



Good Work, Fruitful Rest

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Liberating Silence in the Dictatorship of Noise

CONOR B. DUGAN

Cardinal Robert and Nicolas Diat Sarah, *The Power of Silence: Against the Dictatorship of Noise* (Ignatius Press, 2017).

Noise is one of the constants in our modern world. Visits to the doctor's office or the corner pub require one to brave a cacophony of sound and visual stimuli. Think of the last time you were in shop or restaurant without loud music and flashing televisions. Even in my small office building, there is a television in the lobby blasting out the latest headlines while one waits for an elevator. And this is just the "noise," the distractions that are external to our own persons. In the last decade with the introduction of the smart phone, the noise and distraction are now on our persons. On my phone there are six different ways someone can reach me directly—through phone, text, or various forms of electronic messaging. Unlocking my phone to do one task almost inevitably leads me to some other distraction: something to Google, news to check, a message from an old friend. Our churches, which should be sanctuaries from the relentless noise of the world, are filled with the same distractions. As soon as the communion song is finished, the choir is launching into its next song. The idea of letting congregants pray silently after communion is rejected. At a Mass I attended recently, the lyrics of banal hymns were projected onto screens, adding yet another distraction to the mystery occurring on the altar. We are overwhelmed both by the noise of the world and the noise inside ourselves. It seems we fear silence, and so have become the complicit victims of a dictatorship of noise.

It is this reality that Robert Cardinal Sarah addresses in his most recent book, *The Power of Silence: Against the Dictatorship of Noise*. The book is a long interview with French journalist Nicolas Diat. Sarah takes on the "worldly powers that seek to shape modern man" and "systemically do away with silence" (24). According to him, noise is a sort of "drug on which [man] has become dependent... Agitation becomes a tranquilizer, a sedative, a morphine pump, a sort of reverie, an incoherent dream-world" (33). Sarah observes:

Noise surrounds us and assaults us. The noise of ceaselessly active cities, the noise of automobiles, airplanes, machines outside and inside our houses. Besides this noise that is imposed on us, there are the noises that we ourselves produce or choose. Such is the soundtrack of our everyday routine. This noise, unconsciously, often has a function that we do not dare admit: it masks and stifles another sound, the one that occupies and invades our interior life. How can we not be astonished by the efforts that we constantly make to stifle God's silences? (83)

Ultimately, Sarah's book is about each man's search for God—a search that is "not just about a geographical solitude or movement, but about an interior state" (23). As Sarah says: "It is not enough to be quiet, either. It is necessary to become silence" (23). Silence is "not an absence," rather, "it is the manifestation of a presence, the most intense of all presences" (27). Sarah wants to help men and

women sweep away the noises and distractions that prevent them from meeting that Presence and responding to his love. His desire, like that of his friend, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, to whom the book is in part dedicated, is to help mankind see the centrality of God to *everything*. The choice really is nihilism or God; which was the subject of *God or Nothing*, Sarah's previous collaboration with Diat.

Just as in that book, here Sarah reveals himself as a spiritual master. Indeed, these two books are modern spiritual classics that will be read for centuries to come. I could hardly make it through more than a few pages of *The Power of Silence* without underlining numerous passages. Sarah's chief strength in this book is diagnostic. He has a clear vision of what ails modern man. Time and time again, I was drawn short by a line that seemed to capture my experience and daily reality. There is a great strength in having someone point out those things that wear us down but too often remain nameless. After reading Sarah's book, I have a greater awareness of the *evil*—I use that word intentionally—that comes from the frenetic nature of my daily life. I am not simply running myself ragged: I am obscuring the very voice of God in my life. The noise that presses in upon me and that I let steal the peace in my heart, blocks me from asking the deepest questions about existence, meaning, and destiny. The dictatorship of noise prevents me from knowing God and myself.

However, Cardinal Sarah's book is not merely diagnostic. He suggests cures to what ails us. Befitting his role as the Prefect for the Congregation of Divine Worship, some of his strongest prescriptions are liturgical. Here too, he follows his great friend and mentor, Pope Benedict. Like Benedict, Sarah recognizes that the liturgy is the place where the faithful most directly experience the Church. Concern about the liturgy is not about mere aesthetics or things extrinsic to our conversation with God. Rather, the liturgy is a privileged locus for God to speak to us. This, of course, necessitates silence. As Sarah admonishes: "Sacred silence is a good belonging to the faithful, and clerics must not deprive them of it" (124). The last thing the faithful need is for the Church to add to the incessant noise of the world.

Sarah is honest about the fact that, too often, our liturgies, rather than being transcendent, are pedestrian and mimic the noisy freneticism of the world. He observes that since the Pauline reform of the liturgy in the 1960s "sometimes in the liturgy there is an air of misplaced, noisy familiarity" (123). Indeed, some priests "are afraid that silence in the presence of the Most High might disconcert the faithful" (123). Yet priests must allow the people to participate actively in the silence of the liturgy. This silence "veils the mysteries, not to hide them, but to reveal them" (127). Furthermore, Sarah reemphasizes a proposal for which he has taken much (ahistorical and unfair) criticism: in our liturgical celebrations, we should return to the common orientation of priest and faithful toward the liturgical east. Sarah believes this external sign will help "everyone to understand that the liturgy turns us interiorly toward the Lord" (132). It also will help the priest to be "less tempted to become a professor giving a lesson throughout the Mass" and to allow the "whole assembly" to be "drawn in after the priest by the silent mystery of the Cross" (133).

Cardinal Sarah, who comes from a simple background and a poor country, also extols the virtues of poverty in the quest for coming to know God in silence. "If we are loaded down with an excess of wealth and material goods, if we do not strip ourselves of the ambitions and devices of the world, we will never be able to advance toward God, toward what is essential in our lives" (169). Poverty, thus, can become the means to detach ourselves "from anything superfluous that would be an obstacle to the growth of the interior life" (169).

This book is a spiritual guide, helping men and women to understand why they feel ill and pointing them toward the recovery of the interior life. It is by renewing this interior life that each person will come to know his origin and destiny in God and be able to battle the meaninglessness that modern

culture attempts to obscure through noise.

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Old Jobs, Tangible Results

CARLA GALDO

Richard E. Ocejo, *Masters of Craft: Old Jobs in the New Urban Economy* (Princeton University Press, 2017).

In a world where digital technology has enabled an endless array of consumer goods and services to be ordered from almost anywhere and shipped to a doorstep in a matter of days, or even hours, all things “artisan,” “local,” “small-scale,” and “hand-crafted” have garnered quite a bit of mystique. Not only farmers’ markets and specialty craft fairs boast such goods—beaming photos of local farmers stare out over piles of produce in mainstream grocery stores, enticing buyers with small-scale wholesomeness. Online marketplaces like Etsy proffer every hand-woven, hand-painted, or hand-carved delicacy imaginable. Riding the waves of this trend are the practitioners of the four trades considered in *Masters of Craft: Old Jobs in the New Urban Economy*. They are whole-animal butchers working in elite urban food markets, highly skilled bartenders serving \$20 cocktails, small-scale distillers bottling modern incarnations of moonshine liquor, and plaid-clad barbers at an über-trendy NYC shop. Author Richard E. Ocejo, a sociologist and academic based in New York City, spent countless hours observing, interviewing, and even learning these trades. The result is a well-researched and thorough, albeit very location- and culturally-specific case study of a few of the artisan crafts flourishing today.

In today’s economy, increasingly efficient production methods have led to an overwhelming turn towards cheaply made goods shipped from overseas factories in large quantities. Following a product from inception, to manufacture, to store shelf entails tracing a convoluted path, from the complicated international origins of component parts, to the multiple shipping methods required to distribute the product to consumers. Urban areas in the U.S. that were once centers of industrial production have become hubs for white-collar, technology-based companies whose employees are increasingly well-educated and increasingly tied to digital tools for the vast majority of their workday. Barbering, butchering, and the creation and distribution of alcoholic beverages don’t quite fit in with this new high-tech picture. These trades aren’t new at all; in fact, their long history as a part of civilized life for well over a thousand years led author Ocejo to term them “old jobs.” There are any number of old jobs that continue to be practiced today that could have been considered in a study such as this—farming, carpentry, or animal husbandry, for example—but Ocejo’s focus was on crafts that combined technical skill, a philosophical community surrounding the work and its product, and social interaction with consumers that allowed practitioners to share and/or teach their philosophy or skills in the public arena.

Barbering, butchering, distilling and bar-tendering, in their older incarnations, would once have been considered run-of-the-mill, working-class, manual labor trades. Ocejo describes them as “honest, respectable, and necessary, but low status, dirty, physically demanding, [and] for people with few other work options, not jobs people would want their children to do if they want them to move up in the world, and certainly not culturally hip” (xx). But in the elite urban social milieu where this study takes place, all these jobs are dubbed “trendy” and “hip.” Each of these crafts has been updated to fit their

new urban niche, catering to affluent consumers. The bartenders featured in this book are the spiritual cousins of culinary-school trained chefs. They concoct unique mixed drinks with high-end, small-batch spirits in bars with an elite, refined crowd. Their methods are often old-school—for example, some saw or chip giant blocks of ice into small shavings for the drinks they serve, rather than using standard ice-machine ice, because this chills drinks quickly and with less dilution. Observing bartenders using techniques such as these, Ocejo remarks: “to them, efficiency through technology has decreased quality” (37). Small-scale distillers would agree—they are usually located in rural areas, employ only a few people, and are so small-scale they label and seal their bottles by hand using a pot of melted wax on a hot-plate. Yet their product is sought after and fetches high-end prices.

The butchers in Ocejo’s crosshairs, in their turn, leave behind factory-style slaughterhouses filled with grain-stuffed, feedlot animals, in favor of an earlier butchering style. Their small shops harken back to the ethnic neighborhood butcher who specialized in culturally-specific methods of cutting down and using entire animals; today’s shops tend to draw an elite clientele interested in the grass-fed meats they feature, and is often willing to be tutored by the butchers themselves in different techniques for cooking cuts of the animal they’ve never tried.

Barbering, the one profession in this book outside of the food and beverage arena, was similarly reborn in a nostalgic reincarnation of the old neighborhood shop. New generation barbers are dressed casually, in jeans and plaid shirts, and the ambiance of the shop seems akin to a high-end hunting lodge. Just as barbershops were once hubs of socializing and camaraderie, the mainly male barbers banter with one another and engage the customers in their friendly discussion. Interestingly, the neighborhood feel of the barbershop of yesteryear couldn’t be recreated in the barbershop of today—today’s clients simply come for a fashionable, trendy haircut, and most if not all of them are strangers to one another. Only the rare client engages in the barbers’ chats.

All of the bartenders, barbers, butchers, and distillers—notably male-dominated crafts— featured in this study are men, many of whom live and work in trendy circles in New York City. Most are single—without wife, children or home mortgage to slow down or hinder their career flexibility. The majority of them come from a middle-class background and many of them attended college—some graduated, some tired of it, but almost all have some higher education under their belts. Many pursued unremarkable careers in the corporate or tech world, but found their work unsatisfying and unrewarding. Falling squarely in the midst of the postindustrial trend that considers one’s job not only as a cash-generator, but a path to happiness, they looked beyond the office, and found themselves in one of the four “old jobs.” Some were enticed by the tangibility of the product—in contrast to emails, spreadsheets, and distant results of paper-pushing, these barbers, butchers, distillers, and bartenders can see and touch (often with great immediacy) the result of their daily work. One barber, whose former career was in IT support for academic institutions, spoke with romantic nostalgia about blue-collar workers on car-manufacturing lines being able to actually line up and count the number of cars they had made that day. Pursuing these ancient crafts was often “the result of a search for meaning in work...an occupation to anchor their lives and provide them with purpose” (134). Many interviewed for this study considered their jobs more than just a way to make money; they considered their jobs to be a “calling”—one that often had to be justified to parents, friends, and onlookers who were skeptical of their change in profession and wondered why an otherwise successful individual would have chosen to pursue such a job when given other opportunities.

Even further, the fact that these trades enabled them to use both their body and their mind in a specifically skilled manner, in a predominantly male environment, gave each worker a unique chance to, in Ocejo’s words, “achieve a lost sense of middle-class, heterosexual masculinity” through their work

(20). Interestingly, passionate, and close-knit communities of tradesmen and consumers, united by the shared skill set and philosophical and cultural significance of their craft, drew in many of the interviewed workers and kept them in their new-found jobs longer than many of them had anticipated. The bartenders attended conferences, seminars, and festivals celebrating cocktails. Barbers bantered with one another throughout the day, and shared tips for styling techniques; butchers were the knowledgeable guides for appreciative customers who were often unfamiliar with the specialty cuts of meat they encountered behind the counter in small, whole-animal shops. The distillers, usually working in more rural locations, were key players in their local economy, often forging ties with their agricultural neighbors by sourcing their raw ingredients from nearby farms.

Each one of these trades represents movements in the wider economy towards the admiration of, and demand for, skilled and local craftsmanship. The dynamic of investing both mind and body in the artful creation of a tangible product is something shared across the range of the old jobs seeing a renewal today. That being said, a casual reader may struggle with the specificity of the jobs considered here. They are so specific to their trendy, affluent urban niche that they may be less relevant or interesting to readers in other social circles. Barbers in male-fashion boutiques, pricey specialty cocktails, and tiny, choice cuts of the most select grass-fed meats are often far from the reality and reach of most consumers. A study that considered other “old jobs,” more based upon basic human needs for food and shelter, might appeal to a wider readership. Today’s economy has also seen a renewal in small-scale, family-run farms catering to locals and nearby urban residents via farmers’ markets and Community Supported Agriculture schemes; a casual survey of fairs and farm markets might find a number of carpenters, woodworkers, and other similar artisans who have chosen to pursue work with their hands even after completing a college degree.

Lastly, the absence of the family as an economic and social unit at play in the lives of individuals practicing these four “old jobs” is significant, and further limits the applicability of this book’s study. The lack of family ties is not really discussed beyond the fact—mentioned in passing—that having a family may have limited the flexibility of their career pursuits. Furthermore, the absence of the family in this study may give the impression that it is an institution which reduces one’s ability to pursue meaning and satisfaction in a career, and which may force individuals to engage in more mainstream, stable, and less personally-rewarding careers. A study which branched out to consider those artisan trades which serve more basic human needs—e.g., small-scale farming, animal husbandry, woodworking—may have discovered a different dynamic. In these cases, the family may actually create incentives for stability, efficiency, cleanliness, and productivity. A casual survey of these more basic trades might find that they attract individuals with families, even families of significant size—an important reminder when pondering the relatively tunnel-like vision of *Masters of Craft*—illustrating that the family does not necessarily force individuals to compromise their pursuit of meaningful work.

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A Return to Awe

KIRK KRAMER

Father Francis Bethel OSB, *John Senior and the Restoration of Realism* (Thomas More College Press, 2016).

Lucifer in Starlight

On a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose.
Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend
Above the rolling ball in cloud part screened,
Where sinners hugged their spectre of repose.
Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were those.
And now upon his western wing he leaned,
Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands careened,
Now the black planet shadowed Arctic snows.
Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars
With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
He reached a middle height, and at the stars,
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.
Around the ancient track marched, rank on rank,
The army of unalterable law.

Christian thinkers have looked at the Devil and the Fall, at Heaven and Hell, through different lenses—according to different modes of knowledge. St. Thomas and the popes and the Catechism have examined them systematically or scientifically (using the word “science” as Aristotle did). Preachers like Newman and the Curé of Ars have spoken of these doctrines rhetorically, to persuade their congregations to be mindful of them in living their Christian vocation.

And then there are the poets, like George Meredith, who wrote about Prince Lucifer and his dark dominion in the lines quoted above. The poets lead us to knowledge of a different kind, knowledge that acknowledges mystery, the knowledge men gain when heart speaks to heart. St. Thomas himself gave it the name “poetic knowledge.”

Elucidating a doctrine of poetic knowledge was perhaps the great intellectual achievement of John Senior, the subject of this new biography by Dom Francis Bethel, OSB. Senior was one of the greatest, if comparatively unknown, American Catholic thinkers of the 20th century. A *New Yorker*, Senior was a student of Mark Van Doren's at Columbia only a few years after Thomas Merton. He became a Catholic at the age of 37. After a brilliant academic career teaching at Cornell and other New York colleges, he chose to go west, where in 1967 he eventually joined the faculty at the University of Kansas. With two colleagues, he established a Great Books program there, the Integrated Humanities Program. Hundreds of his students became Catholics, and some became priests and monks, among them the current

Archbishop of Oklahoma City and the Bishop of Lincoln—and Dom Bethel himself.

Dom Bethel has entitled his work—the fruit of nearly two decades of research and reflection—*John Senior and the Restoration of Realism*. Its opening chapters trace Senior's intellectual odyssey through his youthful adherence to Marxism, his close study of Freud and Jung, his scrutiny of Eastern thought and two of its Western interpreters, René Guénon and Ananda Coomaraswamy, and his related interest in the French Symbolists who were the subject of his doctoral dissertation. Newman and the *Summa* were the chief intellectual agents of Senior's acceptance of the "*philosophia perennis*" and of the Catholic faith. These early chapters of the book tracing Senior's intellectual journey are so rich as to constitute almost a primer on the philosophical realism of which the title speaks.

But the most absorbing chapters of the book come later, when Dom Bethel looks at Senior's work as a teacher and how his work in the classroom shaped his developing ideas about poetic knowledge.

In a 1969 letter to Mark Van Doren, who remained his friend and interlocutor until Van Doren's death, Senior told of attending a meeting in San Francisco with a dozen other professors to discuss founding a Catholic Great Books college, a plan that came to fruition when Thomas Aquinas College opened its doors two years later. Senior considered leaving Kansas to join the TAC faculty. But he had a fundamental difference of opinion about the kind of education the college students of the day required. He wrote to Van Doren:

My criticisms are chiefly not about the college proposed per se but about the impossibility of sending a young person to college without his having been to school. The liberal arts college begins with wonder and ends in wisdom. But the freshman has had wonder pretty much crushed out of him. I think, therefore, the college must give all students a year, at least, of poetry, before the liberal arts properly begin—I should say *music*, in the sense of the things the *Muses* do. For example, it seems criminal to teach the liberal arts of astronomy (the mathematical science) to someone who has never looked at the stars. (295)

Or as Dom Bethel himself writes:

Teachers today have to enrich their students' memories and stimulate their delight in reality and their wonder at its mysteries through gymnastic and music before they can undertake more elevated studies like the liberal arts and philosophy.

Learning is gradual and first things must come first. (151)

The notion of wonder mentioned in the preceding passages by Senior and Dom Bethel is fundamental to the story of Senior's intellectual life and to his work as a teacher. The motto of the Great Books program he established at K.U. in 1971 with Dennis Quinn and Frank Nelick was "*Nascantur in admiratione*"—let them be born in wonder. By wonder Senior did not mean curiosity. Wonder means awe—amazement—delight—and is accompanied by the kind of gaze the Apostles turned toward Heaven on the day of the Lord's Ascension. "*Viri Galilaei, quid admiramini aspicientes in caelum?*" the angel asked them. To gaze with wonder at the stars and the mountains and the sea, into the faces of those we love, and into our own hearts, was the disposition Senior tried to cultivate in his students.

Which brings us back to the subject of the poetic mode of knowledge. Dom Bethel says it is an experiential, emotional, intuitive and connatural knowledge. It is related to mystery. In a passage that echoes the thought of Joseph Ratzinger, Dom Bethel declares:

An effort at clarity, solution and mastery is useful in many domains, but all knowledge cannot be reduced to clear ideas and problem resolution; reality cannot be reduced to something reason can fully comprehend. Senior writes, “To most of life’s grave issues, science, dialectic and rhetoric are blind; their reasons cannot penetrate to mysteries like love and war, or why a sinner hopes for his redemption.” Mystery can be described as those aspects or depths of reality that can never be brought completely out into the open. . . . We will never get to the bottom of a mystery, never figure it out completely. (182)

One of the strengths of this book is the abundant use Dom Bethel makes of Senior’s own words, taken from his letters, poems, four published books and especially his last, as yet unpublished, book *The Restoration of Innocence: An Idea of a School*. Perhaps the renewed interest in John Senior brought about by Dom Bethel’s book will result in finding a publisher for the manuscript.

Those like the present reviewer who had the immense good fortune of studying with John Senior will find themselves moved by the memories stirred up by these lines of Dom Bethel’s, which apply so well to Professor Senior.

The teacher is God’s intermediary and has a fatherly dignity and responsibility. Senior wrote that the teacher acts not only *in loco parentis* but also *in loco Christi* and that “students imitating them are indirectly imitating Christ, as St Paul said: ‘Be ye therefore followers (*imitatores*) of me, as I also am of Christ.’” (125)

It is another story, one worth a book of its own—but this reviewer cannot omit at least a mention of perhaps the most remarkable example of John Senior’s fatherly dignity and role as a teacher. Senior had a great esteem for St. Benedict and the monastic life, and encouraged young people to consider a monastic vocation. Dom Bethel and six of Senior’s other students at the University of Kansas eventually became monks at the Abbey of Fontgombault in France. In 1999, those seven, and six other monks from Fontgombault, established a new monastery in the Oklahoma Ozarks, Clear Creek Abbey. Dom Bethel is prior of that community. Fontgombault and Clear Creek are houses of the Congregation of Solesmes, founded in the 19th century by Dom Prosper Guéranger to restore Benedictine life in France after the Revolution. Not the least of the virtues of Dom Bethel’s book is the transmission into English (of a charming *franglais* sort) of the deeply supernatural Solesmien spirit. As an example, let the last words of this review be Dom Bethel’s, in which he expands on a passage by Senior about the Blessed Virgin Mary. Dom Bethel’s words are indeed worthy of a son of Dom Guéranger.

In a way, one can say that Mary completes Jesus. We need a lady, a mother. The art historian Kenneth Clark reminded us that no religion without a feminine element ever produced great art. A man needs a lady for whom he desires to do beautiful things, who makes him more delicate and attentive to details. She inspires music in his soul and makes him a poet. Mary indeed represents a very special, eminent case. This woman, who is Queen of Heaven and Earth, Mother of God and of Christians, breathes divine music into our souls. By striving to make all things beautiful for her, our home and its environment, our work, our schools, our liturgy, our monasteries, all our activity and culture will be more beautiful for her Son as well. (278)

Kirk Kramer writes from Cottage City, Maryland.

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On "Disenchantment," Work and Leisure

D. L. SCHINDLER

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (trans. Talcott Parsons; New York: Scribner, 1958).

Probably the most common reading of Max Weber's argument in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is that capitalism appeared for the first time with English Puritans (Calvinists) of the seventeenth century, as though the "impulse to acquisition, pursuit of gain, of money" began decisively at this time or with this people (17). Weber is sardonic in his dismissal of such a reading. The impulse to acquisition, he says, "has existed among waiters, physicians, coachmen, artists, prostitutes, dishonest officials, soldiers, nobles, crusaders, gamblers and beggars. One may say that it has been common to all sorts and conditions of men at all times and in all countries of the earth, wherever the objective possibility of it is or has been given" (17). He insists that "[i]t should be taught in the kindergarten of cultural history that this naïve idea of capitalism must be given up once and for all. Unlimited greed for gain is not in the least identical with capitalism, and is still less its spirit" (17). Weber's argument is centered rather on a more basic and interesting phenomenon: what he terms the "disenchantment" (*die Entzauberung*, or *Rationalisierung*, "rationalization") of life and work in Puritan theology.

"Disenchantment"

According to Weber, the first beginnings of the new "spirit of capitalism" can be traced to Martin Luther, in whose thought we find a profound shift regarding the nature of "*Beruf*" or "worldly calling." Luther rejected the traditional idea of a division between two calls to holiness or two states of life. According to this idea, the higher or more perfect state was the life of the evangelical vows (*consilia*), which Luther understood to involve solely the "heavenly" activity of contemplative prayer and withdrawal from the world. The less perfect state was the life of marriage, or the living of the commandments (*praecepta*) while remaining in the world. Rejecting the first state, Luther stressed the importance of "worldly" activity, the everyday work of the world. It was in the world, and not in any presumptuous flight from the world, that God and holiness of life were to be found (79-81).

Calvin affirmed the importance of this "worldly calling" even as he further transformed its meaning in light of a distinct theology of sin and predestination. For Calvin, only a small number of human beings were chosen for eternal grace and salvation, while the rest were destined for damnation. God's will in the matter of the ultimate destiny of the human being remains inscrutable. "To assume that human merit or guilt play a part in determining [one's] destiny would be to think of God's absolutely free decrees . . . as subject to change by human influence, an impossible contradiction." God is "a transcendental being, beyond the reach of human understanding, who with His quite incomprehensible decrees has decided the fate of every individual and regulated the tiniest details of the cosmos from eternity" (103).

The consequence of this strict theology of (double) predestination is an "unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual." Each person has to follow his own path of salvation. No one can

help him: no priest, no sacraments, no Church. Even God cannot help, because “Christ had died only for the elect, for whose benefit God had decreed His martyrdom from eternity” (104). The key here is Calvin’s denial of the sacramental principle. As Weber puts it:

This, the complete elimination of salvation through the Church and the sacraments (which was in Lutheranism by no means developed to its final conclusions), was what formed [Calvinism’s] absolutely decisive difference from Catholicism. . . . That great historic process in the development of religions, the elimination of magic from the world [*die Entzauberung der Welt*], which had begun with the old Hebrew prophets and . . . had repudiated all magical means to salvation as superstition and sin, came here to its logical conclusion. (104–105)

The “elimination of magic from the world,” then, consisted in the removal of any “mystical” sense of God’s presence from the inner meaning of things. This meant a loss of the sacramental nature of the Church—of the sacraments as “infallible” (*ex opere operato*) communicators of the presence of God.[1] At the same time, this “disenchantment” implied a world judged to be under the power of sin, a world, consequently, whose natural integrity had been lost. God is no longer symbolically (“pre-sacramentally”) present in his creation: creatures are no longer inherently true, good, and beautiful in their *givenness* as gifts of the Creator.

In summary, we may say that Puritanism’s peculiar God-centeredness, according to Weber, conceived God’s transcendence “negatively”: God was pervasively “present” in the world only through the influence of his “absence.” The human being never participates intrinsically in God’s goodness. On the contrary, man remains a subject to whom that goodness must be imputed, incomprehensively and from outside. Likewise the things of the world are drained of all intrinsic worth.

Work and Leisure

Puritan “disenchantment” thus involves an utterly utilitarian view of the world. Man’s purpose in the world is to be ever-active in “rationalizing” things *in maiorem Dei gloriam*. But the point is that this “rationalizing” process is conceived in a thoroughly instrumentalized fashion. Nothing in the cosmos really bears value—or salvific value in relation to God—save as “rationalized” via the power of human activity. And this human activity itself has value only as an external *sign* and never as a participatory *cause* of God’s favor (which remains ever a matter of God’s inscrutable “election”). In this light, “the most urgent task” for the Puritan becomes “the destruction of spontaneous, impulsive enjoyment”—as a necessary condition for bringing “order into . . . conduct” (119). “Not leisure and enjoyment, but only activity serves to increase the glory of God” (157–58). Restlessness becomes a sign of God’s salvific action. Inactive contemplation is valueless, or even directly reprehensible insofar as it detracts from the orderly demands of daily work. What gives glory to God, in a word, is the incessantly active performance of his will in one’s “worldly calling” (157–58).

Profit or wealth in light of the above remains ambiguous for the Puritan. On the one hand, insofar as wealth is an expression of continuous work, it remains, *eo ipso*, a sign of God’s favor. On the other hand, insofar as the accumulation of wealth leads to restful enjoyment, it is to be shunned. Indeed, Weber states that Calvinism’s “real moral objection” is

to relaxation in the security of possession, the enjoyment of wealth with the consequence of idleness and the temptations of the flesh, above all of distraction from the pursuit of a righteous life. In fact, it is only because possession involves this danger of relaxation that it is objectionable at all. For the saints’ everlasting rest is in the next world. (157)

It is important to see that the Puritan ethos as described by Weber persists in America even when, over

time, the strength of Puritan piety wanes.[2] Pious Americans and secularized Americans continue to occupy largely the same cultural space, insofar as they both presume a distant God who is most effectively present in and to the world in his “absence,” and insofar as they (consequently) approach the things of the world most basically as apt for rationalization—if not any longer as a sign (for the religiously inclined) of God’s imputed favor, then in the interest of enhancing comfort and advancing the (secular) human estate.[3] What is crucial to see is the link Weber’s book defends (here set forth in terms of Puritanism and America) between the ethos of a culture and its (acknowledged or unacknowledged) assumptions regarding God and the orders of creation and civilization.[4] This link remains even when one is unaware of these assumptions.

Weber’s argument, then, implies not only that those in America who faithfully follow Puritan theology embody this ethos, but that any who live in America are inevitably shaped by this ethos, even if unconsciously. They tend to presuppose a God who is distant from the world, or acts ungenerously (or not at all) in relation to the world, such that the world is no longer symbolic of God, bearing inherent truth, goodness, and beauty as given (*qua being*). Human freedom becomes a simple exercise of choice, absent of any naturally ordered love of God. Knowledge becomes a matter properly of power over things and their meaning, as distinct from first “seeing” or experiencing things as they are (contemplation). The world becomes neutral (“dumb”) stuff awaiting controlled manipulation (experiment). Leisure is identified with idleness and enjoyment of external-bodily pleasure. Work is reduced to ever-more efficient activity for the purpose of producing the ever-greater wealth that enables idle comfort. Deepening the truth, goodness, and beauty of things for their own sake and as symbols of the good God, and thus simultaneously toward liturgical service, is no longer the proper concern of civilized public—economic, political, academic—order.

Weber’s argument in the end implies that no religion has more thoroughly instrumentalized the world and work and leisure than has Puritanism. Never has instrumentalism so pervaded the social-cultural order.[5] For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said:

“Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.” (182)

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[1] The sacraments “are not a means of grace, but only the subjective *externa subsidia* of faith” (*PE*, 104).

[2] In his introduction to Weber’s *Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), Talcott Parsons states that, for Weber, “rationalization concerns in the first instance the systematization of a pattern or program *for life as a whole*, which is given meaning by an existential conception of the universe, and within it the human condition in which this action is to be carried out” (xliii).

[3] Weber’s appeal to the worldly Benjamin Franklin, who had Puritan roots, as a prime example of the Puritan ethos, is instructive in this respect. It is interesting also to note here religious sociologist Will Herberg’s use of the phrase “secularized Puritanism” to describe “the American way of life” in his classic *Protestant Catholic Jew* (University of Chicago Press, 1983, first ed. 1955). Needless to say, there is clearly a difference in moral intentionality among secularized as distinct from pious Puritans. But in either case, worldly being is considered to be merely “neutral” in itself, as raw material apt for being made into what is (instrumentally) “true” and “good.”

[4]We should emphasize that Weber’s argument counters the Marxist or customary “secularist” approaches that would make the *material conditions* of a culture (economy and the like) the primary causal agent of its view of God and man. But it is important to understand that Weber does not thereby adopt a “traditional” (e.g., “Thomistic”) approach that would affirm a realistic causal relation between God and the cosmos. Rather, he proceeds in a more Kantian manner that emphasizes a “generic concept” (or *Idealtypus*: “ideal type”) that accounts for all the empirical data in the most complete manner (“ideally”). But this requires fuller exploration elsewhere.

[5] *PE*, 157-158. As the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has stated: “What Weber depicted was not only the secularization of Western *culture*, but also and especially the development of modern *societies* from the viewpoint of rationalization. . . . Weber understood this process as the institutionalization of purposive-rational economic and administrative action. To the degree that everyday life was affected by this cultural and societal rationalization, traditional forms of life—which in the early modern period were differentiated primarily according to one’s trade—were dissolved.” Habermas, “Modernity’s Consciousness of Time and Its Need for Self-Reassurance,” in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), p. 2.

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Working Deeply and Resting for Its Own Sake

COLLEEN ZARZECKI

Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, *Rest: Why You Get More Done When You Work Less* (Basic Books, 2016).
Cal Newport, *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World* (Grand Central Publishing, 2016).

There is a paradox at the heart of Alex Soojung-Kim Pang's *Rest: Why You Get More Done When You Work Less*. Pang offers the book as a needed corrective to the cultural narrative that more work makes us valuable to our employers and wealthier, more secure and, more satisfied with our work. The narrative also implies that being more valuable in the marketplace makes us *better people*. This cultural assumption is rooted in the "Protestant Work Ethic" first articulated by Max Weber in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) in which a person's moral fitness is directly tied to and reflected in the quality and amount of the work he or she does. Against this background, Pang's book makes strong claims that rest is as needed, as important, and as valuable as work. It seeks to rehabilitate leisure from an afterthought we fit into unproductive hours to the thing which enables us to work more productively and to lead a more fulfilling life.

However, the main shortcoming with Pang's conception of rest is that, in it, even relaxation serves our work performance. In some sense, everything becomes work. Rest has no intrinsic value, rather it is a way to give our brains a chance to recharge and to make connections that we might not make otherwise. Pang marshals an impressive amount of social science, neurological, and psychological evidence to prove his point. However, he does not seriously grapple with the proper purpose of rest. He asserts that rest allows us to perform optimally in our work and implies that doing so is the measure of a life well lived. He urges those who wish to be counted among those who really matter in the economy and society to rest so that they can be a better, more productive worker.

In addition to the scientific evidence Pang uses to prove the benefits of rest, he also makes ample use of the exemplar, recounting the resting habits of people such as Charles Darwin, Bill Gates, Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, Scott Adams, Maya Angelou, Paul Cézanne, Stephen King, Steve Jobs, Lin-Manuel Miranda, as well as various CEOs, software magnates, and business people. To Pang, these are the modern-day saints, whose virtuous resting is good because it allows them to become part of the class of productive "creatives" that he valorizes.

Another weakness of the book is that the rest it describes is almost always solitary. Resting is done by oneself to improve one's own creativity and productivity. His examples of restful activities include rock climbing, mountaineering, walking, tinkering alone in the garage on a long-term project, taking a solitary week in the woods to think big thoughts, or creating new languages and fantasy worlds while sitting alone in your study. Rest is not found in meaningful personal friendships or family relationships.

Additionally, Pang does not examine the role of rest for people who are not highly productive creative types. How a stay-at-home mother, a doctor on the night shift, a factory worker engaged in repetitive tasks, or a mid-level manager at a big-box store might incorporate some of Pang's suggestions is not addressed. If rest is such a positive force, it would seem important to consider how someone who is not in control of how he or she spends time might incorporate the ideas put forward.

Rest is confused about what the purpose of rest itself actually is. It cannot decide whether rest is a good in itself or whether it is a means to professional advancement and fulfillment. Pang concludes his study with the assertion that “[Rest] creates a life that’s rewarding while it’s lived, a life that has purpose and pleasure, work and reward, in equal measure. And that life feels complete and well-spent at the end” (246). While in this summation of his own work, Pang implies that rest should not be seen in a utilitarian way, the bulk of his own work argues the opposite.

Cal Newport’s *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World* shares Pang’s bias toward creative and productive “knowledge workers” and many of his assumptions about workers’ control of their own time. Like Pang, he uses data from neurobiology and psychology to support his assertions. Newport’s work, however, is more prescriptive, offering “rules” to enable knowledge workers to avoid shallow work and maximize deep work.

Newport’s schema divides work into two categories. He defines deep work as “professional activities performed in a distraction-free concentration that push your cognitive capabilities to their limit. These efforts create new value, improve your skill, and are hard to replicate.” For Newport, something of value is a new idea, a new product, new knowledge. Knowledge workers performing deeply, find meaning as they perfect skills that are difficult to master. He likens them to highly skilled craftspeople practicing their art.

In contrast, shallow work is made up of “non-cognitively demanding, logistical-style tasks, often performed while distracted. These efforts tend to not create much new value in the world and are easy to replicate.” Newport acknowledges that there are some workers and managers who prefer this kind of work. Emails answered, meetings attended, and memos written are an easy measure of productivity and provide tangible proof that the worker is earning his or her wage. It is precisely Newport’s assumptions about “value” that make his analysis insufficient. He does not seem to believe that there can be value in tasks that are inherently shallow.

Newport does not seem to believe that there can be value in jobs that are *inherently* shallow. Therefore, he does not address how workers in these kinds of jobs can find meaning in their work. This group includes the vast majority of workers in the economy, such as receptionists, custodians, waiters, salespeople, bus drivers, laborers, etc. Newport presumes that workers can control their own schedules and tasks in order to work more deeply. These workers—the “inherently shallow ones”—of course, do not have this freedom. A discussion of how these workers might find depth and meaning in their work would have been welcome.

There are other gaps in Newport’s analysis. For example, when he asserts the value of deep work in the current economy, he says that “three groups will have a particular advantage: those who can work well and creatively with intelligent machines, those who are the best at what they do, and those with access to capital” (28). He does not consider the implications of this state of affairs for the majority of workers who do not fit into any of these three narrow categories. Instead, he glosses over what will likely be very negative effects of this Great Restructuring to urge his readers to ensure they have a seat on the deep work lifeboat.

After this high-level discussion of deep work, Newport turns to his prescription for how to achieve it in one's professional life. He offers four "rules" to ensure that one can maximize the time spent doing deep work. He recommends that we decide that it is worth it to work deeply and then adopt rituals, habits, and structures that support that decision. He discusses the value of boredom and how our habitual distraction reduces our capacity for deep work. Since the internet is a major cause of distraction, according to Newport, he offers several ways in which we can restrain our Internet habit. Newport also recommends finding ways to work more intensively in shorter periods of time, using meditation techniques to focus our minds, and practicing various techniques to improve our memories. Newport also strongly recommends eliminating social media from our work and personal lives so that we can focus on more substantial uses of our time. Finally, Newport recommends that we quantify how much of our time is spent on shallow work by rating the depth or shallowness of all our tasks and then scheduling every minute of our day into blocks of deep and shallow work. He also has specific suggestions for taming perhaps the most difficult shallow work task, email.

Newport closes his book by saying that "the deep life, of course, is not for everybody.... For many, there's a comfort in the artificial busyness of rapid e-mail messaging and social media posturing," but that, for the "focused few," "depth generates a life rich with productivity and meaning" (263). Like Pang, here Newport reveals his biases and negative assumptions about people who are not part of the knowledge worker elite. Pang's "creatives" and Newport's "knowledge workers" are essentially the same group of driven and successful high achievers who populate Ivy League campuses and management suites throughout the nation. Both *Rest* and *Deep Work* are written for this cohort, or for those who aspire to it. While it is certainly necessary and valuable to reassert the value of rest and leisure and to rescue work from the never-ending and growing stream of administrivia, neither of these works rises above the assumption that the measure of a person's worth is his productivity, particularly in generating highly creative, deep work. This seems to me to be an altogether utilitarian view of the role of the human person and what work can mean in her life. As St. John Paul II said in his 1994 *Letter to Families*, utilitarianism is "a civilization of production and of use, a civilization of 'things' and not of 'persons,' a civilization in which persons are used in the same way that things are used" (*Gratissimam Sane*, 13). Both Pang and Newport measure the value of workers in terms of their productivity and contribution of work that they consider truly important and meaningful. They encourage their readers to look at themselves primarily through the lens of their productivity, and thus illustrate the problem described by St. John Paul II.

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A Brief Introduction to the Issue

MARGARET HARPER MCCARTHY

In the third issue of our “work year” we turn to *good work* and *fruitful rest*. We are well aware of the degrading characteristic of much of today’s work among the new class of “knowledge workers,” alienated as they are from their bodies and the products of their labor. (We leave the question of backbreaking toil and sub-standard wages to which the less fortunate are subjected to our fourth issue on *work and justice*.) We are also well aware of how much our “rest” has become passive, lonely entertainment. Here we ask if the question of work and rest don’t stand and fall together. If rest were *real rest*, what would that do for work? And how would good work open us up to more fruitful rest?

Looking at rest, Saint John Paul II’s re-introduction to the “Lord’s Day” (*Dies Domini*) is as timely as ever for us who can no longer remember a week without the week-end, but who may have lost the memory of true rest. To rest with the Lord, says the late saint, is to participate in His enjoyment of “what has already been achieved”: the end that work attends to. Péguy puts this “Sabbath rest” on display with his inimitable account of the child at play, “wasting time,” doing “useless” things, because she is resting in what has “already been achieved,” what is already given that is, enjoying it, *being together* with it. Indeed, we see with Cardinal Sarah, that Christian *silence* does not leave us alone, but puts us in front of a *presence* (if we would only liberate ourselves from the “dictatorship of noise”). Finally, the Abbot of Clear Creek Abbey, one of the disciples of John Senior (also featured in this issue), tells us how the deep joy of monastic “silence” before God gets expressed among the brothers in times of recreation—on short and long (10-mile!) walks—through conversation, laughter, and above all a smiling face.

What is the relation between rest and work? On this milestone anniversary of the Reformation, David L. Schindler reviews the classic text by Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, focusing especially on the effect of “disenchantment” that came with the separation of the “worldly calling” from the abolished “idle” one (monasticism): the loss of an inherent good, a utilitarian view of work, and a less home-like world. Looking at the question positively, William Hamant considers the direct relation between home and work, so that the entire world may be transformed for the glory of God, but that this transformation only take place when we belong to a place (a home!). As for the positive relation between work and rest (in the rich sense), Erik van Versendaal follows Péguy. Work has to begin with the acknowledgment of something *given* (“what has already been achieved”). But wary of the disparagement of work, he explores the way in which work *adds something* to rest. Work, he suggests, expresses the adult effort to endure, to win and embrace what has been given “for free.” Given the current anniversary, the text from St. James comes to mind: “faith without works is dead.” Finally, Deborah Savage brings us back to our starting point with her essay on work and the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharist that all work finds its end, since there Christ offers Himself to the Father together with “the work of human hands.”

Within this comprehensive arc, we also consider several popular books on the topic of work and rest, one on the problem of distraction (*Deep Work*) written by Cal Newport, another on the need for rest (*Rest*), and finally one on the fascinating phenomenon of the return to *Old Jobs* (barbering, butchering, distilling, and bar-tending) all of which involve real skill, tangible results and social interaction with customers.

With all of this we wish you some fruitful (and restful) reading!

Margaret Harper McCarthy is the US Editor of Humanum

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From Monday to Sunday: The Eucharist and the Work of Human Hands

DEBORAH SAVAGE

It is almost a truism that life in our contemporary period is characterized by a profound sense of fragmentation. Our daily lives and our psyches seem to splinter in the face of the myriad responsibilities and concerns that beset us—a list that gets longer, more complex, and more fraught with risk every day. We feel pulled in every direction, even as we sometimes choose to take on more and more in the eager desire to better ourselves and the lives of our families.

All this has led to the now widely broadcast struggle to maintain some kind of “work-life balance” and the search for “mindfulness” and inner peace. Many flock to yoga classes and meditation centers, while publications claiming to provide the antidote crowd bookshelves and bedside tables. An entire business model has developed around helping us to find the path; the [self-help industry generates more than a billion dollars](#) annually in the United States alone. When the popular self-help guru Louise Hay died at 90 earlier this year, she had published more books than had almost any other woman in history. She was admired and read by countless devotees. Her multi-million dollar publishing empire grew by devoting itself exclusively to spreading what her [New York Times obituary](#) referred to as the “self-help gospel.” Widely acknowledged as the “Queen of the New Age,” Ms. Hay was perhaps most famous for her [pithy, if vague affirmations](#) such as “Life loves you” and “Every thought we think is creating our future” and “It is safe to look within.”

Though we might scoff at these pursuits, we would be mistaken to deny the impulse at their core. Even those of us who pray daily and avail ourselves regularly of the sacraments recognize that we confront the same sense of fragmentation: the existential divide between who we are and what we do. Whether in the home or in the world, whether doing the dishes or teaching a class, whether mowing the lawn or running a company, the minute I turn my attention to the task at hand, I lose contact with the reality of my own being—and that of the God who whispers to me in its depths. There is a gap between my life in Christ and my work in the world.

When Pope St. John Paul II issued his encyclical on human work, *Laborem Exercens*, in 1981, I was employed in the business sector as an internal management consultant; I spent the first half of my adult life working primarily in manufacturing companies. Though I was Catholic, I knew little about the Church’s vast intellectual treasury other than what I happened to receive in the Sunday homily. But a question began to develop during those years of contact with the world of work, one that grew and persisted. In the end, it was a question that would not leave me in peace: Why, I asked myself, do people tend to go to Church on Sunday and work on Monday and live as though the one has almost nothing to do with the other? I set off to graduate school to investigate, only to find that the Church had been there before me. While everyone else has been searching for inner peace in the wisdom of the East, the Catholic Church had possessed the answer all along.

In his 1988 document on the vocation and mission of the laity, *Christifideles Laici* (CL), Pope St. John Paul II points to two temptations that lay people often have difficulty avoiding; both serve to prevent

them from realizing their vocation in the world. The first is that of being so interested in Church services and tasks “that some fail to become actively engaged in their responsibilities in the professional, social, cultural and political world” (CL, 2). The second—and perhaps of more interest to us here—is the temptation to legitimize “the unwarranted separation of faith from life, that is, a separation of the Gospel’s acceptance from the actual living of the Gospel in various situations in the world” (CL, 2). We walk a narrow road it seems between two extremes: on the one hand, a reluctance to leave our prayer corner in order to engage and transform the temporal order; on the other, a tendency to forget that we must bring the fruits of that prayer into our efforts in the world.

These two temptations are to be avoided at all costs, because the laity actually do not have the luxury of lingering in the comfort of their prayer corner any more than they have the right to go on about their business without a thought for the salvation of the world. For as St. Paul tells us—and anyone with the eyes to see knows—creation itself is waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption (Rom 8:21). And, according to the teachings of Christ’s own Church, *it is the task of the laity to transform the world*. This particular commission is not given to the priest or the deacon, nor is it given to the religious sister or brother. It is given—in clear and unequivocal terms—to the lay faithful. Indeed, according to the Second Vatican Council, “...the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.[1] Through our efforts, we not only provide for ourselves and our families, we participate in bringing all of creation into “the liberty of the glory of the children of God” (Rom 8:21).

In *Christifideles Laici*, St. John Paul II reiterates and affirms this teaching, stating that this particular mission and vocation is unique to the laity” (CL, 15). However, here he adds a new emphasis—a clear sense of heightened urgency—and a plea for action. He declares that “a new state of affairs today both in the Church and in social, economic, political and cultural life, calls with a particular urgency for the action of the lay faithful. If lack of commitment is always unacceptable, the present time renders it even more so. *It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle*” (CL, 3). It is no longer an option—if it ever was—to bask in the warm light of grace that comes from frequent prayer and reception of the Eucharist. In virtue of our baptism, we participate in the three-fold office of Christ (CL, 14). We are responsible for bringing his light into the world.

Here we arrive at what may be the riskiest aspect of our complicated lives. For the implication is that our faith actually *obligates us* to manifest it and express it in everything we say and do. We have no choice but to bring it into the murky glare of the public square.

When I finally encountered *Laborem Exercens* (LE), St. John Paul’s encyclical on human work, I was stunned to find articulated there what had been until then a mostly inchoate intuition: that work has a deeply theological meaning. For there he states *unequivocally* that our work, whether in the home or in the public sphere, actually *enters into the process of salvation itself* (LE, 24). The “unwarranted separation of faith from life” is not merely an incidental concern, something we simply accept with resignation in the face of the human condition. It is *the central* concern in our wish for wholeness and for holiness. The inner peace we seek will be found when we fully occupy the place that is uniquely ours—and grasp that its locus is in the world.

John Paul’s insights in *Laborem Exercens* revolve around a fundamental distinction he makes between the objective and subjective dimensions of work. Since work is both a transitive and intransitive activity, it operates in two directions. Clearly, it creates objective results external to the worker (a meal, a report, a well-made bed, an essay); we are most familiar with this aspect of work. But, he points out, it also has a profound impact on the personhood of the worker; this is the *subjective* dimension. The

dignity of work is found most fully here, in the fact that the one doing it is a person. And so, human work must serve to recognize the person's fundamental humanity and to permit him to become that person God had in mind for him—even before he was in the womb. John Paul's argument is that we become who we are meant to be, in part, through the work that we do. Our work, like our prayer life, like our participation in the sacraments, is one of the means by which we move toward our real destiny, final communion with God. It is not merely a place to achieve an external result; it is where we live out our call to life in Christ.

In his encyclical, John Paul points out that all human acts, including work, are always the act of a person who is a conscious being, “capable of deciding about himself with a tendency toward self-realization” (LE, 24). The late Holy Father declares that since work is an *actus personae*, the whole person—body *and* spirit—participates in the act of working which thus can and should lead, much like other human activities, to a closer relationship to God and a deeper friendship with Christ. Through an “inner effort on the part of the person, guided by faith, hope, and charity, work is given the meaning it has in the eyes of God”—and “enters into the salvation process on a par with the other ordinary yet particularly important components of its texture.” [2]

This profound understanding of work reveals that it cannot be reduced to something I do simply to survive. Nor is it something I do merely to further a career. Work is—or can be—a *vocation*, a call in the midst of life, and a route to becoming whom God meant each of us to be. It is a locus of grace and of our hope in redemption. It is an aspect of our own movement back toward God, an element in our own redemption. Through it, we are able to join our sacrifice to that of Christ on the Cross and participate with him in the redemption of the world.

Ultimately, our work calls us to imitate the work of Christ himself, who performed, obediently and willingly, “the work of salvation that came about through suffering and death on a cross” (LE, 27). And so we see that it is not only through our lives of prayer and worship that we show ourselves to be true disciples of Christ, but also through our work. For there we live out concretely our participation in the three-fold office of Christ: by accepting to make the sacrifices necessary to perform our own daily tasks well, by courageously bearing witness to the truth when the opportunity presents itself, and by our efforts to take dominion, first over ourselves, and then—though our work—to transform the temporal order.[3] These are all actions that must be taken out of love, first for Christ, and then for those we serve. In so doing, we work in union with Christ on the Cross—joining ourselves to his sacrifice—and collaborating with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity and the return of all things to God. Our work, along with our praise, worship, and thanksgiving, is to be offered to God. It is to be made holy, a worthy sacrifice. It is what we bring to the sacrifice of the Mass. It is our gift—in truth, the only one we have to offer. Ultimately, it is an offering of ourselves.

The connection we are seeking becomes clear and unambiguous when we consider the words said by the priest as he prepares with us to offer the sacrifice of the Mass: “Blessed are you Lord, God of all Creation. *Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made.* It will become for us the bread of life.” The same offering is made of the wine; it also is something that “human hands have made” and it becomes our “spiritual drink.” This prayer reveals a profound truth, something that has been obscured by time and the accretions of ritual: it is at the sacrifice on the altar where we join our work to the sacrifice of Christ and participate in the Redemption of the world.

This is somewhat easier to see by considering the historical context. In the early Church, when the Christian community was one—when pretty much everyone participated in the weekly celebration of

the Eucharist—and certainly well before we could go out and purchase those perfectly identical unconsecrated hosts—the people would bring the fruits of their labor—the bread and the wine—to the back of the church before Mass. This became the matter of the sacrifice, transformed by the hands of the priest and the action of grace into the body and blood of Christ.[4]

Over the centuries, we have lost touch with the deep connection between work and the Eucharist. Perhaps because the “fruits of our labor” are so often collected at the beginning of the Offertory, our gift of currency gathered by ushers, taken, often somewhat surreptitiously, up the side aisle, while someone else walks down the center aisle to give the bread and wine to the priest. The gift of the people, meant to be joined to the body and blood of Christ, is handed off to the closest lay minister who unobtrusively passes it along to someone in the sacristy. While understandable in light of modern day realities, this practice has helped us forget that what is offered at Mass is our work—in the form of bread and wine—and that it is in the Eucharist that that our work joins with the sacrifice of Christ in an offering to the Father.

But let us be clear here. If we are to take John Paul’s account seriously, it is not merely the objective results of our work that are offered—our dollar bills and pocket change—for it is the *subjective dimension* of human work that lends ultimate meaning to our efforts in the world. After all, it is *through* the subjective dimension of work that its objective results are created. The value of work is found in the fact that the one working is a person—and though it is true that in working I create things that can be traded or sold or shared, in that process I also am created; through it, I come closer to that fully actualized creation envisioned by my Creator—or not. And thus, it is this inner work more than anything else that is offered; it is my being, my effort to *become* a new creation during the week. It is our work on ourselves that becomes the sacrifice. What is offered is our becoming, our own joining of *ourselves* to Christ on the Cross through the work that we do.

Our work in the home or in the world is a place where we put our gifts to at the service of the kingdom, every moment of the day. Do we remember that we are always in the presence of God? Do we attend to his presence in the everyday occurrences? Do we notice the opportunity for small—or big—sacrifices?

In the eyes of our Church, every moment is potentially a Eucharistic moment. The whole of creation embodies the sacramental principle because wherever we are—it is in God that we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). There is nowhere, not the public arena, not the workplace, not the home, not the school, not the steps of the Capitol—where God does not reign. And as Brother Lawrence so beautifully said so many years ago—we are called to practice the presence of God, whether that be cleaning a toilet, diapering a baby, cleaning out the garage, or in a meeting. We bring these little moments of sacrifice to the Eucharist, they are transformed, and they are returned to us as the Body and Blood of Christ—the Bread of Life, without whose sustenance, we cannot have eternal life.

When we toil, whether it is to provide for our families, to become “more a human being,” or to pursue peace and justice and contribute to the conditions that foster human development, we find “a small part of the cross of Christ.” And the Christian will accept this “in the same spirit of redemption in which Christ accepted his cross for us.” We go to Mass to worship, to offer our sacrifice, our thanksgiving—and to be reminded that our work must be ordered both toward our own salvation *and* that of the world. Our work must reflect the meaning it has in the eyes of God—wherever it takes place.

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[1] *Lumen Gentium*, 30.

[2] LE, 5.24. Work is not only a sharing in the creative act of God, but also a sharing in his redemptive and sanctifying aspects.

[3] These three aspects of our working lives correspond to the three-fold office of Christ. Though it is perhaps well understood that the laity clearly participate in the priestly office through their daily sacrifices and the prophetic office through their witness, it seems to have escaped many Christians that our call to transform the temporal order is specifically a reflection of the kingly office of Christ. In light of our baptism, it is our duty to root out continually the structures of sin and disorder through the work that we do.

[4] As early as the second century, the bread and the cup were given solemn form. Soon after, the faithful brought to the church the bread and wine they made themselves to be offered at the sacrifice. St. Augustine reports in *The Confessions* that his mother brought her offering to the altar every day without fail. See Robert Cabie, *The Eucharist: The Church at Prayer*, vol. II, ed. A.G. Mortimer (Collegeville, MN: 1986), 77-78. The Byzantine ritual retains this practice, accepting a slice from the bread offered by each family in the sacristy before Mass. This becomes the consecrated bread, offered in the sacrifice.

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Of Work and Home...and God's Glory

WILLIAM R. HAMANT

As I write this, I sit at my desk “at work”—a phrase meant, I suppose, both spatially and actively. By being here, I am not “at home,” however much I “feel at home” in my place of “gainful employment.” But the dilemma, or at least division, is clear: to be here, I cannot be present at home; to be present in our home and to our children, my wife cannot be “at work.”

I have been asked to write on the theme of “work and the home,” and in light of the situation described above (common enough, I imagine), the most striking aspect of the theme assigned to me is perhaps the short word “and,” a conjunction in the place one might, on the basis of common experience, expect a disjunctive. Isn’t one’s work the place where one is occupied with “doing,” whereas one’s home is where he goes to “be” when work has finished? This is not to deny that at home there is always much to be “done,” while ideally one’s work is also “satisfying,” a way in which one expresses oneself. I am merely pointing to the fact that, in the pairing of “work and the home,” there seems a clear priority and a clear direction: work is done for the sake of the home; home is the end at which work aims. I am also pointing out that this manner of pairing the two is a problem. The “means-end” directionality, apparently obtaining with a kind of obviousness, either seems to instrumentalize work, such that it may not even matter what sort of work one does for a living; or, for those for whom their particular work is their means of self-expression or creativity, work can threaten to exist in *competition* with the home, precisely because of the personal importance of the activity itself.

I would like to argue here, however, for a different view, based upon what I’d consider to be a more accurate theology of the created order and of human activity. According to this view, work in its deepest sense is not simply a means to the end of securing a home and other material goods, nor is it simply one among many of the “hats” I wear in competition with others, such as “husband,” or “father,” or “friend,” or “gardener of only moderate success.” Rather, the realities of work and home, of activity and rest, deeply interpenetrate one another. Genuine work cannot be done except in a place that is already home and that becomes more deeply home through work; to call a place home is the condition that makes the activity of work possible. In this way, through my work I give myself and commit myself to a place that thereby becomes “mine.” Without this sense of belonging, without knowing a place and giving one’s life to it, activity done within that place becomes a kind of “violence,” a force imposed from the outside. Only committing oneself to a given place makes one’s activity there be a creative participation in the abundance and fruitfulness that is, yes, inherent in all of creation, but is nevertheless particular to each place.

Citing the Second Vatican Council, St. John Paul the Great affirmed that the human person, made in the image of God, was consequently given the “mandate” to work, to “subdue” the earth and “to relate himself and the totality of things to Him Who was to be acknowledged as the Lord and Creator of all” (*Laborem exercens*, 25). Though we should not forget that Joseph Ratzinger cautions against making work the “content” (*Inhalt*) of the doctrine of the *imago Dei*, rather than the “consequence” (*Folge*), John Paul nevertheless connects the mandate to work with likeness to God quite closely: work is a “sharing” in the activity of Creation—a sharing that, however limited, nonetheless still “develops” and even “perfects” God’s creative activity (LE, 25). We are here reminded of Josef Pieper’s assertion that being

created by God isn't "enough," that we must be confirmed in our existence by the love of another (*Faith, Hope, Love*, 174). The goodness of the created order is marked by its capacity to be "deepened" in its goodness; and the humility of almighty God in creating the world is evidenced by His generosity in allowing us to work to deepen that goodness of creation.

The "ownership" of the fruits of one's labor has been grounded by John Paul in this same "sharing" in divine creativity through work: through labor man transforms the created order in such a way that he "in a sense humanizes" it (*LE*, 12). Let us say in this vein that ownership is a kind of "communion" between myself and particular elements of the created order, into whose orderedness I imprint a new, personalized ordering. This ordering obeys the given, natural, created order, and participates in it; but work deepens that order—or takes *me* into that order, and takes that order into me. This is the basis of ownership: that in work, I have imparted myself to the things I own, have become a part of those things. They become an extension of me, a reflection of me, a communication of me, and they do this because, through my work, I have entered into communion with them. Precisely for this reason it matters very much what sort of work I do; precisely for this reason, work can never be reduced to a simple means to the end of securing my bodily existence. Work is inseparable from what it means to be a personal, free creature who exists in *act*, and whose existence is through work bound up with and at the service of the ever-"deeper" existence of non-personal beings.

What do I deepen in these elements that I transform through work, if not the fact that the world is a gift for humanity and made for the glorification of God? Human work, therefore, draws out the possibility of the created order to be that gift of God whereby I provide for my needs, and in this sense, is clearly the "means" for doing so. By "personalizing" the world through work, we place its goodness at the disposal of human needs and joys and of worship of the divine.

How, then, does this lead us to a union between work and the home? If work makes it possible for things to "belong" to me and, conversely, if work makes *me* "belong" within a place and to its elements, then, in a certain sense, my place of work always becomes my "home," regardless of whether I also sleep and eat dinner and spend time with my family there—which one almost never does. If what we have said about the bond between labor and "being" is correct, then one inevitably makes his place of work a kind of "home" where his being unfolds. In this sense I am not arguing that we need to force work and home back together; I am pointing out that they cannot really be separated, and that much of the crisis of the family today stems from uprooting the home by a work that is abstracted from it.

Naturally, I am not arguing that everyone may only morally work "from home." In the first place, part of the problem is that the "home" is no longer situated in the context of a genuine "neighborhood" or "community" that is worthy of those terms, and so one is already in the social poverty of the atomic home as soon as one exits his SUV and walks through his front door. But more fundamentally, I am simply indicating in broad terms some of the bases of the alienation so many experience today: contemporary cities are built so that work and home are divorced; the term "hometown" is becoming obsolete in a world in which everyone is mobile and towns are dismissed as being those places where "nothing happens"; fewer and fewer children play with friends on their own streets because they are busy online with "friends" from elsewhere. But the human person is not made to commute for hours a day, to recreate on "social media," and to have all of the "take home" fruit of his labor be in the form of the abstraction of money, which is itself further abstracted by being paid to him by the automated changing of information across computers. We are made to transform our patch of the world through our work, to "humanize" it—which is to say, to deepen its natural order into one that is personal, more and more able to be given over in worship to the God in Whose image the human person is created.

When one expresses the problem in the manner above, the scope of the difficulties facing a recovery of genuinely human work is overwhelming, and any proposed solutions will understandably be dismissed as “unrealistic” or even “reactionary.” But how could a solution be otherwise? To fix the situation we must challenge what is “realistic”; and everything must be reconfigured.

Let us dare to give ourselves to work that is more human; let us dare to give ourselves homes and neighborhoods and communities that are more and more the fruit of our own labor and so which bear the imprints of our personalities. Let us overturn society for work that is worthy of the gift of our lives; let us, through our work, make the world worthy of God.

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A Gift for Doing Nothing: Ordering Play, Liberating Work

ERIK VAN VERSEDAAL

1. The Freedom to Be

Because children are more my creatures.

Than men are.[1]

As Friedrich Schiller has it, “man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays.” [2] This sentiment would seem to fly in the face of mature human action—helping, teaching, making, planning. Isn’t the human person at his best when he is responsibly and seriously committed to the good of the world in and through the domestic, professional, or ministerial task allotted him? Though a permissible diversion, a deserved and desirable consolation for the overtaxed soul, how can play be said to reveal the human person at his most human? If we accept Schiller’s judgment, don’t we commit ourselves to disdaining all pragmatic, goal-oriented, thankless industry as ignoble—even degrading?

In her play, the child gives irrefutable witness to the adult homo economicus that his life is not exhausted by position, production, commerce, the acquisition and maintenance of property. At bottom, personal life is not subject to exchange, cannot be earned, and has no value that can be prospected. Absent the habit of accepting life as given for free, and thus staying attentively true to the simplest sense of be-ing, man seeks to manufacture the meaning of his life through enterprise. His aspiration will be frustrated from the outset unless he owns that he is counted worthy of love as a matter of sheer grace: that of being created. As Josef Pieper so clear-sightedly taught, leisure is the sphere of life that most amply recollects this abyssal foundation of creaturehood, and all leisure, no matter how noble, always retains the festive, “pointless” character of play. “Leisure,” Pieper writes, “is only possible when man is at one with himself, when he acquiesces in his own being.”[3]

Does the little girl at play then make a mockery of the pursuits and duties with which her parents are daily preoccupied? Does celebrating the seamliness of play compel us to scorn adult cares as misguided delusions, or as the betrayal of one’s humanity, a cowardly concession to a fallen world-order? Does ascribing primacy to play in human life relegate work to the mechanical, the unfree, the impersonal and dehumanizing? Or can play actually teach us what it is to do “good work?”

2. How Nothing Gets Done

But the children are only interested in making the trip...

They don’t go, they don’t run in order to get there. They get there in

order to run. They get there in order to go.[4]

Perhaps no note is more emblematic of play than that of gratuity. This means neither that play is arbitrary, nor that it is, on the other hand, “good for nothing.” Play is gratuitous most simply in the

sense that it is self-rewarding—it satisfies, and is worth partaking in, apart from any further boon that might come of it. This character of play as done “for its own sake” takes up and rests upon the pure givenness of being, by the free and utter donation of which God affirms the world as good, and very good, *in principio*. The child has a native instinct for discovering and revealing the unmerited bounty of finite existence, which is already justified by the divine *fiat* alone. On this basis, she is gifted with the freedom to happily surrender to the playfulness with which all things present themselves to her. This comes to view with special clarity in her readiness to entrust herself to the games to which she is called. (What task is not a game for the child? And to what game does she not give herself with the most earnest abandon?) Her willingness to take this risk of play manifests her inborn, implicit trust that it is good to be, and that being is so securely delivered, so supportively available, and so personally meant, that its goodness can be taken for granted, like the mother and father through whom this goodness is first mediated to her. Indeed, taking being for granted can be a form of cherishing it—by intimately engaging with the community of all that has been let-be. Play, as a modality of love, takes seriously the useless end of a created universe: be-ing together.[5]

To play is to offer oneself in an answer to an acceptable invitation, where surrender justly grows into purposeful involvement. The very attribute that best defines play—its gratuity—gives rise, by necessity, to what might seem to be the antithesis of play: the form of the game, its body of rules. The game’s goodness can only be received for its own sake through the player’s disciplined obedience to the order that the game generates of itself. For it is precisely in its rules that the game communicates its intrinsic end, so that its gratuity is preserved and appropriated only by way of upholding these rules. Likewise, the player’s freedom for self-risk is not foreshortened, but augmented, by his conformity to this order. In submitting and committing himself to this pattern, the player actualizes his freedom by executing definite tasks and accumulating habits, attaining a greater command over the game, and over himself, in the process. Through this discipline, possibilities of play open up to the player, and he becomes a more versatile agent without ever outgrowing the fundamental rules of his art. Indeed, the integration of prior forms is what frees the gymnast, martial artist, or ballerina for more purely spontaneous action in the flesh. As he more ably manifests his freedom, his body is likewise more fully gathered up into spirit. The virtuoso pianist is so flexible, and his hands and the keys they manipulate are so fluently at his command, precisely because he has so deeply yielded his freedom to the given constraints of his instrument. The game is most at his disposal because he fully belongs to the game.

And so we talk of play whenever the mastery of the spirit over the possibilities presented by the body has in some way attained its perfection, a perfection that shows itself in the easy agility, the shimmering elegance of some acquired skill; when word, sound or gesture has been made obedient and pliable to the spirit; when the physically visible has become the expression of an inner fullness that is sufficient to itself. [6]

Play in the vocation of the athlete or artist gives clear expression to the way in which personal concreteness intensifies through conformation to a rule. Without a doubt, effortlessness (not relaxation) is the mark of excellent play, as the counterpart to carefree, uncalculating presence to the game. Yet any field of play manifests how sovereign facility arises out of long, severe obedience to its narrow forms and tactics. However much an inspired maneuver or poignant line of verse may transcend convention, it is only admirable to the extent that it confirms the very rules it seems to bend. In fact, the most elastic move flows from a fuller appropriation of rules, or from a deeper penetration into their meaning and a vaster sense for their best application. Sidestepping from or transgressing against the ordinances of the game, even in the name of a masterful play, is always an implicit form of forfeiture, and a sign of being less free than one desires.[7]

The stable rules of play do not merely hover above the game, but are principles given to be interiorized and corporeally performed in the player's own unprecedented, unrepeatable, and, yes, *gratuitous* feats. Since they give a game its own inward determination, these are not arbitrary restrictions on the player's free self-enactment, but mark the very path along which he perfects himself along with and against his fellow players. To the extent that the principles of a game are simply integrated with one another towards one good, the efforts that play demands can already be undertaken as a form of rest. This is no less the case for every sport that requires competition and culminates in a single winner. To let one's freedom be obediently "ruled," or organized, by the pattern of the game, is to enjoy fulfillment—victory—within the dance of action—the contest. For all their zeal, both the champion and the defeated can approve the outcome with disinterested admiration in the measure that each has already shared the point of playing in the first place—that is, the performance itself, a good game. Though rivals never really play unless each fights to overcome the other, it is just as true that neither really competes unless they do so for the sake of play alone.

3. Working for Free

Because no one ever works except for children...

And because all that is made in the world is made for them.[8]

It is tempting to romanticize the genuine witness represented by the child. Nostalgia for the ecstasy of formless spontaneity and uncommitted possibility is symptomatic of our age. If work is reduced to a technical endeavor whose demands and successes are external to my freedom, however valiant it may be to submit to its oppressive necessity, weekends and vacations will seem to promise a reprieve from purpose. Lament for lost childhood, however, finally perverts the irresistible ebullience of youth, whose wonder must ripen into more conscious, steadfast, and structured forms of presence. The regressive attempts to safeguard one's "child-self" against the commitments that define the person in maturity disfigure the beauty of "the beginning." They are nothing less than rejections of the growth and fruitful death to which freedom is called; they are symptoms of the "old man" (Eph 4:22-24). An opposition between work and play, in which work ceases to be meaningful for the life of persons and play ceases to be refreshing and fulfilling, only represents the adult's failure to integrate the virtues of childhood.

The child's joy in the world gives way to the solemn discipline of adhering more and more wholeheartedly to the truth of his being. When St. Paul exhorts us to leave behind childish ways (Rm 14:20), this does not mean a simple turning away from the imperfect to the perfect, the inchoate to the fully-formed. Christ calls us, paradoxically, to "grow into childhood." Christ's invitation for man to be reborn in the kingdom is not a license for entering "a second time into his mother's womb" (Jn 3:4). The only path to rediscovering the child's easy liberty is through a long education in the practice of faithfulness. This resurgence of simplicity is the flowering of the good in the heart of the person: the free-play of endless praise, the uninhibited agility of holiness. The boundless, serene boldness of the child is only preserved, enriched, and transfigured through letting one's life be ever-more fully determined by the good in daily action.

What bearing, then, might play have on the nature of work, which takes up so much of an adult's waking hours? Work appears at first glance to be defined against those very features that most qualify play as play. Unlike, say, the dance, whose "gratuitous finality" is paradigmatically immanent to its performance, the doing of work is directed to an end outside itself. Whereas play is unmotivated and self-rewarding, work is inescapably instrumental. I want to suggest, however, that the play's superiority to work is exactly what enables it to provide an inner foundation that (a) informs all good work and (b)

affirms the specific, irreducible genius of work: rightful utility.[9]

Though justified for its own sake, and so standing apart from workaday productivity, play has salutary effects besides itself and is in this sense useful—or *fertile*. [10] This counts for all genuine leisure, especially communal festivity and aesthetic-philosophical contemplation. It is true above all of the sacred game of the liturgy, participation in which imparts to the rest of life a deeper readiness to receive God's loving presence at the heart of all that exists. [11] Good leisure disposes one to more aptly recognize that all natural beings are intrinsically "worthwhile," and refreshes one from the mania of always evaluating the things one encounters in terms of what profit they may yield and how they can fit into one's life-plan. The Sabbath, as the fullness of play-time, habituates the worshiper for loving fellow creatures as willed by God for the sake of their own participated goodness, and so for attending first to what or who they are rather than their exchange value. Such availability enriches human work during the week, without of course being functionalized as one step in its processes. Work serves ends distinct from its own activity, and yet all worthwhile work finally rests on a good that deserves affirmation "just because."

Play is rooted in an act of saying Yes to one's existence in a sacred world. The risk of self that play demands rests on the intimation of the ever-richer gratuity of being welling up constantly in and through every nature it preserves, at the behest of the merciful Father. We might say that such consent has the form of hope, or of the natural precursor to this properly theological virtue. Hope is a unity of striving and rest; it is already the possession of the promised good that one does not yet possess. [12] So it is that the good player enjoys the end of the game at all stages of its execution. Play, in being more fully its own end than work, illustrates better than work the look of the restful possession, the rejoicing, after which one hopes. Insofar as it is taught by play to serve the wholes that are its end, however, work's instrumentality perhaps supplies a clearer image than play of hope's endurance and receptive desire.

In the measure that the worker lets the end of his distinctive field order (or *justify*) each of the means he directs to producing and obtaining that good, his work becomes a form of generous intimacy with the good he serves. By recognizing the dignity of the piece he is hired to make, the craftsman can give himself over to his charge. He can forget himself in attention to his practice, and can pliantly receive its demands with a positive indifference: what does this good ask of me? What materials are needed, and what steps must I follow, to do a "good job"? Such obedience, as in disciplined play, is where man becomes himself most purely, and learns more perfect spontaneity. Here the reward of work begins to be discovered within the effort itself, so that labor bears the imprint of the very rest (or feast) whose promise motivates the worker. This doesn't exclude the need for one's work to also garner wages: though work cannot retain its goodness as work if it is exhausted by this subordinate goal. The procedure, practice, and means of work are not, then, merely the fragmentary preparations for an unrelated outcome that will leave them behind like so much scaffolding. Rather, the worker's sketches and trials already partake of the fulfillment after which he aspires to the extent that his method acquires its integrity from its ordination to this good. In turn, the cultivated crop—which is harvested first and simply to be enjoyed (or offered)—will gather up and preserve in its beauty all the toil that stands behind it. Yet even as the worker can know the satisfaction of the end—a satisfaction of which his wages are only a symbol—as *already* (proleptically) present in his labor, it remains the case that the fruit stands incommensurably beyond his own contribution, if never alien to it. *Hope* is the atmosphere, or animating breath, of this dramatic relation between foretaste and fitting surprise. Its *not-yet* is as pronounced in the farmer who endures the variability of weather, as in the merchant who endures the fickleness of the market, as in the teacher who endures the meanderings of the young minds he addresses.

Significantly, hope is a response: a desire for the destined end as *if* it were already present. In his pursuit of a hoped-for achievement, the craftsman works in the peace of receiving the result of his technique as if this good came forth wholly from itself and for itself. In this sense, the chalice the silversmith has forged precedes him, so that his work is pervaded by and flows out of a more basic confidence in a gift that is independent of his control.[13] For all this, he is no less actively responsible for its finished form, even as his responsibility always has the character of making-space for a descending “godsend.” His work of making not only issues into a final rest (delight in the completed chalice to be blessed and used for the transubstantiation of wine) but abides within this rest from the beginning (contemplative reception of the sacred vessel to the service of which he rightly consents to be commissioned).

Play liberates the worker to see how the gratuity of an intrinsically good *telos* can be enjoyed throughout the effort to embrace it. To the extent that its methods are integrated by or take their form from such an end, work can serve freedom’s own growth towards unified versatility. If the fulfillment of play is present through the excellence of its performance, there is a danger that the player will so take the grace of this accomplishment for granted that he will think his victory is solely his own. Against this temptation, work reminds the player how radically finite earning is always grounded in a prior bestowal. That use is best which already bears its purpose within itself; that earning is best that knows itself to always be supported by an all-sufficing generosity.

Perhaps work shows us better than play the lot of man the wayfarer, as it instills a sense for the goodness of time in its passage, its repetitions, and its openness to an eternity that, though definitively promised and already present, is still coming. The skilled tradesman, like the poet or plastic artist, shows us what it is to avail oneself and so await, from within one’s diligence, a result beyond one’s own producing. To see that this letting-go is of the essence of hope is to see that all instrumentality has the pattern of plowing, planting, waiting, and harvest—the open-handed self-offering that alone bears fruit. When the relation between the means and the end is lived in hope, work schools the player in that intimate dependence on the Giver of all good things that underlies any victory. If play epitomizes *fruition*, work initiates us into the confident patience that is the inner condition of *fruitfulness*.

4. Post-lude

It’s a miracle. A perpetual miracle, a miracle in advance, God made the first move, a mystery of all the mysteries, God took the initiative.[14]

The world, the theater of Wisdom’s play, is no illusory ruse, though it is a “moving image of eternity” (Plato). God is no compulsive or arbitrary gambler, though he stakes everything on the partner he has uniquely freed to share his game. Though a play of love, creation is not an empty whim to be laughed away. It is not a pastime for God, but his magnum opus. Yet the world can only be cherished in its full weight by a heart that is carefree enough to let itself go and play along. In turn, work teaches the player that this self-entrustment must mature into discipleship, dissemination, and cultivation.

It is often noted that the word used in Proverbs 8:30 to describe Sophia as a “little child,” may also be rendered “master craftsman.” The beloved Son who is unceasingly pleasing to the Father, who is “daily his delight,” is the same Word without whom “nothing was made that was made” (Jn 1:3). God’s unstinting and effortless benevolence is at once the ardor with which he takes meticulous, non-invasive responsibility for the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, and every hair of your head. As Péguy saw, our hope in God mysteriously reflects God’s own long-suffering patience, the labor-pangs of a divine hope for us. “All of the feelings, all of the movements that we ought to have for God,/God had them before us, he began by having them before we did.”[15] In being sent into the vineyard of the world, the

Word who goes forth from the Father's mouth, like the rain and the snow that water the earth, does not return empty (Is 55:10-11). So our Father, "who is at work even now" (Jn 5:17) awaits, in our return, the choicest fruits of his creation: "a sacrifice of praise," *eucharistia*, "the fruit of lips that confess his name" (Heb 13:15).

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[1] Charles Péguy, *The Portal of the Mystery of Hope*, trans. David Louis Schindler, Jr., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 3.

[2] Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man [=AEM]*, trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 107.

[3] Josef Pieper, *Leisure The Basis of Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 46. Shortly thereafter (48) he adds: "Leisure is possible only on the premise that man consents to his own true nature and abides in concord with the meaning of the universe (whereas idleness, we have said, is the refusal of such consent). Leisure draws its vitality from affirmation."

[4] Péguy, *Portal*, 115.

[5] This universal inter-play is already a mode of rejoicing in the goodness of the Creator. Because the perfection of every creature is always at least a tacit form of praise, the self-fulfillment of each creature in cooperation with every other is rightly described as a "cosmic liturgy."

[6] Hugo Rahner, *Man at Play*, trans. Brian Battershaw and Edward Quinn (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 6-7. Rahner goes on to write: "The happily playing child, the virtuoso playing upon his instrument—and how few in fact really 'play' upon it—the genius whose work flows from his fingers with the effortless ease of one playing a game—all these are but realizations of man's deep-seated longing for a free, unfettered, eager harmony between body and soul."

[7] So Huizinga notes that the cheater "robs play of its *illusion*—a pregnant word which means literally 'in-play' (from *inlusio*, *illudere* or *inludere*). Therefore he must be cast out, for he threatens the existence of the play-community." Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study in the Play-Element of Culture* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2016), 11. Schiller, in the text cited above, similarly reflects on the character of play as a positive "semblance," which through the artificial order of its rules is able to give purified expression to truths of nature.

[8] Péguy, *Portal*, 12, 24.

[9] Though it perhaps goes without saying that work is necessary, and that play alone cannot suffice for the life even of a child, it is more difficult to articulate why work is good. The finally non-competitive relationship between play and work can help in this attempt. To acknowledge a higher order as higher never commits one to altogether rejecting a genuine good of lesser ontological weight.

[10] To say play is for-itself is clearly not to say that all forms of leisure are the "be-all, end-all" of human action, for each form of leisure belongs in a hierarchy of ends. As such, even play can be directed to higher ends "instrumentally." We use abusively only when we either treat means as ends closed-in on themselves or despise means as mere, disposable vehicles.

[11] "It is in this very aspect of the liturgy that its didactic aim is to be found, that of teaching the soul not to see purposes everywhere, not to be too conscious of the end it wishes to attain . . . The soul must

learn to abandon, at least in prayer, the restlessness of purposeful activity; it must learn to waste time for the sake of God, and to be prepared for the sacred game with sayings and thoughts and gestures, without always immediately asking ‘why?’ and ‘wherefore?’” Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. Ada Lane (New York: Herder and Herder, 2015), 71.

[12] This structure of hope is retained when it is fulfilled and taken up into the end towards which it is directed. The rest of human persons is an ecstatic intimacy with God, perfectly known and loved as comprehending and exceeding one’s created powers infinitely. This surrendered grasp-in-being-grasped is analogously prefigured in all natural finality. This claim must await a different occasion for due elaboration and justification.

[13] To invoke an example and a line of thinking proposed by Heidegger in his “The Question Concerning Technology.” This essay can be found in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008): 307–41.

[14] Péguy, *Portal*, 72.

[15] Ibid.

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Rediscovering Sundays

POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II

*On July 30, 1998, Pope John Paul II promulgated the apostolic letter *Dies Domini [The Lord's Day]*, challenging Catholics to rediscover the true meaning behind the Sabbath Day and, consequently, to "not be afraid to give their time to Christ." This excerpt (pars. 4-7, 11-15) was taken from the [Vatican website](#).*

Until quite recently, it was easier in traditionally Christian countries to keep Sunday holy because it was an almost universal practice and because, even in the organization of civil society, Sunday rest was considered a fixed part of the work schedule. Today, however, even in those countries which give legal sanction to the festive character of Sunday, changes in socioeconomic conditions have often led to profound modifications of social behaviour and hence of the character of Sunday. The custom of the "weekend" has become more widespread, a weekly period of respite, spent perhaps far from home and often involving participation in cultural, political or sporting activities which are usually held on free days. This social and cultural phenomenon is by no means without its positive aspects if, while respecting true values, it can contribute to people's development and to the advancement of the life of society as a whole. All of this responds not only to the need for rest, but also to the need for celebration which is inherent in our humanity. Unfortunately, when Sunday loses its fundamental meaning and becomes merely part of a "weekend," it can happen that people stay locked within a horizon so limited that they can no longer see "the heavens." Hence, though ready to celebrate, they are really incapable of doing so.

The disciples of Christ, however, are asked to avoid any confusion between the celebration of Sunday, which should truly be a way of keeping the Lord's Day holy, and the "weekend," understood as a time of simple rest and relaxation. This will require a genuine spiritual maturity, which will enable Christians to "be what they are," in full accordance with the gift of faith, always ready to give an account of the hope which is in them (cf. 1 Pt 3:15). In this way, they will be led to a deeper understanding of Sunday, with the result that, even in difficult situations, they will be able to live it in complete docility to the Holy Spirit.

From this perspective, the situation appears somewhat mixed. On the one hand, there is the example of some young Churches, which show how fervently Sunday can be celebrated, whether in urban areas or in widely scattered villages. By contrast, in other parts of the world, because of the sociological pressures already noted, and perhaps because the motivation of faith is weak, the percentage of those attending the Sunday liturgy is strikingly low. In the minds of many of the faithful, not only the sense of the centrality of the Eucharist but even the sense of the duty to give thanks to the Lord and to pray to him with others in the community of the Church, seems to be diminishing.

It is also true that both in mission countries and in countries evangelized long ago the lack of priests is such that the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist cannot always be guaranteed in every community.

Given this array of new situations and the questions which they prompt, it seems more necessary than ever *to recover the deep doctrinal foundations* underlying the Church's precept, so that the abiding value of Sunday in the Christian life will be clear to all the faithful. In doing this, we follow in the footsteps of the age-old tradition of the Church, powerfully restated by the Second Vatican Council in its teaching

that on Sunday “Christian believers should come together, in order to commemorate the suffering, Resurrection and glory of the Lord Jesus, by hearing God’s Word and sharing the Eucharist, and to give thanks to God who has given them new birth to a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (cf. *1 Pt* 1:3).”

[...]

Sunday is a day which is at the very heart of the Christian life. From the beginning of my Pontificate, I have not ceased to repeat: “Do not be afraid! Open, open wide the doors to Christ!” In the same way, today I would strongly urge everyone to rediscover Sunday: *Do not be afraid to give your time to Christ!* Yes, let us open our time to Christ, that he may cast light upon it and give it direction. He is the One who knows the secret of time and the secret of eternity, and he gives us “his day” as an ever new gift of his love. The rediscovery of this day is a grace which we must implore, not only so that we may live the demands of faith to the full, but also so that we may respond concretely to the deepest human yearnings. Time given to Christ is never time lost, but is rather time gained, so that our relationships and indeed our whole life may become more profoundly human.

[...]

If the first page of the Book of Genesis presents God’s “work” as an example for man, the same is true of God’s “rest”: “On the seventh day God finished his work which he had done” (*Gn* 2:2). Here too we find an anthropomorphism charged with a wealth of meaning.

It would be banal to interpret God’s “rest” as a kind of divine “inactivity.” By its nature, the creative act which founds the world is unceasing and God is always at work, as Jesus himself declares in speaking of the Sabbath precept: “My Father is working still, and I am working” (*Jn* 5:17). The divine rest of the seventh day does not allude to an inactive God, but emphasizes the fullness of what has been accomplished. It speaks, as it were, of God’s lingering before the “very good” work (*Gn* 1:31) which his hand has wrought, in order to cast upon it *a gaze full of joyous delight*. This is a “contemplative” gaze which does not look to new accomplishments but enjoys the beauty of what has already been achieved. It is a gaze which God casts upon all things, but in a special way upon man, the crown of creation. It is a gaze which already discloses something of the nuptial shape of the relationship which God wants to establish with the creature made in his own image, by calling that creature to enter a pact of love. This is what God will gradually accomplish, in offering salvation to all humanity through the saving covenant made with Israel and fulfilled in Christ. It will be the Word Incarnate, through the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit and the configuration of the Church as his Body and Bride, who will extend to all humanity the offer of mercy and the call of the Father’s love.

In the Creator’s plan, there is both a distinction and a close link between the order of creation and the order of salvation. This is emphasized in the Old Testament, when it links the “*shabbat*” commandment not only with God’s mysterious “rest” after the days of creation (cf. *Ex* 20:8-11), but also with the salvation which he offers to Israel *in the liberation from the slavery of Egypt* (cf. *Dt* 5:12-15). The God who rests on the seventh day, rejoicing in his creation, is the same God who reveals his glory in liberating his children from Pharaoh’s oppression. Adopting an image dear to the Prophets, one could say that in both cases *God reveals himself as the bridegroom before the bride* (cf. *Hos* 2:16-24; *Jer* 2:2; *Is* 54:4-8).

As certain elements of the same Jewish tradition suggest, to reach the heart of the “*shabbat*,” of God’s “rest,” we need to recognize in both the Old and the New Testament the nuptial intensity which marks the relationship between God and his people. Hosea, for instance, puts it thus in this marvelous

passage: “I will make for you a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord” (2:18–20).

“God blessed the seventh day and made it holy” (Gn 2:3)

The Sabbath precept, which in the first Covenant prepares for the Sunday of the new and eternal Covenant, is therefore rooted in the depths of God’s plan. This is why, unlike many other precepts, it is set not within the context of strictly cultic stipulations but within the Decalogue, the “ten words” which represent the very pillars of the moral life inscribed on the human heart. In setting this commandment within the context of the basic structure of ethics, Israel and then the Church declare that they consider it not just a matter of community religious discipline but *a defining and indelible expression of our relationship with God*, announced and expounded by biblical revelation. This is the perspective within which Christians need to rediscover this precept today. Although the precept may merge naturally with the human need for rest, it is faith alone which gives access to its deeper meaning and ensures that it will not become banal and trivialized.

In the first place, therefore, Sunday is the day of rest because it is the day “blessed” by God and “made holy” by him, set apart from the other days to be, among all of them, “the Lord’s Day.”

In order to grasp fully what the first of the biblical creation accounts means by keeping the Sabbath “holy,” we need to consider the whole story, which shows clearly how every reality, without exception, must be referred back to God. Time and space belong to him. He is not the God of one day alone, but the God of all the days of humanity.

Therefore, if God “sanctifies” the seventh day with a special blessing and makes it “his day” *par excellence*, this must be understood within the deep dynamic of the dialogue of the Covenant, indeed the dialogue of “marriage.” This is the dialogue of love which knows no interruption, yet is never monotonous. In fact, it employs the different registers of love, from the ordinary and indirect to those more intense, which the words of Scripture and the witness of so many mystics do not hesitate to describe in imagery drawn from the experience of married love.

All human life, and therefore all human time, must become praise of the Creator and thanksgiving to him. But man’s relationship with God also *demands times of explicit prayer*, in which the relationship becomes an intense dialogue, involving every dimension of the person. “The Lord’s Day” is the day of this relationship *par excellence* when men and women raise their song to God and become the voice of all creation.

This is precisely why it is also *the day of rest*. Speaking vividly as it does of “renewal” and “detachment,” the interruption of the often oppressive rhythm of work expresses the dependence of man and the cosmos upon God. *Everything belongs to God!* The Lord’s Day returns again and again to declare this principle within the weekly reckoning of time. The “Sabbath” has therefore been interpreted evocatively as a determining element in the kind of “sacred architecture” of time which marks biblical revelation. It recalls that *the universe and history belong to God*; and without a constant awareness of that truth, man cannot serve in the world as co-worker of the Creator.

John Paul II served as Pope from 1978 to 2005. He was canonized in 2014.

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The Surrender of Sleep

CHARLES PÉGUY

This is an excerpt from Charles Péguy's *The Portal of the Mystery of Hope* (Trans. David Louis Schindler, Jr. [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986]: 123–28, 131–36). It is published here with permission and available for purchase [here](#). Earlier issues have featured excerpts from this same work of Péguy's on the themes of [finding eternal meaning in our daily work](#) and [children inspiring the work of their parents](#).

The Portal of the Mystery of Hope, first published in 1912, is Charles Péguy's most famous prose-poem. Going through over sixty editions in the last hundred years, it gives voice to the French socialist's profound conversion to the Catholic faith, anchored in a vision that married eschatological vision with a deep sense of social realities. For Péguy, "the little girl Hope" is the most dynamic of the three virtues, enabling Faith and Charity to reach those parts of the humanity which a merciful God desires to plumb. The virtue of hope was of especial relevance to Péguy himself, whose personal circumstances prevented him from receiving the very sacraments around which his poetic vision revolved. Few poets have meditated so deeply on the meaning of human work, and he remains the poet of the disenfranchised and the dispossessed: those who might be tempted to despair at the futility of everything they do.

Children don't even think about being tired.

They run like little puppies. They make the trip twenty times.

And, consequently, twenty times more than they needed to.

What does it matter to them. They know well that at night

(But they don't even think about it)

They will fall asleep

In their bed or even at the table

And that sleep is the end of everything.

This is their secret, that is the secret to being indefatigable.

Indefatigable as children.

Indefatigable like the child Hope.

And always to start over again in the morning.

Children can't walk, but they really know how to run.

The child doesn't even think, doesn't know that he'll sleep at night.

That he'll fall asleep at night. And yet it's this sleep
Always at hand, always available, always present,
Always underneath, in full reserve,
That of yesterday, and that of tomorrow, like good food for one's being,
Like a strengthening of being, like a reservoir of being,
That's inexhaustible. Always there.
That of this morning and that of this evening
That strengthens his legs.
The sleep from before, the sleep from after
It's this same bottomless sleep
As continuous as being itself
Which passes from night to night, from one night to the next, which
continues from one night to the next
By passing over the days
Leaving the days as days, like so many holes.
It's in this same sleep that children bury their whole being
Which maintains, which creates for them every day new legs,
Their brand new legs.
And also that which is in their new legs: new souls.
Their new souls, their fresh souls.
Fresh in the morning, fresh at noon, fresh in the evening.
Fresh like the roses of France.
Their souls with the undrooping collars. This is the secret to being
indefatigable.
Just sleep. Why don't people make use of it.
I've given this secret to everyone, says God, I haven't sold it.
He who sleeps well, lives well. He who sleeps, prays.

(He who works, prays too. But there's time for everything. Both for sleep and for work.

Work and sleep are like two brothers. And they get on very well together.

And sleep leads to work just like work leads to sleep.

He who works well sleeps well, he who sleeps well works well.)

There must be, says God, some relationship,

There must be something going on

Between the kingdom of France and this little Hope.

There's some secret there. They work too well together. And yet they tell me

That, there are men who don't sleep.

I don't like the man who doesn't sleep, says God.

Sleep is the friend of man.

Sleep is the friend of God.

Sleep may be my most beautiful creation.

And I too rested on the seventh day.

He whose heart is pure, sleeps. And he who sleeps has a pure heart.

This is the great secret to being as indefatigable as a child.

To have that strength in your legs that a child has.

Those new legs, those new souls

And to start over every morning, always new,

Like the young, like the new

Hope. Yes, they tell me that there are men

Who work well and who sleep poorly.

Who don't sleep. What a lack of confidence in me.

It's almost worse than if they worked poorly but slept well.
Than if they worked but didn't sleep, because sloth
Is no worse a sin than anxiety
In fact, it's even a less serious than anxiety
And than despair and than a lack of confidence in me.
I'm not talking, says God, about those men
Who don't work and who don't sleep.
Those men are sinners, it goes without saying. They get what they had
coming to them. Great sinners. All they have to do is work.
I'm talking about those who work and who don't sleep.
I pity them. I'm talking about those who work, and who thus
In doing this are following my commandment, poor children.
And who, on the other hand, don't have the courage, don't have the
confidence, don't sleep.
I pity them. I hold it against them. A bit. They don't trust me.
As a child lays innocently in his mother's arms, thus do they not lay.
Innocently in the arms of my Providence.
They have the courage to work. They don't have the courage to do
nothing.
They possess the virtue of work. They don't possess the virtue of doing
nothing.
Of relaxing. Of resting. Of sleeping.
Unhappy people, they don't know what's good.
They look after their affairs well during the day.
But they don't want to give them to me to look after during the night.
As if I weren't capable of looking after them for one night.
He who doesn't sleep is unfaithful to Hope.

And that's the greatest infidelity.

Because it's an infidelity to the greatest Faith.

Poor children, they manage their affairs wisely during the day.

But, come nightfall, they can't resolve

They can't resign themselves to entrust their affairs to my wisdom

They can't allow me to govern their affairs for the space of one night.

To take over the management and government of their affairs.

As if I weren't capable, I suppose, of looking after them a bit.

Of watching over them.

Of managing and governing and all the rest.

I manage plenty of other affairs, poor people, I govern creation, surely that's more difficult.

Maybe you could, without much loss, leave your affairs in my hands, wise men.

Surely I am as wise as you are.

Perhaps you could hand them over to me for the space of a night.

While you sleep

At least

And maybe tomorrow morning you won't find them too badly damaged.

Maybe tomorrow morning they won't be any worse off.

I'm probably still capable of guiding them a bit.

I'm talking of those who work

And who in this follow my commandment.

And who don't sleep, and who in this

Reject all that's good in my creation,

Sleep, all that I have created good

And who reject all the same my same commandment.
What ingratitude these poor children have toward me
To reject such a good,
Such a beautiful commandment.
These poor children are following human wisdom.
Human wisdom says Never put off till tomorrow
What you can do today.
Whereas I tell you He who can put off till tomorrow
Is he who is most pleasing to God.
He who sleeps like a child
Is he, too, who sleeps like my precious Hope.
And I tell you Put off till tomorrow
Those concerns and those worries that are eating at you today
And that might devour you today.
Put off till tomorrow those sobs that choke you
When you see today's misery.
Those sobs that rise in you and strangle you.
Put off till tomorrow those tears that fill your eyes and cover your face.
That flood you. That fall down your cheeks. Those tears flowing from
your eyes.
Because between today and tomorrow, I, God may have passed by.
Human wisdom says: Cursed is he who puts off till tomorrow.
And I say Happy, happy is he who puts off till tomorrow.
Happy is he who puts off. Which means Happy is he who hopes. And
who sleeps.
And I say on the contrary Cursed.
Cursed is he who lies awake and doesn't trust me. What a mistrusting

of me. Cursed is he who lies awake.

And who drags.

Cursed is he who drags through the evenings and through the nights.

Through the eve of evening and through the fall of night.

Like a snail's trail across these beautiful eves.

My creatures.

Like a slug's trail across these beautiful nightfalls.

My creatures, my creation.

The thick remembrances of daily cares.

The burning, the gnawing.

The dirty tracks of our cares, the bitterness and the anxieties.

The sorrows.

The trails of slugs. Upon the flowers of my night.

Truly I tell you that this offends

My precious Hope.

Who wouldn't want to entrust me with the supervision of his night.

As if I hadn't proven myself.

Who wouldn't want to entrust me with the supervision of one of his
nights.

As if I were asking for more than one.

Who, having surrendered his affairs in poor condition when he went to
bed,

Has not found them well when he woke up.

Because I may have paid him a visit.

[...]

As the sea is the reservoir of water so night is the reservoir of being.

It's the time that I've reserved for myself. No matter what these feverish days may do.

As in the open sea, in the middle of the night, they bathe in the fulness of night.

It's they that are scattered, it's they that are fragmented.

The days are the Sporades Islands and night is the open sea

Upon which St. Paul sailed

And the border that descends from night to day

Is always a rising border

A steep border, and the border that rises from the day toward the night

Is always a descending border. In the depths of night.

O night, my finest invention, my most noble creation of all.

My most beautiful creature. Creature of the greatest Hope.

You give the most substance of Hope.

You are the instrument, you are the very substance and the dwelling-place of Hope.

And also, (and thus), you are ultimately the creature of the greatest Charity.

Because it's you who gently rock the whole of Creation
Into a restoring Sleep.

As one lays a child in his little bed,

As his mother lays him down and as his mother tucks him in

And kisses him (She's not afraid of waking him up.

He's sleeping so soundly.)

As his mother tucks him in and laughs and kisses his forehead

For pleasure.

And he too laughs, he laughs in response while sleeping.

So too, o night, dark-eyed mother, universal mother,
Not only mother of children (it's so easy)
But even mother of men and of women, which is so difficult,
It's you, night, who put to bed the whole of Creation
In a bed of a few hours
(Awaiting.) In a bed of a few hours
Image, feeble image, and promise and prefiguration of the bed of every
hour.
Anticipated realization. Promise kept in advance
Awaiting the bed of every hour.
In which I, the Father, will lay my creation.
O Night, you are night. And all the days together
Will never be day, they will never be anything but several days.
Scattered. The days will never be anything but flashes.
Uncertain flashes, and you, night, you are my great somber light.
I congratulate myself for having made night. The days are isles and
islands.
That pierce and split the sea.
But they have to rest in the deep sea.
They're forced to.
And you too, days, you're forced to as well.
You have to rest in the deep night.
And you, night, you are the deep sea
Upon which St. Paul sailed, not that little lake in Galilee.
Al the days are nothing but members
Dismembered members. It's the days that emerge, but even so they
have to be anchored in the deep water.

In the deep night. Night, my finest invention, it's you who calm, it's
you who soothe, it's you who bring rest
To aching limbs
All out of joint from the days work.
It's you who calm, it's you who soothe, it's you who bring rest
To aching hearts
To bruised bodies, to limbs bruised from work, to hearts bruised from
work
And from daily cares and sorrow.
O Night, o my daughter Night, the most religious of all my daughters
The most reverent.
Of all my daughters, of all my creatures, the most abandoned into my
hands.
You glorify me in the Sleep even more than your Brother, Day, glorifies me
in Work.
Because in work man only glorifies me by his work.
Whereas in sleep it is I who glorify myself by man's surrender.
And it's more certain, and I know better how to go about it.
Night, you are for man a more nourishing food than bread and wine.
Because the man who eats and drinks, if he doesn't sleep, will not
profit from his nourishment.
And it will sour and upset his stomach.
But if he sleeps, the bread and wine will become his flesh and blood.
For working. For praying. For sleeping.
Night, you alone dress wounds.
Aching hearts. All out of joint. All torn.
O my dark-eyed daughter, of all my daughters you alone are, and can

call yourself, my accomplice.

You are in league with me, because you and me, me through you,

Together we cause man to fall into the trap of my arms

And we take him a bit by surprise.

But one takes what one can get. If anyone knows, it's me.

Night, you are the beautiful creation

Of my wisdom.

Night, o my daughter Night, o my silent daughter

At Rebecca's well, at the well of the Samaritan woman

It's you who draw the deepest water

From the deepest well

O night who gently rocks all creatures

Into a restoring sleep.

O night who bathes all wounds

In the only fresh water and in the only deep water

At Rebecca's well, drawn from the deepest well.

Friend of children, friend and sister to the young Hope

O night who dresses all wounds

At the well of the Samaritan woman, you who draw, from the deepest well,

The deepest prayer.

O night, o my daughter Night, you who know how to keep silent, o my daughter of the beautiful mantle.

You who confer rest and forgetfulness. You how issue a healing balm,

And silence, and shadow

O my starry night, I created you first.

You who send to sleep, you who already enshroud in an eternal

Darkness,
All of my most restless creatures,
The fiery steed, the industrious ant,
And man, that monster of unrest.
Night you succeed in quieting man
That well of unrest.
By himself more restless than all of creation put together.
Man, that well of anxiety.
Just as you quiet the water in the well.
O my night with the glorious dress
You gather children and the young Hope
Into the folds of your dress
Though men resist you.
O my beautiful night, I created you first.
And practically before first
O silent one, draped with veils
You who descend on earth as a foretaste
You who scatter by hand, who pour out over the earth
An initial peace
Forerunner of eternal peace.
An initial rest
Forerunner of eternal rest.
An initial soothing balm, an initial beatitude
Forerunner of eternal beatitude.
You who soothe, you who embalm, you who console.
You who bind wounds and injured limbs.
You who silence hearts, you who quiet bodies

Who still aching hearts, aching bodies,
Wrought with pain,
Worn-out limbs, backs broken
With weariness, with care, with (mortal) anxieties,
With sorrow,
You who administer balm to throats torn with bitterness
A cooling balm
O my noble-hearted daughter, I created you first
Practically before first, my great-bosomed daughter
As I knew well what I was doing.
Surely, I knew what I was doing.
You who lay the child in his mother's arms
The child, brightened with a shadow of sleep
Laughing inwardly, laughing secretly because of his confidence in his
mother.
And in me,
Laughing secretly out of the corner of his serious mouth
You who lay the child, inwardly bursting, overflowing with innocence
And with confidence
In the arms of his mother
You who used to lay the child Jesus every night
In the arms of the Most Holy and Immaculate one.
You who are the turn-sister of hope.
O my daughter, first among all. You who even succeed,
You who occasionally succeed,
You who lay man in the arms of my Providence
My maternal Providence

O my daughter, *glittering and dark*, I salute you
You who restore, you who nourish, you who give rest
O silence of darkness
Such a silence reigned before the creation of anxiety.
Before the beginning of the reign of anxiety
Such a silence will reign, now a silence of light,
When all this anxiety will have been consummated,
When all this anxiety will have been exhausted.
When they will have drawn all the water from the well.
After the consummation, after the exhaustion of all this anxiety
Man's anxiety.
Thus, my daughter, you come early and you come late
For in this reign of anxiety you recall, you commemorate, you
practically reestablish,
You practically recommence the former Serenity that existed
When my spirit brooded over the waters.
But, my starry daughter, my daughter of the dark mantle, you are also
very much ahead of your time, you are also precocious.
For you announce, for you represent, for you practically commence in
advance, every night,
My great Serenity of light
Eternal.
Night, you are holy; Night, you are great; Night, you are beautiful.
Night of the great mantle.
Night, I love you and I salute you and I glorify you and you are my
great daughter and my creature.
O beautiful night, night of the great mantle, my daughter of the starry

mantle

You remind me, myself, you remind me of the great silence that existed

Before I had unlocked the firmament of ingratitude.

And you proclaim, even to me, you herald to me the silence that will

exist

After the end of man's reign, when I will have reclaimed my scepter.

And sometimes I think about it ahead of time, because this man really makes a lot of noise.

But above all, Night, you remind me of that night.

And I will remember it eternally.

The ninth hour had sounded. It was in the country of my people of Israel.

It was all over. That enormous adventure.

From the sixth hour to the ninth hour there had been a darkness covering the entire countryside.

Everything was finished. Let's not talk about it anymore. It hurts me to think about it.

My son's incredible descent among men.

Into their midst.

When you think of what they made of him.

Those thirty years that he was a carpenter among men.

Those three years that he was a sort of preacher among men.

A priest.

Those three days when he fell victim to men.

Among men.

Those three nights when he was dead in the midst of men.

Dead among the dead.

Through the centuries of centuries that he's been a host among men.

This incredible adventure was finished.

The adventure that has tied my hands, God, for all eternity.

The adventure by which my Son has tied my hands.

Tying the hands of my justice eternally, untying the hands of my
mercy for eternally.

Charles Péguy (1873-1914) was a notable French poet, essayist and editor.

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The Smiling Silence: A Monastic Way of Recreation

DOM PHILIP ANDERSON, O.S.B.

"Even for monks playfulness may become a moral virtue." —The Right Rev. Dom Paul Delatte, Third Abbot of Solesmes

For the monk that I am—belonging to the older Benedictine tradition of a strictly contemplative form of monastic life—the question of recreation is directly related to the topic of silence, which is one of the fundamental elements of monastic spirituality as dealt with in Chapter Six of the *Holy Rule* of Saint Benedict. Since the monk is tending with all his soul to a deeper prayer and union with God, he must practice a true silence, so as not be led away from God by the distractions of daily life, many of which come through the sense of hearing. But how complete should this silence be? It would seem that exceptions must exist to the rule of silence.

Indeed, a monk must practice silence, but he must also maintain a human balance. Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Doctor of the Church, sometimes styled the “Sybil of the Rhine,” states categorically that “it is inhuman to keep perpetual silence and never to speak.”[1] Even for monks the Greek virtue of εὐτραπέλεια (a pleasant wit) can become a truly moral virtue. Saint Thomas Aquinas agrees with Aristotle and Saint Augustine in finding it useful for the good of the soul.[2]

Historically speaking absolute silence for monks or nuns has been very exceptional, even in the East. The monks of old probably spoke less than we do in the twenty-first century, but they did speak with one another outside the times of prayer. The Rule of Saint Basil allows the breaking of silence with moderation and for good reasons.[3] The Rule of Saint Pachomius mentions a conversation each morning.[4] The *Rule* of Saint Benedict, which Benedictines still follow today with certain modifications, does not mention recreation (a modern conception), but there exist something like it among the monks of the Order. At the great Benedictine abbey of Cluny, in the Middle Ages, there were two set times daily (except for Sundays and certain other days) when the brethren were allowed to talk in the cloister. The morning conversation did not go much beyond a half an hour, and in the afternoon this period of recreational conversation lasted sometimes less than a quarter of an hour. Even the very austere Saint Bernard permitted his conferences given to the brethren in the chapter room to take on a recreational character, stopping from time to time to exchange lighthearted words with some of his monks, as a close study of the history of his life reveals.[5]

Practically speaking, in our monastery, we have a period of recreation immediately following the midday meal and the dishes. Most days this period lasts a little over one half an hour. The monks first meet together in the cloister to hear a few news items from the Superior; then we go for a walk through the monastery grounds in groups of three to five, engaging in lively conversation. On Sundays the period is a full hour. Once a week we have an even longer walk, lasting up to three hours. This allows young men to burn off energy as they walk for ten miles or more through the countryside (often outside the monastery property). Sometimes, in the middle of the summer, the monks swim in Clear Creek, which is truly clear and very cool. On such a walk in the wilder places we may encounter a wild

boar or a water moccasin—keep your eyes open!

Now here is a somewhat controversial point, one that was dealt with a great length (though rather poorly I would say) in the historical mystery novel by Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*. We might pinpoint the controversial matter with a question. Might there be mirth and laughter during a monastic recreation? At first sight this would seem out of the question for monks professing vows under Saint Benedict's *Rule*. Here is the pertinent passage:

But as for buffoonery or silly words, such as move to laughter, we utterly condemn them in every place, nor do we allow the disciple to open his mouth in such discourse.[6]

One could hardly be clearer: *aeterna clausura* [in every place]. Had we no other indications to go by the question would be settled. However, here as in many aspects of monastic life, we must read the *Rule* in the context of the living tradition, taking into consideration the way this warning from Saint Benedict has been understood over many centuries by monks and nuns.

In fact, Saint Benedict does not mean to forbid a sense of humor and of gaiety in these moments of monastic recreation. Abbot Paul Delatte of the Solesmes Abbey in France explains this very well in his *Commentary on the Rule*.

There is wisdom in avoiding the prudery which is shocked and scandalized by everything; when we are good, the peace and innocence of childhood, its moral naïveté, return to us. Still it remains true that there are certain subjects, a certain coarseness, a certain worldly tone, which should never enter our conversation. These things are not such as to stir wholesome laughter; there are matters which one should not touch, which it is wholesome to avoid. Our own delicacy of feeling and the thought of Our Lord will save us from all imprudence.[7]

To this might be added another text of Saint Benedict, where he bids his monks “[N]ot to love much or excessive laughter.”[8] If the monk is directly to avoid *excessive* laughter, there must have been allowance for its moderate use.

Perhaps, in summarizing the matter of laughter and pointing to the essence of monastic recreation, we might say that the genuine joyfulness of the monk on recreation expresses itself in the smile rather than in outright laughter—especially of the violent or uncontrolled sort. Joy is a spiritual quality that is essential to monastic life, and it is only natural—supernaturally natural—that this joy find a form of facial expression. Such joy does not disturb religious silence. When the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to the children of Fatima or to Saint Bernadette of Lourdes, she smiled in a way that moved the soul of the seer to its depths. How could that not be the very best of recreations?

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[1] Reg. S. Bened. Explanatio. PL CXC VII., 1056.

[2] Summa, IIa IIae, question 168, art. 2.

[3] Reg. Contr., xl., cxxxiv.; Reg brev., ccviii.

[4] Chap. XX.

[5] St. Bernard, *Tractatus de duodecim gradibus superbiae*, c. xiii. P.L. CLXXXII., 964; *Sermo XVI i., de Diversis*. P. L. CLXXXIII., 583 sq.

[6] *Rule*, Cha. 6.

[7] Dom Paul Delatter, *The Rule of Saint Benedict, A Commentary* (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1921), 97.

[8] *Rule*, Chap. 4, Instr. 55.

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