

IMPINGEMENTS IN CAPITALIST ECONOMY

Decoding an Obscure Factor in Ethical Analysis

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Abstract

Capitalism is based on the core principles of private property/self-interest, capital/profit-making and labour, and liberal democracy. Such principles have generated standard economic practices; fields for management, production, and consumption and durable institutions. Through time, these practices, fields, and institutions have impinged on people's homes, neighbourhood, villages, and nations. Using the theory of *impingements*, this study uncovers the insidious ways capitalism has impacted on life and points out the analytic potential of impingements in the following: a) reconnecting the private-public disconnect in a world pervaded by capitalism; b) internalizing what has been considered as externalities by economics; c) tracing the psycho-neurological genesis of impingements; and d) tracking down the interlocking development of capitalist institutions and persons. These approaches are meant to aid and expand the ethical evaluation of capitalist actions and structures, leading toward proposals for the ethical solutions to some problems unearthed by the concept of impingements.

Keywords: impingements, economic externalities, rational/affectional principles, private/public dichotomy, care and solidarity

1. Introduction

A capitalist economy is built on the core principles of private property/self-interest, capital/profit-making and labour, and liberal democracy. Such principles, with their corresponding axioms, have established standard economic practices; fields for management, production, and consumption and durable institutions. Those capitalist

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practices, fields, and institutions have impinged, through time, on the home, neighbourhood, villages, and nations. Negative impingements of standard capitalist practices on people and places are plenty (like social anomie, psychological and physical debilities, socio-cultural disintegrations, cultural subjugation, and environmental degradation). These have been studied from various angles by prominent authors and critical theorists, offering valuable insights about the modern economy and theoretical and practical ways of solving its fundamental contradictions.¹ In this article, using the theory of impingements, I will uncover what is not so clear in the ways capitalist economy has impacted on life. I shall point out four main ways of unpacking the analytic potential of impingements: 1) reconnecting the private-public disconnect in a world pervaded by capitalism; 2) internalizing what has been considered as externalities by economics; 3) tracing the psycho-neurological genesis of impingements; and 4) tracking down the interlocking development of capitalist institutions and persons. These approaches are meant to aid and expand the ethical evaluation of capitalist actions and structures. Thus, this contribution in analysis is hoped to lead towards proposals for the ethical solutions to some problems unearthed by the concept of impingements.

2. Impingements

We are informed by the first and second laws of thermodynamics that in every expense of work within a system, energy is not destroyed (or created) but only converted into another state or form. Within a closed system, this conversion into another form of energy may be viewed as a conversion into an acceptable, thus tolerable, form of energy. If, however, we are dealing with two different systems that are entangled with each other, the work expenditures in one system could produce “heat conversions and transfers” which may not be acceptable, thus intolerable, to the other system. This dynamic transfer of converted energy or heat may be “normal” in the first system, but “abnormally” impacts upon the other; thus, the latter system could experience negative *impingements*. The factory system, for example, has impinged upon the natural environmental system (by treating it as source and sink), producing negative or

¹Peter H. Sedgwick, *The Market Economy and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

unacceptable consequences (usually referred to as unintended consequence or externalities² – as external to human intentions or plans).

‘*Impingements*’ is a term used in developmental psychology to refer to “imperfections in mothering.”³ In this article, I will apply this concept beyond the context of mothering and use it to refer to broad/deep-impact and high-context imperfections in the management of human affairs by “fathers”, mainly *public* affairs; hence, *impingements* could also be “imperfections in fathering” as this “fathering” dimension is usually linked to and expressed through the processes and channels involved in the management of the political economy. Thus, it refers not only to imperfections due to lack of individual insight, neglect, insensitivity, narrow-mindedness, hardened conscience, “narrowing of cognitive map,” but also to “normal” predispositions and behaviour, as these are embedded in and constrained by economic, political, and cultural systems-structures.⁴

My use of the term also implicates the socio-cultural matrix as enabling, inhibiting, or disabling factors of disposition and behaviour, producing intended as well as unintended effects that impact on homes and villages, environment, and the deep human epigenetic materials. Thus, *impingements*, as imperfection in management, emphasizes not only the mediated but also the mediating character of behaviour – it also mediates socio-cultural elements and their predictable and unpredictable effects.

This broadened meaning of *impingements* calls to mind the over-all effects of behaviour. These effects are not necessarily under the control of an individual as one’s actions are also enlivened by broad socio-cultural processes intersected by individual intentions. Whether one likes it or not, multiple effects of pre-established processes are reproduced every time an individual acts or socializes. Action is thus understood to be an element within systems and structures that provide channels and pathways which are older, more enduring, and stable than individuals.⁵

²Albino Barrera, *Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 27-35.

³John B. Arden and Lloyd Linford, *Brain-Based Therapy with Children and Adolescents: Evidence-Based Treatment for Everyday Practice*, Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009, 44-45; see also 66-69.

⁴See the notion of “bounded rationality” in Shaun Hargreaves Heap, *Rationality in Economics*, New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989, 116-147.

⁵See A. Reckwitz, “Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, 2, 243-263.

3. Reconnecting the Private-Public Disconnections

The traditional meaning of mothering has been identified with caring of children and managing the home; while fathering is another kind of becoming, commonly known as 'breadwinning'. In this distinction between the two ways of becoming lies the original cause of separation (an ancient mode of management) of the private and public spheres. This separation has become a feature of today's worlds pervaded by the capitalist mode of economic management, production, and consumption. In principle, this state of separation is contained in every form of negative impingements, reflecting the division of labour between private care/affection and public management/reason.

Nevertheless, mothers who are preoccupied by private/domestic concerns are no longer alien to a public occupation which consists of pursuits of opportunities and other stakes in the various fields of modern economy. Providing for the family's financial needs through a public occupation, though identified with the male, is no longer a masculine prerogative. Mothers already occupy jobs outside the home, a development that has transformed the face of the public since the onset of modernity. However, their presence in the public realm does not translate into radical transformations of the pre-established male/female domestic division of labour (they may have salaried jobs, but they still manage the home, while fathers reap the benefits of getting an additional subsidy from their public occupation) or the overhaul of public economy in terms of care and affection (a bank manager may be a mother, but the demands of commerce will prevent her from applying care and nurture to investigate the credit capacity of a loan applicant).

The effects of the imperfections in the private/public division of labour are nonetheless strictly attributed to their immediate managers and normally restricted within their respective domains. The failures in caring are to be accounted for against the mother and the failures in breadwinning (and imposing strict discipline) against the father. Neighbours neither frown upon the father if the dirty dishes and linen are scattered around the house nor blame the mother if income is lower than expected. Neighbour's accounting tend to be confined to the standards and constraints set by culture with regard to the male public role and female domestic role.

There is, however, a feature of male role that goes with breadwinning, that of ruling the public economy (in the same way that the homemaking role assumes the position of the mother as queen of the private economy). From the start of the Industrial Revolution in 1750's in

Manchester, England, the male has already taken a front seat for himself: as manager of his own public affairs. Thus, we have a picture of the male who takes upon himself the responsibility of managing the affairs of the world, a world bigger than that of the wife’s domestic affairs.

What has become problematic is that the male-managed economic public turns out to be more complex, dominant, and pervasive in its effects while the domestic private is a subordinated family sphere with little impact on the shaping of public economics. Thus, the standards set by fathering in the public tend to impinge on the realm more properly identified with the mother; but the standards set by mothering are less likely acknowledged in the public realm. Let me illustrate.

Home is where family relations are taken for granted, where more warm dealings would define routines while the modern workplace/public realm tends to be seen as a domain managed by a means-end kind of reasoning,⁶ where everyone is expected to act professionally, that is, where kinship or friendship may be set aside for a more efficient and consistent productivity. The affectional principles of compassion, forgiveness, and care for the weak are, in general, the foundational principles of the home. The public economic realm, on the other hand, is founded on utility, justice, or rights, principles which are set in the foundational precept of democracy wherein every question or issue is to be resolved through discussion or public consultation among interested parties. Questions that implicate the home pass through the public forum.

Economic management that called for a more instrumental reasoning engendered economic principles that consistently push for market productivity, efficiency, and progress. This kind of forward-looking management has impinged on home life, most especially against the vulnerable members of society: children, the elderly, the uneducated and others who are similarly exposed to risks because of lack of capacity or resources. Wages set by law, for example, are difficult to adjust in favour of labour even if it is not consonant with the high cost of living; private property acquisition is generally based on fair exchange which leaves millions of people landless because they lack the financial capacity to acquire land; and food sufficiency is difficult for the poor because of the market’s strict *quid pro quo* principle. Thus, if thoroughly applied,

⁶Means-end reasoning is also referred to as instrumental reasoning. Martin Heidegger, Max Horkheimer, and Jürgen Habermas are few of the major philosophers who offered critiques of instrumental rationality.

instrumental reasoning would undermine homes of the vulnerable even if these are founded on the mother's care, forgiveness, and compassion.

The affectional principles customarily identified with the home and mothering role have not been set as organizational and operational principles for the modern capitalist economy. Thus, poverty, landlessness, and illiteracy are also issues that could be understood in terms of the impingements of economic principles equally imposed on all citizens; such issues are no longer just viewed in terms of unequal development between classes but also in terms of weak-application of the principles of compassion and care. We say: *there is no such thing as free lunch*, even if people are already starving. Interest on debts cannot just be written off – not all are members of JAK Members Bank⁷; exclusion of some citizens from some services may have to continue to ensure profitability; and some asymmetrical transactions between the poor and the moneyed (in cases of predatory lending or usury) may have to be tolerated for the survival of the poor.

It has become customary to blame the mother for deficits in caring; but, the negative effects of the public sphere (where fathers are) on private domains (like intimacy and sexuality) are usually obscure and thus less accounted for except by experts or social scientists. Unless the less-articulated impingements of public-fathering is recognized, private problems are less likely to implicate their public connections. Right thinking and action would need a clearer hold on the need to interconnect the private and the public, more especially if we regard means-end reasoning and caring deficit as matters of public concern.

We may thus have to expand our analysis of home economics and world economy through their invisible connections that bring about visible and less-visible impingements; and then see for ourselves how efforts to lessen instrumental reasoning and increasing the care principle in public could actually produce some good results. Care does have a role in boardrooms which could bring about changes in the way managers think about collaterals or interests on loans. Alternative practices have been actually realized when care and concern for the poor became the main factor in the economic equation that runs Grameen Bank⁸ or Kiva

⁷The JAK Members Bank, or JAK Medlemsbank, is a cooperative, member-owned financial institution based in Sweden. Its loans are financed solely by members' savings; thus, the bank's activities occur outside of the capital market.

⁸Grameen Bank is also known as a bank for the poor, especially women. It is a Nobel Peace Prize winning non-profit, microfinance organization and community development bank that was started in Bangladesh by Professor Muhammad Yunus.

Microfunds⁹ if this pattern in economic practice becomes more widespread, then the public realm could be expected to be more positively impinging on the domestic or village front.

4. Internalizing Externalities

Economic management of production and consumption have their unintended negative effects but these are usually treated by economic theories as *externalities*, that is, *not part* of the *intended* output. Unless pressured or not unaware of their responsibility, fathers-managers will not treat such externalities as their immediate concern; even if they are cognizant of the double-effect nature of economic activities. Such preemptive tactic to externalize is one major reason why the visible negative by-products of production and consumption are difficult to manage (like mine tailings, food industry chemicals, or jet plane pollution). To pull managers back into their responsibility, they must acknowledge the unintended as integral part of the intended.

Modern industry and commerce have regarded the unintended negative consequences of production and consumption as belonging to externalities and not necessarily impingements. But our present discussion must *immediately* pull externalities towards the centre and make these as part of the internal talks since these belong to the histories and solidified ways of fathering. The extraction of fossil fuels, felling of trees, and mining of diamonds may have brought dividends to some but at the same time caused miseries to others; the mass production of electronics, textiles, food, medicines, chemicals, and the like, have brought not only convenience to households but also pollution and degradation to both the natural ecology and bio-ecology.¹⁰ Such negative effects are clearly difficult to imagine as “external” to economic activities.

Laws have been passed to bring about changes in the way manufacturers treat their by-products. Some have indeed responded with some measures of responsibility.¹¹ However, not all by-products are

⁹Kiva Microfunds is a non-profit organization that allows people to lend money via the Internet to people in developing countries.

¹⁰Alexander G. Haslberger, ed., *Epigenetics and Human Health: Linking Hereditary, Environmental and Nutritional Aspects*, KGaA, Weinheim: Wiley-VCH Verlag GmbH & Co., 2010.

¹¹See, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in the *Kyoto Protocol* of 1997 and *Copenhagen Accord* of 2009. See also Laszlo Zsolnai, et al., eds. *Ethical Prospects: Economy, Society and Environment*, Volume 1, Budapest: Springer, 2009.

visible and predictably measurable in their “unintended” effects. Chemicals like nonylphenol, bisphenol A, and phthalates (ingredients in the manufacture of plastics, detergents, pesticides, and other packaging materials) have been shown by research to leach into edibles that trigger low fertility and feminization in males and breast cancer in females;¹² but few manufacturers are aware about such findings, especially those located in areas not immediately informed by scientific researches done in the more developed economies. And if others are aware of it, it would be extremely difficult to change their usual ways because of the popularity and widespread use of such products. Needless to say, the modern world is already dependent on their usage. It gives limited freedom or fewer options to consumers given fewer alternative approaches: one who avoids vegetables in cans lined with phthalates may opt to consume fresh vegetables; but such vegetables may have been applied with pesticides. And somebody who shuns away from plastics with chemicals on linings could use bottles; but it is difficult not to use detergents to wash these “alternative” containers.

“Externalities” are internal to the practices of fathering. No matter how theories separate the unintended from the intended, imperfections in the management of the public sphere include not only those things which they are able to control and predict but also those which result from their limited capacity to control and predict – resulting in some of the most destructive *hidden impacts* of production and consumption.¹³

While the *positive* consequences are not necessarily intended by and totally under the control of industry and commerce (low prices of goods and services, employment opportunities, and other trickle-down effects) these are still recognized (with enthusiasm) as part of the goods of capitalism; and market economists have tended to place the negative consequences of production and consumption as capital’s technological (e.g., pollution and environmental degradation) and pecuniary (e.g., adjustment of prices or shutdowns of factories) externalities.¹⁴ Even the definition of externalities has become stunted and limited to merely cover

¹²John A. McLachlan and Steven F. Arnold, “Environmental Estrogens,” *American Scientist* 84 (September-October 1996), 453-461.

¹³Daniel Goleman, *Ecological Intelligence: How Knowing the Hidden Impacts of What We Buy Can Change Everything*, New York: Broadway Books-Random House, 2009. See also Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, New York: Picador, 2008.

¹⁴Barrera, *Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics*, 27ff.

the immediate (not the more remote) unintended effects of technological and pecuniary decisions. The idea of externalities (of negative consequences) may indicate the wimps in those responsible for the fathering of the negative. They are proud of their products (and the income derived from such products), but turn their backs when notified of smelly and destructive by-products.

It is about time for economists to seriously rethink *externalities* in their accounting procedures, the way they acknowledge responsibility for the wear-and-tear of their equipment. If the State and civil society’s concerned citizens have not chased them for their previous mistakes, the notion of green accounting, sustainable development, or carbon footprints would not have come about.¹⁵ Economists should no longer wait to be accused of possessing mere means-end reasoning. A more socially and environmentally responsible and caring mindset would pre-empt the more destructive consequences of their projects and pursuits. They will have to abandon their view on externalities and consolidate impingements with capital expenditures. Economics would then be doing great service to humans and to the planet.

5. Psycho-Neuro-Analyzing Impingements

The common sense and binary kind of outlook on the world having a public/private, rational/affectional spheres may either be referred back to the biological male/female differences or associated with the observed differences in male and female roles. However, we could not just maintain that sex roles (not gender roles) are merely based on biological or genetic predispositions. We are informed by the more up-to-date research (on phylogeny) that genes too have been shaped by and, thus, behave according to historical development of cultures.¹⁶ The male brain being primed for problem-solving and aggressive behaviour may have actually been shaped by the demands of a culture that reinforces those qualities in the males; the same way that a woman’s brain circuits are disposed to conversation and relationship could be further fortified by cultural

¹⁵Gareth Edwards-Jones, *Ecological Economics: An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell Science, 2000.

¹⁶Dorothy Nelkin and M. Susan Lindee, *The DNA Mystique: The Gene as a Cultural Icon*, New York: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1995; Ruth Hubbard and Elijah Wald, *Exploding the Gene Myth*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

expectations about caring and mothering.¹⁷ Knowing such deeper sources of dispositions would help to better understand why one-half of the world's population is more identified with many practices that negatively impinge on the world.

Males – fathers and would-be fathers – have been cradled by mothers and would-be mothers. By some effects of genes, hormones, and culture – all interlocked in the ontogenetic and phylogenetic issues of natural and second-natural individual formation – males carry and internalize peculiarly male dispositions; dispositions which are impelled by genetic, epigenetic and hormonal factors (testosterone and adrenaline) ready to snap into the shared social dispositions “intended” for the males: rational, aggressive, adventurous, competitive, and conquering.

While mothers and would-be mothers have been forced to concentrate on tasks at home and nearby, fathers and would-be fathers have been impelled to go hunting, exploring, and mastering lands and colonizing other humans. Hundred-thousands of years of skills-development to ensure victories in conquests (and defenses) have insidiously imprinted in the male brain the more rational and less affectional dispositions – a disposition to be identified by later generations as “natural” to males and dictating some norms or standards of behaviour.

Hunting and warfare have demanded on the male the lesser connection to affections or to the heart-level principles of caring. “Male activities” demanded connection to the head-level principles more associated with the promise of success in male expeditions and projects in the public spheres. Fathering (as required by the father-role of breadwinner or defender of the tribe) required more deliberate thinking, compartmentalized and specialized low-context training, strict and rational use of space and time (monochronic), control or subordination of the more “female passions” like compassion, pity, or mercy, and development of the “male virtues” of prudence, moderation, or detachment. Some amount of ruthlessness, boldness, and unyielding purpose come and go with the movement of the hunter or warrior male. Mothering is an art more connected with the needs of infants and growing children; it presupposes the more delicate qualities of tenderness, kindness, sensitivity, resignation, understanding, and forgiveness. Thus, it needs or produces different sets of hormones: estrogen, progesterone, prolactin, and oxytocin. Those delicate

¹⁷Louann Brizendine, *The Female Brain*, New York: Broadway Books, 2006; Louann Brizendine, *The Male Brain*, New York: Broadway Books, 2010; Cynthia Darlington, *The Female Brain*, 2nd ed., Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2009.

qualities neither promote characters needed for the male who have come of age for hunting and warfare nor dovetail with characters already riddled by testosterone and adrenaline.¹⁸

The diminishing practice and incidence of actual hunting in the wild and colonization of peoples around the globe by dominant races and cultures have not removed the brain-imprints of hundred-thousand-years of male-experiences in world explorations and mastery over his rivals or competitors. Testosterone and adrenaline are still the main hormones presupposed by centers where driven males congregate in their pursuit and struggle for stakes. Females may have struggled recognition in the public sphere and, to some extent, may have succeeded in providing competition in some areas. It is, however, a different story when it comes to who rules and dominates the public. The prevailing institutions and pre-established practices still preserve the place of the male as the master in public.

The language of hunting and warfare proliferates in today’s corporate world: killing the enemy-competitor, paralyzing the rivals, reinforcing labor forces, reserve-army of labor, arming with new products, barricading resources, defending property rights, deployment of aggressive commercials, alliances, etc. The market leader of the industry phase must be a relentless predator, merciless in competition and exploitative in targeting consumers. Today’s info-productivity market leaders have become more wary of external and internal pressures and controls (against predatory and combative behaviour) and thus have become more “civilized,” scientific, and “politically-correct;” that is, more discriminate, creative, versatile, and cunning in dealing with market forces. Liberalism has managed to insert and convert into knowledge (exploitation, versatility, science) and consensus process (democracy, election, discussion and legal battle), the drives to hunt and kill.

Capitalism is really an arena for the more modern and “normal” form of hunting, warfare, and colonization – all replete with laws, ethics, and appropriate “privatized” religious behaviour and sacred persons. Although capitalism is an entirely different “war game,” it still calls for the “hot” qualities of males and the more “rational” (not affectional) procedures applicable to hunting and warfare. The rational, aggressive, adventurous, competitive, and conquering males have found their place in the age of

¹⁸Michael Gurian, *The Wonder of Girls: Understanding the Hidden Nature of Our Daughters*, New York: Pocket Books, 2002; Michael Gurian, *The Wonder of Boys: What Parents, Mentors and Educators Can Do to Shape Boys into Exceptional Men*, New York: Penguin Group, 1997.

hunting and colonization; such males will also find their niche in today's capitalist markets. Thus, fathering will be drawn into that niche and, in the process, interlocked in its practices, rules, and beliefs – making impingements part of the market's trinity of self-interest, profit-making/capital and labor, and liberal-democratic worldview.¹⁹

Nevertheless, people (most especially males) may become more self-critical and creative if they learn about the psycho-neurological bases and connections of impingements. They may see their places and roles in society in an ethical manner and hopefully, they could adjust themselves towards stakes and pursuits that would produce more positive impacts.

6. Interlocking Institutions-Persons

Persons are shaped through time by the culture that previous generations have constituted and handed down to succeeding generations. This means that market capitalism has produced citizens whose identities are resolved along the more familiar activities of paid employment, shopping, and consumption. Such activities make people study for years to acquire their degrees; earn money for needs and security, and consume daily necessities and goods that bestow some amount of social integration or distinction. Through such activities and in *longue durée*,²⁰ persons acquire identities that reflect the character of modern economy. In this sense, modern persons are also created in the image of modernity whose core is based on the axioms of private property/self-interest, capital and labour, and liberal-democracy. Impingements is thus very difficult to handle, because those who would want some change are themselves walking under the same skies and climate of capitalist economy.

Amidst environments where people pursue their goals and where they struggle for some place, individuals are expected to behave as educated and formed persons with skills and talents. They have to be ready for work and struggle. They have to face societies which previous generations of individuals have constituted. The societal forms are

¹⁹Ferdinand D. Dagmang, "Identities amidst Connections and Disconnections," *Hapag* 3/1-2 (2006), 53-103.

²⁰*Longue durée* is an umbrella concept referring to historical time that is so slow and stable. It forms at the interface of the natural physical world and human social activity, something significant to the understanding of what is enduring in society and culture. See Fernand Braudel of Fernand Braudel, "*Histoire et sciences sociales: La longue durée*," *Annales E.S.C.*, 13, 4 (1958); Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. I, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, 23ff.

regarded to be adequate for subsequent generations of individuals who must be predisposed to search for security, comfort, success, distinction, recognition and fulfillment.

Most people, however, are no longer conscious of the fact that as soon as they are disposed towards modern/late-modern lifestyles and thus pushed to become “more intelligent, more responsible, driven adults,” they have to be drawn away from their most “elementary” but treasured ways of finding comfort with their caring mothers/caregivers, leisure in child’s play, warmth in their homes, security in togetherness, and peace in mutual support.²¹ People have to become “real men,” as in acting like men do in the pursuit of those goals offered by societies defined by male managers who are forced to get accustomed to abbreviated warm relations at home and prolonged work in the workplace. In modern/late-modern settings, people are generally expected to act like the qualified men who must struggle toward success which in turn is understood in terms of usefulness and productivity – also bases of power, wealth, and distinction. An unintended consequence, however, results: their rational pursuits and struggles could neither satisfy their deeper need for affection nor compensate for the absence of satisfaction afforded by the warmth of care from mothers, homes, and other intimacy-producing social bonds or solidarities. Because people are largely unconscious of this need-satisfaction imperative being anchored in Care, they continuously compound their problems by thinking that their pursuits and successes are their real sources of salvation. Their creations and the quest for their creations have become, at the same time, their regular sources of deprivations or troubles.

Nevertheless, people oftentimes realize that work unbalanced by leisure and home time, for example, is not good for them. However, in their search for leisure and joy for themselves and their families, they are still entangled by the ways of business and commerce. They are stimulated by the enticements of billboards and commercials. Their choices, wittingly or unwittingly, will be diverted into or targeted by the products and services offered as objects of fulfillment by businesses pursuing profit. In having integrated themselves into the market, people are entrenched and

²¹Herb Goldberg, *The Hazards of Being Male*, New York: Signet, 1976; Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992, 149-152; Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill, London/NY: Continuum, 2004, 51-61.

implicated into the rational pursuits of profits, which can only provide substitutes for people's search for peace and fulfillment in their lives. When people of modernity/late-modernity finally feel that they are "freed" from the bondage of alienating work and pre-modern lifestyles, they are consequently *recaptured* by the snares of the gratifying objects of commerce.²²

Modernity/Late-modernity offers too many substitutes for or copies of the many forms of human bonding that people sorely miss. Their original desires, biologically and emotionally nurtured by the caring mother, have gradually transformed into autonomous desires looking for bonds, which can, in the meantime, no longer be commonly attached to mothers.²³ While the individual searches for those sorely missed feelings of care-satisfaction, countless objects are there to entice them, promising gratification. The individual, finally falling for one monetarized substitute/simulacrum, (e.g., signature jeans, Havaianas flip-flops, PSP, mobile phone, laptop, iPad, Facebook, DotA, LED TV, SUV, Rolex watch, golf clubs, false eyelashes, slim figure, firm abs, Boracay vacation,

²²Take the case of "enjoyment" or "fun" in video games: "The problem with video games ... is that they not only create tremendous arousal, increasing levels of dopamine and norepinephrine in the brain and levels of adrenaline in the blood, but they also require little or no physical exertion. This means that the increased levels of dopamine, norepinephrine, and adrenaline are not fully utilized during the game. Very often people who have played a video game walk away feeling nervous, tense, and irritable; their hands and legs literally shake. If they were to go out for a run, they would burn off the gas-pedal chemicals and feel fine again, but usually they try to reduce the stress caused by the excitement by eating or drinking foods that are rich in sugar... This lowers dopamine and norepinephrine and increases serotonin, allowing them some peace of mind and physical relaxation. They are literally medicating themselves with sugar in order to deal with the anxiety created by the dopamine. Yet the dopamine never really leaves the tissues and is simply waiting until some other form of arousal stimulates another round of excitement, anxiety, and stress. Many people – especially the young – are continually bouncing back and forth between arousal and satiation, between the 'fight-or-flight' response and the dreamy world of sugar- or drug-induced satiation. These heightened states of arousal and their concomitant levels of dopamine make dependence on sugar, refined foods, and drugs extremely tempting." Joel C. Robertson, with Tom Monte, *Natural Prozac: Learning to Release Your Body's Own Anti-Depressants*, New York: Harper Collins e-books, 2009, 49.

²³Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995; Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

etc.) clings momentarily to it until another product is noticed, and so on and on; and thus the endless search for that which would satisfy a longing which can only be calmed down by the most sympathetic attention which only a caring person (mother, wife or partner) could give. The cycle of cathexis (the process of investment of mental or emotional energy in a person, object, or idea) will forever haunt people the more they forget the fact that only a kind of compassionate maternal care could provide the self in turmoil the sense of peace it needs. The world of men only intensifies that longing for what that world has constantly excluded or subordinated.

The world of modernity (with its principles, practices, and processes) should be the logical target of change if we hope to produce more lasting cures for our ills. Change may result through counter-practices (or alternative practices) that could deal with modernity’s built ecologies, including its myth of progress, its fast-paced and utilitarian lifestyles, and its rules that engender a variety of death-dealing mechanisms (e.g., physiologic reactions to various stressors and alienating conditions that foster allergens, carcinogens, pathogens, etc.). No one, whether rich or poor, male or female, young or old, lay or cleric, may escape from them – conditions and mechanisms that also bring about spiritual malaise or negative predispositions; a situation which may be viewed as a common experience of iniquity; a power-sphere, a larger-than-human corrupting environment.

The question about work and consumption is the context in which ethics implicates the person whose identity is embedded in the place that produces both opportunities and disappointments. Every person must regard opportunities as opportunities for human flourishing; and every form of suffering as a chance to transform self or society for the better.

The home, the neighbourhood, and the village may be circumscribed by capitalism, inasmuch as these are also the sources of skills and the target of strategic marketing impulses. It is, however, encouraging that these places are also sources of alternative visions and lifestyles. This means that we can do something.

Alternative lifestyles suggest that there are roads less-travelled and these may lead to better worlds that put primacy on the whole human well-being and on the vulnerable members of society. Habits alternative to those peddled by today’s commerce may be the source of redemption for multitudes of persons. Such habits may well be engendering alternative institutions and persons of tomorrow.

Some alternative practices illustrate what I have in mind: the Edible Schoolyard (a garden in Martin Luther King Middle School in Berkeley, California, established to promote healthy and organic eating and combat childhood obesity); Green Mountain Farm-to-School (a leader in the growing farm-to-school movement in Vermont promotes the health and wellbeing of Vermont's children, farms and communities by providing programs to connect schools and farms through food and education; alternative childbirth practices that encourage the husband to have more active part in his wife's child-bearing/birthing and Seasons of Life Women Health and Birth Center; alternative communities like the Awra Amba in Ethiopia, where work has transcended the gender, class, and religious divides; the Green Schools Bara in Madagascar; and many more.

7. Conclusion

We have seen the use of the concept of impingements to uncover some of the negative impacts of the capitalist economic arrangements, practices, and processes on persons, homes, communities, and the environment. We realize that lessening the scourging impact of shortcomings and avoiding more negative impingements is our responsibility. Some pro-active fathering and mothering will be necessary.

Profit-making, minimum-wage, and competition operate powerfully and on a male-public platform and backdrop. It would entail overhaul or removal of such platform and backdrop in order for care, solidarity, and mutuality to *take the stage and prevail*. Is this really possible? It is possible if business owners and consumers will agree to change or transform their platform and backdrop from one based on capital and market principles into one based on care and solidarity. Corporate systems could give way to practices which are more humanitarian and uplifting. Perhaps, the caring warmth of the feminine could lessen the power of the scalding qualities of the male-dominated systems.

If capitalists are open to suggestion, reorganization of experience or ways of understanding could result via the caring ways of perceiving, gathering, and processing of information. This process of reorganization may, however, only happen through actual involvement in an experiential process of reorganization (as seen through the setting-up of alternative lifestyles). The care-and-solidarity ways of organizing what has been organized by older means-end models may be unsettling, but the former will eventually become useful in further examining the quality of every capitalist knowledge or practice.