

Christian Compassion and Solidarity within Capitalist Contexts

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ABSTRACT

The theories and practices of capitalism in different places and periods also produced various theories and practices of welfare which have implications for the understanding and practice of solidarity as well as that of capitalism itself. This article sets the possible expressions of Christian compassion and solidarity against the backdrop of capitalist work, commodity circulation, and the practice of welfare. It offers a stage towards a more integrated reflection on the possibility and limits of social assistance and solidarity; something necessary for the evaluation of everyday practical moral reasoning or proposals of some forms of social ethics.

KEYWORDS: Welfare, capitalism, work and commodity circulation, solidarity

Introduction

Social welfare, or public acts of assistance to the needy, has unfolded within the parameters set by the capitalist system. This means that the practice of welfare is closely tied to capitalism's history. While capitalism has provided opportunities for waged work and cash-based consumption, it has somehow engendered marginalization or exploitation of the unskilled, unemployed, and penniless. This problem, among others, has been addressed by various welfare practices that are still evolving as capitalism further develops in different forms.

Evolving through the histories of different societies, capitalism has turned out to be advantageous for some classes of privileged people (those with capital like property, education, or connections). It has been likewise subjected to various criticism or pressure from many groups (church, socialists, state, NGO, and others) for its perceived tendency to marginalize or exploit labor, as well as manipulate

the market, in its systematic pursuit of profit-maximization. Moreover, it has been criticized for its propensity to frown upon welfare or assistance to those excluded from social labor and the consumer market.

In their pursuit of profit, capitalists have treated welfare as being inconsistent with capitalism's requirements, unless it is enlisted towards efficiency, or it enters via the cash connection, or social benefits are clearly calculable. Thus, the development of welfare is associated with the development of capitalism, which only offers template-determined opportunities and constraints in the practice of extending assistance to others. Welfare or social assistance is also a product/by-product of capitalist activities in pursuit of clearly formulated goals.

Capitalism as a cause of marginalization and deprivation has kindled crisis interventions towards its "victims" and sometimes denunciations against its standardized practices. Nevertheless, capitalism has also been considered to be a solution, and thus has become an option for welfare practices. This makes welfare a bipolar correlate of capitalism: as its effect and as its beneficiary.

With the use of social scientific tools, this article will demonstrate how welfare practices are dictated by the work and consumption patterns of capitalism. This exercise does not only aim at welfare's forms, but also shows how such forms limit or enable the appeal for and the concrete expressions of Christian compassion and solidarity. Though Christian compassion's source of inspiration is beyond the conventional social welfare, its concrete expressions have been constantly constrained by the forms essential to society's functioning and reproduction. Most Christians have to ride with the social current; in the process, they accumulate and preserve enduring predispositions which are neither inspired by the Gospel nor by ethical principles.

It is to be emphasized that the standard practices within capitalism have stirred the production of social conditions that shape encounters, groups, organizations, and networks. These conditions are also conditions for the thinking about and the dispensation of welfare, as well as the concrete expressions of Christian compassion.

We may thus ask: Can society's conditions allow and provide for the possibility of a faithful expression of Christian compassion and solidarity, or should Christians create the conditions for the possibility of forming compassionate "neighbors?" How would this be possible when everyday capitalist practices have become necessities?

Christian Solidarity and the Limits of Involvement

The heart of Christian identity/integrity is the person of Jesus of Nazareth, an embodiment of forgiveness and compassion as he is portrayed in the Christian Scriptures. Almost two thousand years after Jesus' death, his message of forgiveness/compassion is also proclaimed amid the louder and discordant voices and complex lifestyles of today's urbanized capitalistic societies. Christians who are inserted into such societies, as property owners, workers, and consumers, merge with everyday capitalism.

Christians-citizens have become accustomed to typical, but not necessarily Christian-inspired, monetary, and market-oriented social behavior. Thus, many Christians today have learned a reconfigured Christianity now necessarily connected to the structures of capitalism that pervade both the public and private spheres of life. The public into which Christians are also inserted is shaped by social labor and commodity exchange. It is an area in which the concrete expressions of compassion are also circumscribed. There, the concern for and involvement with the welfare of the needy unfolds.

For the disadvantaged and the Christian communities, the setting up of a better form of life orientated to reciprocity and respect is at the same time an appropriate witnessing to Christian blessedness (Mt. 5: 3-10; Lk. 6: 20-26). Since structural relations orientated to definite perspectives are involved in the preservation of a condition that perpetuates unemployment and poverty among the disadvantaged, an ethical appeal is addressed towards the dominant ones to share their privatized resources, even if this would mean the diminution or even relinquishment of such (cf. Mt. 19: 16-30; Lk. 18: 24-30; Lk. 17: 19-31; see also Lk. 12: 16-21). Thus, the following actions characterize and radicalize the nature of Christian discipleship: sharing of resources, leading a life of simplicity, and devotion to service that is defined by compassion and forgiveness.

However, modernity's modes of social association circumscribe without a doubt a baptized Christian's everyday life. Such modes of association are imbued with society's predispositions, which also demarcate every citizen's waking hours. In other words, the dominant social predispositions also define and characterize every citizen's behavior towards some enduring personal dispositions or *habitus*.¹

Everyday practices, maintained and reproduced in everyday life like waged work and monetary-based consumption, are channels of relations that frame human activities. In various ways, persons who act or move through these avenues of behavior come out habituated in the process. In other words, persons belonging

to a capitalism-pervaded milieu will necessarily be formed in a manner that is consistent with the system's character or limits.

The Pre-Industrial Era and the Emergence of Capitalism

Social assistance within rural/feudal communities was largely framed by kinship as well as feudal relations. Work on the land did not require the pervasive mediation of money, since consumption could be had through the produce itself. Thus, assistance assumed the format of close relationships, as well as dependence on the land or its overseer.

The right to private property, as in right to a titled land, was not yet a constraint over a community's need to support itself through common use of an agricultural field. Products are themselves not necessarily produced for markets or exchange, although a limited form of exchange was not an uncommon practice among agricultural producers. Work was not yet wage-based and was thus still tied to consumption or subsistence with or without a minimal mediation of money or its equivalent.

In pre-industrial societies of the West, kinship customs, as well as religious moral systems, provided people with standard sources of guidelines and representations for helping behavior. It was, however, on the level of the practical, rather than on the religious or bureaucratic, that expectations of mutual help were more felt and effective among the rural or village inhabitants. Typical expressions of standards of helping behavior followed the cultural habit path. Helping behavior was constrained, at most externally, not so much by ethical principles or religious moral systems but by socio-cultural considerations (no matter whether they were imbued or not with religion). This happened mainly in the context of the household, clan, village community, and the guilds in towns.²

Pre-Industrial Work, Consumption, and Welfare

Work, including the agricultural and non-household-based, was largely an extended family affair in the sense that the economy was centered on the household. When work was household-based or adjoining it, family chores and intimacies interconnected with the manufacturing processes by virtue of a shared space. This household-based industry had a character different from agricultural labor, but the feudal cultural setting was common. From the point of view of the household, work had a tenuous/half-hearted separation from private-household concerns such as child care, housecleaning, and family lunch. A continuous flow of activities for household management did not discontinue because of the presence of manufacturing work; manufacturing work did not have to suffer because of its

“private” setting. Agricultural work presupposed a whole clan; cottage industries presupposed the household.

When urban-based factories developed, they provided the “pull” for the rural folks’ migration; rural poverty or impecuniosity itself provided most of the “push.” Rural and household labor migrated toward urbanized areas where socialized work developed. Land and household-rooted workers had to move away from their familiar spheres of interaction, but remained orientated to their concerns and dependencies (Habermas, 1989:19). The socialization (a kind of “publication”) of private/household concerns evolved as rural people became part of a space now defined by social labor and commodity circulation. Household/private vicissitudes exploded in the face of a public reality different from the familiar feudal world where some forms of assistance (welfare) still existed. Such assistance could no longer be invoked by the migrants before personalities who did not share the pre-industrial world’s kinship-based mutual-help expectations.

Waged Work, Cash-Based Consumption, and Welfare

Waged work, following industrialization, became a regularity; already taken for granted as necessary for survival. However, groups of people were excluded from this type of work which required special skills and appropriate mentality. Those who did not possess skills beyond muscle skills could not find easy employment; if they find one, they become more exploitable. Slowly, people realized that without work for wages they can no longer survive since they no longer produce the goods and services which they need. They have to buy these from the market. Waged-work and cash-based consumption defined people’s new forms of survival or dependence.

Many people were not only forced to work away from the previous sources of security but also forced to sell their now commodified labor for wages that guaranteed connection to life’s necessities. The capitalist’s production and commodity circulation became the channels of both the satisfaction of some and the alienations and deprivations of others who would be constant objects of compassion and welfare or indifference and neglect.

The subsistence concerns of former household workers eventually depended on and conformed to the directions of private capitalist production characterized as the privatization of the process of economic reproduction and orientation towards the public market for commodity circulation (Habermas, 1989:19). Activities connected with the survival of rural households were now allowed to appear in public (cf. Arendt, 1958:46). Consequently, the welfare of

the former household-based, thus private, workers were now visible before a newly constituted public which did not necessarily dispense products and services for the needy. This “publication” would, however, be a tension-filled process. Even workers would become used to the private–public spheres distinction as they began to gain spaces that they recognized as their own private sphere, distinct from the public sphere of labor and circulation of private goods and already separate from their folks in the countryside. Consumers, too, would not escape the privatizing culture of work and market. Many workers, however, would find it difficult to shake off their predispositions for traditional mutuality. Their memories of solid and extended families would bring to their mind images of automatic assistance.

The hard separation of public and private remains an ill-defined structure in the dispositions of many workers coming from a traditional setting. This is also a source of frustration for many public personalities/authorities who operate on the basis of public/private distinction; traditional workers tend to position themselves as if they belong to the capitalist’s or authority’s extended family.

Transformations

The coming of the capitalists ushered in a different approach to helping society’s poor, especially in England. Before the ascendancy of capitalism, support for the poor was not lacking. *Automatic assistance* was common to feudal settings where the lords or masters took care of their serfs’ needs, or heads of clans or families pooled common resources together to solve distress-causing scarcities (Kropotkin, 1955); the urban-based social, craft, and merchant guilds maintained “works of charity” that belonged to a wider class of *relief assistance* also practiced by the Churches at the diocesan or parish level, where care for the poor was administered as a matter of duty; hospitals were run by both religious and state institutions; laws were passed to address the needs of those who were in distress (cf. England’s Poor Law of 1601 and other laws that preceded it).

In the pioneer settings of America, where England’s established feudal institutions did not interfere, all forms of assistance, neighborly kindness, or mutual aid supported survival until social life became more complex and people turned to English tradition. This was a setting where “neither private charitable trusts nor ecclesiastical welfare institutions existed” (Trattner, 1974:16) and the Poor Law provided the guide for the pioneers who were confronted with much social risks. The traditional institutions, however, were constrained by the dominant capitalist interests and thus transformed, as the new capitalist social order demanded for a new way of dealing with public troubles. The Poor Law Reform Bill of 1834 was also a product of a growing attitude of rationalized calculation under capitalism

(Ibid.:49). As accumulation of wealth became a virtue, dependency was declared a vice. Even the poor who had few opportunities were expected to struggle for their place in a new social order.

These are the fundamental sources of tension felt by many people today: a) the privatized state and process of economic reproduction and b) the publicized process of commodity exchange in the market (including the labor market). Within their privatized spheres, capitalists are constantly challenged by public issues; within the public spheres, their private interests are exposed to the public eye.

The traditions of the past, which were still alive in the ways of the workers, tangled with new ways of private individual-led free enterprise set-ups. These traditional culture bearers had to adapt to the new ways while the entrepreneurs installed what was for them necessary to preserve the basis of their new ways.

Welfare and Commodification

Concrete expressions of welfare have also evolved within the capitalist setups. Through the capitalist's notion of corporate social responsibility, wages, benefits, improvement of working conditions, and the setting up of foundations have become concrete forms of welfare set off from the side of capital. This does not mean that such forms are necessarily capitalist initiated.

Capitalists have neither been strictly embedded in mutualist cultures nor have they participated directly in workers' solidarities. In fact, most industrial capitalists were exploitative and predatory. As they moved around the production and commercial field, many of them chose to employ women and children to rationalize cost in the face of competition and gain (Heilbroner, 1980:83; Anderson, 1922; Hutchins, 1915; Shreiner, 1911). It was in their climb towards dominance that capitalists were challenged by different forces: the State, trade unions, socialists, critical social theorists, literary Bohemians, the Catholic Church (cf. social encyclicals from Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* to John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus*) and other religious groups, and civil society through the NGOs. The privatized mode of economic production as well as the public market sphere of privately-owned goods became contested areas where capitalist self-interest was subjected to supervision, control, regulation, and challenges by forces external to capital. The different forms of welfare and social service that eventually developed (taxation, social security systems, labor group's mutual fund, the Churches' Basic Ecclesial Community programs, etc.) became correlates of the different forces critical to capitalist principles and practices.

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The capitalists were surrounded by different welfare measures that challenged their primary money-making ventures. As automatic assistance became more outdated and was perceived as “counter-productive,” a more rational and scientific kind developed that reflected the capitalist ethos imbued with principles of self-reliance, autonomy, industry, rights, and self-interest. The relief form of altruism, qualified as dole, was scrutinized by scientific calculation. The relief work in the United States during the Great Depression had to pass through federal discussions and legislative debates before it was deemed acceptable because, according to reason, it was a form of justice (Ibid.:234). Thus, extending help and assistance to the socially deprived had to contend with the more compelling rational model of *calculated assistance*. Calculated assistance was to be efficient, scientific, and rationalized according to principles of corporate management; thus, its acceptability in the business and professional areas.

Clearly, stringent measures were applied to scrutinize “qualified” relief beneficiaries and to distinguish those who were responsible for their own uplift. The focus was more on the perceived personal causes (laziness, intemperance, foolish spending, or lack of determination) of poverty rather than on social conditions. The process of character verification of beneficiaries of public assistance showed abhorrence towards the relief approach to welfare. Eventually, it evolved into a more developmental form founded on a broader understanding of the social causes of poverty (Ibid.: 90; Katz, 1986; Ehrenreich, 1985). We may label it as *constructive assistance*. It found able and trainable people among the poor who could be empowered towards self-reliance. It tried to build or create the social conditions and opportunities for its citizens’ productivity.

Pressured by various sectors and eventually compelled by law, capitalists had to contribute their share to the many social reform measures that had an already expanded application beyond the immediate workshops and offices. Although such compulsory shares to contribute to the reduction of social risks were accepted by business owners, in most cases, they passed this burden to the consumers themselves (like their share as mandated by the US Social Security Act of 1935). The structural dependence of consumers on market products could not be avoided, and this was always open to exploitation. The real meaning of a welfare state, which is to “substitute public benefit for private profit, to place human rights above property rights” (Trattner, 1974:153), has always been problematic in the light of capitalism’s requirements.

There have, of course, been donor-capitalists, and some have been exceptionally generous to welfare institutions. One may recall the recent

contributions of Warren Buffett (\$30.7B) and Bill Gates (\$11B) to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.³ However, some of their motives may not necessarily have sprung from compassion or a moral precept, but from similarly deep passions like guilt, fear, or self-interest (Smillie, 1995:28). Moreover, beneficiaries are often the invisible, generalized humanity, and neither workers nor associates. We could characterize this altruism as, to reappropriate Dickens, *telescopic assistance*, because assistance is meant to reach those who are noticed from afar and probably ignore those at one's feet (see Dickens' *Bleak House*, in reference to Mrs. Jellyby; cf. Chernow, 1990:9).

The beneficiaries of assistance have not only been the handicapped and the able-bodied unemployed, but also the employed. They have needed and, in fact, gotten support from the state, from private individuals and from their own collective cooperation through labor associations or unions. Laws have also been passed to "establish and maintain fair standards of wages, hours, housing, to prohibit child labor and regulate the dangerous trades, to establish more vigorous and effective public health programs, and to institute a more practical system of public education" (Trattner, 1974:151); legislations for insurance and workmen's compensation followed slowly. The latter development is already tied to workers' contribution to social insurance, which is a more favored approach among employers who abhor the public assistance of the non-worker needy.

Work-based social insurance reflects a more utilitarian approach to welfare. If a social risk is handled by the market, it will have to be via the cash channel or via the wage earner. If more people are able to pay cash toward the unburdening of risks, then we can say the commodification of risks (or risks allowed to be handled as another business opportunity) has benefited everyone. In cases where cash is unavailable to families, the burden is to be absorbed by the state and thereby defamilializes the solution. This is to be done for the market to function and free it from unproductive (bad) risks. This is another service of the state making the family unburdened and freer to reproduce its activities without disturbing capitalist resources which constitute the market.

The perceived perpetrators of social troubles have been expected to reform and help those affected by their systematic pursuit of wealth and prestige. However, an unexpected consequence developed: the buying of labor and the selling of goods and services have eventually evolved, in the minds of the many, into capitalism's service to the wider society.

State and Church Welfare

State and church interventions have commonly been directed against capitalist excesses, as the former moved in to protect and uphold workers' rights and demands. It was also in the context of these interventions and regulations directed against capitalism that the state's social policy further gravitated into a distinct form of welfare. While the public sphere was the concern of the state and the Churches as object of welfare, capitalists will stand up for the private sphere which it feels is properly theirs. Within their perceived private sphere, capitalists will exercise their right to choose whether or not to get involved in public. Being the sovereign citizens of the publicized sphere, they feel they can, without coercion, and for their own welfare, decide for themselves and the fate of others in private.

Unskilled and low-skilled workers, even if employed, are confronted by many kinds of risks, whether class-related, life-course-related or intergenerational (Esping-Andersen, 1999:149ff.). Even without direct interventions into the privatized sphere of production, the state's concern for workers' welfare (institutionalized in laws and agencies) are already felt in principle by many capitalists through their shares in social security contributions, taxes, and the observance of other labor-related laws. Private employers take a public stance, even if reluctantly, when they have to share the burden of welfare of their workers through the state channel or through wages. Under ordinary conditions, other relief-potential publicized goods and services could only be acquired through a cash connection.

There is, however, a difference in the approach of East Asian Tiger economies. In some countries, elements of traditional culture mix with capitalism and approaches to welfare. Some agents – whether as state servants, laborers, consumers, sellers, or manufacturers, bring into everyday capitalism aspects of their culture. East Asian states as regulators of capitalism have made Confucian principles an ingredient of their social policies (see Holiday and Winding, 2003:168; Esping-Andersen, 1999:44; Critchfield, 1994:202). In Singapore, tax breaks are enjoyed by children who live with their aged parents, and state laws provide parents the right to sue children who refuse to provide. In similar vein, employees in Korea get stipends and loans for their houses if they care for their parents (Newsweek, 2004:47).

In Asian economies the threat of marginalization or the dismissal of mutualism is thus tackled through the familialization of social risks. Even socialist China, through Deng Xiao Ping's reforms (Critchfield, 1994: 202), recognized the value of traditional family dynamics when it abandoned the commune type of agrarian development. He gave the agrarian task back to family-size units while

he engineered his country's global-market integration. Although the institutionalization of welfare may be a more efficient setup in many advanced economies, traditional mutualism could be a more congenial setting for mutual expression of altruism/compassion in less-developed and smaller societies where voluntary contributions by private investors are less forthcoming (cf. Smillie, 1995: 60).

Today's labor situation in the presence of institutionalized challenges and channels of welfare is far better than the situations of workers during the industrial revolution (cf. Dobb, 1963; Heilbroner, 1980). Many cases in Third World economies are, of course, the negative side of today's welfare advances in affluent capitalist nations. Where public welfare is lacking or inefficient, sources from private entities are hard to come by, since the logical sources are still unchallenged or still remote from institutionalized welfare channels. But it would seem that welfare state setups in less-developed economies can hardly cope with welfare challenges (Smillie, 1995:2).

Labor Instantiated

Laborers, especially the low-skilled, are doubly disadvantaged: within production units where they are exploited and dominated (employed) by private interests; within labor market where they are, by necessity, for hire or commodified. As consumers, they may become passive objects of imposed necessities and inaccessible luxuries. Having caught the spirit of the market, privileged consumers also seek to protect themselves from risks through privatistic decisions that both reflect aggressive market integration and accumulation (cf. Nocera, 1994; Davidson, and Rees-Mogg, 1993). In both areas, workers are in constant search of their place within the wider scheme of things. Within production units they will slowly gain a different form of identity, individually and collectively, as laborers and as unionized labor. The patterns of division of labor have formed workers into distinct individuals (Durkheim, 1984) while families have been uprooted from communities and become part of emerging modern societies.

A distinctive expression of solidarity among workers has engendered a form of reciprocal assistance similar to an altruism based on a culture-embedded reciprocity that primarily raises social expectations of tradition-bound mutualism or automatic assistance. This automatic and cultural form familiar to village-communities is transported into another setting and transformed into a different form of solidarity – one born out of common experiences of division of labor (Durkheim, 1984) and contestations in urban workplaces and other politically contested contexts.

Solidarity may also have to be founded on common experiences of struggles in work and protests, but its fundamental meaning is based on a common experience of facing common risks and taking steps to endure or unburden (through compassion) distress and risks. In this sense, solidarity is also a result of mutual expressions of assistance founded on compassion that is also a quality wanting to be recognized, validated and enthroned as a basis of relations. Consequently, compassion may have to be recognized as a principle of action in solidarity assistance.

Although critical to the socialist-inspired associations that initially developed within labor-capital contestations (cf. anti-communist sentiments of the States and those found in *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*), the State and the Churches have eventually learned to regard labor's gains as inescapable. Both the State and the Churches have eventually capitalized on the experiences of labor groups in the latter's struggle within the employment setups, learning from the more labor-oriented solidarity approach to welfare (cf. John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens*, CELAM's Medellin and Puebla Documents, Synod of Bishops of 1971 document *Justice in the World*, Latin America's Liberation Theology, the American Bishop's pronouncements on Justice and Peace, etc.). In some countries, labor groups have become part of mainstream politics. Within the Churches, labor-related programs owe much to labor's gains, inasmuch as labor has also sought the support of the former.

Civil Society and NGOs

Although the notion of the NGO was formalized within the United Nations' establishment in 1945, NGOs developed through the growing associational approaches to welfare by the social agents of civil society. The International Red Cross is one of the oldest NGOs to develop in the modern world. It is the largest of the different humanitarian groups found worldwide. Although it did not rise from specific capitalist environments, it eventually provided a model for subsequent NGOs critical to or relying on businesses.

NGOs emphasize humanitarian issues, developmental aid, and sustainable development. Sometimes they are divided into the operational and advocacy types. The operational ones are either relief-oriented or development-oriented, while the advocacy types promote a specific cause through which they can raise social awareness and involvement. Both types may either be religious or secular. Their scope could be community-based, national, or international (see Smillie, 1995).

The relationship among businesses, governments, labor groups, Churches, and NGOs is complex and sometimes conflictual. This is evident when NGOs raise issues against some activities of governments and businesses. NGOs may seek the support of governments and the Churches which, as we know, also rely on businesses for revenues or contributions.

It must be noted, however, that Christians have relied on the presence of NGOs and their services, either as social agents or as beneficiaries.

Matrices of Welfare within Capitalism

The spheres of social interaction common to urbanized capitalist settings have given shape to typical forms of social associations that also function as matrices of welfare practices. In other words, any practice of welfare, Christian and non-Christian, would be constrained or conditioned by society's typical associations. Practices will, therefore, become coordinates of the existing forms of social associations that are loaded with goods specific to their character.

In most urbanized and capitalism-pervaded societies are found the following forms of social associations: encounters, groups, organizations, and networks.⁴

Typical *encounters* refer primarily to the role that individual subjects assume when meeting other subjects in socialized/public spaces like parks, roads, marketplaces, and other crowded areas. Reality in these spaces appears massive, turbulent, and sometimes threatening. Impersonality is assumed by almost everyone; meaning, most people appear undisposed to enter into a friendly conversation or familiar interaction with anyone. Most are unwilling to enter into any talk with strangers; people generally avoid entering into unpredictable scenarios. Civil inattention thus becomes a typical behavior one portrays in everyday public presentation of the self. This assumed behavior has also become a quasi-standard form of behavior in public places; strangers, including the needy, suffering, and at-risk strangers, are very often met by indifference or by "bystander apathy." "Bad Samaritans" in modern or advanced-modern societies are no isolated failures in matters of assistance to those needing immediate help. Baptized Christians who form part of society's populace cannot avoid but internalize and master the art of civil indifference. As Christians are more likely to be habituated to this form of impersonal public encounters, more often than not, they, too, "pass by the other side" and leave the half-dead needy on the road because of the more compelling reasons: to fulfill one's task and to follow one's predispositions. The Jericho experiment is the most appropriate illustration for this point:

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Darley and Batson were interested in helping behavior, so they created what is called the Jericho Experiment. Seminary students were asked to develop a talk on either the Good Samaritan or jobs in which seminary students would be most effective. When they went to give their talks, they were told that they had to give their talk in another building. Some were told to hurry because they were late. Others were told they were right on time. Still others were told that they had a little extra time but they should start over to the building. On the way to the building, all the students passed someone slumped over in an alley who looked like he might need help. What Darley and Batson wanted to know was whether the seminary students would stop to help; they found that:

The talk the students had prepared had no effect on their behavior;
The major factor that affected the students' behavior was how hurried the students were:

63% of those with extra time stopped

45% of those on time stopped

29% of those in a hurry stopped.⁵

The notion of negative and positive duties within the liberal tradition's understanding of justice could further clarify the character of typical encounters.⁶ On the one hand, negative duty refers to prohibitions. Subjects are expected to refrain from doing anything that violates the rights of other individuals encountered. The "not-doing-anything" stance is understood as a prohibition based on justice. Refraining from doing something is an expression of a negative action that could show respect for the other's right to privacy, or the right to one's private property or the right against harm to one's limb. Negative duties are necessary for the preservation of some forms of peace or harmonious relations in society.

The concept of positive action, on the other hand, stresses the "doing something" based on charity or benevolence. However, this does not mean an obligation or duty is to be imposed except when a special relation is involved – like parent–child, child–parent, or husband–wife relations that carry some pre-existing obligation to do something in view of the special relationship. Without the pre-existing obligation, the expected "doing something" cannot be enforced, but is instead left up to anyone's discretion on how or when one is to fulfill it.

In other words, social welfare or assistance depends only on the available pathways for help as well as the willingness (i.e., subject to one's discretion) to share one's time, energy, or resources. The libertarian tradition thus allows much tolerance to those who would not extend help even to those who are in extreme

need; the needy do not necessarily impose pre-existing obligations on those who have the ability to help. Their relationships to non-intimates are to be considered civil and thus not covered by the expectations of solidarity or mutuality – relations that are not founded on a pre-existing obligation or contract.

The family, household, hobby and literary groups, sports team, the gang, and the rock band are some examples of *groups*. They are formed around a common interest or relationship and they enjoy some amount of privacy among themselves. The group experiences some common spaces that are shared by the members. Although the family enjoys more private realms, groups generally appropriate for themselves reserved spaces that are less public than typical public encounters. Assistance is somehow reserved for members. In this sense, assistance is more inward-directed than outward.

Organizations are the usual matrices of outward-directed assistance. They are more formal than groups and relatively permanent. They have specialized interests but pursue them efficiently and systematically. In this sense, they are more calculative and instrumental even in their approaches to welfare. Organizations include the government and its agencies, the Churches and its social programs, civil society and its NGOs, labor groups, and businesses and their foundations. Most effective (relatively effective) practices of welfare are dispensed by the groups. Anyone wanting to get involved in social assistance would find the groups and their different activities the more promising spheres for welfare.

Networks are interlocking groups such as multinational corporations, the United Nations, the World Council of Churches, the ASEAN, the Bishops–Businessmen Conference of the Philippines, and similar interconnections between businesses and government or NGOs and Churches or Labor and NGOs. Networks' welfare involvement may take the telescopic form, but this does not mean these could not be translated into more concrete and face-to-face forms on the ground.

These associations provide the parameters for the possibility of expressions of compassion and solidarity. They could show the limits, but they also point to openings that could lead to alternative parameters.

Everyday concerns for everyday behavior do not necessarily reflect a favorable picture of how people would actually behave in ethical terms. Acting based on routines, automatic dispositions, or cultural scripts do not suggest the exercise of deliberate reasoning based on a Christian ethical action. Somehow,

one no longer need act deliberately if socio-cultural associations have already provided the necessary format for individual action. When such action has been part of an enculturation process that is more effective in forming individuals into culture bearers, then action would be a coordinate of socio-cultural upbringing. Although individual choice, in such instances, may not really be destroyed, the quality of one's act would seem to lessen links to the process of practical moral reasoning embedded in Jesus of Nazareth's vision of the Reign of God as proclaimed through the Christian Gospels.

Conclusions

Most people are preoccupied with everyday life concerns that are far from remote ethical principles somehow uprooting consciousness away from the ordinary day-to-day troubles. Although the more remote ethical concerns would have also affected everyday life, immediate concerns make up most of routine life that may not be linked to age-old traditions, such as that of the Christian Tradition which embodies shared memories or visions of a good life or a better future. Those who practice Christian compassion and solidarity may not be able to avoid being formatted by everyday capitalist work, commodity circulation, and standardized welfare practices.

Immediate concerns also determine every decision-making process or individual practical reasoning. In other words, considerations about one's proper course of action also relate to everyday life challenges. Survival, adaptation, accumulation of pleasurable experience or possessions, pleasure-gratifying pursuits, etc. make up the stuff of most people's daily routines. Welfare practices, thus, do not necessarily rely on the vital resources provided by a shared memory or a common vision of an ethical life beyond that which is immediate and linked to the more familiar capitalist format.

The reciprocity familiar to previous generations has been set aside in the light of subsequent socio-economic adjustments. Reciprocity was expected to inform and affect people within the limited and traditional spaces of simple societies. The present-day formalized concerns and expectations of capitalism developed in the West have driven it from its business arena. As the social field has become more and more capitalist in character and less tradition-bound, people have mastered the art of civil inattention (Goffman, 1959) in a modern world where beneficiaries of reciprocity must rely on other sources now more institutionalized and less automatic. These sources of welfare, together with less cooperative sources, will provide the conditions for both benefits and deprivations. It is inevitable that citizens of capitalist societies will develop behaviors consistent with such conditions.

The rationalizations within capitalism, the strategies furthering its private property/self-interest core, the defensive adaptations to labor, and the capitalization of human resources and traditions, are for reproduction, for continuity, and stability of the system. When these various undertakings encounter social risks that cannot be absorbed without endangering its core, capitalism will have to act consistently – that is, refuse to absorb such risks; if necessary and possible, will have to assign it to the state (push up) or back to households (push down) or, in many places, pass on to the church (push aside). When the system requirements tend to be rigid and state support is not available, workers'/citizens' solidarities pose themselves ready for pressure politics and risk pooling.

The concrete expressions of Christian compassion and solidarity, as coordinates of society's types of association, do not necessarily go beyond the forms allowed for social reproduction. Even when transformations develop toward more radical forms in the practice of welfare (e.g., profit-sharing schemes or labor groups' mutuality funds), a change in the Christian practice towards a greater fidelity to the Gospel message does not automatically follow. The typical patterns of association still reflect capitalist-directed forms in terms of dependence on capitalist work and commodity circulation. Unless the prevailing dependence on capitalist work and commodity circulation is transformed, specific expressions of Christian compassion and solidarity will always be coordinates of society's principles and practices. This transformation may happen when work becomes tied to immediate subsistence and fulfillment; and when work's product tends toward sharing, and consumption becomes possible even without the medium of money.

Most Christians' concrete expressions of solidarity as coordinate entities of capitalism may not necessarily be bad; however, such a quality of being a coordinate of capitalism cannot be extolled as a faithful reflection of the radical nature of Jesus of Nazareth's message and practice of compassion and forgiveness (cf. the Parable of the Good Samaritan [Lk. 10:25-37] or the encounter with the Rich Man [Lk. 18:18-25]). The foregoing discussion further shows how welfare schemes tend towards a balancing of forces – a democratized format commonly adopted by many Christians.

Notes

- ¹ “Introduced by Marcel Mauss as ‘body techniques’ (techniques du corps) and further developed by Norbert Elias in the 1930s, habitus can sometimes be understood as those aspects of culture that are anchored in the body or daily practices of individuals, groups, societies, and nations. It includes the totality of learned habits, bodily skills, styles, tastes, and other non-discursive knowledges that might be said to “go without saying” for a specific group – in that way it can be said to operate beneath the level of ideology.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habitus/>, accessed June 14, 2006. The concept of habitus refers to both the social habitus of a certain group of people and the personal habitus of an individual. In general terms, habitus refers to the generalized and habitual schemes of thought, appreciation, and action. It points to the habitual dispositions of a society which every individual would internalize and become part of oneself as second-nature ability. Their predispositions or determined typical ways of looking or viewing at things, ways of evaluating taste or values, and ways of approaching an event or problem through action, prefigure everything that a group or a person may think, appreciate, or do. Within a simple, homogenous society, a certain shared habitus may still be expected. Urban settings will exhibit more disjointed and multiple forms of habitus – some elements of which may converge within a single individual whose habitus reflect also a very complex situation. See Jonathan Fletcher, *Violence and Civilization: An Introduction to the Work of Norbert Elias* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997); Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (London: Blackwell Pub., 1994) and Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); see also Bourdieu, *Distinction*, pp. 170ff.
- ² Cf. Petr Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Boston, Mass.: Extending Horizons Books, 1955).
- ³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warren_Buffet/ accessed 12 October 2006; See also <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/default.htm>.
- ⁴ Stephen Fuchs, *Against Essentialism: A Theory of Culture and Society* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 63ff.
- ⁵ J. M. Darley and C.D. Batson, “From Jerusalem to Jericho: A Study of Situational and Dispositional Variables in Helping Behavior,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 27 (1973):100-108. Heilbroner, R.L. 1980. *The making of economic society*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. Holiday, I. and P. Winding. 2003
- ⁶ See Patricia Smith, “Bad Samaritans, Acts, and Omissions,” in R.G. Frey and Christopher Heath Wellman, eds., *A Companion to Applied Ethics* (Malden, A/Oxford/Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2003):475-486.

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