing else than the 'humanization of the world'" (LTF, 13).

[15]LTF, 18.

[16]See, for example, fns. 9 and 10.

homelessness primarily in terms of abstract (or mechanistic) ways of being and acting: of relating to others—God, human beings, nature. Held develops further this abstract way of being and acting in terms of "contractual relations between self-interested or mutually disinterested individuals." In positive terms, then, renewal of the "home" signifies recovery of the primacy of the concrete, constitutive, and intimate—in sum, organic—ways of being and acting, of relating to others, proper to the family (in its nature as communion of persons).

(1) What I wish to suggest in the context of this recovery, then, is that the purpose of our existence as consumers and as workers, at the deepest level, is to transform the world into a home: to extend the organic relations constitutive of the family into the structures of the world, and thereby to "domesticate" the world. This of course does not mean that we should attempt to transform every relation with the world into a relation of intimacy in the literal ways characteristic of a family—to do so would be absurd. What it means is simply that we should grant *primacy*, in our consumer choices and in our labor and our professions and our business, to the dispositions and patterns of activity described above in terms of familial community (see, e.g., Held's mother-child relation), and illustrated in terms of a home-cooked meal. Again, this does not at all deny either the necessity or the importance of the mechanical or "abstract" dimensions of things and indeed in some significant sense of the relations among and within larger social-economic-political institutions. It means simply that these necessary and important mechanical dimensions are truly "humanized" only insofar as they are progressively integrated into the reality of organic relations, as found especially in the local community called the family (understood as a communion of persons: the "domestic church" that is "a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit").

The precise burden of this argument bears emphasis: renewal of the world in terms of the communion of persons is not an exclusively "inter-personal" concern, as though community were simply a matter of good will and had no effect on the *order of space and time and institutional structures*; one cannot claim that these latter remain neutral "in themselves" and become relevant to the nature of community only insofar as they become subject to a manipulation of human will that, on these terms, necessarily remains extrinsic to their fundamental ordering. ("Communitarian" liberals tend to conceive this will primarily in terms of altruism, conservative liberals in terms of self-interest "rightly understood.") Such a "moralized" or "voluntaristic"

reading of community—which I take to be characteristic of liberal societies—is ruled out by the understanding of community sketched above, according to which personal relations themselves are always-already inclusive of the space and time and structures within and through which the relations are exercised. As illustrated with respect to the cooking of a meal, the very reality of space and time and matter and motion and "things" becomes different when *originally located within* personal community, taking on the "shape" of love itself.

The world, in other words, is called *in its original ordering*—from the moment of its creation by, hence in its constitutive relation to, a lover-God—to become the *place* of personal community: to *become itself the extension* of personal community *in time and space*. This stands in contrast to an idea of the world—with its space and time and matter and motion and artifacts and institutional structures—as simply ("in itself") an *instrument*, whose value relative to the building of personal community emerges *first and most basically* as a function of its *use* by human beings (where use, again, is understood voluntaristically, in a sense that pays insufficient attention to the ontologic that is inevitably present, at least implicitly, in the original ordering of "things" and in every exercise of the will). I take this "instrumentalist" view of the world to be dominant in our consumerist society and globalized economy and indeed in the understanding of technology operative in these. I wish now to critique this "instrumentalism," using the example of modern technology. My purpose is to show the significant sense in which modern technology—and the "instrumentalism" typically invoked to explain and justify it—in fact furthers an "undomesticated" view of space and time, in a way that favors a consumerist, as distinct from genuinely communal, notion of the human person.

(2) Cardinal Francis George, in a recent address on globalization, points out that "all cultural phenomena are evangelically ambiguous."[17] That is, globalization presents us with both positive and negative dimensions. I assume this to be true—and indeed will return in Part IV to what this ambiguity implies for evangelization. Here I wish only to say enough to indicate one important criticism entailed by my argument. The criticism bears on the understanding of technology that is typically operative in, and helps to drive, our

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[17]Cardinal Francis George, "How Globalization Challenges the Church's Mission," *Origins* 29, no. 27 (December 16, 1999): 433–439, at 437.

current globalized economy and indeed the consumerist culture bound up with this economy.

The view to be criticized supposes that technology "in itself" is neutral, that the value (or disvalue) of any given technological device emerges *first* with its *use*. Technological devices, in other words, are inherently or "in themselves" empty of theology, anthropology, or ontology. They are effectively pure instruments (hence "instrumentalism") and, as such, can legitimately be said to be "evil" only insofar as they are used by the human will for immoral purposes. That is, any significant dimension of (possible) evil with respect to the device arises only extrinsically to the order or structure of the device considered in itself. This view can be illustrated today in terms of television and especially the personal computer. Insofar as criticisms of these arise—and the criticisms are in fact frequent—they tend to focus almost exclusively on things like the pornographic or promiscuous content introduced by vicious marketeers.

My suggestion is that we need to raise the issues at a deeper level: in terms of the very nature, or structural order, of computers. For the fact of the matter is that computers are not instruments that are purely neutral relative to human community. On the contrary, the computer already in its very structure indicates a definite ordering of space and time. Pertinently, Cardinal George defines globalization in terms of a "simultaneous expansion and compression of time and space" (435), and suggests that the computer provides a good image of this: "The Internet and the World Wide Web represent the expanded interconnectedness of the world; the computer chip, with its compression of information into a very tiny place, gives us an image of what the world has become" (435).

But once we see that the computer represents, in its very structure, a definite ordering of space and time, we see that, again, in its very structure, the computer already bears implications relative to the nature of community and of the world called to community as sketched above. The Internet represents an explosion of bits of information extending literally endlessly—and available successively if almost instantaneously. The "thinking" associated with the Internet consists largely of gathering these bits of information. That is, thinking as conceived in terms of the Internet favors speed, surfaces, and the continuous accumulation of finite "bits"—and indeed the endless and virtually instantaneous nature of this cumula-

tive process signifies a kind of dispersion of consciousness into what may be called a "bad infinity."

Of course, much more can and needs to be said about the precise nature of consciousness and experience—and consequently of the human being—favored by the order of the computer: how the order of the latter, as reflected in the Internet, favors extroverted habits of consciousness and a notion of experience as acquisition. We would need to show how, as a consequence, the spread of the computer around the world tends to promote a *monoculture*: that is, despite the vast diversity in the information conveyed, the medium of conveyance itself generates a uniformity of experience, conceptual framework, and categories of knowledge—and just so far a worldview.[18] We would need to show how this worldview implicit in the Internet favors a consumerist idea of the person—in other words, how it favors a culture that accords primacy to habits of "having": to dispositions of acquisitiveness, power, and control.

But it is sufficient for my purpose here merely to suggest how the computer (and, in a different way, also the television),[19] already in its fundamental order, favors the growth of a "community" that is precisely *not* organic in the sense sketched earlier. The simultaneous expansion and compression of time and space—of consciousness and experience—signifying the "logic" of the computer does not encourage habits of patient interiority, of contemplativeness, of wonder, of sustained mutual presence, of an embodied being-with; it does not foster a genuine sense of transcendence and mystery or indeed of infinity; it does not promote a sense of reality as gift. Rather, it tends to generate the contrary of these—a tendency exacerbated in proportion to the prevalence of the computer's mediation of consciousness and experience.

(For this reason, I support the judgment of Portland State University professor of education, C.A. Bowers, who suggests that

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[18]Cf. Jerry Mander, "Technologies of Globalization," in *The Case Against the Global Economy, and for a Turn Toward the Local* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996), 344–359, at 357; and C.A. Bowers, *Education, Cultural Myths, and the Ecological Crisis: Toward Deep Changes* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

[19]Cf. Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: Quill, 1978).

computers not be used in primary and secondary education. Why? Because

> they change the way children's minds process information and affect not only what they know but what they are capable of knowing—that is, computers alter the pathways of children's cognition. Newly immersed in data-based forms of knowledge and limited to information transmissible in digital form, our culture is sacrificing the subtle, contextual, and memory-based knowledge gleaned from living in a nature-based culture, meaningful interactive learning with other human beings, and an ecologically-based value system.[20])

In sum, then: having shown (a) that institutions and artifacts are *always* a matter of extending the person and community into space and time in one way or another, and (b) that technology does this in a non-neutral, indeed, ambiguous way, my concern here (c) has been simply to note how the extension of persons into space and time in terms of familial community indicates an order of space and time that entails a deep transformation of technology. Familial community calls forth a "domestication" of space and time that challenges the technology operative in the global economy, and thereby makes its distinctive contribution to a "civilization of love."

IV: The Family, Community, and the Social Mission of the Church

I turn in my final section to a summary statement regarding the implications of the foregoing argument in terms of the Church's mission in the social-public arena. My proposal can be outlined in three parts.

(1) Put most succinctly, the Church, as it enters the public arena, should simply be church. The Church's fundamental task is simply to extend into the world its own reality as communion of persons: as sacramental sign and image of the divine trinitarian communion of persons revealed in Jesus Christ. More concretely put, the Church's fundamental task is to extend its own reality as communion of persons into the world especially in and through the

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[20]Cf. C.A. Bowers, *Education, Cultural Myths, and the Ecological Crisis.* I take the summary of Bowers's position here from Jerry Mander, "Technologies of Globalization," 356–57.

family that is the domestic church: the place where community finds its first "worldly" home. The foregoing argument presents a sketch of what this means. I believe we need some such argument if we are to take seriously Pope John Paul II's recent New Year's "Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace," which stated that the will to peace "must be based on the awareness that humanity, however much marred by sin, hatred and violence, is called by God to be a *single family"* (2); and which linked the will to peace with a "call for *rethinking international cooperation in terms of a new culture of solidarity*" (17). Some such argument is necessary if we are to go to the heart of the Pope's insistence that "the time has come for a *new and deeper reflection on the nature of the economy and its purposes*" and indeed on "the concept of 'prosperity' itself" (15), and for "a *renewal of international law and international institutions*" (12); of his insistence, in short, that we must make "solidarity an integral part of the network of economic, political and social interdependence which the current process of globalization is tending to consolidate" (17) [all italics in original text].

The main burden of my argument has been that we must not "moralize" the pope's call for solidarity: by failing to see that the integration of economic, political, and social institutions in terms of a community of persons that he calls for essentially includes structural changes in these institutions. As the pope points out in *Dominum et Vivificantem*, the "*interior and subjective*" dimension of sin "finds in every period of history and especially in the modern era its *external dimension*, which takes concrete form as the content of culture and civilization, *as a philosophical system, an ideology, a programme* for action and for the shaping of human behavior" (56). The needed "liberation" of such institutions, in other words, is a matter not only of moral will (personal subjectivity) but also of objective order ("external dimension").[21] This notion of "structural sin" plays a central role in John Paul II's social teaching, and is developed and employed by him in significant ways in (*inter alia*) *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (e.g., 36); *Centesimus Annus* (e.g., 38, 58) and *Evangelium Vitae* (e.g., 12).

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[21]Cf. *Centesimus Annus* (= *CA*): "[P]resent circumstances are leading to a reaffirmation of the positive value of an authentic theology of integral human liberation" (26). Cf. "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation," Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1986.

The burden of my argument, in short, is that we must "domesticate" space and time and matter and motion—hence institutions and technologies—to prevent them from becoming "structures of sin," and to make them instead into "structures of holiness."

(2) In light of this, I suggest that the Church as it enters the social-public arena today needs above all to come to terms with the ambiguity in the following characteristic claims of (Anglo-Saxon) liberalism (which are typically defended by Catholics in terms of *Centesimus Annus*): (a) that culture is distinct from economy and politics in such a way that economic and political institutions can be said to be primitively or structurally ("in themselves") empty of theological, anthropological, and ontological order;[22] (b) that the idea of a "third way" proposed by the Catholic Church between capitalism and socialism has been explicitly rejected; (c) that the connection between what the pope has referred to as a "culture of death" and capitalism is "accidental"; (d) finally, that creativity (as expressed, for example, in economic initiative) is the primary content of the creaturely *imago Dei*.

Let me emphasize that each of these assertions contains an important element of truth. I repeat: each assertion contains a partial

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[22]This claim of empty institutional structures has been virtually "canonized" with respect to the political order by John Courtney Murray's "articles of peace" interpretation of the religious articles of the First Amendment.

It is important to note here that I do not deny the importance of a distinction in principle between institutional structure and "ideology." I deny only the extrinsic, hence dualistic, sense of this distinction that permits an "articles of peace" reading of either political or economic institutions. To be sure, John Paul II himself affirms a distinction between economic systems and cultural systems (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 39, 36). What I am denying is that his distinction is to be read as an extrinsic relation between the two. To illustrate what I mean, consider the difference between Aquinas and Descartes: both distinguish between the soul (spirit, mind) and the body (matter, the physical). The point is that Descartes interprets the distinction as an extrinsic relation between the two, with the result that the body now becomes an empty shell that is essentially mechanistic in nature. In contrast, Aquinas interprets the distinction in terms of an intrinsic relation between the two, with the result that the body remains precisely organic in nature. The importance of the difference between distinctions here—for our argument regarding the "worldly" structures of space and time, matter and motion (more fundamentally organic or mechanistic in nature?)—should be manifest: the "instrumentalist" view of institutions and technology (according to which these are first—or "in themselves"—empty of human-religious meaning) in fact implies a fundamentally Cartesian view of institutions and technology.

truth. My questions, nonetheless, concern the qualifications necessary for eliminating their ambiguity and thereby helping to prevent what seem to me the potentially pernicious consequences of this ambiguity for the integrity of the Church's task in the social order.

Regarding (a), then: the foregoing argument should make clear that economic and political institutions *are already from their very origin and in their primitive structures* embodiments of cultural order (i.e., of theological, anthropological, and ontological assumptions bearing on the meaning of existence). As we have seen, artifacts, which embody space and time and matter and motion, and which include institutional structures and anything else insofar as it is made by man, receive their shape and meaning from the beginning and all along the way in terms of relations that are either more basically loving (communal) in nature or more basically mechanical. To be sure, every artifact will necessarily be a mix of these two kinds of relations. The point is simply that each mix will imply a definite (hierarchical) ordering of communal relations relative to mechanical relations, and that any such ordering is not, and can never be, neutral with respect to the destiny of man and the cosmos in Jesus Christ.

Regarding (b): it is of course true that the Church proposes no alternative form of political economy *as a political-economic system* (cf. *CA*, 43, 47). At the same time, however, the Church *does* propose a distinctive ecclesiology of communion that entails a deep transformation of the capitalism prevalent today. As evidence of John Paul II's conviction of this need for deep transformation, we might cite, in addition to the statements already provided, his condemnation of "neoliberalism" (not "so-called neoliberalism") in "Ecclesia in America" (56). What the Church proposes, in other words, is a way of being (in and as communion) that radically transforms both capitalism and socialism, albeit in a distinctive way in each case.

Regarding (c): given our responses in (a) and (b), and indeed our earlier argument, it follows that the connection between certain nihilistic tendencies of the growing "culture of death" and capitalism—that is, actual-historical liberal capitalism—is not merely "accidental." On the contrary, insofar as a political economy is always-already (also) a cultural order, and insofar as this cultural order embodies a false notion of the person and of personal community, the defects of capitalism must be

recognized as just so far "systemic": that is, ingredient in the very *structure* of capitalism *as it has grown up and actually exists*.

Regarding (d): while it is of course true—and importantly so—that human creativity does image divine creativity, it is crucial to see that creativity is neither the whole nor the primary content of the creaturely *imago Dei*. More fundamental for the human creature is the capacity for worship and love. It has been said that the theological separation of the Creator from the creature is the key to understanding that nature is subordinated to man. But the distinction between Creator and creature is best understood in terms of gift: creatures are "receivers" before they are "creators," and this receiving disposition remains anterior to and informs every act of human creativity. This always-anterior "receptive" activity discloses the primary content of the creaturely *imago Dei* to consist in man's being before-God, being constitutively from- and hence for-God (and indeed in a significant sense also from and for all other creatures in God); and discloses man's relation before non-human creatures to be always one of stewardship (and never one of simple use or domination).

(3) The argument I have advanced in this article on behalf of the Church's mission in the social-public arena, with its attendant criticism of modern technology and the globalized economy, will appear to some "unrealistic" or indeed even "romantic." In conclusion I can offer only an outline of a response to this charge.

First of all, we must not permit the charge of "unrealism" to dictate in advance the terms of diagnosis of our current cultural situation. The charge of "unrealism" in its conventional form typically precludes *a priori* any criticism of contemporary technology or economic-political-social institutions that would go to their *fundamental order*. It does so both because it fears the consequences of such a diagnosis, which seem overwhelming; and because typically the charge itself already presupposes the liberal ideology that claims a disjunction in principle between institutional structures as such and ideology (theology, anthropology, ontology). In other words, the charge itself often presupposes the very "instrumentalist" view of institutional structures that one may wish to argue—and the present paper does argue—needs to be challenged.

But more fundamentally, it is important to insist that the most basic terms of diagnosis and of the meaning of and response to "unrealism" are to be set by the Gospel. My earlier argument attempts to delineate the terms of diagnosis. But the point now is that

these terms of diagnosis appear to have led, willy-nilly, to questions bearing on the fundamental order of the technology operative in the globalized economy. Does such a diagnosis leave us with any reasonable response in the "real" world? Or does it entail a simple condemnation attended by withdrawal—a refusal as far as possible to cooperate with the dominant structures of the world?

My response is to insist, emphatically, that a criticism bearing on the fundamental order of "worldly" structures like technology does not entail a denial of many significant positive dimensions of technology, and consequently does not deny that technological phenomena are deeply ambiguous. On the contrary, my own argument presupposes this. Many reasons could be given for this presupposition: most immediately, there are all the evident ways in which computer and communications and transportation technology make possible a more interconnected world, by enabling us to share more information and to shorten distances. Furthermore, history is real: history is constitutive of our being, and consequently it is not an ontological possibility for us simply to re-create some pre-technological era. And pre-modern philosophy itself teaches us that the movement of history can never be one of "brute fact": because being, wherever and however it appears, is always convertible at a deep level with the good and the true and indeed the beautiful. There are no "facts," even technological "(arti-)facts," that are without inherent value.

For all of these reasons (which to be sure need more elaboration than can be given here), genuine participation in the world is demanded, and withdrawal from the world precluded, even at those junctures where criticism of the world is most profoundly indicated.

The meaning of this response, however, must still be deepened and qualified further by the terms of revelation. (a) The fact of creation affirms that every creature and creaturely activity—hence at a deep level also every creaturely artifact—is the fruit of the love of God in Jesus Christ and just so far an image of God's goodness. The sin of Adam, in which all of us are in a significant sense complicit, has of course deeply distorted this image.

(b) The Incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus Christ reaffirms and restores the creature in its imaging of God. But the crucial point to recognize in the present context is that, in his incarnation in Jesus Christ, God embraces the creature precisely in its sinful state, and hence *in the creature's ambiguity*. God did not wait to

enter the world until after the world had eliminated its sin. On the contrary, he first *entered the world*, in order to love it—and so to transform it—*from within*. But if God in his infinite difference from the world nonetheless did not reject or withdraw from the world, but poured himself into it, thereby both constituting and revealing its intrinsic goodness, then the depth and breadth of our culture's sin is in the first instance irrelevant in determining our stance toward the culture. Regardless of its sin and guilt (to which in any case we all have always-already contributed), we are to do with respect to our culture what God himself has done with respect to the cosmos: that is, to affirm its essential goodness and to enter and embrace it—in a word, to transform the culture *in love, from within*.

(c) Finally, Christ's loving entry into and participation in the world ended in his crucifixion, a fact which can never be forgotten, even for a moment. This latter point entails rejection of the implicit or explicit claim that the cross remains a reality only in the *private-moral* and *voluntary* ("subjective") dimensions of one's cultural life: runs counter, that is, to the claim that liberal societies have so constructed their institutions and technology that the reality of the cross can be (permanently?) delayed in the *public* and *intellectual* ("objective") dimensions of one's life, because the forms of these institutions and technologies are, in principle, (putatively) empty of any substantive human-spiritual ends. In fact, as we have seen, the supposed neutrality of modern liberal institutions and technologies already implies a mechanistic as distinct from genu-inely creaturely ontology of the human person. The point, then, is that we must follow Christ into the heart of the culture, and stay there to the end; but that we should expect this following to entail living the cross at the heart of the culture—even in its public and "objective" or "structural" dimensions.

The burden of my argument in (3), in sum, is that the fundamental response of the Christian to the world and all of its structures is one of loving solidarity, a solidarity that includes, even as it burns all the way through, the cross. It is solidarity so under-stood that makes up the substance of an authentic Christian "realism,"and that gives the first and last word in the present circumstances to an authentic Christian hope.   □

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