Book Review Column


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It is rare in these days of mass academic publishing to encounter a genuine book in the old sense. This is one such. Hence, although I disagree with some of its main theses for reasons that will become presently apparent. I recognize that without it I would have been incapable of formulating my own contrary point of view. It has helped me to make up my mind and thereby it has shaped my mind. It will do no less for other readers. Economists in particular have much to learn from it about how their “dismal science” might be conducive to greater social happiness and also about the place of values in a market of prices, an issue that is obfuscated by the concept of “utility”. Whether one comes to agree or disagree with its conclusions hardly matters for it is a book that forces one to think through basic things oneself. That is the hallmark of a classic text, which this work might in time become.

It would be foolish to attempt a summary of a book so lengthy and vast in scope in a brief review. However, a few initial indications of at least the topics covered might help orient the reader. A better sense of what the book is about will also be gleaned from the more polemical discussion to follow. As its title stresses, it is about the market experience, not about the theory of market exchange nor about the market as an institution. By the term “market experience” Lane means the “psychological and social principles [which] govern the thinking, feeling, and behavior of participants in a market economy” (p. 4). This is of obvious relevance to microeconomics. But this book is of concern not only to economics, but to many other disciplines, above all, to psychology, sociology, ethics and law. What it achieves, therefore, is an integration of economics with these other disciplines. As Lane puts it, “only by a convocation of these several disciplines in invisible colleges will a proper interpretation of the market experience be possible” (p. 600). Since I have little faith in research by committee, I believe that only an individual like Lane can constitute such an “invisible college”.

The book addresses the major topics of microeconomics by challenging the accepted interpretations of the “concepts of utility, rationality, concepts of wants and wanting, and the desire for more money (mistakenly thought to be a neutral medium) as the single or at least dominant motivation” (p. 15). Instead of focusing on the outcomes of the market, consumer goods and services, it deals with the processes of participation in a market economy, above all, with the satisfactions and rewards gained from work, of which money is one component but by no means the most important one. The market is conducive to happiness and self-development as well as to satisfying the usual wants:

“The criteria for a successful market are its contributions to happiness (or utility) and to human development. Human development, in turn, is composed of cognitive complexity ... and two other elements: a sense of personal control (which is based on self-attribution) and an appropriately high sense of one’s own worth, self-esteem” (p. 155).

After a preliminary general exposition of basic concepts in Part I, the book goes on in Parts II and III with detailed studies of how the market realizes these goals of happiness and human development. The central sections, Parts V and VI, deal with work and its rewards, arguing against the economic conception that work is a chore or penalty to be paid for the rewards of consumer pleasures in leisure. According to Lane, work can and ought to be an intrinsic benefit to be sought for its own sake. Hence, Parts VII and VIII, the end part of the book, seem to counter what Lane regards as the fallacy that happiness and life-satisfaction are to be found in leisure and consumption. Lane contends that money is not conducive to happiness, above a minimum income necessary to relieve want. In the course of this discussion he provides a shrewd and subtle analysis of the concept “happiness” and associated terms.
Hence, despite initial appearances to the contrary, for Lane the consumer market economy is not the final historical answer to the economic problems of human well-being:

"... we have examined the claim that the market is a device offering the best way of satisfying wants in human society. Without denigrating its magnificent contribution to all the satisfactions that are brought about by increased national prosperity, we must recognize (Part V and VI) that it fails to give priority to the sources of greatest happiness, namely, achievement and the meeting of challenges in work, and it fails to acknowledge the intrinsic satisfactions derived from personal control, the performance of duty, and the desire for excellence" (p. 501).

Thus in the same breath as he praises the contribution of the market, Lane also condemns it, or at least that variant of it he calls the "consumer market", which for all intents and purposes can be read as capitalism. Capitalism, he seems to be arguing, has achieved much, but not enough; it will have to be transcended. To accomplish that last step of historical progress it is essential to criticize that aspect of the capitalist ideology Lane calls "economism":

"What we find is an integrated culture whose values, beliefs and motives are bound together by the tenets of the economistic fallacy, the belief that an individual’s sense of well-being is primarily a function of income and wealth. This causal belief is supported by ethical values, namely that to pursue happiness through material gain is ethically acceptable. To penetrate this well-armored belief, some chinks in the armor, some contrary beliefs, values and motives must be found or created" (p. 604).

Lane sets out such contrary beliefs, values and motives in his conception of a producer economy which is to take the place of the present consumer market economy. A producer economy is not to be identified with any of the known variants of socialism, or so Lane implies by his frequent criticisms of past socialist projects. Yet he himself locates it in the tradition of socialist thought concerning the nature of work:

"Some isolated spokesmen pointed to the possible enjoyment of work. At the beginning of this period, Fourier’s utopia (but not Owen’s experiments in New Lanark) emphasized the value of making work enjoyable, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, Ruskin and William Morris criticized work that was not done ‘with joy’ ... From an entirely different direction Marx’s criticism of work, which in the end was much more about the intrinsic satisfaction of work than about equality and justice, is the major nineteenth century statement, with echoes in communist literature and Soviet justifications of policy that survive the failure of Marx’s economic diagnosis" (p. 370).

A producer economy is one where the main coin of reward for effort is to be gained from the intrinsic satisfactions of the work itself, not from cash payment as at present in the work market. Such an economy would seem to be socialistically inclined in so far as it does not seem compatible with the market. Lane is aware of numerous such incompatibilities and sets them out at length in Chapter 16 as well as his Conclusion:

"It is inherent in the market that it give consumer welfare priority over worker welfare because consumers are the sources of profit and workers are costs. Inasmuch as exchange is central to the market network of transactions, giving price signals for the self-regulating system, it is inherent in the market that intrinsic satisfactions, none of which can be exchanged, should lack consideration ... Competition, a necessary feature of the market, inherently creates a degree of insecurity detracting from the enjoyments of market outcomes and processes. And it is inherent in the market that price should be the measure of value, for there is no register for our preferred metric ‘contribution to satisfaction with life as a whole’ “ (p. 609).

Lane is also aware that moving to a producer economy risks killing the goose that lays the golden eggs, the capitalist market-generated wealth; “it risks the prosperity that makes it possible to change priorities to favor worker well-being...” (p. 334-5). Nevertheless, he is undeterred by all these problems and believes that the circle can be squared, that worker satisfaction can also be generated by the market. How is this to be achieved? “It will take an act of social invention to find the way, but perhaps within the nascent discipline of socioeconomics there are people with ideas who can contribute to the creative acts required for such social invention”
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(p. 610). If it is left for professors to find a way, few will be willing to follow. Lane is more true to his cause when he admits openly that “Marx was right, the market economy is unfavorable to worker priority...” (p. 334). It seems, therefore, that a producer economy is some form of non-market socialism which is otherwise left unspecified.

This is obscured by the fact that Lane is critical of most socialist thinkers, accusing them of the twin faults of “economism” and “humanist criticism”. “Economism” comprises the usual foibles of economic thinking based on a too materialist concept of utility. “Humanist criticism” is the negative cultural pessimism of a long line of critics from Montesquieu through to the Frankfurt School Marxists, the Existentialists and such figures as Mumford, Hannah Arendt, Touraine and many contemporary thinkers. Pessimistic statements questioning the benefits and achievements of the market by the classic sociologists such as Simmel, Weber and Durkheim are also castigated as humanist criticism. My task in writing this review would have been simpler and I might have been able to conclude it on a positive note if not for one unfortunate fact: this reviewer happens to be such a humanist critic. And as one of our forbears, Voltaire, might say, we critics are dangerous critics, we defend ourselves when attacked. What follows is a defence of humanist criticism which is not intended to convince economists, for they are hound to be on Lane’s side in this dispute, and their view of his book will be unaffected by it; nevertheless, it might enable us to salvage something of our critical self-esteem.

Oscar Wilde defined the cynic as someone who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing. He knows the price of cabbages but not the value of kings, and conversely the price of kings (“every king has his price”) but not the value of cabbages (“the beauty of a cabbage, the rose among vegetables”). This definition of a cynical point of view raises the whole issue of the relation between prices and all other kinds of values, such as goodness, virtue, beauty, rationality and truth; which, in effect, also means the relation of economics to all other disciplines founded on other values apart from price. Indirectly this is also the subject of Lane’s book.

The cynical point of view in general for all values at all times is one that nobody will seriously entertain. We are all idealistic or naive enough to believe that there are some things above, beyond or besides price: that money cannot buy love, that a good woman is worth more than rubies, etc.

Nevertheless, we humanist critics are willing to grant that in a market economy or capitalist society the cynic is often right. Values can frequently be equated to price. If, as Lane puts it, “it is inherent in the market that price should be the measure of value” (p. 609) and, as Hobbes states, “Money ... is a sufficient measure of the value of all things else” (p. 79), then money or price and value or worth will tend to be treated as exchangeable and so interchangeable. The cynic will have been proved right. Of course, this does not mean that a cynical point of view prevails, for a humanist critic will then proceed to a critique of cynicism. Cynicism accepts price in lieu of value; humanist criticism affirms value in the face of price.

Lane will have no truck with cynicism; he is usually prepared to grant the cynic nothing and maintains an idealistic point of view throughout. In reply to the characteristic cynicism of the market espoused by humanist critics such as Tonnies and Simmel, Lane argues as follows:

“...by definition the use of price to facilitate exchange implies a common denominator that may govern evaluation where other properties of the thing in question, such as its beauty or serviceability would be better. Not only docs exchange ‘hollow out’ aesthetics (Simmel), it also reduces the variety of the world. When a businessman looks at the Black Forest in terms of lumber, he has narrowed his cognitive span. Wilde defines such a person as a cynic (‘a man who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing’). I know of no evidence that indicates an increase in this form of materialism and there is some evidence of its decline...” (p. 92).

One wonders whether the geographic market-driven surveys from space of the Amazon rainforest and all the other rainforests of the world as so much lumber to be exploited count as contrary evidence. Lane believes that the market itself has its own antidotes to such single-vision and single-valuation

“The multiple values of a market society (as contrast to gemeinschaft) - the variety of personalities in a society where individualism licenses (but does not always encourage) individuality, the many social functions requiring specialized knowledge where command of that knowledge rather than money brings honor and self-esteem, the cultural variety facilitated by international trade, and the cosmopolitanism that is protected by the
substitution of a money schema for ethnic and religious schemata - all offer resistances to the single standard” (p. 94)

We shall test this paean to the market, which in this context means capitalist society, by considering whether it delivers the cultural cornucopia that Lane imagines.

Odd as it might seem given this kind of statement, there is little in Lane’s book that deals with culture. There is, for example, no mention of the Culture Industry or the associated markets which service it. If cultural issues are raised it is usually to refute the accusations levelled against the market by the humanist critics. Thus we are told it is wrong to claim that there is a “market culture that is said to penetrate all institutions and practices in market societies: literature, religion, politics, family... ”; and that “it is impermissible, therefore, to claim that market attitudes, values, and skills generalize to non-market domains” (p. 25). It might seem unfair for a self-confessed humanist critic to choose culture as his field of battle as against a psychologist of the market were it not for the latter’s insistence that the market is so good for culture and his rejection of nearly every charge to the contrary.

According to Lane, it is those engaged in cultural activities who are most privileged in respect of “self-direction and work satisfaction”.

“Self-direction and work satisfaction are distributed along the lines of privileged-class hierarchy, the hierarchy of those who derive their (psychic) income from work (Chapter 15). This puts urban professors at the top of the ladder. Whereas the top of the income hierarchy is vulnerable to a redistribution of its particular resources, the top of the hierarchy based on psychic income from work, especially professors, scientists, professionals, artisans, and artists, is secure from depredations of this kind. They are thus doubly privileged” (p. 603).

It seems that in the realm of self-satisfaction the professors are kings. Unfortunately, Lane has not backed up his judgement of the “psychic income” of these various kinds of cultural professionals with studies of their conditions of work, and, what is even more crucial, their conditions of employment, namely, the kinds of markets for jobs and products that govern them. I cannot examine them all here so I must restrict myself to his first and last instances: professors and artists. The first is governed by the academic market which is part of what might be called the Education Industry. The second is served by the art market which is part of the Culture Industry. Starting with the latter first, I will discuss both of these in what might seem excessive detail also because I happen to have some “market experience” in these fields as no doubt have other professors.

The working life of an artist is dominated by the art market. Of the numerous art markets in the world for contemporary painting that of New York is decisive. Unfortunately, on the New York art market the cynic’s point of view is completely realized: price is value. This is particularly evident in the case of contemporary American painting, for in my judgement the works of painters such as Pollock, Lichtenstein, Warhol and currently the photographer Mapplethorpe, and many other so-called ‘pop’ and post modern artists are aesthetically worthless, yet they often fetch prices to equal or exceed those of the old masters. How this paradoxical result is achieved is a question for studies in the sociology and aesthetics of contemporary art which we cannot broach here. Suffice it to say that a market has been created through which cunning dealers, careerist art-gallery administrators and pliant critics, many of them professors of fine art, can persuade gullible millionaires with high-status aspirations and art-spectators to part with their money. Collecting paintings becomes just like collecting rare stamps. According to the art-critic Robert Hughes, “what strip mining is to nature, the art market is to culture”.

The artists who have to survive in this kind of cultural environment are far from privileged according to any hierarchy. The market creates a “star-system” whereby the few who succeed, the “winners”, condemn literally hundreds of thousands of others (there are estimated to be 200,000 artists in the US alone), the “losers”, to failure, frustration of unrealized talent, cynical bitterness, emotional suffering and in many cases to penury. Artists of real ability or honesty, as well as those with sound training who do not resort to gimmicks, have no chance in this kind of art market. This callous commercial devastation of a whole cultural environment of fine art, formed over untold centuries of tradition, has in turn a devastating effect on the populace as a whole. The mass of common people become justifiably cynical about “art” and “culture” and turn to the mass media for all their stunted aesthetic needs.

Lane would no doubt retort to this by arguing, as he does so often, that the market per se is innocent, that it does not create crooked dealers, art administrators and critics or even speculating
millionaires. Whenever he has to confront such an issue he invariably tries to shift the blame away from the market on to something else, be it capitalism or even the money system. There is a point to such a rejoinder for nobody could say that the market alone, of itself, is the cause of the contemporary debasement of art; many other factors such as the commercialization of culture in general, and earlier also its politicization, are to blame. But the market is not something separable from these other social conditions; there is no such thing as the market per se. Lane himself grants this at first when he contends that “...the economic system cannot be studied in isolation from the social system” (p. 35); but later, as we shall see, he often falls into the assumption that the market can be separated from the social conditions in which it is embedded.

What holds for the art market also holds for all the other markets of the Culture Industry. It is not worth repeating here what everyone knows concerning the products of the media, the role of advertising in the consumer market and of ratings in TV programs or the way Hollywood operates. Much the same now holds in the market for news where journalistic values in reporting and presentation have almost completely disappeared. The journalist Carl Bernstein writes in the Washington Post (reprinted in the Australian 3 June 1992) as follows:

“We are in the process of creating, it seems, what deserves to be called the idiot culture. Not an idiot sub-culture, which every society has bubbling beneath the surface and which can prove harmless fun, but the culture itself. For the first time in our history the weird and the stupid and the coarse are becoming our cultural norm, even our cultural ideal... What is happening today, unfortunately, is that the lowest form of popular culture - lack of information, misinformation, disinformation and a contempt for the truth or the reality of peoples' lives - has over-run real journalism. Today the people are being stuffed with garbage...”

Presumably the media-magnates will argue with some plausibility that this has nothing to do with them or the market which they faithfully serve. If the people have no desire for truth, how can they be forced to buy it?

But if it is true that we are now engulfed by a commercial idiot culture then what are we to make of the benefits of the market society that Lane extols: “the affluent society has two auxiliary strengths, higher levels of cognitive development and higher levels of life satisfaction” (p. 30). What is the level of cognitive development of the masses that consume the cultural junk of the media? What is the level of cognitive development of the educated ones with PhDs in physics or economics or administration whose tastes extend no further than rock and roll music, juvenile films and pulp fiction? What “higher levels of moral reasoning... imaginative thinking... resistance to unthinking obedience to authority without consulting their own conscience... lack of ethnic prejudice and [being] more accepting of complexity...” (p. 31) do such people evince while working in the arms industry or, for that matter, in the Culture Industry?

If we consider the matter historically and realize that in American society and other Western societies the rising levels of affluence in the course of this century have coincided with the spread of the “idiot culture”, then we will not so easily accept Lane’s claim that “the market contributes mightily to cognitive development by its success in creating conditions for economic growth” (p. 126). The market, it seems, also creates conditions for cultural stultification. This is an “affluence effect” Lane has not considered. Under such conditions the cycn’s point or view can be generalized to nearly everything on the market, a good X simply comes to mean an expensive X: hence, a painting, film, architect, lawyer or piece of scientific research is considered good if, and only if, it is costly. Cheap becomes synonymous with bad.

But what of the rising levels of education that affluent societies bring about, do these redound to cognitive complexity? To judge this we must consider the Education Industry and what purposes it serves in society. Education, like everything else in a market society, is sold and can be bought. However, it is not quite a commodity like all others for to dispense it or acquire it requires certification conditional on the passing of exams. Nevertheless, in capitalist societies education cannot be acquired without money beyond certain elementary levels or only with the greatest difficulty by the very gifted and assiduous. Those who cannot afford to pay to educate even their clever children will see them tail or drop out sooner than the dumb children of rich parents. The “public” school system in Britain and Australia, the private colleges and universities in the US and similar institutions elsewhere catering to the wealthy elite all play a dominant role in education. Hence the endowment of children with educational qualifications by parents constitutes a fund of “symbolic capital”, as Bourdieu calls it, which, though in some ways different from real
capital, can also be measured and calculated in monetary terms. A
given amount $X$ invested in a child’s
education can be expected to bring a yield of $X + Y$
in that child’s working career as an adult. Courses
of education and careers are usually chosen on that
basis, not with a view to any “cognitive
complexity”.

Symbolic capital - usually in the form of
certificates and degrees but also including such
intangibles as the correct accent in Britain - is the
crucial determinant of the job market. On it depend
one’s chances of success in most fields.
Unfortunately, Lane has almost nothing to say about
it or about the nature of “success” and how this is
measured by money. Perhaps incautiously he slips
in the phrase that “money is a measure of dignity
and success” (p. 336), but only to contradict it on
the very next page in saying that the “hypothesis
that people work, by and large, to maximize their
pay” (p. 337) is false. Are people so stupid that
they do not realize that if they maximize their pay
they will earn greater “dignity and success”,
socalled, or are they so unambitious that they do not
care for “dignity and success”? What is the
relentless drive for promotion in all careers graded
by rising scales of pay all about? Why do people
in general choose careers which will bring them
the maximum secure income? Why do the best and
brightest students seek to become doctors and
lawyers and in the 1980s financiers and even
accountants rather than professors? This drive for
success or ambition increases the higher up one
goes in society or on the educational ladder along
which people rise by degrees. And the only
unambiguous “measure of dignity and success” is
money in the form of scales of pay. Hence money
is the measure of man (of woman, too, these days.
of course).

Success in a capitalist market society is only
distantly related to any sense of achievement or job
satisfaction. It is directly related to class and status
mobility or what Lane euphemistically calls
“dignity”. The penalty for those who do not succeed
is class and status derogation which can have very
severe material and psychological consequences for
everyone except those cushioned by inherited
wealth. Hence the worship of the bitch goddess
success in such societies. For the sake of it people
will sacrifice achievement, job satisfaction and
personal happiness. In Japan, where the so-called
rat-race is in this respect even worse than the US,
people in the upper strata must almost be forced to
suffer, rather than enjoy, their few leisure hours
and karoshi, death from overwork, is quite common.

These few sociological generalizations are known
to everyone, yet they seem to have escaped Lane’s
attention in this work. He has little to say about the
interaction between money, education, the drive to
succeed and class and status and how these bear on
the job market.

Lane seems almost intent on avoiding these
topics, perhaps seeing them as tainted with
advice. He argues that it is family background
rather than bought schooling which counts and that
cognitive development is what people care about.
Only in one curious footnote is he forced into the
necessary corrective admissions:

“One must modify the implication of these
findings [that bought schooling is
unimportant], at least among an elite
stratum; in the United States the school
that a person attends greatly affects his or
her occupational attainment; but this seems
to have more to do with credentialism and
favoring likeness, which are nonmarket
phenomena - unless, of course, one defines
market processes as a device for class rule,
which is reasonable up to a point but
extraneous to the definition of the market
used here” (p. 300).

But does one really have to accept the Marxist
view on politics that sees “market processes as a
device for class rule” or agree that this is
“reasonable up to a point” to allow that credentials
and class are closely bound up with the market
and are not “nonmarket phenomena”? Weber
stresses this repeatedly; class is defined in market
terms and credentials are seen as a means to market
success. To exclude class and credentials “as
extraneous to the definition of the market used here”
puts into question that very definition of the market.

What kind of definition can it be that abstracts
the market from the conditions of its operation in
capitalist society, against Lane’s own prior
stipulation that the market is not to be separated
from the economic, social and cultural system in
which it is embedded? The meaning of the term
“market” shifts uneasily in Lane’s text. Sometimes
he seems to be using it almost as a figure of speech,
a syllogism such that the part (market) stands for
the whole (capitalist system), especially when it is
prefaced by the term “consumer”. At other times
he seems to be treating it as an idealized abstraction
distinct from any social system, as the exchange
principle per se which might be made compatible
with a producer economy (a socialist system). As
a result of this semantic ambiguity there arises a
fusion, and possible confusion, between the market
as it is (in capitalism) and the market as it might
potentially become or ought to be (in a future socialism). The two senses of the market are brought as close as possible together in order to argue that only a very small easily bridgeable historical step separates the one from the other. I shall come back to this point later.

I can now turn to a discussion of professors, who, according to Lane, enjoy the most privileged of all occupations. Unfortunately, Lane has not considered the rat-race of the academic market which every professor has to run. Professors are as avid for success, for class and status and, therefore, for money as is any other upwardly mobile group in society, perhaps even more so as they tend to be driven by a relentless ambition for promotion. They are themselves at the top of the whole educational hierarchy where those at the bottom earn least and teach small children and those at the very pinnacle earn most in the graduate schools of the elite universities. Thus in the academic market as elsewhere money in the form of salary is the "measure of dignity and success". In the true to-life academic novel by David Lodge, A Small World, the go-getting professor Morris Zap aspires to become "the highest paid professor of English in the world" (the real-life model for this character must by now be coming close to attaining this ambition). University administrators are quite aware of this fact. If they wish to attract the most prestigious professors in a given field they can easily do so by offering the highest salaries. Every professor has his or her price. Whether such academic success actually correlates with any achievement depends on the field in question. In some disciplines something akin to the New York art market operates; in other disciplines it is more like the market for soccer players. Obviously, if a team pays top price for soccer players it will buy the highest achievers and most talented. One cannot always say the same for universities.

Odd as it might seem, many of the presumed failings of the market - which Lane does his best to absolve - are exemplified almost to perfection by the academic market. Thus Lane claims to have "relieved the market of responsibility for encouraging the trait of competitiveness among its participants and, except for the detail worker, of making specialists who lacked the human qualities one associates with a whole personality" (p. 336). Yet it is not only detail workers but also professors who are fiercely competitive, and among whom competition takes the form of a direct personal rivalry with such features as jealousy and envy - even the occasional vendetta - which are not to be encountered among detail workers. And as for "making specialists who lacked the human qualities one associates with the whole personality", it is professors who tend to be closer to Weber's depiction of "cynics without spirit and sensualists without soul". There can be no doubt that the academic market promotes all these traits of intense rivalry and specialization, for jobs are now typically advertised in sub-disciplines and even sub-sub-disciplines for which only those in select groups of specialists are entitled to compete. Lane tries to counter "Marx's criticism of the division of labor and knowledge specialization" (p. 325) by arguing that in our time this "must be modified by seven altered circumstances" (listed on p. 326). But do any such "altered circumstances" justify the Fachdienoten, as the Germans say, produced by the academic market? And is this an environment conducive to the cognitive developments and job satisfactions that Lane assumes professors do enjoy? Also in other respects professors are not as removed from detail workers as Lane might suppose. In his review (TLS, June 6, 1992) of a book on British academia by A.H. Halsey, the noted educationist Harold Perkins writes as follows: "the profession has been 'proletarianized', transformed from a community of scholars into the wage-labor force of a nationalized industry."

All in all, then, the characteristic picture that a typical humanist critic, such as this reviewer, would give of the cultural effects of the market in a capitalist society such as the US is far removed from the positive depiction that emerges out of Lane's account. Undoubtedly Lane has considerable evidence for his view, drawing mainly on American specialized studies in social psychology, such as attitudinal testing. This evidence cannot simply be dismissed as ideologically biased by critics of this culture. Yet it clearly contradicts the more historically based sociological studies, which on the whole Lane tends not to use. My own completely untested hypothesis for this divergence is that psychological studies provide a more favorable impression of contemporary reality because what they implicitly test is the degree of peoples' adaptation to their society at any one given time. Invariably a large proportion of people adjust to the society in which they are raised, no matter how bad it is, because of what might be called the lobster-in-the-pot effect: a live lobster thrown into a pot of boiling water will jump out, but placed in a pot of cold water with the heat gradually turned up, it will remain there till cooked. Lane himself notes that "people adapt to whatever level of benefit or pain they currently experience" (p. 434), but he
does not realize that this reflects on much of the work in psychology on which he relies.

The other, and perhaps more important, reason for Lane's optimism concerning the market and, by extension, concerning capitalism in general is his belief in historical progress. History is moving in the right direction, so just as a producer economy will be superior to a consumer market economy (read "capitalism"), so must a consumer market economy be superior to the previous agricultural economy (read "traditional feudal society"). This is close to Marx's view of capitalism in relation to what it surpassed and what will surpass it. Lane, too, believes that history is on his side:

"The history of concern for the circumstances of work reveals a gradually increasing, though episodic, attention to intrinsic satisfaction in work (p. 370)... But the humanist proponent of intrinsic motives and rewards need not despair for there is (fragile) evidence of a long-term historical movement: from reliance on social support to reliance on economic gain to reliance on intrinsic motivation and rewards in the changing economies of the world" (p. 412).

This is like saying that the move from capitalism to socialism is just as assured as the move from feudalism to capitalism. Lane does his best to show that all the conditions for a future producer economy are already here; all it requires to complete the change is an axial turn in consciousness. If only people could be disabused of their misperceptions, false needs and fallacies which lead them to pursue money instead of job-satisfaction. The prognosis that their eyes will soon be opened is good: "the evidence in the quality of life studies showing a decline among the better off in the correlation between wealth and self-reported happiness suggests why prosperous people may now begin to doubt that it is income that makes them happy"(p. 605).

Unfortunately people do not make the wrong choices of work because they are mistaken or confused as to what will bring them happiness. They are compelled to make the choices they do by their society and the market which rules it. They must choose success rather than failure; and the canons of success are set for them and beyond their control; those canons are calibrated in money in capitalist societies. The transition from this to another society would call for a revolutionary change, such as Marx tried to bring about, and which Lane does not seem to favor for obvious reasons. Instead he seems to be advocating a gradualist transition. However, the distance separating capitalism from his producer economy is much more than a mere short historical step for which everything is already prepared; it is the gap between the real and ideal. A producer economy has much of the feel of an utopian goal.

History seems to be moving away rather than towards it. The whole tendency in the last century or so is not towards greater work satisfaction but towards less work; working hours in affluent countries have continually declined and are still declining further. In some countries, such as Germany, workers enjoy longer leisure than working hours. Lane pays no attention to leisure, even though his values of self-development and happiness are far better realized in self-selected leisure activities than in work. Leisure is not, as he seems to believe, merely a time for consumption, but also a time for self-improving pursuits that partly escape the constraints of work and the market. Lane has also failed to note that work is ceasing to play the key role in peoples' lives, especially so as women enter the labor market and as part-time jobs tend to be favored by them and also by increasing numbers of men as well.

Hence, if social and financial resources are to be devoted to improving the quality of life they would be better spent and have far greater effect in leisure activities than in work. The improvement in work could only be marginal since most tasks are constrained by the objective demands of the situation and most jobs are bound to remain dirty or boring. But there is no limit to how much leisure time could be improved. People could be persuaded to improve themselves physically through sport and outdoor activities; intellectually and aesthetically through educational, cultural and artistic pursuits that are achievement, not success, oriented; morally and spiritually through religious and character-promoting relations; people might also be induced to take part in convivial, communal and political affairs, especially so the last of these. We have seen what a difference it made to their self-esteem and self-improvement when workers in communist trade-union movements were able to organize their own activities outside working hours.

But none of this is conceivable unless something is first done about the "idiom culture". A way must be found to free the media from business control and the depredations of the advertising market. In general, the Culture Industry will have to be wound up and cultural institutions insulated as far as possible from the commercial market. Something similar will have to be done with the Education Industry. Provided all this can be accomplished, the market need not be otherwise
disturbed. After all, it has proved a wonderful machine for the satisfaction of consumer demands (utilities) and for economic growth. It can easily be made compatible with improved leisure; but not with improved work as in Lane’s producer economy. In the last resort, I would defend the market as against Lane.

Lane is also against any sequestration of culture from the market. He sees “dangers in isolating a domain” and contends that “the fear of pollution risks a damaging isolation” (p. 37); “barriers rigidify, become reified, and lend to institutions pretensions of autonomy” (p. 38). He would also be against any undue attention paid to out of work activities, holding that people fulfil themselves best in their work. I would retort that this is ultimately an “economistic” orientation that favors work and production to the detriment of everything else. The argument could go on from this point for a long time, far beyond the bounds of a review. All I seek to show is that a humanist critic has some means of defence as against Lane’s strictures. Nevertheless, it is imperative for humanist critics as well as economists and many others to confront the full force of Lane’s powerful battery of arguments. To do so they are obliged to read his book with great care. I urge them to do so for this is a work that will long remain in the forefront of everyone’s attention.