

THE FUTURE OF WORK: A CLA CONTRAST AND SCENARIO

BY VINNY TAFURO

The world's contemporary economic systems are in crisis. Environmental destruction and climate change threaten natural and human habitats, the colonization of human attention at the brainstem by algorithms, and the capture and consolidation of political power place a majority of humans in fiscal, physical, and mental precarity. Driven by inaccurate assumptions, data, and models mainstream economics provides no path forward without expanding the concept of work beyond the limits of fiscal capital.

Regardless of where on the political or ideological spectrum these dominant economic models sit, they ignore up to two-thirds of the value created by the actions (aka work) of people – simply because those efforts are not exchanged for monetary compensation.

This limitation is a straight jacket to the individual and a cage to humanity's potential.

THE LABOR CAGE

The precarious state of workers and families today has created a litany of wicked problems undermining environmental health and social cohesion at every level. Poverty-driven health and education inequity robs children of opportunity. Family violence and financial hardship perpetuate violence in broader societal relationships. Addiction and social isolation destroy mental and physical health and drive deaths of despair. These burdens leave families unable to meet their own needs and block them from engaging in their neighborhood, civil society, and government to improve or often simply protect their standing.



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Work today remains dominated by centuries-old worldviews with underlying myths and metaphors that go back millennia. The centering of patriarchy, stratified social order, and assumed dominion over nature are deeply rooted and stand as bulwarks to human flourishing. Male domination of women, other men, and nature was enshrined by the Alphabetic religions and recorded beliefs of philosophers such as Aristotle (350 B.C.). Elimination of the feminine as divine by the Bible and the assumption by Aristotle that, "From the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule" have served as the foundational justifications for slavery, colonization, and exploitation. These practices support the unjust structures of our contemporary social systems.

Without addressing these worldviews, the narratives that support them, and the systems they entrench we cannot address the future of work. I would argue further that we may not be able to address the future of civilized society.

UNLOCKING THE CAGE WITH CLA

Our poor relationship to work is deeply rooted at the beginning of recorded history.

Despite two centuries of incremental shifts toward egalitarian systems, new narratives are needed as foundations for truly rebuilt systems and structures. While Causal-Layered Analysis (CLA) allows current paradigm analysis we can use it from an aspirational perspective to imagine future scenarios in which work, human and environmental value, and time itself are experienced differently through a new lens focused on cultivating human flourishing and supporting greater individual expression.

The table below contrasts a causal-layered analysis of work in contemporary society and a future scenario where we interpret a new narrative at each level to create a very different paradigm.



Image source: Canva

CLA: WORK AND TIME FUTURES

	CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY	A FUTURE SCENARIO
LITANY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technological unemployment. • Deaths of despair. • Selling out. • Gender gap. • Exploitation and lack of dignity. • Earn today relax tomorrow, maybe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eudemonia - A life of "good spirit" or "happiness" is an especially salient expectation. • Time well spent regarded as absolute foundation of modern life. • Cultivation not exploitation is the guiding principle of all organizations. • People are the number one asset within families, organizations, and society. • All children have equal opportunity to learn, experiment, and flourish. • Social sector provides support systems throughout the life. • Eldercare is a communal and cooperative effort.
SYSTEM / STRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrenched industrial infrastructure. • Science / Spirit disconnect. • Patriarchy. • Caste. • Dominance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economics includes social, cooperative, and market sectors. • Holistic scientific method developed. • Sacred human spirituality. • Partnership system and structures.
WORLDVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Nature must be taken by the forelock... lay hold of her and capture her... conquer and subdue her." - Sir Francis Bacon • Rational humanism. • Protestant work ethic. • Creativity as prostitution. • Hierarchy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gylany, "the linking of both halves of humanity" - Riane Eisler • Reconciliation of science and spirituality. • Humans are part of nature and have learned from their evolution instead of finding shame in it. • Consciousness gave rise to matter. • We are all divine expressions of the same universe. • Caretaking is important work.
METAPHOR / MYTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry God/sinful man entrance to heaven. • Money/usury sinful. • Biblical centering of man over nature and woman. • Aristotle (350 B.C.): "From the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All human belief systems share fundamental truths. • Dignity of matter and consciousness is a universal right.

ESCAPING THE LABOR CAGE (A SCENARIO)

How might we “work” in a future where we’ve replaced three millennia-old metaphors and myths with “new” ones which may offer a return to far older human truths?

Where we recognize time as a highly valuable and limited asset and count environmental and social capital stewardship as a function of fiat financial capital?

We can begin to peel away and reshape the worldviews and systems based on an emerging paradigm. The father of modern economics, Adam Smith, identified commercial artistry as “a sort of public prostitution” in the first chapter of *The Wealth of Nations*. Addressing that one world view alone may ease the crushing pressure that is felt in the arts community — saving the lives, minds, and hearts of so many creative people. Dispatching the Protestant work ethic would end more than 500 years of misogynistic and shame-centered philosophy that ignores the value of women and justifies work for the sake of work — without qualifying the broad value of that work.

In building a new narrative system, organizations and individuals can all work from a foundation that begins with human dignity within a sustainably cultivated environment that supports a healthy and cohesive social fabric.

Hard and dirty jobs will still be essential and highly skilled jobs requiring extensive education and/or training would coexist. But the former would not be a punishment for failing to achieve the latter.

These paths would be just two of so many that individuals could sample, pursue, and master as they move along their journey of life. The industrial model that dominates education systems would have to be replaced with a system that begins with teaching foundation intellectual and emotional education while introducing and diving deeper into other pursuits in response to a child’s curiosity as they develop.

This future envisions more professional artists, teachers, and health and wellness workers who are fairly compensated and well respected. Career choices that currently strike fear in the hearts of parents who fear for their child’s ROI on education and ability to survive let alone thrive. This future is one where investments by the private and public sectors into social sector programs are seen as concrete investments in social capital and strengthening social cohesion to support thriving market exchanges and engender trust in individuals and institutions.

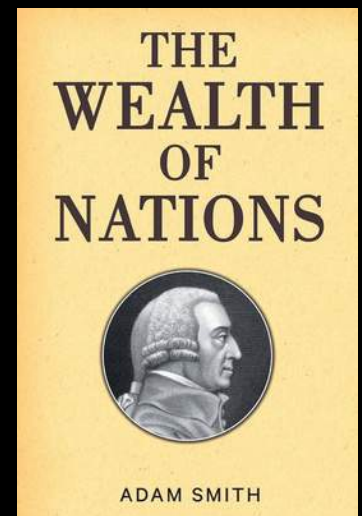


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UNLEASHING HUMAN POTENTIAL THROUGH WORK

Unleashing human potential through work lies in letting go of the rigid systems that weigh down individuals and society. The gylanic worldview proposed by Riane Eisler in *The Chalice and the Blade*, published in 1988, envisions the “resolution of our problems through the freeing of both halves of humanity.” The myths and metaphors, worldviews, and philosophers of the past that do not free both halves of humanity no longer serve us. By digging deeper into our cooperative past, we can recover new truths that allow our work to be better aligned with our physiological, psychological, and spiritual needs. Work in the future will be plentiful and navigating work at different life stages should be an exciting prospect — instead of dreaded necessity.

Vinny Tafuro is a consultant, futurist, and the founder of the Institute for Economic Evolution. A polymath and curious by nature, he is a pioneering advocate for the twenty-first-century economy that is disrupting society's rigid institutions and beliefs. Vinny's economic and foresight projects explore the societal and economic shifts being catalyzed by human culture as a result of technology, corporate personhood, and evolving human cognition.

An engaging and energetic speaker, Vinny presents on a variety of topics both professionally and through community outreach. He enjoys an active and blended professional, academic, and personal life, selecting challenging projects that offer opportunities for personal and professional growth.

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