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Work, Non-Work and Resacralizing Self

Against a dominant sociopolitical momentum of increasing and unmitigated instrumental rationality that Weber foresaw pervading all spheres of life in modern industrial society are new social and cultural signs of contestation and counterpoint. Modern critical social analysts have argued variously for delimitations to technocratic and economic rationalities and these modern contestations to instrumentality and alienation remain apparent in contemporary social and political life. Yet there is evidence of diverse contemporary social efforts that endeavor not only to delimit but to refute or transcend the assumed path of progressive rationalization and secularization. The author proposes that both modern acute rationalization and technicization and postmodern dissociation and dissolution, and their respective conditions of alienation, generate countervailing tendencies.

En dépit d'une évolution socio-politique dominante allant dans le sens d'une rationalité instrumentale croissante et triomphante, dont Weber avait prévu qu'elle imprégnerait toutes les sphères de la vie des sociétés industrielles modernes, on voit apparaître çà et là de nouveaux signes sociaux et culturels de contestation et de remise en question. Des sociologues critiques modernes ont avancé divers arguments allant dans le sens d'une limitation de la rationalité économique et technocratique, et ces contestations modernes de l'instrumentalité et de l'aliénation restent présentes dans la vie sociale et politique contemporaine. Aujourd'hui, divers courants sociaux visent non seulement à délimiter, mais aussi à réfuter ou à transcender l'évolution "normale" vers une rationalisation et une laïcisation croissante de nos sociétés. L'auteure soutient que tant la rationalisation et la technicisation modernes que la dissociation et la dissolution postmodernes—et leurs conditions d'aliénation respectives—gènèrent des tendances contradictoires.

Critical social analysts notably, but not only, of Frankfurt School heritage, have argued variously for delimitations to instrumental and technocratic rationalities. Yet, by and large, they, like traditional sociologists, retain the belief in progressive rationalization and concomitant secularization. Delimiting technocratic rationality and dealienating self, in the modern critical view, are sought through *reasoned* contestations to loss of agency and control, the protection of non-economic domains, and revival of sensory and affective sensibilities. Other contemporary social analysts influenced by postmodernism's deconstructive emancipation espouse an unranked, always contingent, relatively valuable plurality of meaning systems. A bricolage of meaning and value erases boundaries and disperses

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bases of differentiation. For many social and cultural theorists of the current generation modern 'essentialist' categories including self and its project of self-creation are discarded. Alienation, as loss of self powers of agency, control and interiority, a quintessentially modern problematic, is thereby rendered obsolete. A differentiation between sacred and secular/profane (ultimate and ordinary), as their foundation on privileged difference is dissolved, is similarly fractured and its remnants available for diverse reconstitutions and representations.

Still other theorists ignore or dismiss these social and theoretical developments as frivolous and fleeting or politically reactionary moments of little social or analytical importance (e.g. Wallerstein, 1998). Yet, I contend we can observe contemporary social and cultural events that appear to be contestational to both modern rationalities and social organization, and to postmodern implosion and fragmentation. The perspective offered in this article (one shared with some other critical theorists e.g. Wexler, 1996; Melucci, 1996; Csordas, 1994; Heelas, 1996) emphasizes the social analytic importance of serious contestations to modern rationalities and to postmodern deconstruction and "undecidability". The article discusses some of these contestations to and refutations of modern rationalities in the context of work—that most eminent modern site of progressive rationalization, technocratic instrumentality, secularization, and alienation. I consider here the emergence of desecularization and "spiritualization" of work, and of unexpected non-work counter-practices, and I offer an exploratory, interpretive, discussion of the uses and impulses of counterpoint, dealienation, and revitalization.

Modern sociology has predominantly accepted the Weberian thesis that processes of societal modernization entail progressive rationalization in all spheres of life. *Gesellschaft* fragments and displaces *Gemeinschaft*, rational secularization laicizes and disperses religion into a private realm of individual need and choice. Yet within sociology some, notably in the sociology of religion, have argued alternatively for the Durkheimian thesis that: "there is something eternal in religion which is destined to survive" (Durkheim, 1965 [1915]: 474) against the conventional, institutionalized, interpretation of Weber. The Durkheimian tradition argues that modernization entails a transmutation of forms of religious and collective life rather than total secularization and individualization (Seidman, 1985; Thompson, 1990). Thompson in particular extends this argument to theorize the persistence of the sacred, in both religious and non-religious manifestations, in modern society that demonstrates a dialectical relationship between secularization and sacralization. Against the Weberian tradition's over-emphasis of instrumental rationality and assumed secularization as characteristic of modern societalization Thompson argues that the decline in traditional religion in modern culture and the plurality of metanarratives of meaning and choices of identity in postmodern culture represent a laicization of the sacred rather than an eradication of the sacred.

Now, in postmodern conditions, the metanarrative of progressive rationalization and "emancipation" from traditional and religious forms is no longer widely operant. A fragmentation and pluralization of meaning sys-

tems at once evident of and enabled by postmodern disjuncture has generated a laicization of the sacred as well as, and distinct from, secularization. There is considerable evidence of the former in what is popularly described as New Age practices. These practices include various interests in eastern or pagan religions, mysticism, tantric practices, meditation, and various alternatives to western science and medicine such as acupuncture, mind/body therapies, homeopathy and so forth. Notwithstanding their diversity these practices share a project that seeks both a “revitalization of the experience of organic, bodily being” (Wexler, 1996a: 160), and “a spiritual seeking... outside established religious institutions” (Wuthnow, 1998).

Desecularizing impulses include the uses of the laicization of the sacred presenting in the diversity and idiosyncrasy of experiences and expression of spirituality or sacralization. There is evidence, too, of a restoration and revivification of traditional cultural, ethnic, and religious forms in contemporary social practices. These include notably the revival of fundamentalist and orthodox religions, tribalism, and revitalized ethnic, regional and communitist identities. Ascendant agendas in cultural studies in the academy that particularly focus on language, representation, and discursive subjectification and construction of identity attest not only to the importance of these events in the wider social arena but to the concurrent influence of postmodern theorizations in shaping our analytic focus and legitimating knowledge.

In the sphere of economy and production, currently much neglected in social and cultural theory, there are signs of similar and significant events demonstrating a postindustrial, and postmodern, pattern. In recent years observers of globalization see ample evidence of contestational, complementational, and pluralizational events and trends between forces of globalization of rationalized economy and production, *and* localization of community, difference and identity (Castells, 1996; King, 1991; Robertson, 1992). In the midst of an intensification and globalization of instrumental and economic rationalities in the sphere of production and work there are competing and counter-rationalities, plural meaning systems, communalism and desecularization emerging in otherwise typically capitalist instrumental production organizations. Contemporary developments in corporate organizations apparently defy Weber’s totality of instrumental, economic rationality. I elaborate below.

Work

Modern sociology and social theory have long recognized the importance of work (as economically rational production) in organizing and structuring social life, and in shaping individual life and identity. The importance of work and production in social organization manifests a distinct feature of modern societal rationalization and everyday life, and the endurance of work in its modern practice, although in postindustrial conditions, remains taken for granted as social fact, and social value. Yet, as we look closely at contemporary practices of work there is evidence not only of significant

and enduring changes in production and work (e.g. Aronowitz and DiFazio, 1994; Aznar, 1990; Casey, 1995; Delors, 1992; Gorz, 1989; Rifkin, 1995) but that the performance of work is no longer central in the everyday lives of millions of people in the technologically developed West. Technological developments, particularly computer-aided production and control, enabling the restructuring and dispersion of work, and the globalization of production and financial systems have generated dramatic alterations to modern practices of work: its performance, its organization, its productivity, and its value.

Structural unemployment, for some a chronic personal and social problem, is now endemic. For many its "solution" is or ought to be sought in the creation of new jobs in defiance or ignorance of the forces of their eradication. For others it is socially and morally unacceptable and mistaken to advocate the resumption of labor and jobs as the primary measure of self and social worth while simultaneously championing the development of technological, organizational, and economic means to their eradication. Freedom from the tyranny of heteronomous work is now a realizable possibility. There is evidence of emergent efforts toward such altered relations of work.

In most western societies the state provision of a basic income (or long-term unemployment benefit) has weakened the connections between economic productivity and sustaining a living, however modest. In addition to the ranks of structurally unemployed and subsistent, there is emergent evidence of women and men in highly skilled, highly paid, relatively secure corporate work tentatively, yet increasingly, seeking altered relations to work (Casey, 1997; Caudron, 1996; Ehrenreich, 1995; Laabs, 1996). Accompanying these changes are alterations to the meaning and value people are placing on their work and its place in their lives. Challenges not only to the conventional relations of production and their outcomes but to the economic and technocratic rationalities pervading all spheres of modern life are emergent.

Discussions of work for this and earlier generations of sociologists and critical social theorists have typically involved questions of alienation—abstraction, estrangement and loss of human power and agency—resistance and struggle against oppression in production relations, and everyday disputation over the conditions in which production takes place. Despite decades of struggle against the conditions of alienated labor in the West, and a slow defeat of organized movements in everyday relations and practices of work, the rhetoric of counter-alienation through political struggle continues. Of course within the contemporary fields of organization theory, business and management studies, notably in the United States, yet increasingly far-reaching, an entirely opposing view is advocated and practiced. Corporately organized efforts to eliminate political contestation and to incorporate employees into an espoused unitarist, familial, team organization now prevail. In the academy these ideologies and neo-functional pragmatism are widely taught, and practiced.

Nonetheless, in much European sociology of work and industry current research continues to reiterate a deep tenet of Marxist social science. This

fundamental principle not only emphasizes the alienation of human beings in alienated labor—all labour under capitalist modes of production—but insists on overcoming that alienation and transforming social relations of production through collective resistance and industrially based political action. However, organized collective contestations to experiences of capitalist industrial relations of production, notwithstanding some political and economic successes, have scarcely generated conditions for dealienated production (or other dealienated social practices). They have, in the process of achieving some successful modification of oppressive, exploitative capitalist relations of production, more immediately effected experiences of psychic gratification through engendering primary states of narcissistic bonding with familial-like others (however illusory) in class and occupational opposition. Collective contestations against oppressive production and employment relations—while of course necessary—accomplish, with varying degrees of success, structurally contained, partial and temporary modifications to ongoing conditions of alienation and hegemonic economic, technocratic rationality.

Modern, Marxist efforts to counter alienation—the abstraction and deformation of species-being—have given way to acceptance of compensation for alienation in consumption—in commodity fetishism and, ironically, in increased individualism. Hyper-alienated, denuded selves find compensatory gratification for self-loss in sporadic occasions of communalist opposition and more generally in consumption. Simultaneously, in conventional modern schools of thought and practice in industrial relations and sociologies of work and organization the project to retain and secure alienated jobs remains robust.

Sociological theorizations that recognize the defeat and incorporation of communalist organized labor movements typically argue that the integration of communalism may readily be understood as consequent of the processes of societal rationalization. They indicate yet further evidence of the erosion of *Gemeinschaft* against the rationalizing instrumentality of *Gesellschaft* societalization and individualization. Consumerism and urban individual identity substitute for communalist reciprocity and irrational differences. Communalist opposition represents a nostalgic pre-modern form of self and collective identity.

Yet these conventional modern sociological theorizations inadequately analyze many contemporary practices of work and organization. While advanced technological developments, including globalization, in production and exchange continue to attract most analytical attention other cultural practices of work and organization are ignored or functionally interpreted. Importantly, the conventional sociological underestimation of the continuing significance of non-rational communalism, not only in opposition but in meaning-making and psychic motivation in production, has hindered serious analytic attention to the deliberate regeneration and rehabilitation of communalist—and desecularized—experience and expression in now deliberately designed corporate organizational cultures.

In the face of the intensification of economic and instrumental rationalities and incorporation of employees under postindustrial conditions many

critical analysts of work, organization and production continue to seek and find evidence of resistance to intensified, mystified, exploitation and colonization. Critical analysts have discovered evidence among corporate employees, if not of their incipient revolution, at least of (typically individualized) resistance against the effects of corporate designer cultures, and have demonstrated the ways in which corporate employees shape and delimit the organizational culture in which they produce (Barker, 1993; Jermier et al., 1994; Kunda, 1992).

Notwithstanding the modernist agenda of this enduring intellectual and practical tradition, nor its incorporated defeat—manifesting in research and practice that seeks the harmonization of production and workplace relations through humanized management practices that value and incorporate employees—the question of “resistance” and counter-alienation is by no means obsolete. There remains considerable theoretical and political effort to organize resistance through refurbished, resurgent political movements typical of the modern context of production, organization and work (e.g. trade unions, and oppositional political parties and pressure groups). These activities are well known and require no further discussion here.

More important, however, are other significant efforts to affect human beings in production and work that differ demonstrably from modern industrial discipline and control, and contestation. These practices include the deliberate reconstruction of communalist, and desecularized, organizational cultures of work.

In response to the interplay of vast changes in technology, production, market, and organizational structure of recent decades, corporate organizations are moving quickly to redesign organizational cultures that respond to altered environmental conditions. Complex paradoxes confront the organization in the midst of and as a result of the globalizing intensification of economic and instrumental rationalities. Obstacles to the ubiquitous requirement to expand production and consumption now appear not only from expected external environmental forces and traditionally unionized workplaces, but from within the non-unionized corporate organization through its highly paid, highly trained, and organizationally identified professional middle-class employees. Scarcely articulated, emergent non-economic disaffection generates impulses and insurgent counterpoint to the acute productionism of millennial capitalism.

In the 1980s and 1990s corporate organizations designed and installed organizational cultures that promised employees participatory familial and team workplaces. Incorporating affective and relational needs into organizational cultures of production simulated communalist identity and belonging (Casey, 1995). Now at the turn of the century corporate organizations are responding with sophisticated strategic managerial adeptness to the needs and impulses of persistently disenchanting, distracted, employees.

Corporate organizations are now offering programs of corporate renewal that both echo the rites of traditional religion, and reflect and accommodate contemporary laicized religious, and affective, sentiment. In addition to bringing one's mind and body to work in service of the organization one is now invited in a growing number of organizations to bring

heart and soul as well. Corporate efforts to reenchant postindustrial bureaucratic organization of production exploit all repositories of human potential. Heartful and soulful work are the corporate promises, and requirements, of the coming decade.

Not unexpectedly, most of the attention in organizational sociologies and management studies currently placed on various new organizational and workplace practices evades social analysis and interpretation in preference for conventional functionalist pragmatism delimited by the task of problem-solving for capitalist organizations in now-global conditions of production and market. Beyond a problem-solving functionalist incorporation of communitist impulses into production formulae, a deeper social analytic suggests further interpretations.

Corporate organizations of the 1990s have institutionalized the successful implementation of isomorphic programs of organizational restructuring, re-acculturation, and reformation of workers, managers, and contractees. One commonplace (and no longer noticed) example, the treatment and use of all employees or contractees—and not just laboring “manpower”—as “human resources”, a term that flagrantly extols the treatment of persons solely as the object of another’s utility, illustrates and underpins the flexible instrumentality of the new organizational culture programs. Simultaneously, in counterpoint to such manifest utility, my ongoing research¹ indicates that trends among corporate employees in some western countries point to an insurgence of competing individualized self-interest and privatized resistance. These behaviors indicate not so much resistance to particular organizational or production activities, or even to the widely accepted subjectification as a human resource in production, but to total bureaucratization and productionism in social and cultural life more broadly.

The 1990s have seen a proliferation of management and organization texts and applications in workplaces that expound various new theories of strategic advantage through restructured, culturally reformed organizations and employees. The latest among them now overtly encompass desecularized impulses and non-economically rational values emerging among even the mainstream professional middle class. Religious and affective dimensions of human experience so long omitted from the rational institutions of production and work are now welcome. The appropriation and application of current “new age” interests in popular culture to encourage zealous and devoted employees in service of organizational ends are managerially perceived as a cost-effective production incentive in highly competitive markets.

Among the newly popular writings are titles such as: *Getting Employees to Fall in Love with Your Company* (Harris, 1996), *Heart at Work* (Canfield and Millar, 1996), *Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work* (Canfield et al., 1996), *True Work: The Sacred Dimensions of Earning a Living* (Justine Wills Toms and Michael Toms, 1998), *Zen at Work* (Les Kaye, 1996), and *The Corporate Mystic* (Gay Hendricks and Kate Ludeman, 1997). Moreover prominent organizational academics, such as Charles Handy (see Handy, 1997), are similarly exploring and advocating the incorporation of spiritual and tradi-

tional values in the workplace. Organizational consulting firms (especially but not only in the US) offer training seminars and courses in, for example: "Spirituality in the Workplace", "The Inner Life of Business", "Igniting Purpose and Spirit at Work", "The Transformed Organization" (all advertised on the internet).

One such company explains: "Spiritual consulting and training honors the whole of each person within the whole of the company so individual and corporate needs and goals are honored and fulfilled" (Tools for Transformation, www.page.com). Hollyhock Spirit and Business Conference in September 1998 seeks to encourage "business as a vehicle for social change and integrating spirituality and business".

At an international Spirituality in the Workplace conference in Toronto in 1998, the Chairman of Aetna International gave a keynote address on "The Dollars and Sense of Spirituality in the Workplace". Seminars and workshops of this nature are offered not only in the USA, but in arguably more secularized countries such as the UK, Germany, Australia and New Zealand. Moreover, a number of very large corporate organizations including IBM, Xerox, AT&T, Nike, Forbes, Apple, Pepsico, and General Electric, fund in-house or off-site employee participation in retreats which include yoga, meditation, mind-body work, and the like. A prominent yoga establishment in Massachusetts offers a regular programme of "corporate yoga" to companies and individual corporate executives. Yoga, which often includes chanting to Hindu deities, is selectively adapted to consumer needs.

Further examples abound. My own research on contemporary practices and experiences of work in organizations ranging from financial institutions such as banks, accounting and insurance firms, to pharmaceutical, telecommunication, and public relations companies, hospitals and research laboratories, presents unexpected (to a modern social scientist's ear) tales and observations of practices of and at work, and relationships to work. These practices and relationships are contrary to those expected under the forms of organization and production characteristic of modern bureaucratic rationality.

Invoked in the service of enduring rational and high-tech production and organizational profitability I have observed diverse counter or alternatively rational practices that include reading the "aura" of job interviewees, managers and scientists using tarot cards to discern direction and aid decision-making, and the widely welcome employment of language of "the gut", intuition, of the spirit, and of "meditation". Companies frequently take teams and managers away on "retreat", encourage (or pay for) participation in seminars such as Landmark Foundation's "forum", or meditation workshops, encourage the reading of New Age self-help and self-discovery literature, and at least rhetorically invoke the language of openness to alternative or competing rationalities.

In the early 1990s the metaphor describing the desirable employee character type was that of the familial, caring, feeling, team participant (Casey, 1995). At the turn of the century, it is the mystic and the votary. These activities of organizational change and an apparent valuing of the employee as

a “whole person” in service of organizational production, though generally accepted and often popular, are, my research indicates, practiced against forces and impulses more seriously contestational to postindustrial work in postmodern conditions.

Non-Work

Alongside these developments in corporate organizational work is another trend in the social relations of production. Against work, production, and organization in their modern forms are counter, non-work developments. Current academic investigations and reports from a growing body of anecdotal, journalistic, and company accounts indicate that another important pattern is emerging in relation to production. People displaying altered and altering relations to work comprise clusters of trends which I provisionally designate as “downshifters”, non-workers, work-refusers, and work-transformers.

The first pattern encompasses the condition of those people whose class histories have positioned them for the expectation of long-term or life-long industrial work in heavy industry, in manufacturing, or in middle-level service provision (e.g. banking, retail, clerical) who now find themselves in an unprecedented precarious relationship with such industrial work—not only with its organizational providers (as traditionally expected)—but as a result of the diminishment of the requirement for labor in such production. The availability of industrial work (in both primary production and its service sectors) has been variously affected by economic recession or slow growth in most western economies in recent decades. But of much more significance are the effects of advanced technologies and new organizational practices that have generated a condition in which productivity may be increased and markets expanded with fewer workers involved in either production or organizational expansion (Aronowitz and DiFazio, 1994; Casey, 1995; Delors, 1992; Gorz, 1989; Handy, 1997; Offe and Heinz, 1992; Rifkin, 1995). The resulting loss of regular employment (as “full-time” jobs) and restructuring of production activities (organizationally and economically) has generated high unemployment and under-employment, and a rise in casualization, “McDonaldization”, “job portfolios”, and increasingly tenuous employment relations. This trend has produced workers, former workers and non-workers who are forced into a reevaluation of their relationship to work. The effects on self-identity and social organization are emerging, and considerable.

A full discussion of these matters is deferred. But my research to date indicates that few of these former or non-workers expect, or even desire, participation in full-time, living-wage, jobs again—even if such jobs were to be politically reinvented. In summary, western societies’ provision of even minimal social security, basic (guaranteed minimum) income or unemployment benefit, food subsidies etc. deters destitution (and uprising) among those former workers. The sustained non-availability of work (as conventionally understood) for millions of people, the state provision of rudimen-

tary income, and the emergence of alternative economies: green dollar trade and exchange (as well as criminal economies) are generating non-work—and work-refusing—alternatives to modern societal values and identity. Of course these matters are highly controversial. There is nonetheless an apparent public acceptance of industry deregulation, restructuring, downsizing, closures and rising unemployment as inevitable. Non-workers and work-refusers refer not only to an expected sector of “welfare dependents” but to otherwise able persons structurally unemployed and disillusioned with work as typically experienced and valued in modern societies. Ejected too many times from the modern structures of work, these former workers seek alternative practices and forms of work, and productive and creative activity in which non-economic ends are highly valued.

The second pattern of altered relationships to production and conventional work encompasses people in—or formerly and potentially in—relatively much more secure relations to work and employing organizations through historical class connections and attendant social processes. There is evidence that many technological, financial, managerial, and other highly skilled and educated workers in large organizations or secure professions are, like those in the first pattern (although for quite different originating reasons), experiencing or seeking new relationships to work and employing organizations. But for this middle-class, white-collared, overworked personnel in the West the new relationship is one in which they might actively, of their own volition, find “more meaningful” lives outside the parameters of production or high-end services provision. These people, regarded by their employing organizations as valued human resources, typically hold high-status, well-paid positions in successful organizations. Yet they are wanting to alter their own identity *and* economic relations with their work and their employing organizations. Expressive interests in various seekings of “voluntary simplicity”, “spiritual growth”, personal development, creativity, and new ethics are reported and valued as constituent of self-identity. Many of these (financially secure) people have deliberately “downshifted” or opted out of regular participation in modern organization and routinized work-compulsion (Casey, 1997; Laabs, 1996; MacKinnon, 1997). An unexpected intersection of non-economic values and interests occurs between historically class differentiated, and more recently polarized, industrial and professional workers.

Desecularization and Dealienation at Work?

Corporate organizations operate in complex competitive environments that include the increasing plurality of meaning and value among employees and potential employees about work and organizational production. Organizational programs that offer and gain newly spiritual and affective sensibilities among employees are a sophisticated, postmodern, organizational strategy. At first glance many of these deliberately encouraged affective and spiritual practices at work that mutually serve self and organizational interests may be seen as efforts to restore elements of

human being that have been systematically subjugated and repressed in typically alienated modern production processes and relations. The widely practiced restoration of affective and sensual sensibilities in the establishment of familial and caring organizations, notwithstanding the use of emotional needs and expression for organizational production purposes, has been generally well received by employees and managers and has already demonstrated its effectivity in the past decade—until downsizing ruptures the family.

Extending the success of the newly relational organizationally-identified employee into an encouragement of the “corporate mystic” accompanies and enables further organizational use of corporate human resources. These developments as apparent efforts toward dealienation assist the corporate organization to meet its production and profitability goals. Simultaneously presenting as sensitive and accommodating to dispirited and disaffected employees, the new programs enable the organization to respond quickly to its environment, by enabling a super-flexible human resource management practice that may downsize, reorganize, restructure (including various configurations of networks, core-periphery structures, outsourced contracts) with little traditional opposition. Mystical, soulful employees take responsibility for their own karmic experiences in organizational participation. Corporate mystics, according to their designers Hendricks and Ludeman (1997) “have a respect and even fondness for change... At times they may have unpleasant feelings about the directions of change, but they are careful not to let those feelings limit their ability to respond.” Corporate mystics have a “type of discipline that makes them flexible and adaptable rather than rigid.”

Encouraging soulful, mystically equanimous employees simultaneously appeals to dispirited, overworked and potentially downshifting employees, and endeavors to rekindle their devotion and service to their work and organization in increasingly precarious global conditions. A desecularization is invoked and utilized by the corporation.

A sociological analysis might argue that an expected expansion of secularization encompasses processes of laicization of the sacred. The activities presenting in both corporate organizations and among disaffected middle-class professionals who display a heightened interest in alternative rationalities and non-economic values may be interpreted as evidence of expanded individual consumer choice, and as adept organizational practice in retaining and reintegrating producer employees. An incorporation and commodification, rather than an eradication, of competing interests, including the diversely (laicized) religious, into organization production goals manifests flexible, highly-adaptable postmodern, postindustrial capitalism. Furthermore, taking a Durkheimian view, we may interpret these activities as indicative of a dialectical turn of resacralization, or new designations of the sacred, in contemporary secularized society. Laicization of sacred, religious rites has emancipated individuals and communities and generated diverse arenas for signification and expression. Corporate validation and incorporation of spirituality, as with affectivity, represent another arena of such expression and cultural construction.

A postmodern interpretation might see laicization in its corporate use as further pluralization and erasure of boundaries that renders self and social constructions matters of choice or chance within discursively determined conditions. Participation in corporate organizations, as any other activity, generates sites of contestation and positionings. There may be no agreed-upon notions or values of the sacred, the profane, the self, and the other. These matters are fluid, undecidable, contingencies of everyday life in which meaning is subjectively and fleetingly constructed and relentlessly deconstructed.

Notwithstanding the potential for reconstitutions and altered relationships offered by a postmodern discursive deconstruction, Wexler argues that postmodernism's circumvention "of the modernist Marxist interest in agency" (Wexler, 1996a: 159) not only refutes and deconstructs such a "humanist project", it celebrates disembodiment and self-fracture as its bleak alternative. Postmodern theorizations that renounce these categories and conditions of alienation confound and prolong modernity's species alienation. Modernist critics failed to significantly influence or counter the trend of hegemonic capitalism and its instrumental rationalities. Postmodernism not only fails to offer a counter-movement to modern degradation and dissolution, it inadvertently facilitates and legitimates it in self and social abandonment to disembodiment and dissolution. The postmodern nonchalant abandonment of a self-project—a project of self-identity that seeks a sense of interiority, consciousness, individuality, agency, and relationality (see Taylor, 1989)—is a defense against the despair of the loss of self engendered by extreme modern instrumental rationalization and alienation and contemporary cultural conditions. A postmodernism of defeat can offer no way out of "mechanical petrification" (Wexler, 1996a) and regenerate conditions for human and planetary (Melucci, 1996) life.

The material and discursive conditions of contemporary production and organization indicate a two-fold trend. The trend comprises both a corporately organized and promulgated program that commodifies, captures, and utilizes affective and spiritual impulses increasingly popular in a disaffected consumer society, and at the same time an individualistic impulse for greater opportunities for self-interest and well-being that propels a shift away from domination by economic rationality. The latter impulse is simultaneously the impetus for the corporate response as an effort to reintegrate persistently alienated, distracted employees from the all-consuming task of production.

Bringing spirit and soul to work and the workplace as currently advocated in many corporate organizations, although indicating a desecularization, does not indicate a dealienation and emancipation of self at work, nor a restoration of domains of ordinary and sacred—the latter unassailable by totalizing, de-differentiating technocratic rationalities and potentially a domain of resistance, freedom and play. Endeavoring to diminish or obscure alienation at work through encouraging employees to take responsibility for spiritualizing and filling their workplaces with fun (Hendricks and Ludeman, 1997) is a contemporary corporate organizational strategy to defend against the much deeper, and potentially transformative, malaise

of industrial and postindustrial production. Desecularization rechannels disruptive, effervescent energy (or “holy sparks” in Wexler’s [1996b] metaphor) back into rational organizational ends. The reappropriation of spiritual interests and impulses does not generate conditions for re-enchancement, dealienation and self-creation in the workplace.

The containment, incorporation, and utilization of emerging impulses and demands from dispirited, disaffected, highly-paid employees are in reality efforts to preempt the potential of these impulses (more widely evident in social practice) to more seriously disrupt the metarationality of capitalist production and economy. The complexities of organizational practice in uncertain global environments encourage the use of these activities, promoted as humanistic restoration and revaluing, to obscure and mitigate the intensification and generalization of totalizing instrumental rationality in modern institutions, *and* the dispersion and dissolution engendered by postmodern de-differentiation and self-loss.

Toward Dealienation and Resacralization

Of greater social theoretical interest than the strategies and activities of contemporary corporate organizations in serving their traditional functionalist ends in postindustrial capitalist conditions are the impulse toward desecularization, and renewed efforts against alienation and toward self. Notwithstanding the ready corporate appropriation and commodification of the practices described above, these practices do ironically represent efforts at revitalization and toward countering and undoing modern alienation and total rationalization. Against alienation, dissociation, and fragmentation desecularization represents a step toward new efforts to create self, and self-with-other experience. It does not, however, as a matter of revived *Gemeinschaften*-course, indicate a restoration of agentic self-value over the amoral utility of hyper-capitalism.

The laicization and pluralization of meaning and value can simultaneously indicate a further secularization, or potentially a resacralization—a rendering ultimate *vive*, the living, over mechanical petrification. The incorporation of the impulses and outcomes of laicization for instrumental organizational goals indicates a further secularization. Hyper-intensification of instrumentality succeeds in rendering all life forms—humans, animals, plants, the planet, the cosmos—as objects of utility and exploitation ultimately sacrificed, consumed, and destroyed by those uses and technologies. Modern secularization did not eradicate the sacred; rather, it simultaneously replaced and incorporated the sacred as rationality, technology and production bound to the tasks of planetary exploitation and destruction. But modern technocratic domination is not complete.

The modern (unintended) “sacralization”, or the rendering ultimate (in itself considered a desecration by modernity’s earlier critics) of instrumentality and progressive rationalization that sublimated effervescence and subjugated human intelligence, affect, spirit, and labor in its service, meets now a crisis that does not occur in modernist opposition. The postmodern

fragmentation and implosion of differentiation and delimitation, and the dissolution of an ethic of sacred and profane, ironically generate their counterpoint, with an effervescence distilled by fragmentation non-existent under modern rigidity and repression. The first moment in that is a *creative destruction* of the disenchanting gods of modern capitalism. The Holy Grail of the job is already rejected.

A differentiation between sacred and profane is, in Durkheimian language, a most fundamental and enduring human practice. The sacred and profane are distinguishable but not separable. Their de-differentiation in postindustrial and postmodern capitalism paradoxically stimulates efforts beyond degeneration and decomposition and toward regeneration, recombination and reenchancement. Resacralization requires, in the first instance, a recognition of imploded differentiation and a renewed constitution of domains of ultimate and ordinary, sacred and profane. As I interpret evidence from contemporary practices of work such a renewed constitution is currently emerging.

Current corporate organizational efforts to capture and defuse serious contestations to total organizations, and resacralizing impulses, and redirect their energies into production is an intensification of mystified alienation. The commodified corporate mysticism now offered after the corporate team-family does not represent a resacralization of self. As ultimate privileging of commodification, instrumental utility, and degradation of human being as total resources in economic activity endures under a flexible postmodern character, the spiritualization of the votary employee represents a further desecration of self and a counter bio-ethic of human and planetary destruction.

The reassertion of a sacred/profane differentiation upholds a classical distinction but does not insist on the modern autonomy of separate spheres. These distinctions are not discrete polarities, but rather co-constituents of a dialectical dynamic. Human being and doing are constituted, and encompassed, in both. The eclipse or implosion of these dualities results in either the hyper-trophic dominance of one, as modernity achieved, or the dissolution of the possibilities enabled by their delimitation, as postmodern implosion portends.

A resacralization or revitalization of self, and of social relations, does not require an erasure of boundaries, rather a renewed attention to their possibility and limit (Melucci, 1996). It is the erosion of these values of self-subjectivity under both modern instrumentality and postmodern dissolution that has generated the emergent efforts to counter, to re-create, revitalize, and resacralize. It is a movement that recognizes the simultaneity of differentiation and encompassment by which a socially transformative ethic is both theoretically and practically possible.

Conclusion

In the domain of production and work (as conventionally understood) the most fruitful path toward dealienation and revitalization lies in non-work,

and the self and social transformation of work. The work-refusers (both non-workers and work-reducers) and work-transformers may indicate a new, non-monastic, trend toward an emphasis of being distinct (but not disembodied) from doing. A counter-economic assertion and impulses to reenchant doing/production indicate creative steps toward dealienation and revitalization. At the same time current corporate organizational cultural activities also hold much potential for counter-practice and dealienation that modern forms of political resistance do not. Corporate employees quietly questioning the *modus operandi* of contemporary corporate organizations may seize upon the new spiritualizing practices and direct the energies (and charisma) of those practices toward dealienating, emancipatory practices. Dealienation refers, in the first instance, to a resistance of desubjectification and self-dissolution in hyper-capitalist technocratic instrumentality, and postmodern nihilist incorporation. Diminished or altered involvement in work, socially practiced as technocratic domination, may enable emancipation from total rationalization and allow possibilities for reenchantment and revitalization. Substantial organizational transformation may subsequently ensue.

The possibilities for non-economic, non-instrumental forms of being, notwithstanding the capitalist market ever-readiness to commodify, may begin with the body. Importantly, a turn to the body, although similarly susceptible to continued commodification and normalized dissociation, may signify an important step toward recognition of mystified alienation, and toward its counter-movement. A restoration, against both modern alienation and postmodern dissociative absence, of an inner psyche and soma requires a new recognition and listening to the body. In the first instance attending to the body is a means of reawakening an awareness of alienation in its postmodern guise. It requires and evokes a presence of and closeness to oneself, against dissociation, fragmentation, and dissolution. The restoration and consecration of self as creative, effervescent being discourage sacrifice of self in the service of mechanical, abstracted doing. Revitalization and resacralization of being restore doing to a relationship with embodied being. In this way a transformation of work is made possible.

The task of a revitalized self-project begins with awareness of the routinized desecration of a dissociated, disembodied, alienated self in postindustrial and postmodern social and cultural conditions. A revitalized project of the social is simultaneously made possible.

NOTE

1. My ongoing research into work and organizational practices, and self-social institutions relations, draws on a number of sources: observation and management practices; a popular and emerging academic literature; and first-hand interviews and observations among highly-skilled employees in contemporary organizations including finance institutions such as banks and insurance companies, hospitals, pharmaceutical and telecommunications companies and research laboratories in a number of western countries.

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