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RELIGION AND ECONOMICS

Edited by Peter A. Redpath,
Marvin B. D. Peláez and Jason Morgan

INTERNATIONAL ÉTIENNE GILSON SOCIETY
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Religion and Economics

Edited by Peter A. Redpath,
Marvin B. D. Peláez and Jason Morgan

Peter A. Redpath
Marvin B. D. Peláez
Jason Morgan

Religion and Economics: Editors' Introduction

The response to the special 2019 issue of *Studia Gilsoniana* on economics was so positive that it led to the creation of the Aquinas School of Leadership School of Economics (ASLSE). This 2021 publication is, therefore, a second special issue of *Studia Gilsoniana* on the same theme and the second installment of ASLSE's economic journals. We are delighted to present here further fruits of thought from the maturing *Studia Gilsoniana* and ASLSE partnership.

The papers in this special edition address the relationship between religion and economics in a capitalistic system. Because modern economics is often understood to be a value-free science, positing a relationship between economics and religion would appear to force together strange bedfellows. One reason that bringing economics and religion into conversation gives many pause is that each area of knowledge has its own principles and methods. As Aristotle warned in *On the Heavens*, a small mistake about first principles in the start of an investi-

Peter A. Redpath — CEO, Aquinas School of Leadership, Cave Creek, Ariz., USA
e-mail: peterredpathp@aquinasschoolofleadership.com ▪ ORCID: no data

Marvin B. D. Peláez — Universitat Abat Oliba, Barcelona, Spain; Adler–Aquinas Institute, Colorado Springs, Colo., USA; e-mail: marvinpelaez119@gmail.com ▪ ORCID ID: no data

Jason Morgan — Reitaku University, Chiba, Japan
e-mail: morgan.jason.michael@gmail.com ▪ ORCID: 0000-0002-2969-3010

gation leads to large mistakes as the enquiry proceeds.¹ A grave mistake exists in any attempt to study the relationship between economics and religion without knowing their respective principles and methods.

The principles of modern “mainstream” economics today are empirically-based, mathematically quantifiable relationships between economic variables. The variables can be observed from many aspects of economic activity (such as consumption, production, market exchange, government intervention, wealth creation) and the impact of technology on an economic system. The methods of economics are largely determined by these principles. At its most basic, modern “mainstream” economics counts the material and quantifies the human relationship to the material world. A principle of religion is the moral acknowledgment rooted in the principle of justice of the existence of a supreme being (or beings), who is (are) all-knowing and who regulate(s) conduct within a providential order among those who adhere the religion through moral precepts and laws. The methods of religion derive from this psychological principle. More than the material is involved in human existence, and those who study religion take seriously what William James called “the varieties of religious experience”—the different ways in which human interests interact with our sense of the otherworldly or divine.

While few today think of economics and religion as chiefly complementary, psychological endeavors, economic activity in ancient societies could not be divorced from adherence to a supreme being’s (or beings’) moral precepts such as justice and prudence as psychological principles, causes, influencing choice. Studies of ancient economic teachings and schools using a modern scientific framework show to exist in them a “symbiotic relationship between a god and the economic

¹ Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, Bk. 1, p. 5, 271b10.

well-being of his town, [where the god's house—the temple—was a commercial center]:²

In many instances, commerce occurred in the temple environs as a means of providing a dependable, easily accessible source of cult sacrifices, as observed in the New Testament scene between Jesus and the money-changers. However, another factor for conducting economic activity in or near temple precincts was the desire to conduct his business dealings under the benevolent aegis of the gods, who could ensure success and protect participants from opportunistic exploitation.³

In this context, religion and economics were much intertwined. But what about modern-day economics in a capitalistic system?

The late Clayton Christensen, former professor at Harvard Business School, indicated that religion and economics was very much a part of the fabric of a nascent American society in the eighteenth century.⁴ At that time, the discipline of economics (back then called *political economy*) had not yet developed to the putatively scientific discipline it is today. What prompted Christensen to make this observation was an encounter he had with a Marxist economist from China who, after studying in the United States for several months, observed that religion was in many ways the drive behind the economic system in the United States.⁵ This is a remarkable statement, and it requires serious consideration and further study. A most striking thing about the Chinese Marxist's observation is that it indicates a big hole in our conceptual framework in the contemporary West—we have yet to reconcile the

² Morris Silver, *Economic Structures of Antiquity* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995), 18.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Clayton Christensen, "Clayton Christensen on Religion and Capitalism." Big Think. YouTube video, 9:31 (April 23, 2012). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

⁵ *Ibid.*

principles and methods of two areas of knowledge, religion and economics as psychological and moral motivational principles.

On one side of this question, economics is held to be a value-free, scientific enterprise, and as such there can be no relationship between economics and religion. Ayn Rand, a well-known novelist-turned-philosopher, took this position in an unapologetic way in her writings, specifically in her novel *Atlas Shrugged*. The contrary position to what we might call the Randian “strict separation” thesis holds that economics and religion *are* related, in some way and to some degree, and therefore should be considered in tandem. The papers in this special edition of *Studia Gilsoniana* set out to show the extent and quality of the relationship between economics and religion from a variety of viewpoints and historical periods.

The Order of Science, Philosophy, and Religion

To facilitate reconciling economics and religion, we analyze their relative order as different *bodies of knowledge*, or *subjects of study/interest* since St. Thomas Aquinas following Aristotle indicates in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, it is incumbent upon the wise man “to order things rightly and govern them well.”⁶ While, by refining Aristotle’s classification of the sciences through his own *faculty psychology* and doctrine of a *formal object* (what, today, we might call an *external stimulus*), Aquinas clearly explicated the nature of the psychologically distinct orders of economics and religion, because his technical jargon takes years (often decades) to master, in this editorial introduction we will consider it from Mortimer J. Adler’s more reader-friendly way of

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles. Book One: God*, trans. Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 64.

talking about this, which is itself indebted, and faithful, to the teachings of St. Thomas.⁷

Adler thought in terms of a tripartite division of bodies of the genus (wider order) of human knowledge into three species (smaller orders within the same genus): “the three great departments of our culture: science, philosophy, and religion.”⁸ For Adler, these are not discrete spheres sharing no commonality. An order exists among them. Today, many scholars find this view surprising. For example, modern economics is often seen as a science, even though economic thought originated as a branch of philosophy, which the Ancient Greeks had considered to be a division of ethics.

Adler proposed two ways to order science, philosophy, and religion as species of a wider order, or body, of knowledge. First, as bodies of knowledge all three appear to be equal and coordinate with each other.⁹ However, a difficulty immediately arises. How does one view the purported relationship between economics and religion as such bodies, subjects of study? We may say, or even know, that economics and religion are related as ways of knowing, but how?

Adler thought this problem is not one related to their natures. It is sociological. It is indicative of what society thinks about the ordering of science, philosophy, religion—how to include them with a hierarchy within some more general order. Faced with this difficulty, Adler proposes an alternative. Properly understood, an ascending hierarchy of the

⁷ *S.Th.*, I, q. 1, respondeo and ad 2; I, q. 77, a. 3, respondeo; *Thomas Aquinas: The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1986), 13; Mortimer J. Adler, *How to Think about The Great Ideas: From the Great Books of Western Civilization* (Chicago: Open Court, 2000).

⁸ Adler, *How to Think about The Great Ideas*, 467.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 473–474.

domains of knowledge exists—starting with science, then philosophy, and finally religion as the highest domain of knowledge.¹⁰

In making these arguments, Adler is expressing a central theme that repeatedly occurs within the history of Western thought. For example, this ascending hierarchy of domains was expounded by St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century and by St. John Paul II in his 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio*:

It may help, then, to turn briefly to the different modes of truth. Most of them depend upon immediate evidence or are confirmed by experimentation. This is the mode of truth proper to everyday life and to scientific research. At another level we find philosophical truth, that attained by means of the speculative powers of the human intellect. Finally, there are religious truths which are to some degree grounded in philosophy, and which we find in the answers which the different religious traditions offer to the ultimate questions.¹¹

Within this hierarchical structure, Adler explains, “in theoretical order as you ascend from science to philosophy to religion you get the answers to more so ultimate questions.”¹² The modern discipline of economics is value-free and answers proximate questions because it focuses on *individual material needs for physical survival*. Since people are more than material beings, economics must be in conversation, fruitful dialogue, with psychologically more complicated issues (such as philosophical and religious) to help address more psychologically demanding questions (such as war and peace, love and hatred, being wise or foolish, prudent or asinine) for the psychological well-being and good of human beings as social animals. By expanding the hierarchical ordering of the sciences in this sociological way, as Adler (fol-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 474.

¹¹ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1998), 30.

¹² Adler, *How to Think about The Great Ideas*, 474.

lowing St. Thomas Aquinas) proposed, we may better understand how a relationship exists between economics and religion.

Once a reader can recognize that a sociological, ascending hierarchy of knowledge can recognize how economics and religion can be reconciled as different species of knowing unequally belonging to a wider order of knowledge, he or she should be able more easily to appreciate how religion and economics can reciprocally enrich each other in their normative, and other, aspects. The papers in this special edition are rooted in this cross-disciplinary, reciprocally-enriching thinking. Hence, they set out to show how domains of knowledge—considered separate by many today—can and do interact and benefit by so doing.

Description of Papers

In the six papers in this special edition of *Studia Gilsoniana*, three address religion as providing the moral norms toward achieving well-being and highest good in a society even when conflict exists in an economic system within that society. A good example of this exists in Renato Cristin's essay. Therein Cristin argues for a proper understanding and application of Catholic Social Doctrine in support of capitalism that provides the economic framework in which the poor can flourish. Owen Anderson brings "Ayn Rand, Thrasymachus, Socrates, and the Apostle Paul into conversation about what it means to be just." Taking up the theme, he carries it forward to show that social good is a perennial concern deeply rooted in both economic and religious understandings. In the same way, Tom Michaud writes that: "The degree to which market economies are grounded on moral norms that are affirmed as metaphysically objective and universal is the degree to which the market economies can flourish. Without such normative grounds, moral turpitude can corrupt a market economy, ultimately resulting in the e-

conomy's collapse." Without religion or religiously-grounded moral precepts, economic activity breaks down and societies greatly suffer.

Two papers approach religion and economics from the perspective of two religious traditions, one from the West and the other from the East. From the West, Peter A. Redpath considers the perennial problem of "sound money" from a Thomistic perspective, addressing the sociological and psychological impact the exchange power or sound and unsound money has within an economic system. From the East, Jason Morgan argues that, in Japan, Shintō notions of distributed divinity help buoy the human person as a moral actor, thereby inspiring moral economic engagement emphasizing the good of the self, the other, and society as a whole. Taken together, Redpath's and Morgan's work here suggests that truth can be found in all subjects of human interest and at any time in history. This universality of truth is reiterated in *Fides et Ratio*, wherein St. John Paul II speaks of the "quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart."¹³ The quest for meaning, John Paul writes, can be found:

[I]n the sacred writings of Israel, as also in the Veda and the Avesta; we find them in the writings of Confucius and Lao-Tze, and in the preaching of Tirthankara and Buddha; they appear in the poetry of Homer and in the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles, as they do in the philosophical writings of Plato and Aristotle.¹⁴

To conclude this edition's collection, Daniel Hammond addresses the religious convictions of three well-known twentieth-century economists, focusing in particular Milton Friedman from the famed "Chicago School of Economics." Hammond discusses how these economists' views of religion affected their economic thinking, which in turn affected economics as we see it practiced today in the United

¹³ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

States of America. Even in the modern, allegedly post-religious United States, Clayton Christensen's Chinese Marxist interlocutor's observation holds true. Religion is at work in economics. Daniel Hammond's essay is a nuanced investigation of how this truth plays out in strongholds of even secularist economic thought.

While the papers in this special edition take seriously the relationship between religion and economics, they also respect and maintain the distinction between these domains of knowledge. They recognize that properly to unite different orders of knowing, these orders must first be properly distinguished. And, while the papers herein do not seek to alter the mainstream framework of economics in terms of its principles and methods, they do show that economics' value-free conclusions become more significant from the religious perspective when formulating courses of action or policy solutions to economic problems. We are confident that these papers in the special edition will serve as catalysts toward that desirable end.



Religion and Economics: Editors' Introduction

SUMMARY

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KEYWORDS

Religion, economic science, philosophy, science, economics.

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Renato Cristin

Proprietà e identità: La Dottrina sociale della Chiesa e l’unione fra cristianesimo e capitalismo

In Europa, ma per certi aspetti nel mondo occidentale in generale, stiamo vivendo oggi un’epoca particolarmente caotica, nella quale non solo si osserva la sostituzione di forme di vita tradizionali con surrogati che producono un indebolimento della capacità critica, della comprensione della realtà e della coscienza storica, causando così un profondo disorientamento nelle persone e nei popoli, ma si vede anche all’opera un vasto progetto di liquefazione delle strutture fondamentali, originarie e basilari, dell’intera civiltà europea.

Con il termine “liquefazione” intendo rinviare alla teoria di Zygmunt Bauman, che interpreta la società contemporanea come “società liquida,” attribuendo a questa liquidità un valore positivo, corrispondente alle teorie postmoderne della commistione e della decostruzione. Liquido viene contrapposto a solido, facendoci credere che la solidità (intellettuale, etica e pratica) sarebbe un disvalore, un concetto antiquato, inutilizzabile e anche dannoso per il progresso civile, perché essa implicherebbe la solidificazione, la cementificazione sociale, dal momento che sarebbe portatrice di ciò che i postmodernisti-decostruzionisti considerano il nemico del progresso, portatrice cioè dell’identità (il

Renato Cristin — Università degli Studi di Trieste, Trieste, Italy
e-mail: cristin@units.it • ORCID: 0000-0002-9650-657X

peggiore dei concetti), a cui invece la visione fluida della società contrappone la mescolanza, vettore della grande trasformazione anti-identitaria e anti-tradizione che il paradigma del politicamente corretto sta tentando di imporre all'Europa.¹

Ma la società liquida è, in realtà, una società liquidata, che ha consumato il terreno, le fondamenta e le radici, da cui era sorta, e che così facendo è diventata oggi un fantasma della grandezza spirituale e della qualità morale che l'Europa è stata, un ectoplasma della sua identità. In questa epoca di liquidazione, in cui il migliore offerente ha il maggiore successo a prescindere dalla qualità della propria merce o del proprio pensiero, tutto è confuso: i criteri si affastellano l'uno sull'altro senza discernimento, i principi vengono piegati a finalità strumentali; le qualità non vengono più riconosciute e qualsiasi cosa (prodotta dal pensiero o dall'agire) vale qualsiasi altra; i valori vengono denigrati come residui di una concezione identitaria che va superata nel mondo dell'indistinto concettuale e dell'indifferenza morale; il canone occidentale si è incrinato al punto da sgretolarsi; l'ordine, che pure è sempre stato precario e che è stato sconvolto da guerre spaventose e spesso insensate, viene sostituito dal caos sistematico.

In questo contesto in cui l'irreggimentazione burocratica produce, paradossalmente, effetti di caos generalizzato; in cui l'imposizione del paradigma di pensiero e di azione che definiamo politicamente corretto ha generato un pauroso smarrimento di valori consolidatisi lungo secoli di storia; in cui il progressismo radicale, nel quale si uniscono il più brutale laicismo e il marxismo culturale, ha causato una de-cristianizzazione che ha valicato ogni immaginabile processo di secolarizzazione, in un tale contesto, dunque, abbiamo bisogno di ripristinare i concetti di tradizione, di autorità e di identità, per conseguire quel grado di ordine che può rigenerare quei concetti e conferirci quella stabilità,

¹ Cfr. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge 2000).

sociale e culturale, storica e strategica, che può permetterci di guardare al destino della civiltà occidentale con una volontà di affermazione e non con un sentimento di declino, di autocolpevolizzazione e di dissoluzione.

E la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa può essere uno dei vettori fondamentali di questa rigenerazione e del recupero dell'ordine smarrito. Che in questo scenario essa sia centrale è ovvio: se centrale continua ad essere, almeno in Occidente e almeno potenzialmente, la Chiesa cattolica e più in generale il Cristianesimo, e se la proiezione concreta della storia occidentale è la società, ovvero ciò che con parole husserliane possiamo chiamare la dimensione socio-culturale del mondo-della-vita, è evidente che l'azione della Chiesa nella società sia uno degli snodi cruciali della nostra esistenza storica e del destino della nostra civiltà.

Per fondare in modo più articolato questa tesi, e per mostrare alcuni aspetti della Dottrina sociale della Chiesa che ritengo decisivi per la nostra realtà attuale, svilupperò un'interpretazione non direttamente politica, ma pienamente sociale e quindi, per essenza, politico-culturale, della Dottrina sociale della Chiesa.

Se concepiamo dunque quest'ultima come un testo, possiamo elaborarne un'ermeneutica che la espliciti nella sua articolazione e nel suo orizzonte di senso. Ogni interpretazione però è un atto che, pur restando all'interno di certe strutture ermeneutiche unanimemente riconosciute e accettate, la rende particolare, non soggettiva nel senso deperiore del termine, ma certamente personale. Lo sforzo dell'interprete dovrà quindi essere quello, a partire dal proprio orizzonte personale, di fondersi con l'orizzonte del testo e con la sua verità. E l'esperienza ermeneutica della verità unisce, come insegna Gadamer, l'autorità del testo con la tradizione in cui l'autore e l'interprete sono inseriti. La conseguente *applicazione* rappresenta il momento conclusivo del lavoro ermeneutico, quel momento in cui si conclude un percorso e da cui se ne può aprire, successivamente, uno ulteriore.

Ora, poiché la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa non è racchiusa in un testo strettamente codificato, i margini della sua esegesi possono essere più ampi di quelli dell'ermeneutica testuale, e perciò ci si può più facilmente trovare dinanzi a quello che Ricoeur aveva chiamato "il conflitto delle interpretazioni" e quindi dinanzi a *divergenze ermeneutiche*, a esiti interpretativi differenti, che sono il risultato di differenti punti di vista e sono a loro volta fondamento per ulteriori proiezioni. Accanto ai cardini morali e religiosi, che suscitano divergenze non per quanto riguarda il loro valore ma nella loro traduzione concreta e contingente, uno dei nuclei centrali di queste esegesi divaricate è costituito dalla dimensione sociale intesa come sfera in cui convergono la politica, l'economia e l'etica.

Si tratta di diversità di lettura che riflettono impostazioni socio-politiche talvolta anche opposte: lo sguardo dell'interprete non è mai svincolato dal proprio orizzonte di esperienza e di idee, e quindi egli sarà sempre pre-orientato nella sua interpretazione. Queste varianti esegetiche sono alla base di utilizzi sul piano della teoria politica e di quella economica, legittimi ma talvolta non rispondenti al dettato stesso della Dottrina sociale della Chiesa, i quali mostrano non solo tendenze diverse su problemi circoscritti o contingenti, ma anche opposte visioni complessive dell'ordinamento sociale e politico. La Dottrina sociale della Chiesa ha tuttavia un contesto di riferimento stabile, il Vangelo della fede cattolica, la Bibbia stessa, che ne dovrebbe determinare la lettura e delegittimare quelle che vi cospirano contro. E si rimane sconcertati, quando è l'apice ecclesiastico a staccare questa cornice dalla sua tradizione, rivendicando, cito a senso, il pragmatismo contro il paradigma.

Si constata dunque le differenze ermeneutiche e le loro conseguenze sul piano pratico, e tuttavia, come l'ermeneutica ha sempre sostenuto e dimostrato, esiste l'interpretazione migliore, quella che *in tutti* i suoi aspetti si rivela più adeguata a tutti gli aspetti del testo stesso, oltre che al contesto che lo regge, che nel caso della Dottrina sociale

della Chiesa è quello di una tradizione bimillenaria e a un testo sacro che non può essere stravolto senza conseguenze devastanti per l'intero sistema della fede, l'interpretazione che possiamo definire *autorevole* e che diventa canonica, perché rappresenta il canone ermeneutico di quel determinato testo o di quel dato problema.

E la sistematizzazione dottrinale fornita dalle *Lezioni* dell'Arcivescovo Giampaolo Crepaldi,² rappresenta questo canone, perché contiene anche il risvolto della *applicazione*, non di tipo idealistico o ipotetico, ma di carattere realistico, concreto e realizzabile dal punto di vista del più ampio sistema economico-sociale dell'Occidente nel quale la Dottrina sociale è ovviamente inserita. Nell'ermeneutica speciale ma non specialistica della Dottrina sociale della Chiesa che tento qui di elaborare, mi concentrerò dunque sul momento dell'applicazione, cioè sulla declinazione di tale Dottrina sul terreno dell'attualità. Ma poiché applicare la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa significa farla vivere costantemente nell'orizzonte di attualità e di finitezza, senza però mai smarrire il fondo di verità e di trascendenza (e quindi di fede) che ne sta alla base, anche l'applicazione più concreta e più pragmaticamente curvata, dovrà sempre avere lo sguardo rivolto alla trascendenza stessa.

Il quadro generale, ma al tempo stesso dettagliato nei suoi vari ambiti tematici, della Dottrina sociale della Chiesa è esposto in forma definitiva proprio nelle *Lezioni* di Monsignor Crepaldi, e proprio perché esaustivo, quel quadro diventa per noi una *base testuale* di tale Dottrina, un testo che ne raccoglie principi, valori e senso, e che rappresenta dunque il testo generale da cui sviluppare interpretazioni particolari, riferite ad ambiti o temi specifici. In queste *Lezioni*, accanto alla sistematizzazione del metodo e dei fondamenti della Dottrina sociale, Monsignor Crepaldi ci offre un'interpretazione delle sue implicazioni *politiche*, sempre in conformità con quello che egli chiama "il deposito della

² G. Crepaldi, *Lezioni di Dottrina sociale della Chiesa* (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, 2018).

fede,” quel patrimonio cioè formato e fissato da Scrittura, Tradizione e Magistero.

Ispirandosi ai grandi dottori della Chiesa e ai principi enunciati da Giovanni Paolo II (in particolare nell'enciclica *Centesimus annus*) e da Benedetto XVI (il riferimento principale è all'enciclica *Caritas in veritate*), Monsignor Crepaldi ha il coraggio, rimarchevole soprattutto nel momento di grande confusione che sta vivendo oggi la Chiesa, di toccare i punti fondamentali della vita sociale in generale e di quella occidentale in special modo. Uno dei molti pregi di questa accurata opera di ricostruzione e rielaborazione teorica consiste infatti nella esplicitazione del rapporto fra la dottrina cristiana e il sistema socio-economico occidentale, o più brevemente: fra cristianesimo e capitalismo. L'Arcivescovo precisa in forma teorico-teologica il nesso con il mondo della produzione, in tutti i suoi aspetti. Egli pone mano a una materia che, per le sue sfumature etiche, dev'essere trattata con estrema cautela, e lo fa con un'accuratezza e un equilibrio esemplari.

A partire dal quadro dottrinale, chiarito che giustizia non significa redistribuzione, ma solidarietà, dobbiamo pertanto chiederci quali sono le condizioni di possibilità della solidarietà, non come semplice ideale ma come pratica concreta. Le condizioni materiali che la rendono possibile non sono disgiunte da quelle spirituali o morali. La ricerca della giustizia infatti non deve mai essere disgiunta da quella della verità, e poiché entrambe vanno sempre connesse con la libertà, intesa sia come libero arbitrio conferito da Dio stesso, sia come libertà dell'agire nella società e quindi come libertà personale nelle scelte pratiche, la giustizia va sempre intesa come spinta verso una produzione che sia utile a tutti, che sia cioè funzionale al bene comune nella misura in cui contribuisce alla crescita materiale (oltre che ovviamente spirituale) della società. Giustizia sociale e benessere sono dunque direttamente proporzionali alla crescita economica, e quest'ultima dipende dal grado di libertà complessiva di una società, e dal suo livello di sussidiarietà.

La sussidiarietà, che Monsignor Crepaldi definisce come “la rivendicazione di spazi di libertà responsabile,” non ha nulla a che vedere con il sussidio garantito, bensì suscita in ciascuno e a ciascun livello, a cascata, il senso di responsabilità attivo e produttivo. In questo senso, la povertà si supera sia con il lavoro sia con la coscienza della produttività, che sono le due condizioni di possibilità per qualsiasi benessere sociale, in una circolarità virtuosa fra dimensione materiale e sfera spirituale.

Il lavoro, inteso come operosità, come spirito che trasferisce l’idea della trascendenza sul piano storico in una spinta alla realizzazione concreta, alla creatività, alla produzione o, in termini economici, alla imprenditorialità, è uno dei pilastri concettuali su cui si erige la Dottrina sociale. Nella *Centesimus annus*, Giovanni Paolo II aveva già fissato la cornice teorica: il rapporto dell’uomo con la terra è determinato dal lavoro, perché, sosteneva il Papa polacco, “è mediante il lavoro che l’uomo, usando la sua intelligenza e la sua libertà, riesce a dominarla e ne fa la sua degna dimora. In tal modo egli fa propria una parte della terra, che appunto si è acquistata col lavoro. È qui *l’origine della proprietà individuale*.”³ E poiché il lavoro è parte fondamentale dell’esistenza umana, il concetto di lavoro va compreso nel suo senso più ampio, che travalica cioè la dimensione economica. Giovanni Paolo II pensa infatti, come annota George Weigel, “that development economics and economic development strategies cannot be abstracted from questions of culture and politics.”⁴ La “destinazione universale dei beni”⁵ riguarda dunque l’assegnazione che Dio ha fatto all’umanità e, in secondo luogo, riguarda il buon uso che dei beni si deve fare per far

³ Papa Giovanni Paolo II, *Centesimus annus* (Roma 1991), 31.

⁴ G. Weigel, “The Free and Virtuous Society,” Ethics and Public Policy Center (May 19, 2004). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

⁵ Papa Giovanni Paolo II, *Centesimus annus*, 6, 43, 61.

crescere la società, ma non ha nulla a che vedere con la collettivizzazione dei beni che ciascuno si è acquistato grazie al proprio lavoro.

Nell'interpretazione e nella soluzione di questo nodo, che rappresenta un punto cruciale della concezione del mondo espressa dalla civiltà occidentale, Crepaldi non ha esitazioni: tutte le risorse, materiali e spirituali, naturali e intellettuali, devono essere valorizzate per sé e nell'insieme sociale, e "il modo per metterle a frutto è il *lavoro*, il quale legittima la *proprietà privata*." La redistribuzione forzata della ricchezza è una falsificazione ideologica dello spirito cristiano, perché, prosegue Monsignor Crepaldi, "i beni non sono dati a tutti in fettine uguali, ma sono messi a disposizione di tutti perché tutti vi abbiano accesso con il proprio lavoro, accedendo così alla proprietà privata." E quindi il sistema proprietario inteso come sistema non solo economico ma anche culturale (e perfino, potremmo dire, spingendo il discorso al limite, spirituale) è in piena armonia con il paradigma teologico ed etico del Cristianesimo, perché in esso i talenti che Dio ha assegnato a ciascuno possono essere sviluppati individualmente secondo le capacità e il senso di responsabilità di ciascuno. Perciò "la diffusione della proprietà privata è il modo corretto con cui realizzare la destinazione universale dei beni," perché la destinazione implica la crescita della ricchezza generale grazie all'iniziativa individuale. La teoria socioeconomica espressa da Monsignor Crepaldi, ancorata nella pienezza dell'omiletica cristiana e nel più genuino spirito di bontà e carità, è dunque quanto di più distante dalle fumose e invero anche obnubilanti teorie della decrescita.

E percorrendo questa via egli tocca la questione dello statalismo, il nervo scoperto di tutte le teorie economico-sociali moderne e contemporanee, sia che lo accettino passivamente, sia che lo rifiutino sia che addirittura lo rivendichino: la messa a frutto dei talenti non deve essere inquinata da interventi extrapersonali e quindi "la soluzione non sta nel concentramento nello Stato e nella sua distribuzione, ma nel favorire la partecipazione, tramite il lavoro, alla produzione della piccola

proprietà privata.” Solo così si può mirare, con buone possibilità di risultato, al bene comune; solo così si può arricchire non solo materialmente ma pure, e soprattutto, spiritualmente la società, la quale prima di tutto, prima cioè di essere una formazione statale, è una comunità vivente che si nutre dello spirito più ancora che della materia; una comunità che respira nella storia, una comunità di persone con i loro valori e la loro identità, con la loro tradizione e le loro aspirazioni, le quali vanno comprese e, nel caso della religione cattolica, riconosciute e valorizzate nella loro funzione fondante e strutturante.

Come va dunque inteso il concetto di “bene comune,” quella nozione così citata ma spesso altrettanto fraintesa? La risposta di Monsignor Crepaldi è articolata e tuttavia perfettamente perspicua: il bene comune esprime in primo luogo “l’ordine naturale delle cose,” e a differenza del “progressismo,” secondo cui “la costruzione del futuro passa attraverso il rifiuto di un ordine naturale dato,” la visione cattolica concepisce il futuro a partire dalla tradizione, la quale, come una forza motrice retrostante, ci fornisce la possibilità di procedere verso il futuro costruendolo sulle solide fondamenta del nostro passato.

Sottolineando i cardini concettuali del bene comune, che sono l’analogicità (o sussidiarietà) e la verticalità, Monsignor Crepaldi esprime un’esigenza che è al tempo stesso esistenziale e trascendente, la necessità cioè di rafforzare sia la prossimità fra le persone nelle loro preoccupazioni quotidiane, sia la cura della trascendenza ovvero l’affermazione del fine ultimo, Dio, punto teleologico fisso in base al quale ordinare i fini dell’uomo nella società, poiché “se manca il fine ultimo, si destabilizzano anche i fini intermedi.”

In questa prospettiva che è, nel contempo, teologica e filosofica, psicologica e sociale, storica, culturale e, ovviamente, economica (soprattutto nel senso dell’antica *oikonomia*, di quell’ordine della casa che sta alla base di tutto l’ordine civile perché riguarda il nucleo originario della civiltà occidentale: la famiglia), il bene comune è principalmente

“un bene eticamente finalistico,” avversato dal pensiero anti-tradizionalista e anti-identitario, che disconosce non solo il ruolo della tradizione ma anche quello di una prospettiva teleologica dell’essere umano e delle società occidentali in particolare, e che vuole distruggere il rapporto fra ordine naturale e princìpi non negoziabili, fra ordine e civiltà, fra l’ordine e il senso del sacro. Lo sguardo di Monsignor Crepaldi scruta e valuta il presente, ma si proietta in lontananza, perché nella crisi attuale vede il rischio di una caduta futura: “se pensiamo a come oggi il progressismo voglia addirittura cambiare la natura umana, ci rendiamo conto come questa frattura tra fini e ordine naturale sia giunta a piena—e drammatica—maturazione.”

Pur non equivalendo al benessere materiale, sul piano sociale concreto il bene comune dev’essere conseguito non solo con la riflessione sul piano spirituale e morale, ma anche con l’azione su quello economico, e quindi secondo il criterio dell’impegno per la produttività, che come abbiamo visto è la declinazione economica della responsabilità etica. Anche su questo punto il ragionamento di Monsignor Crepaldi è coerente e senza equivoci: la logica imprenditoriale “va applicata ad una impresa privata, come a una del terzo settore, come a una di proprietà statale,” e se “il titolare di una impresa privata agirà diversamente dal presidente di una cooperativa o dal dirigente di una partecipata statale,” perché tali realtà produttive hanno caratteristiche specifiche che le differenziano l’una dall’altra, tutti costoro dovranno agire “in modo ugualmente imprenditoriale.” Qui, descrivendo la logica d’impresa, Crepaldi legittima, ancora una volta in sintonia con San Tommaso, il profitto, quel nodo che molti teologi anche contemporanei non hanno risolto e che, anzi, da alcuni di essi viene respinto come un male.

Di conseguenza, bisogna affermare che la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa non rifiuta l’economia di mercato, come invece l’orientamento vaticano di questi ultimi tempi sembra sostenere, ma al contrario ne accoglie il valore per la crescita della società, affermando la necessità di

una scelta generale di campo nel quale situarsi. Pur ribadendo l'esigenza di porre sempre l'uomo (la persona) al centro dell'agire economico e l'idea della trascendenza divina come fine spirituale, la Dottrina sociale dichiara che il sistema di mercato non è un avversario della fede cristiana e della Chiesa stessa, bensì è un suo alleato, perché, afferma Crepal-di, "non è l'economia a produrre la povertà e non è la povertà economica a produrre la povertà morale, ma il contrario: la povertà morale produce povertà materiale e quindi mette in crisi l'economia."

La grande lezione tomistica è qui fatta rivivere in tutta la sua chiarezza: non solo è lecito, scriveva Tommaso, ma è anche necessario alla vita umana, che l'uomo abbia la proprietà dei beni, perché la proprietà privata stimola una maggiore cura dei beni da parte dei loro proprietari e favorisce una maggiore iniziativa individuale e una maggiore responsabilità personale.⁶ Il diritto alla proprietà privata non deriva solo dalle leggi economiche ma, soprattutto, dalla natura dell'uomo come ente creato che è in rapporto con Dio. E quindi, a maggior ragione, la proprietà materiale è non solo una possibilità ma anche un diritto nella vita dell'uomo concretamente esistente. Del resto, "le renouveau des études Thomistes font préciser que la division des propriétés est rendue nécessaire, dans l'état actuel de l'humanité, par l'ordre et la paix sociale et constitue ainsi un droit des gens."⁷ La legittimità della proprietà deriva, secondo questa interpretazione della lezione tomistica, dal fatto che essa è prodotta dal lavoro concepito in senso virtuoso, in una prospettiva che salvaguarda l'azione individuale e rispetta i principi etici generali. L'utile e il bene non si contrappongono né si escludono a vicenda, ma vengono inseriti in un sistema che, per contrapposizione alla circolarità viziosa della cattiva logica (e della scorretta ontologia), definirei *circolo virtuoso fra lavoro ed etica*.

⁶ Cfr. *S.Th.*, II-II, q. 66, a. 2, ad 3.

⁷ A. Degand, "La défense de la propriété privée. Aux sources de la doctrine sociale de l'Eglise," *Social Compass* XXXIV, no. 2-3 (1987): 183.

Questo punto è, a mio avviso, l'alfa e l'omega di tutta la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa. Ovviamente si tratta di un punto estremamente sintetico, che va poi dispiegato nelle sue varie implicazioni, ma a mio avviso in esso consiste il nucleo teoretico, morale, politico e perfino estetico dell'intera struttura della Dottrina sociale. Su questa linea per dir così woytiliana, e nella scia lunga tracciata dalla *Rerum novarum* di papa Leone XIII, l'enciclica che nel 1891 fondò appunto la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa e nella quale veniva affermato che "lo scopo del lavoro è la proprietà privata," il libro di Monsignor Crepaldi porta il concetto del "diritto naturale alla proprietà privata" a un punto di massima elevazione etica e di grande attualità.

I cattolici occidentali hanno da sempre vivissima la coscienza della proprietà (basti solo pensare ai contadini, dotati di quello che Sandro Fontana chiamava elogiativamente "l'istinto proprietario"), perché la loro vicenda è una storia di libertà ovvero di ricerca della libertà *nella* società borghese e non contro di essa. Questo legame di reciprocità essenziale è stato svalutato o in alcuni casi addirittura negato da chi coniuga fede religiosa cristiana e teoria marxista della società, ma si tratta di una forzatura ideologica che disconosce la verità storica dell'Occidente, la quale mostra che la civiltà europea, anche nelle sue strutture economiche, è sorta in simbiosi con la religione cristiana: il sistema delle libertà civili si alimenta nello spirito dal sistema religioso ebraico-cristiano, il quale a sua volta viene difeso e assicurato sul piano storico-sociale concreto dall'azione protettrice svolta dal primo. Difendendo e diffondendo la fede, il Cristianesimo tutela anche la società che ha contribuito a fondare. Reciprocamente la libertà religiosa viene protetta dalla libertà politica e, anche, da quella economica, il cui principio fondamentale è appunto quello della proprietà.

Intaccare il principio della proprietà privata, che secondo Leone XIII è "un diritto naturale" ed "è sancita dalle leggi umane e divine" è la premessa della dissoluzione dell'intero impianto della società umana,

perché, conclude Leone XIII, “naturale diritto dell’uomo è la privata proprietà dei beni, e l’esercitare questo diritto è, specialmente nella vita sociale, non pur lecito, ma assolutamente necessario.” Se l’organizzazione sociale è una esigenza imprescindibile di ogni Stato, e se il miglioramento delle condizioni generali di vita dev’essere un obiettivo di ogni Stato e di ogni società, bisogna trovare le migliori condizioni di possibilità per conseguire questi scopi.

La Dottrina sociale della Chiesa offre una risposta praticabile e fruttuosa, mentre, cito ancora la *Rerum novarum*, “la soluzione socialista è nociva alla stessa società,” perché

troppo chiaro appare quale confusione e scompiglio ne seguirebbe in tutti gli ordini della cittadinanza, e quale dura e odiosa schiavitù nei cittadini. Si aprirebbe la via agli asti, alle recriminazioni, alle discordie: le fonti stesse della ricchezza, inaridirebbero, tolto ogni stimolo all’ingegno e all’industria individuale: e la sognata uguaglianza non sarebbe di fatto che una condizione universale di abiezione e di miseria. Tutte queste ragioni danno diritto a concludere che la comunanza dei beni proposta dal socialismo va del tutto rigettata, perché nuoce a quei medesimi a cui si deve recar soccorso, offende i diritti naturali di ciascuno, altera gli uffici dello Stato e turba la pace comune. Resti fermo adunque, che nell’opera di migliorare le sorti delle classi operaie, deve porsi come fondamento inconcusso il diritto di proprietà privata.⁸

La derivazione rosminiana di questa posizione è evidente, tanto più se si ricordano alcuni passi con cui, intorno al 1845, Antonio Rosmini aveva sostenuto il “liberalismo” come “sistema di diritto e insieme di politica,” denunciando le “mostruose utopie” dei “comunisti,” che sono il “sepolcro di ogni vero liberalismo e di ogni desiderabile progresso,” perché “lungi dall’accrescere la libertà alle società e agli uomini, procaccia loro la più inaudita e assoluta schiavitù, li opprime

⁸ Papa Leone XIII, *Rerum novarum* (Roma 1891), 12. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

sotto il più pesante, dispotico, minuzioso, immorale ed empio dei governi.”⁹

Dalla *Rerum novarum* è trascorso più di un secolo, e da quell'epoca si sono verificate molte trasformazioni sociali e politiche, e tuttavia alcune strutture di fondo dell'ideologia social-comunista sono rimaste invariate, nonostante i cambiamenti che pure sono intercorsi nella sua teoria. Perciò, in questo specifico senso, restano valide l'argomentazione e la posizione di fondo di Leone XIII, il quale così affermava:

i socialisti, attizzando nei poveri l'odio ai ricchi, pretendono si debba abolire la proprietà, e far di tutti i particolari patrimoni un patrimonio comune, da amministrarsi per mezzo del municipio e dello Stato. Con questa trasformazione della proprietà da personale in collettiva, e con l'eguale distribuzione degli utili e degli agi tra i cittadini, credono che il male sia radicalmente riparato. Ma questa via, non che risolvere le contese, non fa che danneggiare gli stessi operai, ed è inoltre ingiusta per molti motivi, giacché manomette i diritti dei legittimi proprietari, altera le competenze degli uffici dello Stato, e scompiglia tutto l'ordine sociale.¹⁰

Già, l'ordine, sociale e individuale, istituzionale, economico e perfino mentale: un fattore tanto essenziale per la società europea e altrettanto trascurato oggi da molte istituzioni di questa società. L'ordine di cui parlo e che ho illustrato in precedenza, lungi dall'essere uno strumento per l'instaurazione di sistemi autoritari, è l'obiettivo di una società autenticamente orientata al bene comune e alla crescita di tutti in un contesto di operosità e di produttività in tutti gli ambiti della vita. E in questo senso l'ordine è al tempo stesso anche la premessa, la condizione di possibilità direbbe Kant, per il conseguimento del bene comune. Infatti, in quanto tale, l'ordine non è arbitrario, perché deriva dal rispetto delle regole civili e dei valori religiosi, e si instaura soltanto in

⁹ A. Rosmini, *Il comunismo e il socialismo* (Genova 1849), 73.

¹⁰ Papa Leone XIII, *Rerum novarum*, 3.

virtù di una visione della società fondata su un sistema a sua volta ordinato o quanto meno tendente all'ordine, fondato sull'intangibilità della proprietà privata e, a cascata, su tutte le sue conseguenze, economiche ed etiche.

In questa chiave, è cruciale una citazione da San Tommaso: “le cose umane si svolgono con più ordine se ciascuno ha il compito di provvedere a una certa cosa mediante la propria cura personale, mentre ci sarebbe disordine se tutti indistintamente provvedessero a ogni singola cosa.”¹¹ Se l'ordine non è dunque un esito contingente, ma una finalità essenziale armonicamente connessa con la ragione divina e con il suo *telos* superiore, e se esso viene raggiunto meglio quando le persone curano i propri beni anziché affidarli alla cura (o piuttosto all'incuria) collettiva, il sistema economico complessivo non è indifferente per il conseguimento di questo fine, ovvero, in altri termini: non tutti i sistemi economici salvaguardano i principi necessari al conseguimento dell'ordine.

E poiché la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa si pone come perno di un equilibrio tra le regole dell'economia e le leggi di Dio ovvero della religione, tra crescita economica e sviluppo spirituale, essa si presenta dunque come un fattore di ordine che contribuisce a evitare il caos o, se già instaurato, a trasformarlo in ordine. E, infine, poiché il caos attuale non deriva da cause esterne alla nostra società, ma da elementi interni che ne auspicano la disgregazione e la sostituzione, e poiché la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa pensa, vive e agisce all'interno di questa società, nella chiarezza del *telos* e della trascendenza, nella presenza di Dio vivente, essa può rappresentare l'antidoto a quella *malattia del caos* che assume le forme dell'autocolpevolizzazione e dell'autodistruzione. In un'epoca di grandi convulsioni, che non equivalgono alle consuete trasformazioni della storia, ma sono processi di disgregazione delle strut-

¹¹ *S.Th.*, II-II, q. 66., a. 2.

ture tradizionali che non vengono sostituite con altre migliori ma, semplicemente, vengono dismesse e abbandonate nell'oceano del caos, la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa è davvero un faro nella notte.

La necessità e l'intangibilità della proprietà privata includono quest'ultima fra i principi non negoziabili che la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa difende, a dimostrazione che quest'ultima, da un lato contiene principi che sono in stretta sintonia con il liberalismo espresso, solo per citare due figure particolarmente significative, da Lord Acton e da Frédéric Bastiat, e dall'altro lato è distante sia dal socialismo nel senso pragmatico e specifico del termine quanto sia dall'ideologia marxista in senso teorico e generale, confutando così qualsiasi tentativo, che venga dalla lontana America Latina o dall'epicentro della cristianità, di unire due prospettive inconciliabili.

Ribadire l'intangibilità e la necessità della proprietà privata sembra oggi un pleonasma, quasi un anacronismo, eppure, poiché stanno riemergendo fantasmi che sembravano dissolti nelle nebbie dell'ideologia o confinati nelle farneticazioni della teologia della liberazione, è necessario ristabilire alcuni fondamenti, alcuni punti fermi, per riaffermare la verità della Dottrina sociale e della civiltà occidentale in generale, e per opporsi al caos, concettuale e sociale, che la riemersione di quei fantasmi ideologici sta generando e addirittura imponendo oggi nel mondo occidentale.

La forzatura della Dottrina sociale della Chiesa in senso, dico così per brevità, *comunistico* (inteso non tanto nel senso di derivazione marxista, bensì in quello di derivazione pauperistica, e che non ha nulla a che fare con la comunione delle anime), questa forzatura è oggi un rischio costante, perché intorno alla religione cristiana, non sugli aspetti strettamente dottrinari, ma sulle sue implicazioni e applicazioni politiche, si gioca da tanti anni una partita pesante, che ha molti lati: quello religioso in senso teologico, quello ecclesiastico in senso gerarchico-organizzativo, quello sociale in senso pratico-sociale, quello geopoliti-

co in senso strategico globale, quello economico in senso socioculturale, perfino quello elettorale in senso stretto e spiccio.

Se l'egualitarismo è la degenerazione dell'idea di uguaglianza, come il buonismo è la corruzione ideologica del concetto di bontà, o come lo scientismo è l'assolutizzazione dell'idea di scienza, la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa offre la possibilità di ripensare uguaglianza, bontà e scienza in una chiave che è tradizionale e innovativa al tempo stesso, perché segue i valori della tradizione cristiana nel quadro socio-economico del mondo occidentale attuale, del nostro presente esistenziale. All'opposto, l'economia di mercato genera prosperità e rispetta la libertà personale e politica, perché colloca al centro della società la persona, in tutta la sua creatività e la sua responsabilità. E poiché la dottrina cristiana è la massima valorizzazione spirituale della persona, l'incontro fra cristianesimo ed economia di mercato è non solo un fatto storico ma anche una esigenza morale, come teorizzò già un secolo fa Ludwig von Mises.

Fra mercato e cattolicesimo c'è una consonanza che soltanto la cecità ideologica può respingere: se il mercato, pur entro i limiti dell'umano errore, crea benessere e quindi favorisce il bene comune, e se la dottrina cristiana raccomanda la ricerca del bene comune perché con esso può affermarsi la solidarietà e quindi l'amore, è con l'economia di mercato, grazie alla sua produzione di ricchezza oggettiva, che si può diffondere la solidarietà e quindi la cura verso gli altri. Pur convenendo sulla necessità che la guida spirituale della Chiesa non cessi di sorvegliare e ispirare le anime che, concretamente, devono far muovere l'economia di mercato, risulta chiaro che al di fuori di questo schema vi è soltanto il rischio del regresso sociale e della barbarie spirituale.

Il profitto dunque, essendo il frutto del lavoro, non è un furto, ma una benedizione, perché serve a produrre anche la ricchezza della nazione e quindi il bene delle singole persone, anche di quelle che non guadagnano; l'imprenditore non è, in sé, un filibustiere ma un creatore

di benessere; lo Stato deve avere una funzione regolatrice ma non invasiva, permettendo che alla solidarietà si affianchi una efficace sussidiarietà, che è il risvolto sociale della libertà personale. Il profitto acquisito legalmente, come scrive Anthony Esolen, è giusto e deve essere considerato come un bene personale: “We work; we exercise our minds, as God commanded us even before the Fall. Man puts himself into his work, and so the reward of his work becomes his own, not the property of the State.”¹²

Di tutto ciò è consapevole portatrice la tradizione del cattolicesimo liberale, che ha rappresentato la colonna portante dell’azione dei cattolici nella vita politica e sociale. A questa tradizione si è sempre contrapposta la linea del cattolicesimo social-comunista (il cosiddetto cattocomunismo), ma con scarsi risultati fino ad alcuni anni fa, mentre oggi ha assunto un vigore che la rende protagonista sulla scena europea. Questa linea oggi vincente non può tuttavia imporre una deformazione della Dottrina sociale secondo le proprie convenienze ideologiche, perché, ripeto, quest’ultima non è una teoria antagonista rispetto all’economia di mercato, come lascerebbero intendere posizioni che all’interno della Chiesa stessa promuovono visioni che predicano un egualitarismo che si oppone per principio al mercato e che prelude così a un impoverimento generale, visioni estremistiche e fanatiche che trasformano la solidarietà in espropriazione.

La Dottrina sociale della Chiesa vuole salvaguardare l’economia di mercato come un piano concreto necessario, sostenendone in particolare quella versione più duttile che, a partire dall’esperienza della Germania post-1945, si chiama economia sociale di mercato, retta da quella teoria dell’ordo-liberalismo che ha il suo apice in economisti, sociologi e politici come Ludwig Erhard e Wilhelm Röpke, entrambi ferventi

¹² A. Esolen, “Leo XIII Knew Socialism Would Fail because It Was Evil,” *Crisis Magazine Online* (January 10, 2013). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

cristiani (evangelico Erhard, cattolico Röpke), i quali hanno cercato, Erhard sul piano politico e istituzionale, Röpke su quello economico e culturale, di armonizzare la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa con l'economia di mercato.

Fra la teologia della contemplazione e la teologia della liberazione, fra cioè un mero quietismo e un rivoluzionarismo ideologizzato, la Dottrina sociale non offre una soluzione facile, che echeggi cioè parole d'ordine di grande richiamo come la ribellione, il pauperismo, perfino il comunismo; essa ci pone invece dinanzi a un'opzione di grande responsabilità nei confronti del mondo, una scelta di serietà e di umiltà, di sforzo e di compassione, come accade nella fatica imprenditoriale intesa nel suo senso virtuoso e autentico.

Ora, la Chiesa non è una semplice istituzione, è molto di più, è un architrave, una delle assi portanti della civiltà occidentale, un fondamento spirituale su cui si è edificata nei secoli la struttura sociale dell'Europa. Perciò essa deve essere difesa con un'intensità maggiore rispetto a quella con cui si difendono le istituzioni, perché se vacillano o addirittura crollano le istituzioni, si potrà intervenire e agire con fermezza per ricostruirle restituendo così saldezza al sistema, ma se sprofonda la Chiesa, non ci sarà riequilibrio possibile, perché a crollare sarà il sistema stesso. Questa *differenza essenziale* è ciò che oggi, fra i laici e in una parte dei cristiani, e forse in taluni casi anche all'interno della Chiesa stessa, non si riesce a capire: è vero che lo Spirito soffia dove vuole, ma confida anche nella libertà di giudizio e di azione con cui Dio ci ha creato, e quindi gli uomini hanno la responsabilità di agire nel mondo concreto, nel quale a orientarci è anche la storicità, la coscienza della nostra identità.

Nel mondo storico-sociale la dimensione della trascendenza è sempre intrecciata con l'esistenza, con l'esperienza storica e con la coscienza della finitezza, con l'orizzonte politico e con la sfera pratica. E poiché l'identità occidentale si è formata in un intreccio stretto e fecon-

do con lo spirito del cristianesimo, e poiché quest'ultimo può vivere solo se vive la sua Chiesa, la vita della nostra identità è strettamente legata a quella della Chiesa, e così anche la vita della Chiesa è connessa a quella dell'identità occidentale. *Tertium non datur*; e nemmeno *terzo mondo*, perché in quel caso il cristianesimo e la sua Chiesa diventerebbero *altro*, per esempio teologia della liberazione, che tuttavia viene fortemente sostenuta dall'attuale Pontefice, provocando così forte disagio e scompiglio nei fedeli. Infatti, insieme ad altre prese di posizione di Papa Bergoglio come per esempio la difesa di una immigrazione di massa in Europa, questa diffusione della teologia della liberazione è uno dei pilastri del magistero sociale di Papa Bergoglio, che però è estraneo a gran parte dei cristiani occidentali, che ne sono scossi e disorientati.

In particolare, esaminando la cosiddetta *opzione preferenziale per i poveri*, partita dalla teologia della liberazione e fatta propria dall'episcopato latinoamericano, della quale Bergoglio ha fatto uno dei perni teorici del suo pontificato, Crepaldi elabora una proposta che contiene impliciti riferimenti alla nostra attualità politica: "i poveri sono i deboli della società e quindi il potere politico deve pensare in modo particolare a loro," però "questo deve avvenire in modo indiretto piuttosto che diretto, secondo una solidarietà sussidiaria, evitando forme di assistenzialismo e cercando di mettere in moto la responsabilità individuale, familiare e dei gruppi sociali." La sussidiarietà non ha nulla a che vedere con il sussidio garantito, bensì suscita in ciascuno e a ciascun livello, a cascata, il senso di responsabilità attivo e produttivo. In questo senso la povertà si supera sia con il lavoro sia con la coscienza della produttività, che sono le due condizioni di possibilità per qualsiasi benessere sociale, in una circolarità virtuosa fra dimensione materiale e sfera spirituale.

Se la secolarizzazione spinta alle estreme conseguenze può realizzare uno degli obiettivi principali del marxismo, cioè la distruzione

della religione, quella stessa tendenza rischia oggi di distruggere anche la Chiesa, perché la perdita del senso *cristiano* del sacro e della sua connessa esperienza religiosa può portare allo sgretolamento delle strutture ecclesiastiche. Le nubi che si addensano oggi all'orizzonte dell'Europa minacciano anche la Chiesa, ma se quest'ultima non riesce ad essere pienamente se stessa, il pericolo diventa sempre più grande e più concreto. Ai nuovi problemi della società contemporanea, dalla crisi economica a quella morale fino a quella migratoria, non si possono fornire soluzioni ispirate a una teologia politica di stampo rivoluzionario e terzomondista, come quelle che si manifestano nel ritorno dell'anti-occidentalismo e nella comparsa dell'immigrazionismo come risposta alla pressione migratoria extraeuropea, o nell'emarginazione della religiosità cattolica tradizionale alla ricerca di nuove frontiere spirituali, che vanno dall'ecologismo all'indigenismo passando per l'apologia della sovversione, come quelle che il Sinodo dell'Amazzonia sta delineando. Queste non sono soltanto risposte sbagliate a problemi che, certamente, sono reali, ma sono anche premesse tragiche di un destino catastrofico.

La coscienza, nella sua struttura morale e gnoseologica, deve guardare non solo al rapporto tra fini e mezzi, ma anche alle conseguenze, personali e collettive, dell'agire, il quale è sempre, nel senso più ampio e più nobile, agire politico. E poiché un orientamento che faccia vacillare la Chiesa implica, come ho detto, il rischio che la Chiesa crolli, un'azione politica che rispecchi la coscienza storica deve porre fra le sue priorità la difesa della Chiesa, in tutte le circostanze nelle quali questa è minacciata. Fra la Chiesa e la civiltà occidentale sussiste un rapporto trascendentale che non può essere sconosciuto né, tanto meno, dissolto. Ma questo rapporto è biunivoco: non c'è Occidente senza la Chiesa, ma niente Chiesa senza la civiltà occidentale. In altri termini: non c'è identità occidentale senza l'identità ebraico-cristiana, e non c'è identità ebraico-cristiana senza quella occidentale.

Farò un esempio, basato su recenti cronache e connesse polemiche: a mio avviso, il crocefisso va non solo lasciato nelle aule scolastiche, ma collocato anche in tutti gli altri istituti di formazione, Università comprese, e in tutte le sedi istituzionali, perché i simboli non sono un accessorio contingente nella storia dei popoli, e se un popolo deve poter conservare e sviluppare i propri simboli, è necessario che le istituzioni che lo organizzano, cioè gli Stati, difendano quei simboli. E poiché il crocefisso è uno dei simboli fondamentali della civiltà europea e più in generale occidentale, la sua presenza pubblica è essenziale all'autocomprensione di questa civiltà. Infatti, solo un malinteso (o malintenzionato) laicismo può spezzare quel vincolo essenziale che lega la fede religiosa alla coscienza civile, e che si esprime nel crocefisso, che è simbolo e realtà al tempo stesso.

Che lo Stato e la Chiesa debbano essere distinti è una ovvietà che nessuno vuole mettere in discussione, ed è anzi una conquista della civiltà cristiana stessa, ma che si voglia sradicare il sentimento cristiano nella coscienza di un popolo è un atto che va al di là di qualsiasi distinzione di ruoli tra Stato e Chiesa; è una violenza che ricorda, fatte salve ovviamente tutte le differenze, il tentativo sovietico (e poi anche nazionalsocialista) di cancellare il sentimento cristiano distruggendone i simboli.

Su questo problema nevralgico, che solo uno sguardo miope può considerare come una questione di facciata, Monsignor Crepaldi ha espresso nel 2009 un ragionamento esemplare:

[L]'estromissione dei simboli religiosi dagli ambienti pubblici non è indice di laicità, ma di arroganza del potere politico che vuole imporre una pubblica piazza senza religione. Con la scusa di non discriminare i fedeli di altre religioni si discrimina la religione in quanto tale, la si riduce a fatto privato. Per l'Europa, poi, la religione cristiana è elemento costitutivo della stessa cultura sociale e politica. Senza radici non c'è libertà; senza identità non c'è vero dialogo. . . . Il cristianesimo non chiede alla ragione politica di accettare la propria presenza storica solo per motivi sto-

rici e culturali—le “radici” europee—ma perché esso aiuta la società ad essere migliore, contribuisce al bene comune, eleva le anime verso quanto è vero e buono: ossia per la sua verità. Il crocefisso rappresenta la verità dell’umano, indica a tutti, credenti e non credenti, i valori della vita e dell’amore. Una ragione politica indifferente alle religioni o che le riducesse a sentimento privato, prima di tutto rinuncerebbe a se stessa, alla sua capacità, laica e razionale, di cogliere la verità delle religioni e nelle religioni.¹³

Nel 2009 infatti la Corte Europea dei Diritti Umani aveva accolto una istanza contraria alla presenza del crocefisso nelle scuole italiane. Quella delibera fu poi totalmente ribaltata dalla stessa Corte nel maggio del 2011, con una Sentenza definitiva che riconosceva invece la legittimità di tale presenza, a testimonianza del radicamento profondo della religione cattolica nella civiltà italiana ed europea.

Riprendendo il tema del legame storico e spirituale che unisce l’identità europea nel suo insieme e l’identità cristiana, ritengo che questo nesso vada compreso e valorizzato non solo dalla parte laica, cioè dalla politica, ma anche da quella ecclesiastica, cioè dalla Chiesa. E poiché vi sono segnali di mancata comprensione non solo sul versante laico, ma anche su quello ecclesiastico, bisogna richiamare con forza tutti alle proprie responsabilità, che riguardano la nostra civiltà nel suo insieme. Questo è, per tornare allo schema ermeneutico, l’orizzonte di sfondo della Dottrina sociale della Chiesa. Al di fuori di questo orizzonte, nel mondo occidentale si disgrega l’ordine nelle sue varie accezioni, cresce il caos e si annuncia il rischio della dissoluzione. Infatti, la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa è aggredita oggi da torsioni concettuali che ne minano i presupposti, stravolgendone lo *spirito* sulla base di una supposta aderenza alla *lettera*.

Quando papa Bergoglio bolla il sistema capitalistico come iniquo e gli oppone una concezione comunista, e quando utilizza la dottrina

¹³ G. Crepaldi, *Dichiarazione sulla Sentenza della Corte Europea dei Diritti Umani del novembre 2009*.

sociale cristiana per questo scopo teologico-politico, sta compiendo un'azione legittima dal punto di vista della libertà di pensiero oltre che, ovviamente, della sua posizione teologico-istituzionale, ma fallace da quello teorico. Infatti, la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa non lascia dubbi su questo vagheggiato connubio: il socialcomunismo è—e quindi dovrebbe restare—antitetico alla concezione cristiana del mondo, della vita e della società. E dunque, pur orientandosi sul registro di un'economia che ponga in primo piano la persona (o forse proprio perciò), la Dottrina sociale della Chiesa appoggia il sistema produttivo capitalistico, sia perché esso è nato e soprattutto sviluppatosi in sintonia e non in antitesi alla visione cristiana della società, sia perché, in particolare, esso è l'unico nel quale può funzionare il principio fondamentale della sussidiarietà. Chi mette in discussione questo assetto criticando i principi liberisti dell'economia capitalistica, contribuisce—non importa per quale scopo e nemmeno se solo involontariamente—a quell'aggressione multipolare e pluristratificata.

Un esempio di questa posizione è il convegno *The Economy of Francesco*, svoltosi nel novembre 2020 ad Assisi su impulso vaticano, centrato sulla figura di San Francesco e focalizzato sull'economia nel senso ampio del termine. A questo incontro il Francesco papa non era presente fisicamente, nemmeno a distanza, ma c'era, in collegamento video, una sua controfigura, colui il quale, nel vasto e qualificato parco di relatori, era implicitamente—cioè contenutisticamente—deputato ad esprimere la posizione del Pontefice, del quale è da decenni interlocutore: Leonardo Boff, uno dei principali esponenti della teologia della liberazione, membro autorevole di una corrente politico-religiosa di estrema sinistra e di estrema pericolosità non solo per la società occidentale ma per la Chiesa stessa: *Vangelo* e *Capitale*, teologia e rivoluzione, come abbiamo visto fin dagli anni Sessanta in tutta l'America Latina.

La dislocazione in Europa di teoria e metodi di quel movimento teologico, nella rinnovata unione fra terzomondismo e socialismo consacrata dalla benedizione di Bergoglio, comporta l'apertura di una nuova frontiera spirituale, culturale, ideale e dottrinale, e al tempo stesso di un inedito fronte di scontro interno ai cattolici, divisi fra coloro che accolgono le tesi "liberazionistiche," intrise di ribellismo, anti-occidentalismo, socialismo e perfino di marxismo, e coloro che invece credono nell'orientamento tradizionale della fede e della Chiesa, la quale guarda e parla al mondo intero da una prospettiva originaria, unica e incontrovertibile, centrata storicamente nella civiltà occidentale e nella verità della Rivelazione. Con Bergoglio questa divisione diventa un abisso, destinato ad allargarsi in misura direttamente proporzionale all'aumento della radicalizzazione terzomondista da parte vaticana.

Nella sua conferenza all'incontro di Assisi, Leonardo Boff, che è uno dei fondatori della teologia della liberazione, inizia con un'affermazione che esprime l'attuale orientamento economico-sociale del Vaticano: "il Papa rifiuta risolutamente l'ordine economico attuale," respingendo il capitalismo e il paradigma socio-culturale che lo regge. Boff trova la prova di ciò nell'enciclica *Fratelli tutti*, dove si chiarisce che "se qualcuno pensa che si tratti solo di far funzionare meglio quello che già facevamo, o che l'unico messaggio sia che dobbiamo migliorare i sistemi e le regole già esistenti, sta negando la realtà."¹⁴ Bergoglio, prosegue Boff, "attacca esplicitamente i quattro pilastri che reggono l'ordine economico attuale: il mercato (in termini di economia), il neoliberalismo (in termini di politica), l'individualismo (in termini di cultura) e la devastazione della natura (in termini di ecologia)," e quindi non propone correttivi al sistema, non lo vuole modificare dall'interno, ma vuole cambiarlo il più radicalmente possibile. Visione economico-sociale tipica dell'ideologia comunista, nella sua modulazione sessantotti-

¹⁴ Papa Francesco, *Enciclica Fratelli tutti* (Assisi 2020), 7.

na: il sistema si abbatte, non si cambia. Questa la versione di Boff, che però non si distacca quasi per nulla dall'originale bergogliano.

L'alternativa sarebbe un'economia socialista nel senso di un socialismo utopistico ottocentesco, non meno statalista ma strutturalmente sgangherato e *ideologicamente modificato* con l'inserimento di istanze indigeniste che agglutinano cristianesimo e sciamanesimo, tribalismo e marxismo. Oggi infatti, dopo il Sinodo Amazzonico e dopo l'enciclica *Fratelli tutti*, la lungimirante affermazione (risalente al 1977) di Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, secondo cui "il tribalismo indigeno è l'ideale comunista-missionario per il Brasile del XXI secolo," può essere estesa a tutto il raggio d'azione del proselitismo bergogliano, che ormai mira a una sorta di indigenismo mondiale che sostituisca, come vogliono i teologi della liberazione, "l'uomo nord-atlantico," l'uomo occidentale.

Colto nella sua essenza, il nodo intorno al quale ruota tutta la nuova costruzione economica vaticana consiste nella concezione della proprietà privata, che nell'enciclica *Fratelli tutti* viene severamente colpita, bersaglio di una critica complessiva che mira a decostruirne il concetto e abolirne la prassi. Se infatti la povertà è il tema privilegiato della riflessione di Bergoglio, la proprietà ne è il principale obiettivo critico.

La proprietà è un concetto originario, che deriva dall'esperienza storica fondamentale di quell'uomo occidentale che i teologi della rivoluzione vorrebbero sostituire e che è, insieme con il concetto di libertà, alla base dell'idea cristiana della dignità della persona. E, sia pure indirettamente, è contro questa coscienza storica che Bergoglio si dirige quando esorta a considerare (in questo caso si rivolge ai giudici che si occupano di cause sociali) l'idea (in sé assolutamente balzana ma in questo contesto altamente suggestiva) di una giustizia non tanto distributiva quanto *restitutiva*:

[Q]uando ripensate all'idea di giustizia sociale, fatelo essendo *solidali e giusti* . . . Solidali nella lotta contro le cause strutturali di povertà, disuguaglianza, mancanza di lavoro, terra e alloggio

. . . Giusti sapendo che, quando decidiamo nell'ambito del diritto, diamo ai poveri le cose essenziali, non diamo loro le nostre cose, né quelle di terzi, ma restituiamo loro ciò che è loro. Abbiamo perso molte volte questa idea di restituire ciò che gli appartiene.¹⁵

Da questa tesi si arriva ad un passo dottrinale radicale e forzato che conduce a una prassi sostanzialmente *espropriativa*: “costruiamo la nuova giustizia sociale partendo dal presupposto che la tradizione cristiana non ha mai riconosciuto il diritto alla proprietà privata come assoluto e intoccabile.” L'espropriazione come ri-appropriazione dei beni: la proprietà privata, in tutte le sue declinazioni, viene qui disintegrata. Così si incita, più o meno implicitamente, a impossessarsi di beni altrui semplicemente come atto di restituzione di un supposto maltolto storico, sulla base di una premessa dottrinale che fa del Cristianesimo una sorta di comunismo primitivo, nel quale “il diritto di proprietà è un diritto naturale secondario derivato dal diritto che tutti hanno, nato dalla destinazione universale dei beni creati.” Questa teoria della restituzione dei beni non si differenzia infatti dalla teoria marxiana della *proprietà come furto*. E di conseguenza Bergoglio afferma “non c'è giustizia sociale che possa essere basata sull'ineguaglianza, la quale implica la concentrazione della ricchezza.” In quanto sistema della ricchezza concentrata, è il capitalismo qui ad essere posto sul banco degli imputati, e in quanto estorsore di quella ricchezza è l'uomo occidentale che va corretto.

In questa chiave, l'*economia di Francesco* è una rivoluzione antropologica, perché si presenta come un progetto di trasformazione radicale non solo dei rapporti produttivi ma anche di quelli sociali e culturali; e si pone in netto contrasto con la lezione di San Tommaso in materia sociale, perché la Scolastica, come ha chiarito in forma defi-

¹⁵ Papa Francesco, “Messaggio in occasione dell'Incontro internazionale dei giudici membri dei Comitati per i diritti sociali di Africa e America, 30 novembre 2020.” *L'Osservatore Romano* CLX, no. 278 (2020).

nitiva Alex Chafuen in un libro fondamentale, afferma che “la libertà economica è una componente essenziale della libertà umana” e che, quindi, il libero mercato è perfettamente compatibile con la tradizione religiosa occidentale.¹⁶ L’unione fra Chiesa e mercato è dunque sancita dal tomismo stesso, da quegli autori della Scolastica che non consideravano il profitto come un male e, anzi, “rifiutavano l’esistenza di un limite legale ai profitti,” sostenendo, scrive ancora Chafuen, “che l’idea di ottenere profitti senza correre rischi era del tutto innaturale.” Da Tommaso alla Dottrina sociale della chiesa c’è una continuità che non può essere infranta senza arrecare danno alla coscienza civile dei cristiani.

Nella visione di Papa Bergoglio si delinea così un mondo in cui “l’organizzazione sociale si basa sul contribuire, condividere e distribuire, non sul possedere, escludere e accumulare.”¹⁷ Contrapponendo condivisione a possesso, Bergoglio apre una spaccatura artificiale (e strumentale) nella coscienza dell’uomo occidentale, nella quale invece possedere e condividere possono coesistere, purché non si intacchi la nozione di proprietà (e nemmeno quella di libertà). Usando poi il concetto di accumulazione, egli svela tutta la sua implicita prossimità al marxismo. Questo schema dicotomico contrappone dunque al sistema capitalistico l’economia presuntamente salvifica dei movimenti sociali e di ciò che definirei *lavoro di sussistenza*.

E lo schema si estende a tutti gli ambiti della vita sociale: per risolvere i malesseri sociali Bergoglio pensa infatti a “un nuovo modello

¹⁶ A. Chafuen, *Christians for Freedom: Late-Scholastic Economics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986).

¹⁷ Papa Francesco, “Messaggio ai partecipanti al Seminario virtuale «America Latina: Chiesa, Papa Francesco e gli scenari della pandemia», 19 novembre 2020.” Available online—see the section *References* for details.

culturale,”¹⁸ a una “educazione integrale” e a una “ecologia integrale,” che a loro volta rinviando, nella loro struttura teorica e nella loro applicazione pratica, alla nuova “Economy of Francesco.” Infatti, “l’*economia*, nel suo senso umanistico di ‘legge della casa del mondo’, è un campo privilegiato per il suo stretto legame con le situazioni reali e concrete. Essa può diventare espressione di ‘cura’, che non esclude ma include, non mortifica ma vivifica, non sacrifica la dignità dell’uomo agli idoli della finanza, non genera violenza e disuguaglianza, non usa il denaro per dominare ma per servire,” poiché “l’autentico profitto, infatti, consiste in una ricchezza a cui tutti possano accedere.”¹⁹ Questa accessibilità implica, nella sua essenza, la messa in comune dei beni: “ciò che possiedo veramente è ciò che so donare.”²⁰

In sé, la premessa da cui si parte non è sbagliata: non è sbagliato infatti reclamare una riflessione per “rallentare un ritmo disumano di consumo e di produzione, per imparare a comprendere e a contemplare la natura, a riconnetterci con il nostro ambiente reale; puntare a una riconversione ecologica della nostra economia, senza cedere all’accelerazione del tempo, dei processi umani e tecnologici, ma tornando a relazioni vissute e non consumate,” ma è distruttivamente errata la conseguenza teorica e pratica. E catastrofica è l’esortazione: “al centro dell’economia di comunione ci sia la comunione dei vostri utili. L’economia di comunione è anche comunione dei profitti,” mentre “il capitalismo fa della ricerca del profitto l’unico suo scopo,” diventando “una

¹⁸ Papa Francesco, “Messaggio in occasione dell’incontro organizzato dalla Congregazione per l’educazione cattolica: «Global compact on Education. Together to look beyond», 15 ottobre 2020.” Available online—see the section *References* for details.

¹⁹ Papa Francesco, “Messaggio al Forum di «European House» – Ambrosetti, 4-5 settembre 2020.” Available online—see the section *References* for details.

²⁰ Papa Francesco, *Udienza generale* (7 novembre 2018). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

struttura idolatrica.”²¹ Così si colpisce al cuore non solo il meccanismo produttivo, ma anche l’intero schema di pensiero occidentale, tentando assurdamente di sostenere che la Chiesa debba opporsi ad esso, senza però accorgersi che la religione cristiana (e quindi la Chiesa) è parte integrante di quello schema, parte fondante (e risultante) dell’Occidente in tutti i suoi aspetti, anche di quello economico.

L’economia di Francesco è ora esplicita: “*mettere i profitti in comune,*” perché “il modo migliore e più concreto per non fare del denaro un idolo è dividerlo, dividerlo con altri, soprattutto con i poveri, vincendo la tentazione idolatrica con la comunione.”²² Che nel sistema capitalistico il denaro sia un idolo (cioè un fine anziché un mezzo per vivere) è una interpretazione prodotta dall’ideologia comunista, alla quale è connessa l’affermazione, generata dalla medesima ideologia e da un cristianesimo primitivistico-pauperistico, che il denaro sia sterco del demonio.

Ora, poiché “il capitalismo *continua a produrre gli scarti* che poi vorrebbe curare,” l’economia di comunione vuole invece costruire un sistema senza scarti, ma al tal fine “bisogna cambiare le regole del gioco del sistema economico-sociale . . . non farsi bloccare dalla meritocrazia invocata da tanti, che in nome del merito negano la misericordia.”²³ Cambiare le regole per cambiare anche il gioco: in questa prospettiva, profitto e accumulazione sarebbero da bandire in quanto strumenti di sfruttamento, produttori di scarti e idoli della crescita, a cui andrebbero contrapposte la condivisione e la decrescita: “tutte le volte che le persone, i popoli e persino la Chiesa hanno pensato di salvare il mon-

²¹ Papa Francesco, “Discorso ai partecipanti all’incontro «Economia di comunione», promosso dal Movimento dei Focolari, 4 febbraio 2017.” Available online—see the section *References* for details.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

do crescendo nei *numeri*, hanno prodotto strutture di potere, dimenticando i poveri.”²⁴

E arriviamo così al paradosso, secondo cui la povertà non si frongeggia dunque con la crescita economica, ma con il progressivo depauperamento: “per avere vita in abbondanza occorre imparare a donare: non solo i profitti delle imprese, ma voi stessi. Il primo dono dell’imprenditore è la propria persona: il vostro denaro, seppure importante, è troppo poco. Il denaro non salva se non è accompagnato dal dono della persona.”²⁵ Ma, culmine del paradosso, non basta donare qualcosa, bisogna donare tutto, e per farlo bisogna uscire dall’ingranaggio capitalistico: “il capitalismo conosce la filantropia, non la comunione. È semplice donare una parte dei profitti, senza abbracciare e toccare le persone che ricevono quelle ‘briciole’ . . . Se non si dona tutto non si dona mai abbastanza.” Così il cambio di paradigma sarebbe compiuto, affinché “il ‘no’ ad un’economia che uccide diventi un ‘sì’ ad una economia che fa vivere, perché condivide, include i poveri, usa i profitti per creare comunione.”²⁶

Non c’è dunque speranza per i moltissimi cristiani che respingono questa radicalizzazione comunistica della Chiesa? Un’opzione c’è, e andrebbe colta con determinazione e coraggio, a tutela non solo della Dottrina sociale della Chiesa ma anche del destino dei cristiani nella società. Con tutto il rispetto dovuto alla figura del Papa, ma con tutta la legittimità di criticare—con onestà intellettuale—le tesi economico-sociali di Bergoglio, va riaffermato il valore centrale del sistema capitalistico, la sua molteplice e pluralistica struttura di pensiero e di prassi, nella quale i principi del liberalismo—ovviamente intesi non nel senso del liberalismo che ammirava la rivoluzione francese, né in quello del libertinismo anarco-comunista sessantottino, né in quello del progressi-

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

simo *liberal* della nostra epoca, ma sotto la forma del liberismo economico e della libertà e dignità della persona, della libertà di impresa e di espressione, di salvaguardia dell'identità e della tradizione della civiltà occidentale—si coniugano con la difesa dei dieci Comandamenti, con l'autonomia della religione, nella distinzione dei poteri ma nell'unione degli spiriti ovvero delle rispettive sfere spirituali entro l'orizzonte della tradizione ebraico-cristiana. Al di fuori di questo quadro liberale anti-progressista e liberista in economia, conservatore e tradizionalista, c'è soltanto l'inferno della società socialista (nel modello post-sovietico, in quello latinoamericano o in quello cinese, a seconda dei casi o delle preferenze) o quanto meno il caos della società liquidata e disorientata in cui rischiamo di trovarci nel percorso verso la prima.



**Property and Identity:
The Social Doctrine of the Church and
the Union between Christianity and Capitalism**

SUMMARY

This paper reaffirms the truth of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church (CSD) and its impact in the socioeconomic sphere in Western Civilization. Specifically, it seeks to put in order the chaos in which secularized European society currently finds itself. Through Archbishop Giampaolo Crepaldi's interpretation of CSD, the author dispels erroneous notions of collectivism surrounding private property, productive work, solidarity, and subsidiarity by arguing that a proper understanding of these principles supports a healthy capitalism, which in turn supports human dignity. Only through a capitalism in line with a proper understanding of CSD principles can the poor stand to gain the most, provided they have a socioeconomic framework in which they can independently thrive. Liberation theology as a cornerstone of a socioeconomic framework destroys the foundation the Church established through the centuries. In the interpretation of the relationship between the CSD and the capitalist economy provided by this paper, the concept of private property emerges as the central nucleus of any human operation, be it cultural, economic, social, or political. Ownership does not only mean possessing material things, but also spiritual elements. Thus ownership also means identity, of a person and of a people. As we enter the third decade of the twenty-first century, the

ideology of political correctness—that is, the ideology of the various cultural and political movements of the left—condemns identity as dangerous, a condemnation which furthers the operation of globalization, the homogenization of humanity, and the related attempt to weaken nations in view of a supranational management. If identity is one of the consequences of the concept of property, then this latter must also be banned, as an obstacle on the way to that global dis-identification that would herald a socialization of the Western world. But from the perspective of the main spiritual foundation of the West, that is, of the Judeo-Christian tradition, property is one of the pillars of society, and therefore cannot be suppressed or even undermined. The Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, founded by Pope Leo XIII and relaunched by Pope John Paul II, is an excellent antidote to the ideological poison of socialism and progressivism now widespread in all Western countries.

KEYWORDS

Crepaldi, social doctrine, poverty, capitalism, private property, identity, *Fratelli tutti*, profit, productivity, liberation theology.

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Owen Anderson

What Can a Conversation between Ayn Rand, Socrates, and the Apostle Paul Teach Us about Our Highest Good?

In the following essay, I will bring Ayn Rand, Thrasymachus, Socrates, and the Apostle Paul into conversation about what it means to be just. There will even be a surprise guest who will direct our focus to where it needs to be in order to make sense of economics and the value of money. Doing this will allow us to consider the role of religion in economics. It will also allow us to determine how religion shapes the economic life of a nation. This will then allow us to consider some current economic problems and how such considerations have a direct bearing on providing solutions. In the end, it is not merely enough to connect religion and economics but a specific claim from religion needs to be affirmed. And that is the need to repent from mistaken views of justice and the good life.

Economics is the study of the distribution of limited resources. And religion is the study of our highest good. We can immediately see how these relate. We would want to use our limited resources not for some lesser end but for our highest end. But what if we are operating in a philosophical system that reduces us to merely material beings (Rand)

Owen Anderson — Arizona State University, Phoenix, Ariz., USA
e-mail: OAnderson@asu.edu ▪ Orcid: no data

or within the skepticism of modernity that says we cannot know our highest end?

In her 1957 novel *Atlas Shrugged* we find Ayn Rand telling a narrative designed to extol the virtues of capitalism. Having left communism, she had firsthand experience of totalitarianism and central planning which led to such disasters in the 20th century. As an atheist, she found no room for religion in economics. Hers was a purely materialist explanation of society and the individual. Instead, she appeals to virtues that are needed to support her form of ethical egoism.

In the character of Francisco d'Anconia we get a speech that reflects Rand's entire philosophy of economics. It is a speech in which d'Anconia sets himself in opposition to the Apostle Paul writing in 1 Timothy 6:10 that money is a root of all kinds of evil. D'Anconia sets out to prove that not only is this incorrect, but just the opposite is also true. Money represents the best achievement of human civilization and the individual. It is the expression of the highest achievements of the human mind. Here I will rely on readily available online resources for my quotes from Rand, Plato (Socrates and Thrasymachus) and the Bible.

This precursor to the pop-culture reference "greed is good" looks to upend the communist worldview. Rather than money causing evil in society, it is those who do not produce money who are the real problem. Those who look to control money without themselves contributing to the production of money tear down society. Here is how d'Anconia phrases it:

"So you think that money is the root of all evil?" said Francisco d'Anconia. "Have you ever asked what is the root of money? Money is a tool of exchange, which can't exist unless there are goods produced and men able to produce them. Money is the material shape of the principle that men who wish to deal with one another must deal by trade and give value for value. Money is not the tool of the moochers, who claim your product by tears, or

of the looters, who take it from you by force. Money is made possible only by the men who produce. Is this what you consider evil?”¹

Here we see already the virtues at the heart of Rand’s philosophy. Work and production to create value. Hers is an appeal to the very first commandment given to mankind: “Be fruitful and multiply having dominion.” That “having dominion” is fleshed out by d’Anconia in terms of the mental inventiveness of humanity. The wealth of nations is its production of knowledge. Without work, there can be no production of value. For those who do not work but live from the work of others, there is a kind of theft being perpetrated against the workers.

But to work requires hope. And d’Anconia says it this way: “Your wallet is your statement of hope that somewhere in the world around you there are men who will not default on that moral principle which is the root of money. Is this what you consider evil?”² When working for money in a system where money is devalued or inflated to worthlessness, the lack of hope undermines the motivation to work. And the idea of hope tells us all we need to know about an individual and society. What does a given individual hope for? Hope is desire but for the future. It is not merely present desire fulfilled. Animals have anticipation but not hope.

Sometimes “hope” becomes synonymous with “what I don’t expect.” So that a person will say, “I hope that will happen but don’t count on it.” This is a hopeless view of hope. It is in reality no hope. It is more like saying that although I desire this to come to pass it will not. With this loss of hope comes a loss of motivation to work for the object of hope. Why work if you won’t attain your goal? Or if the work is so costly as to make the goal lose all value?

¹ Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), Part II, Chapter II: “The Aristocracy of Pull.”

² *Ibid.*

There is also a way of speaking about hope that makes it into an unrealistic flight of fancy. This is a form of magical thinking that disconnects cause and effect or work and the goal. In this false hope one expects outcomes that do not match up with work. This has the same effect as no hope in devaluing work. The belief is that one can achieve the goal with no work or little work. Furthermore, false hope misidentifies the good worth working for. And so both no hope and false hope undermine work. No hope says the good cannot be achieved by work and false hope says a false good can be achieved with little or no work. But d'Anconia connects work to a basic drive in human nature and money as the representation of this drive.

True hope connects work to what is actually the look. Unlike no hope, it sees the necessity of work to achieve goals. But unlike false hope, it does not rest on a mistaken view of the good. Many times, false hope looks to an otherworldly satisfaction in something like heaven or the beatific vision. It disconnects work and this life from the highest good and therefore empties work of meaning. D'Anconia strives to connect work to the good:

Have you ever looked for the root of production? Take a look at an electric generator and dare tell yourself that it was created by the muscular effort of unthinking brutes. Try to grow a seed of wheat without the knowledge left to you by men who had to discover it for the first time. Try to obtain your food by means of nothing but physical motions—and you'll learn that man's mind is the root of all the goods produced and of all the wealth that has ever existed on earth.³

In this sense, work is distinctly human. The activities of animals do not require or involve hope. Even the ant who stores up food for the future needs only instinct. But d'Anconia connects work to the mental products of humanity. The true wealth of the nations is knowledge. And

³ *Ibid.*

this knowledge is symbolized in money. We can use examples to show how human knowledge excellently conceived is what elicits praise and confers value. This can be shown in the various fields of human life including agriculture, health, art, and business. Those persons who produce knowledge in such fields are sought out and their knowledge can be shared for the benefit of all. Unlike money, knowledge is communal in that the more you share the more there is. Unlike money, knowledge is inalienable (cannot be taken by the thief so that you no longer have it).

But now we begin to feel that something is amiss in Rand's vision. Perhaps we have followed her thus far and we see the value in work with hope toward what is good. But has she given us a correct definition of this good? And has her appeal to knowledge become a kind of "know how" that is merely pragmatic in its aims? Knowledge also has a corporate meaning that all persons with various talents can contribute to its production. Whereas the making of money as a talent is often vested in a very few and many times they do not show aptitude in other areas of human life.

D'Anconia tells us that not only is the Apostle Paul wrong but that the opposite is true about money: "Run for your life from any man who tells you that money is evil. That sentence is the leper's bell of an approaching looter. So long as men live together on earth and need means to deal with one another—their only substitute, if they abandon money, is the muzzle of a gun."⁴ The idea seems to be that money is the means of dealing with one another. It is a medium of value. This is reminiscent of Locke's description of money. Gold has intrinsic value as a rare metal that has many uses and does not rust. But we do not want to haul gold around with us. And so currency, perhaps tied to gold, becomes the more efficient means of exchange. But in any exchange

⁴ *Ibid.*

“money talks” only in the narrowest sense. What must happen is that those involved in the exchange come to an agreement. And this agreement is an expression of the use of reason. It might not be sound thinking as we reflect back on some of our purchases or investments. But it is thinking nonetheless and puts another layer of difference between this activity and the animals.

The use of money is the expression of coming to an agreement through reasoning together rather than using force. And Rand points to other virtues that money expresses:

But money demands of you the highest virtues, if you wish to make it or to keep it. Men who have no courage, pride, or self-esteem, men who have no moral sense of their right to their money and are not willing to defend it as they defend their life, men who apologize for being rich—will not remain rich for long.⁵

In this way, she believes that work for money is the embodiment of the virtues necessary for civilization. This requires taking personal responsibility and putting in the effort needed to provide for oneself and family. It produces ingenuity where people look to decrease effort through inventiveness. And it encourages industry rather than sloth and generation dependence.

But the problem noted above keeps growing. What is the highest good toward which all things aim? That is the knowledge we want. Her virtues appear to be circular. We need these virtues to produce the kind of society that values work and money. And we value work and money because these require such virtues. In other words, a virtue is a means to an end. It is not the end itself. And what one person counts as a virtue another might count as a vice when they have opposing beliefs about what is good.

D’Anconia uses his analysis to claim that not only is the civilization of money the best the world has seen, but its decline can also be

⁵ *Ibid.*

measured as we see a misuse of money. Although he relates this to the virtues and the crumbling of those virtues it is really an expression of the decline of reason and the use of force. Robbery which occurs by violence rather than theft, which occurs by stealth.

Do you wish to know whether that day is coming? Watch money. Money is the barometer of a society's virtue. When you see that trading is done, not by consent, but by compulsion—when you see that in order to produce, you need to obtain permission from men who produce nothing—when you see that money is flowing to those who deal, not in goods, but in favors—when you see that men get richer by graft and by pull than by work, and your laws don't protect you against them, but protect them against you—when you see corruption being rewarded and honesty becoming a self-sacrifice—you may know that your society is doomed.⁶

The final conflict in Rand's estimation is between those who work to produce and those who take by force. Whatever its lofty ideals and claims, the communists of the 20th century realized brutal regimes that relied on violence and oppression. She had direct knowledge of this. And what she thinks she sees is a return to a pre-civilized violence of the state of nature:

You stand in the midst of the greatest achievements of the greatest productive civilization and you wonder why it's crumbling around you, while you're damning its life-blood—money. You look upon money as the savages did before you, and you wonder why the jungle is creeping back to the edge of your cities. Throughout men's history, money was always seized by looters of one brand or another, whose names changed, but whose method remained the same: to seize wealth by force and to keep the producers bound, demeaned, defamed, deprived of honor.⁷

According to Rand, without the virtues summarized in her money speech civilization will collapse. But is this the case? Are there other virtues locked in a dialectic with one waxing then waning but neither finally

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

winning? If so it is because neither side has identified the good toward which we work or for which we help others. Perhaps d’Anconia gets us to a starting point for thinking about this when he says: “Or did you say it’s the love of money that’s the root of all evil? To love a thing is to know and love its nature.”⁸

Love involves knowledge of the nature of a thing. And what is good is according to the nature of a thing. What is good for a rabbit depends on the nature of a rabbit. What is good for a horse depends on the nature of a horse. And so what is good for a human depends on the nature of a human. And as we have been going we have been noticing where human nature is distinct from the animal. It came to a focus point not simply in money, work, or hope, but in reason. Humans use reason to think. They may not always think well and even may go some time without exercising thought at all. But tell a human they are thoughtless, merely a brute beast, and they will take great offense.

Just like we could know a person by what he hopes for, so too we can know a person by what he loves. What he loves tells us all about what he believes is good for himself and others. And it is here that we see d’Anconia finally falter: “But money is only a tool. It will take you wherever you wish, but it will not replace you as the driver. It will give you the means for the satisfaction of your desires, but it will not provide you with desires.”⁹

Ayn Rand does not help us with what we should desire. Does she mean that whatever we desire is what is actually good for us? The good is just the desired? That is the ethical egoist speaking. And from there her brand of ethical egoism might, like Epicurus, look to enlightened self-interest. But does this just become the view of self-interest? In such a view, one is best served by appearing to be virtuous before others but

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

in reality to be vicious and doing whatever can be gotten away with to advance satisfy desire. This is the view of Thrasymachus and d'Anconia seems to have led us back here.

Like Epicurus, Thrasymachus was an ethical egoist. He believed that justice as social coercion is whatever the strong can get away with. It is not by being unjust, but being thought to be just, that a person is able to be happiest. This is a form of enlightened self-interest that is self-preserving enough to not get caught. So he says: "And that is what I mean when I say that in all states there is the same principle of justice, which is the interest of the government; and as the government must be supposed to have power, the only reasonable conclusion is, that everywhere there is one principle of justice, which is the interest of the stronger."¹⁰ And he modifies it to affirm that it is in one's own self-interest to be unjust: "justice is the interest of the stronger, whereas injustice is a man's own profit and interest."¹¹

But, in standard form, Socrates turns this on its head. The goal of the government is the benefit of the governed not of the governing. If those who are governing allow the governed to fall apart then soon they no longer have a government at all. And so justice is not for the stronger (the government) but for the weaker (the governed):

Then now, Thrasymachus, there is no longer any doubt that neither arts nor governments provide for their own interests; but, as we were before saying, they rule and provide for the interests of their subjects who are the weaker and not the stronger—to their good they attend and not to the good of the superior.¹²

This being the case, the question naturally arises why anyone would want to govern. And there are only three reasons why a person might govern:

¹⁰ Plato, *Republic*, Book I, 338e.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 344c.

¹² *Ibid.*, 346a.

And this is the reason, my dear Thrasymachus, why, as I was just now saying, no one is willing to govern; because no one likes to take in hand the reformation of evils which are not his concern without remuneration. For, in the execution of his work, and in giving his orders to another, the true artist does not regard his own interest, but always that of his subjects; and therefore in order that rulers may be willing to rule, they must be paid in one of three modes of payment: money, or honour, or a penalty for refusing.¹³

But a just man will not wish to take money and does not need honor. So the only way to get a just man to govern is with a penalty for refusing. But now we can connect to the problems that emerged with d'Anconia and are present in Thrasymachus. Neither has told us what it is that is good. Both seem to think that the good is what is desired. And so the satisfaction of desires is good. But that does not tell us what we ought to desire or if our current desires actually are good for us. We have all had the experience of desiring something we also know to be harmful. So by what standard can we say that the satisfaction of desire is good? This becomes circular in saying that the good is the satisfaction of good desires. What is good? D'Anconia could not help us and neither can Thrasymachus.

Socrates helps us out of this problem in a way that d'Anconia could not. He steps Thrasymachus through this problem: "Tell me, Thrasymachus, I said, did you mean by justice what the stronger thought to be his interest, whether really so or not? Certainly not, he said. Do you suppose that I call him who is mistaken the stronger at the time when he is mistaken?"¹⁴ With that question, Socrates puts a wedge between desire and the good. A person can be mistaken in thinking that what they desire is in their interest but in reality, it is not. So how can money benefit us if it is indeed a kind of symbol of human ingenuity

¹³ *Ibid.*, 347a.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 340c.

that doesn't tell us how to use it? And if it is a means for humans to interact in their pursuit of satisfying their desires this doesn't tell us which desires we should satisfy or how. So, money and payment are not to be confused with ends in themselves. Indeed, he says:

And the art of payment has the special function of giving pay: but we do not confuse this with other arts, any more than the art of the pilot is to be confused with the art of medicine, because the health of the pilot may be improved by a sea voyage. You would not be inclined to say, would you, that navigation is the art of medicine, at least if we are to adopt your exact use of language?¹⁵

So we do not perform the many arts of human civilization for the sake of money nor can money replace them or represent them. D'Anconia has made a fatal mistake about money. He has confused something that is a means with the end of an art. Socrates takes us through this analysis of each art in itself in discussion with Thrasymachus:

And we have admitted, I said, that the good of each art is specially confined to the art?

Yes.

Then, if there be any good which all artists have in common, that is to be attributed to something of which they all have the common use?

True, he replied.

And when the artist is benefited by receiving pay the advantage is gained by an additional use of the art of pay, which is not the art professed by him?

He gave a reluctant assent to this.

Then the pay is not derived by the several artists from their respective arts. But the truth is, that while the art of medicine gives health, and the art of the builder builds a house, another art attends them which is the art of pay. The various arts may be doing their own business and benefiting that over which they preside,

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 346b.

but would the artist receive any benefit from his art unless he were paid as well?¹⁶

Money is not the aim of any of the arts nor is the benefit of doing the arts. It is a strange kind of reductionism that has motivated d'Anconia. Perhaps it is a symptom of the reductionism inherent in the material monism of Rand. But Socrates isn't done. He continues to take us into consideration of the good for a being. The good for a being is based on the nature of that being. He considers good, or end, of the eye. The excellence of the eye. And so from there, he moves to the soul itself. What is a good, or just, or excellent soul? Socrates continued:

Well; and has not the soul an end which nothing else can fulfill? for example, to superintend and command and deliberate and the like. Are not these functions proper to the soul, and can they rightly be assigned to any other?

To no other.

And is not life to be reckoned among the ends of the soul?

Assuredly, he said.

And has not the soul an excellence also?

Yes.

And can she or can she not fulfil her own ends when deprived of that excellence?¹⁷

No. If what is excellent about the soul is gone then it cannot attain its ends. And the end of a soul is called the good, so that a just soul is one that seeks and attains the good. Money cannot be the good and even may be a vice in some cases. The talent to amass money should not be confused with wisdom. Perhaps it is best called worldly wisdom. But the merely worldly wise are not to be confused with the wise who in their love of wisdom have become just. Socrates helps us define what counts as a just soul:

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 346c–d.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 353d.

And we have admitted that justice is the excellence of the soul, and injustice the defect of the soul?

That has been admitted.

Then the just soul and the just man will live well, and the unjust man will live ill?

That is what your argument proves.

And he who lives well is blessed and happy, and he who lives ill the reverse of happy?¹⁸

So we see here that happiness is not an end any more than money is an end. Happiness is the effect of living well. *Well* being the adverbial form of *good*. Money doesn't tell us that we are or have been good, nor can the measurement of someone's money tell us this about them. Indeed, this was the problem we found in d'Anconia is that he did not tell us what is the good. And yet he was ready to criticize the Apostle Paul. But before we turn to Paul, Socrates leaves us with his final analysis that the unjust are unable to work together:

We have already shown that the just are clearly wiser and better and abler than the unjust, and that the unjust are incapable of common action; that to speak as we did of men who are evil acting at any time vigorously together, is not strictly true, for if they had been perfectly evil, they would have laid hands upon one another; but it is evident that there must have been some remnant of justice in them, which enabled them to combine; if there had not been they would have injured one another as well as their victims.¹⁹

This means that when people use money in a just manner they are showing some remnant of justice. And those who use it for unjust ends are unable to work together. So it is not the money that is either just or unjust but the end. And there is no end itself to be found in the money and so money itself is not good. It is only through having a just soul that a person can be happy:

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 353e.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 352c.

But whether the just have a better and happier life than the unjust is a further question which we also proposed to consider. I think that they have, and for the reasons which to have given; but still I should like to examine further, for no light matter is at stake, nothing less than the rule of human life.²⁰

Now we turn to the Apostle Paul. D'Anconia had taken time to refute and correct Paul. But d'Anconia didn't know what is good. Let me name why he failed to know what is good: he didn't know what is real. Part of Rand's economics is that we can engage in economics without settling other religious differences about the nature of reality. So her materialism is overlooked by some Christians who say that we can still adopt her individualism as a code for society. It is a failure to see that a good for a being is based on the nature of a being. Socrates showed us the model of this form of thought: to know the end or good of a being we must know the nature of that being. The eye differs from the ear, the rabbit from the horse, the pilot from the doctor. But Rand's is a modernist attempt to ground social interaction in the satisfaction of desire. The "good" becomes meaningless in its circularity: good is the satisfaction of good desires.

To know what is actually good we need to know the nature of things. What is human nature? And here is where we need to surpass Socrates. He gave us some invaluable help. But he didn't take it far enough either in that section of the *Republic* or in his other dialogues. Paul does that for us by grounding the good in the knowledge of God. Consider the verse that d'Anconia took issue with: "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."²¹ This requires us to know what is evil. And what is a root? This is a metaphor for how a plant operates. The root is what nourishes

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 352d.

²¹ 1 Tim 6:10.

the rest of the plant and allows the production of fruit. It is not money that is the root of evil but the love of money. The love of a means in the place of the love of the final and highest end. A person might work to get money and that can make it a proximate end, but as Socrates showed us it can never be the final end for a being.

This quote from Paul occurs in the context of this chapter. Contrast it with verse 6: “Now godliness with contentment is great gain.” This is the contrast to the love of money. The love of money is straying from the faith. And we know from Hebrews 11:6 that “without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” And we know from Genesis 15:1 that God tells Abraham “I am your very great reward.”

In Romans 1:18–21 we find Paul doing that kind of metaphysics that d’Anconia failed to do and that Socrates only partially did. The creation reveals its Creator. And it is this knowledge that is our highest end. To live well (wisdom in Hebrew is like *skillful*) is to know God. Jesus corrects his disciples when he says “you of little faith, do you still not understand.” Faith is understanding. If we do not understand what it is to be a human or the origin and purpose of a human then we cannot live well. We will not use money well. And whatever it represents (remember d’Anconia says it represents the great achievements of civilization), we will misuse it in the pursuit of unjust desires (any desire not aimed at the good).

D’Anconia is not merely disagreeing with Paul but with Jesus himself. Jesus states it this way:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor

rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.²²

We have a tendency to read “heaven” as otherworldly. But the context is heaven as the kingdom of God, and Jesus began his ministry by teaching that the kingdom of God is at hand (not elsewhere after death).

Jesus, quoted by John, says that eternal life is knowing God (John 17:3). Remember Socrates said that life is when the soul is excellent in the attainment of its unique end. That is living well. That is the good life. The word here used by Jesus is that this is eternal life. The just soul is the one who knows God and Christ Jesus whom He has sent. The love of money for the satisfaction of whatever desire one happens to have is contrasted with the love of God. This is godliness that brings contentment. The person who either does not know God or says there is no God (Rand) cannot hope to have contentment.

But neither can a Socrates who stops too soon. He stopped in his knowing that he does not know rather than going on to get knowledge. This shortcoming gave us Academic Skepticism which really is behind the modernist attempt to separate economics from religion. The many religions fight and come to no unity and therefore, so the thinking process goes, we need to be able to get on with our lives and have a means of doing so that is neutral with respect to religious topics. While it might appear neutral to some of the religious topics that gave us the Wars of Religion, it cannot be neutral about the nature of being and the good. If we want to satisfy just desires we must know what is real.

Academic skepticism has been the solution of modernity. In the face of interminable Wars of Religion that left all sides exhausted, modernity looked for a solution in skepticism. The idea is that we cannot resolve through knowledge of these religious differences and so we allow factions to co-exist within a state that attends to the public interests

²² Matt 6:19–21.

of all. Religion is merely a private opinion and private matter. This is what allowed the apparent separation of economics and religion. But this is a narrow definition of religion.

It may indeed be true that the issues fought over in the Wars of Religion were not getting resolved and must be put on hold while rational arguments are considered. This should have been the approach all along rather than warfare. What unites economics and religion is the common focus on the good. But academic skepticism applies even to the knowledge of our highest good. And if we cannot know what is good then we cannot know how to use economic resources. The only solution to resolve to come to know our highest good is to bring unity between economics and religion and within religion.

We can conclude that economics cannot be separated from religion. Or, that it cannot be separated from the study of metaphysics. The use of money for just ends requires that we know the nature of things. And to live well requires that we know human nature. And this inevitably leads us to consider the Creator of human nature. The knowledge of God unites the many different arts of human civilization. And this includes the art of payment. While the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, the knowledge of God is the root of a well-lived life. Early I reminded you that Jesus began his ministry by saying the kingdom of God is at hand. But that is only part of what he said. He also said, “repent.” And repentance must occur at the root. D’Anconia and Rand need to repent not only of the love money but of the failure to know the nature of things (unbelief).



**What Can a Conversation between
Ayn Rand, Socrates, and the Apostle Paul
Teach Us about Our Highest Good?**

SUMMARY

Ayn Rand, through her character Francisco d'Anconia in *Atlas Shrugged*, taught that the Apostle Paul is wrong when he says money is a root of all kinds of evil. Instead, she argues that money is perhaps the greatest invention of humanity and is the foundation of civilization. In this article, Dr. Anderson challenges Rand's understanding of good and evil first by comparing d'Anconia to Thrasymachus and then by considering good and evil in the Biblical Worldview. These connections make it possible to see how economics and religion are closely connected through basic assumptions about reality and our highest good. Without knowing our highest good we cannot make sense of either religion or economics.

KEYWORDS

Ayn Rand, Socrates, Apostle Paul, good, evil, money, civilization, religion, economics, capitalism, communism, Francisco d'Anconia.

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Thomas A. Michaud

Anatomy of the Progressive Revolution

The degree to which market economies are grounded on moral norms that are affirmed as metaphysically objective and universal, is the degree to which the market economies can flourish. Without such normative grounds, moral turpitude can corrupt a market economy, ultimately resulting in the economy’s collapse. The actors in the economy lose trust in each other; there is no mutual respect and honesty among them. Without moral norms, market commerce degenerates into gang war types of vicious “combat zones” wherein success means eliminating the competition, both economically and literally.

Throughout history market morality has been due typically to the influence of religion on culture. The moral norms of religion establish a cultural infrastructure for trust, honesty, fair dealing, and moral accountability among persons acting in the market.

There is also a historical non-religious source of market “morality.” This is not a morality that is based on principles of honesty and mutual respect for the value and dignity of others. It is the “morality” of the dictates of a government authority exercising a “command and control” economy, which, in current times in the United States, is manifest in Progressive collectivist economics of socialism. The authoritarian collectivist government aims to establish, regulate, and enforce what is

Thomas A. Michaud — School of Professional Studies, West Liberty University, W.V., USA
e-mail: tmichaud@westliberty.edu ▪ ORCID: no data

“right” for commerce. Morality, in such collectivism, does not grow organically through the influence of religion, but is imposed on culture according to the ideological aims of the governing authority. As history has shown, however, command and control collectivist economies are not as long-lived or beneficial to persons as market economies that grow organically within the religiously nurtured morality of their culture.

The first two sections of this article will describe and contrast the Traditional view of religion as the source of cultural morality that influences politics and economics with the Progressive revolutionary aims to transform culture by imposing the revolutionaries’ ideological “social justice” morality of a collectivist political economy. The vicissitudes of the Progressive revolutionary agenda will be analyzed and critiqued in detail. The third section will expose a worrisome, fundamental philosophical problem with the Progressive agenda, namely the Progressive De-Personalization. This article will then finish with some remarks regarding what is at stake for the future of market-based political economy in the United States.

The Traditional View

Along with many other Traditionals, the late politico Andrew Breitbart believed that politics is downstream from culture, and culture is downstream from religion.¹ To expand on Breitbart’s proposition, culture, especially morality, flows from religion, and politics and economics flow from culture.

Breitbart’s Traditional view of the relationship between religion, culture, politics, and economics has a profound heritage including some

¹ This Traditional view of Andrew Breitbart is referenced in Christopher Chantrill, “An American Manifesto” (October 2017); available online—see the section *References* for details. See also Dan McLaughlin, “Politics Is Still Downstream of Culture” (May 2016); available online—see the section *References* for details.

of the United States' founders. In his "Farewell Address," George Washington, for example, stated:

Of all the dispositions which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports . . . these [are the] great pillars of human happiness . . . [Where] is the security for prosperity, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? . . . [Let] us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of a peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle. It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule indeed extends with more or less force to every species of free government.²

Washington could not be more explicit with his belief that morality flows from religion, and since morality is necessary for a free "popular," democratic republic government, so too is religion necessary. His mentions of prosperity, property and happiness reveal his firm understanding that a free market economy that allows for the pursuit of happiness does require a religiously based morality. His reference to religiously based oaths, such as swearing to "tell the truth, so help you God," further reinforces the need for religious morality to maintain honesty and justice in, and the security of, a free nation.³

Following Washington, John Adams recognized that the republic, freedom, and prosperity depend on preserving a moral citizenry.

² George Washington, "Farewell Address," 16–17. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

³ The significance of religiously based oaths, the so-called "wall of separation" between the public and private realms concerning religion, and other issues pertaining to the importance of religion in a democratic republic are discussed at length in: Thomas Michaud, "Demokracja potrzebuje religii [Democracy Needs Religion]," trans. P. Tarasiewicz, *Człowiek w Kulturze [Man in Culture]* 20 (2008): 101–111.

Adams affirmed that, “It is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand.”⁴

Like Breitbart, Washington and Adams, the late Richard John Neuhaus, a twenty-first-century culture commentator, observed that, “Politics is chiefly a function of culture, at the heart of culture is morality and at the heart of morality is religion.”⁵

To encapsulate these views, the traditional position can be represented as:

RELIGION
MORALITY
CULTURE
POLITICS ECONOMICS

In the Traditional view, morality—norms/standards for what constitutes a good or bad action—flows from religion and grows organically in culture. It is ultimately from religion and morality that persons develop their beliefs as to virtue vs. vice, what is the good/happy life, the importance of the family, the sense of individual accountability, and the personal responsibility for earning and stewarding wealth. The interrelationship between politics and economics is influenced by the culture, which, for Traditionals, results in a political economy that values free enterprise, market commerce, individual achievement, a limited gov-

⁴ John Adams, “Letter to Zabdiel Adams, 21 June 1776.” Available online—see the section *References* for details.

⁵ This well-known quote from Richard John Neuhaus is often cited in “quotable quotes” sorts of sites (e.g., <https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/8122>). Richard John Neuhaus, the founder of the journal *First Things*, also said that: “The first thing to say about politics is that politics is not the first thing” (https://www.azquotes.com/author/10752-Richard_John_Neuhaus). The Traditional Neuhaus clearly did not believe that politics has or should have a greater influential force on society than religion, morality, and culture, unlike the Progressives who maintain that politics is and should be the principal influential force on society.

ernment and individual autonomy. Traditionals highly value citizens as free individual persons whose liberty to pursue happiness and personal flourishing should respect morally all other persons and should be protected, and unabridged by their democratic republic. This Traditional appreciation of the individual person is precisely a main Progressive target for fundamental change as will be explained in the following anatomy of the Progressive revolution.

The Progressive View

The late U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan analyzed the difference between Traditionalism (conservatism) and Progressivism (liberalism) in this way: “The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself.”⁶ Moynihan recognized that in the conservative, Traditional, view culture is the driver of social success. He also recognized that for liberals, politics rules, so that a culture that is not driven by their Progressive politics is damned and must be reformed to save it from its own backwardness. His insight illumines a basic conviction of the Progressive revolutionary strategy that politics can change culture and make it conform to the ideological ideals for an enlightened, “woke” society. The full Progressive agenda can be represented with the following graphic.

POLITICS
ECONOMICS
CULTURE
(MORALITY)
EDUCATION JUSTICE SYSTEM MEDIA

⁶ The citation for this frequently referenced quote from Daniel Moynihan is: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/116754-the-central-conservative-truth-is-that-it-is-culture-not>.

This graphic can be best explicated by offering a series of points that briefly describe its facets and the relationships among them.

1. For Progressives, collectivist politics is the prime mover for gaining power and control over society with their revolutionary agenda. Progressives' devotion to their ideology is a type of religious zeal. They are indeed zealots, uncompromising ideologues who are convinced that their position has all of the answers even before questions arise. And if their political answers, solutions, do fail or do not yield immediate results, they tend to blame it on the backward Traditionals, the unsophisticated and obstinate religious right, or some constructed "force" beyond their control like climate change or a pandemic.

2. Progressive politics and their agenda itself are devoid of religion. In the name of their supreme value of social justice, religion must be excluded. No influential moral force greater than their ideology can be admitted. The unenlightened morality of Traditional religions must be deconstructed and substituted with their politically constructed "woke" morality: a social justice morality that serves their vision of collective unity.

3. Progressive politics wages its revolution with the weapon of economics. Through socialist dirigisme, economic policies create antagonisms between classes, races, ethnicities, and genders. Progressives' favored groups are those who are oppressed victims by past economic inequalities and inequities. They are given or promised privileged status through various government policies and programs. These groups' allegiance to the Progressive agenda is fortified by such privileges.

4. Progressive economics secures their politics and engenders the change in culture they seek. They contend that without the social justice morality they promise, the nation will be overwhelmed by the many crises it faces. Only their political economic ideology will ensure true social justice. Janet Yellen, White House Cabinet Secretary for the De-

partment of the Treasury, has bluntly stated this alarming warning: “The country is also facing a climate crisis, a crisis of systemic racism, and an economic crisis that has been building for fifty years . . . I believe economic policy can be a potent tool to improve society. We can—and should—use it to address inequality, racism, and climate change.”⁷

5. As indicated, it is social justice morality that Progressives strive to establish as a substitute for Traditional morality in economics and in culture at large. Their social justice morality emphasizes compensatory and distributive justice. Compensatory justice aims to correct the past and present injustices to oppressed groups. They promote government “compensations” such as reparations (financial and otherwise), affirmative action programs, and selective applications of criminal justice in regard, for instance, to rioting, property destruction, and looting. Distributive justice aims to correct inequalities and inequities suffered by oppressed groups in regard to earning and accumulating wealth. Again, government-managed and, if need be, -enforced examples include free college tuition, guaranteed basic income, universal medical care, housing, food/meal programs, childcare, and “tax the rich” progressive income taxation.⁸

6. Progressive politics implemented by their socialistic economics according to their social justice morality, and the interaction of these factors, generate revolutionary changes in culture. These changes are spurred on and spread by facets of culture led by Progressive activists. Public education, and much of private education, adhere to and inject

⁷ Janet Yellen, quoted in *Catalyst: Journal of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights* 48, no. 5 (June 2021): 8. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

⁸ For a thorough critique of Progressive social justice see: Thomas Michaud, “Krytyka sprawiedliwości ‘poprawnej politycznie’ [Critiquing ‘Politically Correct’ Justice],” trans. R. Lizut, in *Sprawiedliwość – idee a rzeczywistość [Justice: Theories and Reality]*, ed. P. Jaroszynski, et al. (Lublin: Fundacja “Lubelska Szkoła Filozofii Chrześcijańskiej,” 2009), 37–44.

Progressive ideology into their curricula and organizational leadership. The revolutionaries want education at all levels, but especially higher education, to be “government education” which promotes the Progressive agenda. For them, as they happily admit, education is indoctrination, since educators and educational contents that oppose “The Agenda” are summarily cancelled.⁹

7. Progressives believe that the justice system has been systematically unjust and must be reformed and saved by their social justice morality. The system must be repopulated with Progressive ideologues in such positions as police leadership, government prosecutors, and judges, especially in the higher courts including the US Supreme Court. With the moral standards of social justice, the legal system must be used, when possible, to reform economic issues, as well as criminal law for economic and criminal law reform, while advocating for and ruling in favor of the oppressed.

8. Education, the Justice System, and the Media interact to form a collective unity that strengthens and advances the Progressive agenda. Their unified collective efforts are indefatigable; they seize every opportunity Progressive politicians create for them in order to sustain a “permanent revolution” that simply does not retreat. The media are an integral factor in the unceasing propagation of the revolution. They spread the message of the Agenda, so that the facets of culture maintain a collective focus. “Media” in this context has a broad meaning. It includes print media, social media, mainstream TV news, and entertainment media, such as streaming TV services (e.g., Netflix, Hulu, Prime, Amazon, and HBO), sports shows (ESPN, CBSSN, and FS1), and

⁹ For more analysis of the Progressive impact on education see: Thomas Michaud, “Postmodernistyczne wyzwania dla katolickiego kształcenia na poziomie wyższym [Postmodern Challenges to Catholic Higher Education],” trans. Agnieszka Lekka-Kowalik, in *Filozofia i Edukacja [Philosophy and Education]*, ed. P. Jarosynski, *et al.* (Lublin: Fundacja “Lubelska Szkoła Filozofii Chrześcijańskiej,” 2005), 45–53.

movie studios. TV series (comedies and dramas) and movies are filled with Progressive propaganda. In fact, if a series offers an alternative, more Traditional perspective, it risks cancellation. The Progressive scions of social media are uninhibited lords of their fiefdoms. “Un-woke” posts and individuals are cancelled if they communicate unenlightened views. The media’s collective prosecution of the “cancel culture” movement has indeed become a potent force in executing the permanent revolution.

9. The concept of “permanent revolution” is fundamental to the Progressive agenda. This Marxist notion was adopted and adapted by Leon Trotsky in the early twentieth century. Trotsky’s words can be paraphrased to express the Progressive aims: The Progressive permanent revolution accepts no compromise. The revolution can end only with the complete liquidation of Traditional culture. The permanent revolution is not a leap by the Progressives but the reconstruction of the nation under the dictatorship of the Progressives.¹⁰ Chairman Mao Ze-dong had similar ideas with his notion of Continuous Revolution, which was the guiding thrust of his Cultural Revolution.¹¹ The Progressives’ revolution is not new to history. Collectivist/socialistic morality, economics and culture have happened before, but never have they entirely succeeded. They have not succeeded in the Soviet Union, or in Cuba, and not even in China, which is refashioning its communism in certain ways to expand its sphere of influence by engaging the global market economy.

¹⁰ The underlined words in this paragraph are from Leon Trotsky’s “The Permanent Revolution” (1929). Available online—see the section *References* for details. The word “Progressive” has been substituted for “Proletariat.”

¹¹ For more on Mao’s notions of Continuous Revolution and Cultural Revolution, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continuous_revolution_theory.

The Progressive Depersonalization

The political is the personal and the personal is the political. This maxim was a slogan of the late 1960s feminist and student movements. It also expresses axiomatically the Progressives' "identity politics," which can be defined as, "Politics in which groups of people having a particular racial, ethnic, social, gender or cultural identity tend to promote their own specific interests or concerns . . ." ¹² Identity politics:

is a kind of cultural politics. It relies on the development of a culture that is able to create new and affirmative conceptions of the self, to articulate collective identities, and to forge a sense of group loyalty. Identity politics requires the development of rigid definitions of the boundaries between those who have particular collective identities and those who do not. ¹³

To offer some additional traits, identity politics is a politic of cultural change. The identity groups develop tribal boundaries, which may intersect with other identity groups that have suffered injustice and oppression, but boundaries absolutely exclude any group of non-victims, the oppressors. The identities define the self within the cultural collective. To self-identify with a collective requires group loyalty, typically a loyalty that replaces any Traditional aspect of culture, such as religious loyalty or patriotic commitment to one's nation.

The wicked irony of "the personal is the political" axiom is, however, that it is precisely the personal, the sense of oneself as an individual, which the Progressive revolution aims to cancel. A society's culture without a strong sense of the individual as essential to the person is bereft of crucial values like individual/personal autonomy and moral responsibility, self-reliance, individual/personal achievement and reward,

¹² This is a paraphrase of the "identity politics" definition from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity%20politics>.

¹³ Jeffrey Escofier, quoted in: Joan Mandel, "How Political Is Personal: Identity, Politics and Social Change." Available online—see the section *References* for details.

and individual/personal property and wealth. These values are of baseline importance to Traditional culture. Erasing and substituting them with ideologically charged collective identities enables the cultural transformation that Progressives desire.

The individual is a locus of rights and responsibilities. Our personal identity is who and what we become as individual persons. We become persons insofar as we respect those rights for others and ourselves, and fulfill those responsibilities. Individuals grow and mature to become persons. Persons retain their individuality while realizing their responsibilities to themselves, families, communities, and nation. Our freedom, self-determination, liberty, ambitions, and aspirations are most perfectly fulfilled in the process of becoming persons.

The Progressive personal identity effectively liquidates the individual. The individual is not something real, the core of our self, but merely an epiphenomenon of our collective group identity.¹⁴ The collective group is the locus of rights and responsibilities. Our right to self-determination is nothing more than acting with and for the social justice sake of the collective. Our prime responsibility is to oppose the social injustice that our group, and all of the other groups with which we intersect, have suffered and are suffering. With the cancellation of the individual person, the Progressive revolution is able to employ strategically its social justice morality to provide opportunity, cover for establishing its socialist economics, and fundamentally transform the culture of the United States to create a new nation that has disposed of its Traditional history. The Progressives' permanent revolution can abide no other outcome.

¹⁴ I must acknowledge my colleague and friend, Curtis Hancock, who used the term "epiphenomenon" to describe the individual in our conversation about the Progressives' fundamental change of the nature of the human person.

Final Remarks

The advancement of the Progressive revolution hinges on redefining the human person. Just as successful market economies need Traditional morality rooted in their culture, Progressives plant their ideological social justice morality in culture and nurture it with identity politics. Identity politics excises the individual and reduces the person to a collective entity, which then can be more easily manipulated by social justice morality and directed by the Progressive state. Socialist economics is a means for Progressive politics to command and control the culture and generate total cultural change. Full transformation of the culture requires widespread acceptance of the Progressive collective view of human nature.

The Progressive revolution aims to change the way in which people understand themselves, understand their very humanity as collective beings. If their revolution ultimately succeeds, it will have ongoing permanence since it will have to correct continuously lingering cultural issues. For instance, criminal guilt must become understood as the fault of some sort of injustice suffered by the perpetrator's collective. Any beliefs in and efforts to earn private wealth and property would have to be rectified by the state. Moreover, even eschatological beliefs in personal immortality, an individual afterlife, would have to be challenged, probably suppressed, by the state.

The Progressive revolution against Traditional society is fomenting a civil war in the United States, albeit a cold war, but a war nonetheless. Effective resistance begins with understanding the revolution's anatomy, and recognizing and rejecting Progressive "woke" political strategies and leaders as abetted by educational institutions, the justice system and the media. Progressives will not abandon their permanent revolution, though resistance can weaken it, perhaps even to the extent

that it becomes nothing more than an annoying facet of the cultural fringe.



Anatomy of the Progressive Revolution

SUMMARY

A cultural infrastructure of shared morality is necessary for the success of market economics. Traditional views maintain that religion is the nurturing source of the morality, which grows in the culture. The Progressive revolution aims to overturn Traditional morality and impose its social justice morality on culture. This article dissects and critiques the multifaceted Progressive revolution in the United States, while contrasting it with the Traditional view. It argues that the ultimate aim of the Progressive revolution is to redefine the human person through identity politics as a collective entity, which essentially liquidates the individual, conforms the person to social justice morality, and establishes socialistic economics.

KEYWORDS

Progressive revolution, economics, morality, religion, traditional morality, social justice morality, human person, identity politics, collective entity, individual, socialistic economics.

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Peter A. Redpath

**The Uncommon Common Sense of
the Science of Economics:
Sound Money and How it Relates to the Economist as
Liberal Artist and Prudential Organizational Psychologist**

Well known to students of St. Thomas Aquinas is that he maintained that the whole of a science is contained in its principles and that its principles are contained in its definitions.¹ I take as my point of departure for this article a definition of money that I gave in the article I wrote for the 2019 Aquinas School of Leadership’s School of Economics inaugural issue for the *Studia Gilsoniana*. The title of that volume is *A Return to Pre-Modern Principles of Economic Science*.² Within that volume, the title of my article is, “Aristotle and Aquinas on the Virtue of Money as a Preservative of Justice in Business Affairs and States.”³

I take this definition of money as the starting point for my current analysis because, as a species of economic activity, the definition of money must contain what Aquinas considered to be his generic definition of the science of economics and the essential principles he thought this definition contains. The present article I write simply unpacks some

Peter A. Redpath — CEO, Aquinas School of Leadership, Cave Creek, Ariz., USA
e-mail: peterredpath@aquinasschoolofleadership.com • ORCID: no data

¹ See, for example, St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 11:1; *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 1, a. 1.

² *Studia Gilsoniana* 8, no. 4 (October–December 2019).

³ *Ibid.*, 885–890.

implications contained in St. Thomas's generic definition of the science of economics of which money is a species.

In my 2019 article I had indicated that a species of proportionality in commutative exchanges that is an essential part of business activity "qualitatively makes intelligible the nature of money and economic exchange."⁴ That is, a species of proportionality in commutative exchanges that *seeks to preserve distributive justice* in terms of proportionate equality within these interactions causes the concept of economic activity to become born in us.

Before we can rightly or wrongly reason about economic activity, we must first understand that we possess the generic concept of such activity, that we have located it within its real, proximate genus and are thinking and talking about it chiefly in relation to this genus. A chief reason that to recognize economic activity we must induce distributive justice in commutative exchanges is that every species of economic activity in the form of a commutative exchange essentially involves an interaction that, at least implicitly, recognizes some real talent in the production and exchange of real, not fictional, human goods produced by different professions and professionals for satisfying natural, not fictional, human needs.

Production of, and even exchanging, these qualitatively unequal goods requires qualitatively different talents of more or less human difficulty to execute. To maintain an economic order, Aristotle and Aquinas had claimed, "The greater qualitative contribution that some professions make economically to a political order must be publicly recognized and justly compensated."⁵

If a political order (a city or a nation) is to exist, some means must exist: (1) for public recognition (consciousness *in the public psyche* or

⁴ *Ibid.*, 885.

⁵ *Ibid.*

public psychology/awareness) to be made of the natural qualitative inequality of products produced by qualitatively different talents existing with different professions and professionals for satisfying natural human needs, real human goods, and (2) for equating these qualitatively unequal talents according to a uniform measure of qualitative equality. In short, distributive justice must, in some way, be recognized as a necessary condition of commutative exchanges. Economic exchange cannot be totally reduced to commutative exchange and commutative justice.⁶

“If this does not happen, Aristotle and St. Thomas maintain that economic exchanges within a particular political order and between political regimes will stop!”⁷ To prevent this from happening, they assert that money, currency, was invented as a measure of market demand to establish fair pricing—of paying: (1) too much, (2) proportionately equal (fair price), or (3) too little, chiefly relative to a real need.⁸ In relationship to fulfilling real needs, *the existence of sound money, then, becomes a preservative of distributive justice in human exchanges and measure of economic virtue!*

The reason *sound money* can have this quality of being a measure of moral virtue (qualitative equality between extremes) in economic activity is because some human goods have a qualitative greatness relative to the preservation and promotion of real human needs (the greatest of which is the preservation and promotion of human life) than do other human goods. And *sound money* is able more or less precisely to measure this qualitative equality in arithmetically-quantifiable terms relative to market demand through a physical sign numerically-expressed!⁹

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 885–886.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 886.

⁹ *Ibid.*

“The farmer, builder, and shoemaker produce qualitatively unequal useful goods, goods unequally useful for executing performance activity and keeping people alive, safe, and healthy. If human beings do not recognize the hierarchical inequality of business, and other, professions for the unequal contribution they make toward the preservation and promotion of human life and safety, perfecting the quality of human life” (that is, if they do not *psychologically recognize* the reality of distributive justice and have some means to apply it in the individual situation), “Aristotle and St. Thomas maintain that human beings will refuse to exchange goods and products, will refuse to engage in economic activity.” As St. Thomas says, when money loses its exchange power, human communication within an economic order stops and economic activity ceases to exist!¹⁰

Sound money and real economists enable “the real wealth (quality of talent of qualitatively unequal, but talented, people) and the generically unequal goods they produce (like those of the farmer, builder, cobbler, baker, and cosmetologist) to become members of the same genus of economic goods (enabling-means, goods productive of real, life-enhancing good) to be measured by a generically-common,” and qualitatively equal, “standard of use value.”¹¹ *Sound money and real economists*, that is, enable different professions to become economic professions, species of economic activity, and to endure as such. Considered as such, *sound money and real economists* function as *commonsense psychological signs* that real economic activity exists within a social order!

More than this, both serve as signs that a political order (a *polis* or nation) has started to come into being and actually exists at some time or other. In a sense, a city or nation starts, at least in part grows out

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 887.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

of and remains in existence, because of *the psychological awareness of citizens and those with whom they trade of the existence of sound money*.

Atomic individuals do not generate cities, nations, or enable them to endure long term. Cities, nations, essentially grow out of and endure long term in part due to economic exchanges: unequally talented people psychologically agreeing to exchange goods and services that satisfy real human needs; and we measure economic activity according to a human being's relationship to needing something for some human use chiefly to fulfill some real human need related to life, safety, or health in the present that some talented person can satisfy. As the Ancient Greeks realized, a political order is a species of economic order. Family households with internal divisions of labor (an *oikonomia* [*oikos* /*nomos*]: a home regulated by law, household rules) must first exist before monetized economies (cities and nations) can come into being.

The reason for this is evident. Before cities or nations can come into existence, some common sense and the moral virtue of prudence must first exist within individual households and become distributed throughout neighborhoods and villages. Only a total fool, or someone lacking in some form of common sense and prudence, would exchange something for which he or she had a real need for something for which he had no need! Cities and nations can never grow out of households of total fools, families with no common sense, no prudence.

In part, cities and nations essentially grow out of *the psychologically recognized* exchange-power of real money. St. Thomas calls this exchange-power the "virtue" (*virtus*) of money; and only *sound money*—money that is recognizable as real money by someone with economic common sense, prudence—has the qualities of being recognizable and recognized by right understanding and reason as being real—can provide it with the essential quality of possessing this virtue. A chief reason for this is that only *sound money* has real (not fictional) exchange

power, qualitative, greatness. Only sound money is really useful for maintaining an economic order, city, or nation; and only a person in touch with economic reality (a person with prudential common sense) can recognize it.

“Because money can become useless if not backed up by the force of law, St. Thomas adds that, while human demand, need, is the measure of all good according to nature, money is the measure of all economic good according to human convention by law. Further, money enables us to have a measure by law within and between States, a measure of the quality of labor of a State, and of the productivity of a State’s workers: of the reciprocal proportionality of economic worth of labor and the hierarchy of professions within and between States. Hence, in a way, money is the measure of the social health of a State.”¹² A State with an inflated or deflated economy is essentially unhealthy, criminal, despotic, totalitarian.

Economic exchanges are not acts of theft, fraud. As St. Thomas repeatedly states, prudence is the form of all moral virtue.¹³ No moral virtue—not even the moral virtue of temperance or courage—is a complete moral virtue unless it is prudently applied in an individual situation. A person with the disposition to being just is a person essentially disposed to behave temperately, courageously, and with benevolence toward other people. Only a person possessed of the moral virtue of prudence is able to do this with complete virtue because only this person knows how to apply such qualities in the right situation, at the right time, and in the right way. Prudence is right reason (common sense) applied to moral choice: applying the right principle in the right situation in the right way (*applying the right means to the right end under the right circumstances*).

¹² *Ibid.*, 888.

¹³ See, for example, St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 47.

Common among the Ancient Greek philosophers, the pre-Socratic physicists and present in the very first beginnings of philosophy among the ancient physicists—including the Father of Western Philosophy: Thales—was the conviction that philosophy is a *psychological habit of uncommon commonsense wondering* about the existence, unity, and behavior of organizations, including economic ones. This habit of wondering essentially born of moral prudence was so common among them that they were often ridiculed for it. To anyone who has studied Ancient Greek philosophy the most well-known story about such ridicule being heaped upon these Ancient philosophers are those told by Plato¹⁴ and Aristotle.¹⁵

Plato's account portrays Thales as intellectually wise (having uncommon common sense), but lacking in ordinary (common) common sense. According to this tale attributed in origin to a Thracian servant-girl, the well-known astronomer was so lacking in ordinary (common) common sense that, while he was intellectually focused on contemplating the movement of the stars up above his head, he could not see what was in front of him, and he fell into a well.

Aristotle's version portrays Thales as an intellectual tired of being ridiculed for his poverty due to his lack of ordinary common sense who *used* his philosophical, scientific, knowledge (uncommon commonsense) of astronomy to make himself rich. Somehow, due to his observation of the winter movement of stars, Thales had concluded that the next spring and summer would produce a bumper crop of olives. Foreseeing with financial common sense that this would be the case, he had the prudence to put down a deposit at a low price for use of all the local olive presses. When the harvest time came, Aristotle tells us he then rented them out at any amount he wanted and quickly became rich.

¹⁴ Plato, *Theatetus*, 174a–174b.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, bk. 1, ch. 11, 1259a 1–36.

While some people attributed Thales' success to an uncommon, scientific/philosophical wisdom (*uncommon* commonsense wisdom/common-knowledge perfection in understanding) on his part as an astronomer, Aristotle maintains this knowledge was nothing of the sort. It was based upon common economic knowledge (commonsense economic understanding/wisdom, moral prudence) universal to anybody who understands the nature of *monopolies* and how to use them to: (1) acquire wealth as a kind of *self-sufficiency* and, thereby, (2) become a *self-provider* (someone self-providential). Aristotle adds that this knowledge Thales had applied was simply commonsense financial wisdom/common financial understanding, moral prudence (*a commonsense meeting of understandings*) for many an Ancient Greek.

As indicative of this commonsense financial wisdom, moral prudence, Aristotle gives the example of a Sicilian merchant who had analogously applied the monopolistic financial practice Thales had used. The merchant did so by buying up all the iron from local iron mines and becoming the only seller of iron in Syracuse. Without increasing his price much, Aristotle reports that this man was quickly able to make a 200% profit on his initial investment. In addition, he says that, when the ruler of Syracuse, the tyrant Dionysius, had heard about what had happened, thinking that this man had discovered some secret way of making money that could hurt his political interests and career, he told the merchant he could keep his money, but only if he agreed to leave Syracuse.

Aristotle adds that, when they lack money, like households, city-states often monopolize, stock up on, necessary goods/*provisions* (*prudently see ahead*, create an abundance or storehouse [like a bank or treasury] of wealth) to sell them at a later date at a higher price. He even recommends this practice to rulers of city-states because, since a city-state is an organization of households, like an ordinary household, a city-state often lacks money. For this reason, *prudent* (commonsense)

rulers need to have their cities master the practice of being self-providers, monopoly, and should even have public officials devote themselves to the study of its use related to finance in general.¹⁶

While Aristotle glosses over the profundity of his observation regarding Thales and Thales' understanding of the nature of monopolies and how skillfully to practice them, while he does not treat this observation as a *Eureka!*-moment like that of Archimedes, he had every right to do so—especially in light of what Aristotle remarks about understanding the benefit that liberal arts education adds to acquisition of wealth.

According to Aristotle, work that is *most* an art and free (liberal) is the kind that *least* depends upon chance, uncertainty, contingency, and indeterminacy (like understanding *how to use* monopoly to make work as financially beneficial, productive, and enriching as actually possible [actually doable]). In contrast, work that is the *least artistic, free/liberal*, and *most servile* is bodily work that lacks direction by human understanding (common sense): the one that most depends upon all the aforementioned obstacles. Aristotle maintained that, for a human being, the most free, masterly, liberal art is the one that is the least servile and most *commonsensical*. Therefore, in a way, the most economical and economically healthy liberal art is the one that is *most humanly useful/humanistic, prudent to acquire*.

Such work most involves use of human understanding (prudently taking advantage of, leveraging, commonsense and uncommon commonsense wisdom) and least involves use of the body, while the most servile least depends upon human understanding (prudently taking advantage of, leveraging, commonsense and uncommon commonsense wisdom) most on a mindless body. What makes the arts to be arts and liberal is not simply understanding. It is right/beneficial, or virtuous

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

(especially *prudential*), *use* of understanding—one that, in a way, enables a person to take moral advantage of personal talent/skill to become like a sole-proprietor monopoly when exercising a human behavior: become someone better at doing/producing something humanly beneficial than everyone, or almost everyone, else. A great musical performer, for example, must have more than moral talent. He or she must know where, when, and how exercising such talent is healthy and safe to do.

Arts that are most truly liberal are those that *stretch* (extend in qualitative strength, width, and depth) *the human imagination so as to enable the human understanding to acquire and improve command and control over bodily movements and inculcate them with intellectual and moral virtue/common sense/prudence*. This is precisely what defines the arts of Thales and the Sicilian merchant, both of whom saw an essential connection to wealth-increase by *stretching* (educating) *their imaginations prudently* to synthesize three of their talents, applying some uncommon commonsense understanding related to the *use (application)* of the financial art of money making and *the liberal, rhetorical art of negotiating skills to reap great wealth from their understanding of physics* (such as the movement of the stars and where to find [discover] iron).

According to Aristotle, *arts are chiefly psychological habits of excellent use* (common sense) that generate human wealth: human habits that make virtuous use of human understanding to remove the element of chance from beneficial, humanly enriching, action, action that truly improves, liberates, human life in the form of safe and healthy organizational being and action: human greatness! Because they are as good as they can be without the addition of intellectual assistance, servile arts, those that are the least truly liberal and humanly enriching, involve little endowed or acquired, virtuous human understanding (endowed or acquired common sense/virtue, prudence) rightly to direct

them. Naturally endowed virtue (commonsense wisdom), excellence, and a little intellectual experience (acquired commonsense wisdom) is enough for them analogously to be called *arts*.¹⁷

Nevertheless, adding acquired virtue (commonsense wisdom/common understanding wisdom, prudence) that makes human action certain/sure to succeed (lacking in contingency and chance), predictable and fixed, predetermined in outcome in this or that situation to already-existing, endowed virtue (commonsense wisdom/common understanding wisdom), adds a qualitatively higher form of liberty, human wealth/capital, and common sense (*a monopolistic quality of sole proprietorship*) to physical and psychological health and action that is a necessary condition for exercising free human life (and especially that of political life of a citizen), not the life of a slave or serf.

Furthermore, right (commonsense) use of monopoly (being a mono-polis, a city-state unto oneself, self-sufficient/determined/reliant) as a sole proprietor of one's own virtues/talents is a necessary (naturally endowed and acquired resource) form of wealth that is a necessary condition for acquisition of all other species of wealth. Wealth chiefly consists in having and being able to put some resource/good to beneficial personal use. Essentially, human wealth is abundance of greatness in strength in *having and being able wisely, prudently, to put to use* a human good/perfection in health, whether that be physical or psychological. In so doing, an abundance of acquired intellectual and moral virtue causes an individual human being to become analogous to a healthy household or city-state: self-reliant, a bank-vault of talent, self-providential. As Aristotle recognized, what makes barbarians "barbarians" is precisely their lack of common sense, lack of prudence: their having an essentially anarchic psychological disposition.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1258a 35–38.

When virtuously applied, and especially when widely distributed, monopoly is not something evil. It is something good, a necessary condition for storing up (having a treasury/thesaurus) of different forms of physical and psychological wealth: storehouses of individual and social common sense and moral prudence. It consists in becoming perfectly self-possessed, a self-master, or something akin to these: exercising self-ownership of the necessary means for producing perfectly safe and healthy human action and a happy individual and social human life.

What else is a talented vocalist like Andrea Bocelli but a sole proprietor monopolist of a fine art? Precisely because he has a monopoly on a talent, he advances beneficial social communication and exchange of human goods, including financial, psychological, and physical health! What healthy societies have is not a lack of monopoly. They have widely and deeply distributed, decentralized, monopolies in the form of talented sole proprietors freely and prudently exchanging talently produced and exchanged, humanly healthy products/goods.

They do not have one or a few centralized monopolies such as those that exist in contemporary Enlightenment socialist utopias and Enlightenment colleges and universities (which attempt at every turn to transform talented people into serfs—employees servicing and sustaining in existence centralized administrative/bureaucratic monopolies) that often unwittingly traffic in promoting slavery, serfdom, and other forms of humanly destructive behavior among their faculty and students. Contemporary Enlightenment colleges and universities are essentially designed to drive out common sense, prudence, from the psyche of students, convince them that the only species of understanding (common sense) is mathematical physics. In doing this, they cause students to become anarchists, unteachable, imprudent, WOKE, people out of touch with reality who cannot tolerate to listen or to speak to or with anyone who disagrees with them.

As a man of uncommon common sense, St. Thomas Aquinas maintained that the intellectual virtue of *docilitas* (docility/teachability) is a necessary condition for being educated. He said that the moral virtue of prudence (which, he held, is a species of common sense) causes *docilitas*. He asserted that, before being taught outside the home, children generally learn some docility from parents and from their individual conscience, which, according to Aquinas, is the habit of prudence acting as judge, jury, witness, and prosecution of personal choices. In learning docility, we all acquire some common sense and moral prudence.

Common sense is simply some understanding of first principles that cause some organizational whole to have the unity it has that causes it to tend to behave the way it does. It is an understanding common to anyone who intellectually grasps the nature of something, the way the parts (causal principles) of a whole incline to organize to generate organizational existence and action. Strictly speaking, common sense is the habit of rightly applying first principles of understanding as measures of truth in immediate and mediated judgment, choice, and reasoning! Considered as such, it is the first measure of right reasoning!

Just as for Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle before him, for Aquinas, philosophy and science are identical. Philosophy/science is uncommon common sense in right understanding and reasoning about the existence, unity, and behavior of organizational wholes—a habitual, psychological habit of *prudentially wondering* and putting wonder to rest about the existence, unity, and behavior of organizations and the proximate, commonsense, principles that cause in them the existence and unity they have and the organizational behavior in which they incline to

engage. In short, philosophy/science is a species uncommon common sense in behavioral organizational psychology.¹⁸

As a species of philosophy/science, then, economics is simply uncommon commonsense behavioral psychology. Essentially, economists are chiefly behavioral psychologists. First and foremost, they are not mathematicians. Nor is their chief activity that of collecting and preparing charts and tables about data related to the production, distribution, and resources to evaluate wealth (totality of useful means for securing and maintaining life, health, and safety) within a political order or organization. Essentially, economists are people like Thales who possess the commonsense knowhow, prudence about how to acquire and preserve real human goods, to avoid poverty and secure wealth!

That what I am saying is true is simply common sense to anyone who knows anything about economics. As a sign of this truth, all one need do is to consider the psychology of a real wealth producer (someone like an Elon Musk). As far as I can determine, all of them tend most psychologically to pride themselves on their economic, financial, common sense and prudence. If they take pride in preparing economic charts and tables, this tends to be chiefly because of the fact that they consider these to reflect their real commonsense, prudent, preparation of these charts and tables: their personal, right understanding and reasoning applied to data that has enabled them prudently to analyze and express it.

If I am wrong about saying this, or about anything I have asserted in this article, please do not hesitate to show me where that is the

¹⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the connection that exists among the nature of common sense and uncommon common sense, the liberal arts, prudence, monopoly, and how all these apply to wealth formation, see Peter A. Redpath, *How to Listen and How to Speak: Standing on the Shoulders of Giants to Renew Commonsense and Uncommonsense Wisdom in the Contemporary World* (St. Louis, Mo.: En Route Books & Media, 2021), 1–48. Much of my discussion about these topics in this article is from this book.

case. I hope you enjoyed reading this presentation as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Thank you.



**The Uncommon Common Sense of the Science of Economics:
Sound Money and How it Relates to the Economist as
Liberal Artist and Prudential Organizational Psychologist**

SUMMARY

Well known to students of St. Thomas Aquinas is that he maintained that the whole of a science is contained in its principles and that its principles are contained in its definitions. The author takes as his point of departure for this article a definition of money that he gave in the article he wrote for the 2019 Aquinas School of Leadership's School of Economics inaugural issue for the *Studia Gilsoniana*: "Aristotle and Aquinas on the Virtue of Money as a Preservative of Justice in Business Affairs and States." According to him, as a species of economic activity, the definition of money must contain what Aquinas considered to be his generic definition of the science of economics and the essential principles he thought this definition contains. The present article he writes is an attempt to unpack some implications contained in St. Thomas's generic definition of the science of economics of which money is a species.

KEYWORDS

Thomas Aquinas, common sense, science of economics, sound money, economics, liberal art, organizational psychology, money, economic activity.

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Jason Morgan

The “Unity of Economic and Moral Practice”: Japanese Religious Sensibility and the Person-Centered Economic Tradition of Japan

In the wake of the so-called Enlightenment in Western Europe and, later, throughout much of North America and other European colonies, the concept of the economy and the study of economics was gradually divorced from religion.¹ Scottish economist and moral philosopher Adam Smith (1723-1790), for example, spoke of the “invisible hand” as a way to explain the tendency of economic action to level out supply and demand and to allocate resources efficiently.² Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) understood the economy as a pitched battle between limited resources and increasing population, the inversion of the biblical injunction to go forth and multiply.³ Jeremy Bentham’s (1748-1832) economic thought was marked by a Utilitarian approach blind to the hu-

Jason Morgan — Reitaku University, Chiba, Japan
e-mail: morgan.jason.michael@gmail.com • ORCID: 0000-0002-2969-3010

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¹ On “the economy,” see Gary S. Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1993). My thanks to J. Mark Ramseyer for this suggestion.

² But see Jonathan Schlefer, “There Is no Invisible Hand,” *Harvard Business Review* (April 10, 2012). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

³ See Genesis 1:22 and 1:28.

man person as a moral being and therefore at odds with human dignity and the strictures of the Ten Commandments. Karl Marx (1818-1883) saw economics and history as a Hegelian set, a force moving inexorably across the pageant of human life and pushing individual human beings along toward a final conclusion indifferent to the individual. Even anti-collectivist liberals such as Friedrich Hayek (1899-1992), in his discussions of the “constitution of liberty” and the organically-organizing spontaneous order of the free market, in a sense abstracted individual actors out of their activities and substituted unrepeatable economic interactions with economic-political theories.⁴ All of this was at a far remove from traditional religious understandings of human actions as under the watchful eye of Providence.

As thinkers moved away from real-world economic interaction and began to see an abstraction called “the economy” in generalized terms, the human person tended to be obscured or even occulted in economic thought. Macroeconomists created a new being, “the economy,” and imbued it with almost supernatural powers (a way to explain, indirectly, the disappearance of the human agent from economic considerations). In tandem with the divorce between “economics” and the human person, in other words, the economy and economics came to assume mystic, sometimes even religious dimensions. While more recent economic thought has focused on microeconomics much more than on macroeconomics, the return to the individual brings to the fore the original problem anew. There appears to be no way to harmonize the individual and the aggregate under a strictly secularist scheme.⁵

In Japan, however, the jarring disconnect between microeconomics and macroeconomics found in the West has been much less of a problem. This is because the ideal of economic practice in Japan has

⁴ F. A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty: The Definitive Edition*, ed. Ronald Hamowy (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

⁵ I am grateful to J. Mark Ramseyer for prompting this clarification.

long been rooted in a native Shintō-inspired religious sensibility according to which the world is populated by a myriad of deities (*yaoyorozu no kami*; lit., “the eight million gods”).⁶ The gods are everywhere and imbue everything with a significance greater than the visible, and bigger than the moment at hand. People are not, in this divine milieu, to be treated as means to an end. This understanding of the other in an economic transaction as having a transcendent nature, and of the household and wider society as a fortiori transcending (both spiritually and diachronically) the individual economic actor, has nurtured a person-centered approach to economic activity in Japan.⁷

In this article, I examine three iterations of Japanese spiritually-inflected economics—the Ōmi merchants centered on Lake Biwa near Kyoto, the Shingaku teachings of Ishida Baigan (1685-1744), and the “unity of economic and moral practice” views of Shibusawa Eiichi (1840-1931) and later business ethics thinkers—to show that, regardless of specific creed, Japanese economic thought tends to reproduce the understanding of the economy as ideally beneficial for human persons.⁸ I

⁶ See “Yaoyorozu no kamigami no keifu,” in Inoue Hiro’o, *Hito ga kami ni naru jōken: hito wa naze, hito wo kamisama to shite matsu no ka* (Tokyo: Ryonsha, 2007), 9–36. Cf. also H. Byron Earhart, *Japanese Religion: Unity and Diversity* (Encino, Calif.: Dickenson Publishing Company, 1974), 19–20, cited in Phillip E. Hammond, “The Conditions for Civil Religion: A Comparison of the United States and Mexico,” in Robert N. Bellah and Phillip E. Hammond, *Varieties of Civil Religion* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper & Row, 1980), 40–41.

⁷ An overview of some of the moral and religious doctrines presented in this paper is at Nobumichi Watahiki, “Sources of Business Ethics in Japan,” *Euromentor Journal* 10, no. 1 (March 2019): 7–24.

⁸ On the persistence of human-divinity thought in Japan, see, e.g., Matsuzaki Kenzō, *Hitogami shinkō no rekishiminzokugakuteki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwata Shoin, 2014), 13, and generally Part Three, “Jinshin shinkō no tayōsei,” 149–287. Of course, Japan is not the only country to have developed a human-centric economic model. See, e.g., the mention of “Human Capital analysis” in Bill Mihalopoulos, “Gendered Japan: Law, Empire, and Modern Girls on the Go,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 77, no. 2 (2018): 532, citing *inter alia* Theodore W. Schultz, “Investment in Man: An Economist’s View,” *Social Service Review* 33, no. 2 (1959): 109–117. See also Chapter Five, “The Irreducibility of Moral Behavior,” in Amitai Etzioni, *The Moral Dimension: Toward a New*

take my cue here in part from the American scholar of Japanese religions, Robert Bellah (1927-2013), who detailed at length in his classic 1957 study *Tokugawa Religion* the moral-economic valences of both the Ōmi merchants and Ishida Baigan's Shingaku. But I go beyond Bellah in many ways, too. For instance, I include in my considerations the “father of Japanese capitalism,” Meiji entrepreneur Shibusawa Eiichi, whose business ethics were heavily influenced by Confucianism. And I conclude by considering the modern-day doctrine of *dōkei ittai* (akin to Shibusawa's Confucian-inspired “philosophy of the unity of morality and the economy” (*dōtoku keizai gōichi setsu*)), which has been adopted by many in the business world in Japan as a way to privilege people over profits and the long-term social good over short-term individual or corporate gain.⁹ I conclude by recommending a morally- and religiously-grounded economic ethos to all societies, finding what I call the “Shintō personalism” of Japan—that is, the view of the human person as divinely contextualized and therefore to be treated in economic transactions as an end, and never as a means to an end—to be an ideal way to achieve order and moral conduct in economic life.

Theoretical Grounding

In making my arguments here, I draw in part from the locus classicus in English on Shintō sensibilities as the foundational socioeconomic ground in Japan, Robert Bellah's *Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan*. Working to locate a “functional analogue” to Max Weber's (1864-1920) famous arguments about “the

Economics (New York, N.Y.: The Free Press, 1988), 67–87, and “Discourse II: On the Moral End of Business,” in Orville Dewey, *Moral Views of Commerce, Society, and Politics, in Twelve Discourses* (New York, N.Y.: Augustus M. Kelley, 1969), 48–73.

⁹ Tahara Michio, “‘Dōkei ittai’ no ittai to wa,” *Dōkeijuku*, no. 106 (January 2017): 50–52.

Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism,” and building on Paul Tillich’s (1886-1965) definition of religion as, in Bellah’s paraphrase, “man’s attitudes and actions with respect to his ultimate concern,” Bellah finds in many areas of Japanese a spiritual immanence, one which seems to cross beyond doctrinal and even creedal boundaries.¹⁰ For example, Bellah sees Jōdo Shinshū (True Pure Land Buddhism) as having had great influence on the socially conscious Ōmi merchants, but also stresses the more homespun sense of morality found much more broadly in Japan—even unto the “fus[ing]” of economics and spirituality.¹¹ Unlike Bellah, however, I follow a number of Japanese historians and other thinkers (introduced in more detail below) in seeing Buddhism as having had much less of an effect on business practices among the Ōmi merchants than Bellah surmised.¹² Buddhism is one of the cultural staples of Japan. But Buddhism, I argue, did not mold the Japanese ethic—Buddhists in Japan were able to build on much deeper, Shintō foundations in inculcating moral practice among economic actors.

¹⁰ Robert N. Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan* (New York, N.Y.: The Free Press, 1957), 2–3, 6, 126–131; see also Chapter Four, “The Weber Thesis and the Economic Development of Japan,” in Winston Davis, *Japanese Religion and Society: Paradigms of Structure and Change* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992), 113–151, and Hans G. Kippenberg, “Max Weber: Religion and Modernization,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Peter B. Clarke (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2011), 63–78. For a discussion on “functional analogue,” see Amy Borovoy, “Robert Bellah’s Search for Community and Ethical Modernity in Japan Studies,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 75, no. 2 (May 2016): 468. I am very doubtful about the application of the Weberian thesis to Japan, particularly since Weber, and many others who have studied capitalism’s origins, emphasize the particularly English nature of the phenomenon. See, e.g., Chapter Eight, “Capital-ism: The Cradle of Capitalism—the Case of England,” in Alan Macfarlane, *The Culture of Capitalism* (Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 170–190.

¹¹ Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*, 168.

¹² *Ibid.*, 117–126, citing *inter alia* Naitō Kanji, “Shūkyō to keizai rinri,” *Shakaigaku* 8 (1941): 243–246.

I go beyond Bellah, too, in arguing that Shintō religious ideas—not shrine Shintō, but the basic and pervasive sense of immanent deity and a myriad of gods (*yaoyorozu no kami*) inhabiting the world, coupled with a strong revulsion at offending the gods and incurring spiritual pollution¹³—have pervaded Japan since quite literally the beginning of recorded Japanese history. I find that these effect, from age to age, a sense of “spiritual economics” which sees the human person and the social good as the end of economic activity, due to the latent spiritual power in the world.¹⁴

Here, I am conscious of Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō’s (1889-1960) attempt to “imagine a modern society bounded by emotional ties of kinship and nation,” an “ideal of a natural, organic social unity, rooted in the power of cultural identity.”¹⁵ However, contra Watsuji’s larger project, my argument in this paper is not political. I am not trying to justify any particular political form or to rescue the Japanese nation-state from the clutches of liberal modernity (as worthy a goal as that would be).¹⁶ Nor am I following Mito thinker Aizawa Seishisai (1782-1863) in his view on *saisei itchi*, or the “unity of religion [literal-

¹³ See Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*, 64–66.

¹⁴ So immanent are the Japanese gods that they do not scorn human work, such as agricultural labor, and even deign to dine with the sovereign once a year. See, e.g., “4. (1) Shinwa no jidai to buke shakai no hayai tōrai,” in Yamada Shūhei, “‘Hataraku’ wo kangaeru (1),” *Tottori Tanki Daigaku Kenkyū Kiyō*, no. 68 (December 1, 2013): 25. See also “(2-1) *Tama* as Mediator between Two Realms,” in Tomoko Iwasawa, *Tama in Japanese Myth: A Hermeneutical Study of Ancient Japanese Divinity* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2011), 73.

¹⁵ Borovoy, “Robert Bellah’s Search for Community and Ethical Modernity in Japan Studies,” 469. See also Augustin Berque, “Offspring of Watsuji’s Theory of Milieu (*Fūdo*),” *GeoJournal* 60 (2004): 389–396.

¹⁶ I also do not engage in depth here with Maruyama Masao’s critique of Bellah, or at all with the “modernization” school and its many, many critics in the United States and elsewhere. Those are discussions for another day. See, e.g., Borovoy, “Robert Bellah’s Search for Community and Ethical Modernity in Japan Studies,” 474–476.

ly, ritual] and government.”¹⁷ Watsuji and Aizawa were concerned with justifying a political order. I am not.

Instead, my assertion is religious and social. I argue that Japan has a baseline of regard for the other, for the human person, and that that baseline is pegged to the cultural, religiously-formed practice of sacralizing interpersonal interactions so that humans are treated as ends and not as means to an end.¹⁸ Bellah, writing in 1970 (well more than a decade after the publication of *Tokugawa Religion*), said that “the Japanese tradition of this-worldly affirmativeness, the opposite of denial” was the “ground bass, so to speak” of Japanese life, which prevented “the note of transcendence,” the “great outpouring of transcendence” during the Kamakura Period (1185-1333) from becoming rooted in Japanese society.¹⁹ I disagree that “this-worldly affirmativeness” is the “ground bass” of Japanese life. This is a key point where I leave Bellah behind. Instead, I think it is the Shintō understanding of man as embedded in a world alive with divinity and populated with human and divine others commanding his tremendous respect, which is the “ground bass.”²⁰ Immanence of divinity, and not anti-transcendent stubbornness,

¹⁷ Borovoy, “Robert Bellah’s Search for Community and Ethical Modernity in Japan Studies,” 479, citing Victor Koschmann, *The Mito Ideology: Discourse, Reform, and Insurrection in Late Tokugawa Japan, 1790-1864* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1987).

¹⁸ Cf., e.g., Bellah’s emphasis on the “repayment of . . . blessings” received in the course of one’s everyday life, such that “industriousness and devotion to a larger collective” were “regarded as ‘religious action’.” Borovoy, “Robert Bellah’s Search for Community and Ethical Modernity in Japan Studies,” 471–472, citing Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*, 21, 39, 41–42.

¹⁹ Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditionalist World* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1970), 119, cited in Tomoko Yoshida, “Kuroda Toshio (1926-1993) on Jōdo Shinshū: Problems in Modern Historiography,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 33, no. 2 (2006): 392.

²⁰ Yanagita Kunio’s views on the economic anthropology of Japan are instructive here. See, e.g., Chapter Eleven, “Seisei no masei no ijintachi: minzokugaku he no shiza,” in Kurimoto Shin’ichirō, *Keizai jinruigaku* (Tokyo: Tōyō Keizai Shinbunsha, 1979), 238–

is the “Japanese way” of economic life. If Japanese people by and large rejected the “great outpouring of transcendence” during the Kamakura Period, as Bellah alleges, then this was much more likely because they had no need of it, being already steeped in transcendent thought in their day-to-day life. In other words, Bellah assumes worldliness as the default habit of Japanese people. I, by contrast, assume otherworldliness, with this world included under that rubric. This makes all the difference when it comes to considerations of economic activity.

Another, more sociological and historico-anthropological way to put this comes from renowned scholar of Japanese religion, Masaharu Anesaki (1873-1949). Anesaki sees a tension between “monotheistic and polytheistic tendencies” in early Japan, with devotion to the sun goddess, Amaterasu-no-Ōmikami, existing parallel to the multitude of clan deities scattered throughout the archipelago.²¹ “The clan deity was usually represented by a symbol and enshrined in a simple sanctuary erected at a spot commanding the best view of the locality, and in many cases occupying a strategic point,” Anesaki writes. He continues:

The sanctified spot was carefully guarded and kept scrupulously clean. The simple, sober-looking shrine standing in the dim light of the woods inspired the people with the presence of a divine spirit. The sacred grove furnished a prominent landmark in every locality and was associated with the legendary lore of the community, its ancestors and heroes, or genii and fairies. The communal sanctuary was also the place where periodical celebrations and social gatherings were held, all connected with various phases of social life as well as with the change of the seasons and the associated festivities. Thus the Shinto religion was deeply rooted in the soil of the national spirit, patriotism in the narrower but original sense. Just as men lived in communion with the gods and they together made up the communal life, so nature and the phys-

253. See also “Edoki no takai ganbō,” in Komatsu Kazuhiko and Kurimoto Shin’ichirō, *Keizai no tanjō* (Tokyo: Kōsakusha, 1982), 197–202.

²¹ Masaharu Anesaki, *History of Japanese Religion: With Special Reference to the Social and Moral Life of the Nation* (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1963), 34.

ical surroundings played a no less important part in moulding religious sentiment.²²

The Shintō shrine in a local village was not just a clan deity’s dwelling place, but the symbol of the unity of the spirit, natural, and human realms, and of the harmony which that unity was supposed to engender. This produced not only an external, *pro forma* moral order, but an internalized, organic, personal moral order in which the individual was deeply invested.²³ Anesaki continues:

Thus morality, religious observances, laws and customs were interwoven, and their inculcation rested upon the shoulders of the community, represented by an assembly of priests and elders. Grave offences on the part of any member of the community were believed to draw divine wrath upon the whole community, and therefore propitiation was required from the community as well as from the individual.²⁴

This virtual identity of the human with the spiritual world, and of the individual with the community under the watchful eye of higher deities, is perhaps also why Japan seems to have avoided human sacrifice much more than in other societies, such as in primitive Europe or Latin America.²⁵ Not only was the human world suffused with deity, but in many cases the human person him- or herself could be deified.²⁶ The border between the human and the divine was porous, if not nonexistent.²⁷ The individual human person, although existing within a strongly

²² *Ibid.*, 34–35.

²³ Katō Genchi, *Ajiagaku sōsho 14: Shintō no shūkyō hattatsushiteki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Ōzorasha Shuppan, 1997), 852.

²⁴ Masaharu Anesaki, *History of Japanese Religion*, 36.

²⁵ See *ibid.*, 42.

²⁶ See generally Komatsu Kazuhiko, *Kami ni natta Nihonjin: watashitachi no kokoro no oku ni hisomu mono* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2020), and Uematsu Tadahiro, *Shinkō to bijinesu* (Tokyo: Taishūkan Shoten, 1998), 30–35.

²⁷ Komatsu Kazuhiko, *Kamigami no seishinshi* (Tokyo: Dentō to Gendaisha, 1978), 49–82. See also Komatsu Kazuhiko, “Ikai to temō,” in *Iwanami kōza temō to ōken wo kangaeru*, vol. 9, *seikatsu sekai to fōkuroa*, ed. Amino Yoshihito, *et al.* (Tokyo: Iwa-

vertical society of authority and submission, was valued as an integral part of the community.²⁸ My argument here is that economics is an extension of this local-Shintōist, cultural-baseline religious prioritizing of the human person as an end.

The Shintō approach to shared life (including economic life) is a particularly Japanese way of being in the world, of course. But it need not be thought that, therefore, the Shintō approach, generalized, must be alien to other societies. In fact, Emile Durkheim, whom Bellah esteemed, writes of religious practice (and not necessarily religious practice in Japan):

The theorists who have undertaken to explain religion in rational terms have generally seen in it before all else a system of ideas, corresponding to some determined object. . . . But the believers, the men who lead the religious life and have a direct sensation of what it really is, object to this way of regarding it, saying that it does not correspond to their daily experience. In fact, they feel that the real function of religion is not to make us think, to enrich our knowledge, nor to add to the conceptions which we owe to science others of another origin and another character, but rather, it is to make us act, to aid us to live.²⁹

From the inside, adopting the Durkheimian view outlined above, Japan appears not a desacralized or this-worldly workaday realm, but a place suffused by divinity, subsisting in Shintō ideas and ideals in a way so pervasive as to be nearly invisible to casual observers.

Let us turn first to a group of merchants who, although ostensibly Buddhist in their orientation, nevertheless exemplify the Shintō realities

nami, 2003), 229–248, Mark Teeuwen, “Attaining Union with the Gods: The Secret Books of Watarai Shinto,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 48, no. 2 (Summer, 1993): 227–228, 234, 236, and Doris G. Bargen, “Spirit Possession in the Context of Dramatic Expressions of Gender Conflict: The Aoi Episode of the *Genji Monogatari*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 48, no. 1 (June 1988): 95–130.

²⁸ Masaharu Anesaki, *History of Japanese Religion*, 37.

²⁹ Emile Durkheim, *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society: Selected Writings*, ed. Robert N. Bellah (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), 188–189.

of Japan (and, I think, challenge by this very measure the “Buddhist” motives often imputed to them).

Ōmi Merchants: Pure Land Buddhism, Shintō Economic Ethics, and the Commercial Pursuit of the Social Good

The Ōmi Merchants were traders active mainly in central Japan, with a home base along the southeastern shore of Lake Biwa in the Kin-ki region near the ancient capital of Kyoto. Working within a family network and under an ethos of mercantile activity for the social good, the Ōmi Merchants present a prominent and enduring example of the basic economic paradigm in Japan of buying and selling as subordinate to a much broader vision of society than just a single transaction or a single opportunity for illicit gain.³⁰ This paradigm is one of the clearest signals of Shintō economic personalism in action, and is in fact widespread throughout Japanese economic thought and practice.

The particular Ōmi ethic of bearing in mind the social responsibilities of the merchant when engaging in trade is often referred to as a “sanpō yoshi” arrangement.³¹ “Sanpō yoshi” means, roughly, “triangularly good” or “works out well in three directions,” which is to say that a transaction, according to the Ōmi ideal, should benefit the seller, the buyer, and society as a whole—a “win-win-win” situation.³² But *sanpō*

³⁰ Although this does not mean that all Ōmi merchants shared exactly the same views. See J. Mark Ramseyer, “Thrift and Diligence: House Codes of Tokugawa Merchant Families,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 34, no. 2 (Summer, 1979): 209. On Ōmi networks, see briefly Sydney Crawcour, “Documentary Sources of Tokugawa Economic and Social History,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 20, no. 3 (May 1961): 351.

³¹ See, e.g., Yamamoto Masahito, *Ōmi shōnin no tetsugaku: ‘taneya’ ni manabu akinai no kihon* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2019), 155–158.

³² Cf. Japan Knowledge, “Sanbō yoshi,” available online at: <https://japanknowledge.com/lib/display/?lid=2001023498500>, accessed Nov. 21, 2021, and “A WIN for EVERY-ONE: ima koso ‘sanpō yoshi’ keiei: Ei Bei ryū yori Ōmi no chie,” *Nikkei Business*, no. 2084 (March 29, 2021): 30–47. It seems to me that scholars in Japan and elsewhere

yoshi may not be quite as “*Ōmi*” as at first appears. *Ōmi* researcher Ogura Ei’ichirō finds the origin of the “*sanpō yoshi*” phrase in the history of the *Ōmi* merchants, in particular among the writings of Nakamura Jihei (1685-1757).³³ However, Ōno Masahide at the philosophical research institute The Moralogy Foundation in Kashiwa, Japan, argues convincingly, and contra Ogura directly, that it was the moral philosopher Hiroike Chikurō (1866-1938) who began using the phrase from as early as 1931.³⁴ To be sure, *Ōmi* merchant Nakamura Jihei, who in 1754, at the age of 70, left as a passage in his “house code” (*kakun*) an admonition to carry out commerce for the benefit of “the seller, the buyer, and the world around [*seken*].”³⁵ But the words *sanpō yoshi* are missing. The debate over who originated the *sanpō yoshi* ideal and terminology continues.

What is important for our purposes is not who was first to use the term “*sanpō yoshi*,” however, but the fact that the underlying concept is pervasive in Japanese society and economic and social history. The debate itself in a way proves this larger point. Ōno notes, for example, that “this concept [*i.e.*, *sanpō yoshi*] can be interpreted as a Japanese style stakeholder approach,” foregrounding a common way (*i.e.*, “stake-

have not made a sufficient distinction between *sanpō yoshi* thinking and the “delayed gratification” which some, such as Daniel Bell, find in the Protestant work ethic. See, *e.g.*, Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York, N.Y.: Basic Books, 1976), 75.

³³ Ogura Ei’ichirō, *Ōmi shōnin no rinen: Ōmi shōnin kakun senshū* (Hikone, Shiga, Japan: Sanraizu Shuppan, 2020), 39–41. See also Part Three, Chapter Seven, “Nakamura Jihei ke,” in Serikawa Hiromichi, *Shūkyōteki keizai rinri no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Taiga Shuppan, 1987), 461–465.

³⁴ Ōno Masahide, “‘*Sanpō yoshi*’ no kotoba no yurai to sono gendaiteki imi,” *Nihon Keiei Rinri Gakkai Shi* 19 (January 2012): 241.

³⁵ Suenaga Kunitoshi, *Ōmi shōnin: sanpō yoshi keiei ni manabu* (Kyoto: Minerva Shobo, 2011), 20–23. See also Suenaga Kunitoshi, “*Ōmi shōnin Nakamura Jihei Sōgan no ‘kakioki’ to ‘kakun’ ni tsuite: ‘sanpō yoshi’ no genten kōshō*,” *Dōshisha Shōgaku* 40, nos. 5–6 (March 1999): 25–56.

holding”) to speak of the *sanpō yoshi* concept in modern terminology.³⁶ The Ōmi merchants referenced by Ogura may not have used “*sanpō yoshi*” in so many words, but they did speak of the necessity of aligning the interests of both parties to a transaction and the wider social whole when engaging in trade. As Dōshisha University professor emeritus and specialist in Ōmi history Suenaga Kunitoshi points out, the Ōmi merchants were not the only punctiliously upright and honest merchants in Japan. For example, Tōyama peddlers of medicinal products “prized sincerity and trust” and took as their business motto, “First make it useful, and only second concern yourself with making a profit” (*sen’yō kō-ri*).³⁷

Another testament to the *sanpō yoshi* ideal in action is the longevity of so many Japanese firms, regardless of religious affiliation (or having no religious coloring at all). Japan is home to the oldest companies in the world, and of the 7,212 oldest firms worldwide, Japan boasts 3,113 of them.³⁸ (Second place belongs to Germany, which has just over half Japan’s total at 1,563.)³⁹ While the oldest company in Japan is a temple construction firm, which would seem to indicate that Buddhism has more resilience than Shintō and also more influence on

³⁶ Ōno Masahide, “‘Sanpō yoshi’ no kotoba no yurai to sono gendaiteki imi,” 241.

³⁷ Suenaga Kunitoshi, *Ōmi shōnin to sanpō yoshi: gendai bijinesu ni ikiru chie* (Kashiwa, Japan: Institute of Moralogy, 2014), 46–47.

³⁸ See also Keiei to Dōtoku Editors, “‘Dōkei ittai shisō’ kiso kōza 6: yoki kōkeisha zukuri wo,” *Keiei to Dōtoku*, no. 171 (February 1999): 4–7, and Tahara Michio, “Han’ei to eizoku,” *Dōkeijuku*, no. 111 (November 2017): 54–56.

³⁹ *Dōkei ittai no keiei ga eizoku e no michi wo kirihiraku*, ed. Morarōji Kenkyūjo (Kashiwa, Japan: The Institute of Moralogy, 2017), 16–20; see also Alex Coad, “Investigating the Exponential Age Distribution of Firms,” *Economics* 4, 2010-17 (May 21, 2010): 20, Joseph Toschik, “Review of Ron Yates, *The Kikkoman Chronicles: A Global Company with a Japanese Soul* (New York, N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1998),” *Library Journal* 123, no. 9 (May 15, 1998): 94–95, “In the Club,” *Country Life* (December 16/23, 2015): 114, Alex Coad, “Firm Age: A Survey,” *Journal of Evolutionary Economics* 28 (2018): 13–43, “The Business of Survival: The World’s Oldest Companies,” *The Economist* 373, no. 8406 (December 18, 2004): 135.

business ethics (as apparently proven by the longevity of the firm), it must be remembered that there are no comparable Buddhist construction firms elsewhere in the world. What is unique to Japan, and what enables companies to survive over long centuries, is not Buddhism, but Shintō mentality. The diligence and forthrightness which Bellah identified as hallmarks of Japanese life in the Tokugawa period are not religious, as in doctrinal, but are cultural mainstays, inculcated by the basic Shintō understanding of the world as suffused with deity.⁴⁰

As with the temple construction firm of ancient vintage, at first glance the Buddhist roots of Ōmi marketplace morality also stand out. To begin from circumstantial evidence, the Rokkaku clan, which for four hundred years produced the *shugo daimyō* which ruled the southern part of Ōmi province, built their castle stronghold on Kannonji Mountain—“Kannonji” meaning “Kannon Temple,” Kannon being the Buddhist bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. It was in the shadow of this “Kannon Temple” castle that the first free market (*rakuichi*) in Japan was held, seeming further to link Buddhism and economic activity.⁴¹ Shinshū (Pure Land) Buddhist monks were active in proselytizing in the Ōmi area from the fifteenth century, and the Shinshū creed became widespread in Ōmi in the Edo Period (1600-1868). In the heavily Buddhist region where Ōmi merchants first plied their trade, Pure Land and

⁴⁰ On Tokugawa businesses, see, e.g., Yasukazu Takenaka, “Endogenous Formation and Development of Capitalism in Japan,” *The Journal of Economic History* 29, no. 1 (March 1969): 153–156.

⁴¹ Yamamoto Masahito, *Ōmi shōnin no tetsugaku*, 150. On the Ōmi origins see also Kanno Watarō, *Ōmi shōnin no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1972), 17–21, Egashira Tsuneharu, *Ōmi shōnin* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1959), 23–25, and Tsujii Seigo, “Ōmi shōnin no keizai rinri to shinkō no igi: Matsui Yūken to Jōdo Shinshū sō Kōjuin Tokuryū to no kankei wo omo ni shite,” *Bukkyō Keizai Kenkyū* 45 (May 2016): 127–129. On *rakuichi*, see Yoshihiko Amino, “Medieval Japanese Constructions of Peace and Liberty: *Muen*, *Kugai*, and *Raku*,” *International Journal of Asian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2007): 3–14.

True Pure Land sects traditionally accounted for some two-thirds of all temples.⁴²

What’s more, Buddhists in Japan had been involved in trade, even international trade, long before the rise of the Ōmi merchant houses, so there is certainly precedent for Buddhism to inform mercantile practices.⁴³ And Buddhist influence is obvious in Ōmi house codes. Famed Ōmi merchant Itō Chūbei (1842-1903), for example, went so far as to say that “commerce is the bodhisattva way” (*shōbai wa bosatsu no michi*).⁴⁴ Researcher Kubota Kazumi states that “One of the factors in Ōmi’s having produced a long line of Ōmi merchants lies in Ōmi’s particular religious environment,” meaning Buddhism.⁴⁵ This seems obvious at first glance. Reading the “house codes” of many Ōmi merchants, one finds sayings such as “Follow the Law of the Buddha and listen carefully to sermons,”⁴⁶ and “You may follow only the Pure Land or Zen Buddhist faiths, and you must have absolutely nothing to do with the Christian religion.”⁴⁷ Buddhist studies scholar Ōtani Ei’ichi writes of “engaged Buddhism,” borrowing fellow scholar Ueda Noriyuki’s term to describe the way that Buddhist sensibilities have guided Ōmi practice.⁴⁸ The Ōmi ethos would appear, on a close historical read-

⁴² Serikawa Hiromichi, *Shūkyōteki keizai rinri no kenkyū*, 565.

⁴³ Chapter Four, “Doing Business with Your Fellow Buddhists: The Credit System Underlying Sino-Japanese Trade, 1000-1270,” in Yiwen Li, “Networks of Profit and Faith: Spanning the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea, 838-1403” (Doctoral dissertation, Yale University, May 2017), 119–162.

⁴⁴ Tsujii Seigo, “Ōmi shōnin no keizai rinri to shinkō no igi,” 132, see also 134, citing *Itō Chūbei okina kaisōroku*, ed. Itō Chūbei Okina Kaisōroku Henshū Jimukyoku (Tokyo: Itōchū Shōji, n.d.), 150. The ITOCHU corporation derives from the legacy of Itō Chūbei and has as its company motto “Sanpō Yoshi.”

⁴⁵ Kubota Kazumi, *Ōmi shōnin no seikatsu taido: kakun, rinri, shinkō* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2020), 10.

⁴⁶ Ramseyer, “Thrift and Diligence,” 211–212.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁴⁸ Ōtani Ei’ichi, “Gendai ni okeru shūkyō no shakai undō: Shiga kyōku Jōshū seinenkai no Ōmi kome isshō undō no jirei,” *Honge Bukkyō Kiyō* 3 (2015): 92, citing Ueda Nori-

ing, to be steeped in Pure Land Buddhism, with the current corporate ethics of firms which evolved out of the Ōmi beginning practicing a secularized form of Pure Land teachings.⁴⁹

But these bracing pre- and proscriptions in favor of the Buddhist way belie the universality of what the house codes teach. Let us think bigger, and go farther back in time. Long before the triumph of Buddhism in the Ōmi region, the area was home to a wealth of Shintō shrines and produced many prominent Shintō clans.⁵⁰ Also, True Pure Land Buddhism is an anomaly within the Buddhist panoply, an “absolutely other-reliant” (*zettai tariki*) faith developed out of the Tiantai (Tendai) sect by Hōnen (1133-1212) and his disciple Shinran (1173-1263), the latter of whom stressed the recitation of the *nenbutsu* prayer calling on the name of celestial Buddha Amida (Amitābha) for salvation.⁵¹ As Max Weber pointed out, True Pure Land Buddhism, unlike other Buddhist creeds and sects, stresses a kind of *sola fide* approach (indeed, Shinran is sometimes compared to Martin Luther⁵²), a reliance on the other and a radical minimization of the self.⁵³ In doing this, it is

yuki, *Ganbare Bukkyō! o-tera runessansu no jidai* (Tokyo: NHK Books, 2004), 312. The “kome isshō” eleemosynary campaign continues today. See, e.g., <https://www.chion-in.or.jp/kacho/429/>, accessed Dec. 11, 2021.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Tsujii Seigo, “Ōmi shōnin no keizai rinri to shinkō no igi,” 139, 146, 147.

⁵⁰ Serikawa Hiromichi, *Shūkyōteki keizai rinri no kenkyū*, 563.

⁵¹ Taniguchi Noriko, “Nihon ni okeru shihonshugi seishin no keisei ni kansuru josetsu-tekki kōsatsu: Ue-ba- to Ōmi shōnin, Jōdo Shinshū to no kankei wo tōshite,” *Higashi Nippon Kokusai Daigaku Kenkyū Kiyō* 2, no. 1 (December 1996): 18.

⁵² Matthew Milliner, “Evangelicals and Zen Masters,” *First Things*, no. 292 (April 2019): 1–11, Randall Collins, “An Asian Route to Capitalism: Religious Economy and the Origins of Self-Transforming Growth in Japan,” *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 6 (December 1997): 851, Tomoko Yoshida, “Kuroda Toshio (1926-1993) on Jōdo Shinshū,” 387, citing Hattori Shisō, *Shinran no-to* (Tokyo: Fukumura Shuppan, 1967), 68. Hattori finds another monk, Rennyō (1415-1499), to be closer to Luther than Shinran was, but the parallels between Shinran and Luther remain clear even on Hattori’s reading.

⁵³ Taniguchi Noriko, “Nihon ni okeru shihonshugi seishin no keisei ni kansuru josetsu-tekki kōsatsu,” 18.

arguable that Shinran and Hōnen were surfacing the latent other-directedness and self-reflective personality present in Japan’s Shintōist culture. Tiantai Buddhism was imported from China, of course. But it took root in Ōmi, where, before the arrival of Buddhism, Shintō had once been the state religious norm.

We must note yet other sour notes spoiling the swelling Buddhist refrain on the Ōmi front. For instance, there is Japanese sociologist Kawamura Nozomu’s 1998 essay about a virtually ignored 1941 work by fellow sociologist Naitō Kanji (1916-2020), “Shūkyō to keizai rinri: Jōdo Shinshū to Ōmi shōnin” (“Religion and economic ethics: True Pure Land [Buddhism] and the Ōmi merchants”).⁵⁴ Naitō follows Weber and sees Pure Land Buddhism as having provided the ethical grounding for the development of the Ōmi devotion to honesty and fair-dealing in the merchant trade.⁵⁵ Bellah knew the Naitō essay well. Naitō’s work, Kawamura argues, was so crucial to Bellah’s doctoral dissertation (the basis for Bellah’s first book, the 1957 work on Tokugawa religion cited above) that, had Naitō’s essay not been translated into English, thus enabling Bellah easily to read it, Bellah’s work on the Tokugawa milieu would probably never have gotten underway.⁵⁶

But, *pace* Bellah and Naitō, Kawamura is very skeptical of Naitō’s insistence on seeing the “at first blush passive” (*ikken shōkyokuteki*

⁵⁴ Kawamura Nozomu, “Ōmi shōnin to Jōdo Shinshū,” *Tōkyō Joshi Daigaku Shakai Gakkai Kiyō* 26 (February 1998): 1. See also Kubota Kazumi, *Ōmi shōnin no seikatsu taido: kakun, rinri, shinkō*, 10–12, and Serikawa Hiromichi, *Nihon no kindaika to shūkyō rinri: kinsei Ōmi shōninron* (Tokyo: Taiga Shuppan, 1997), 32–49.

⁵⁵ Serikawa Hiromichi, *Shūkyōteki keizai rinri no kenkyū*, 565–566, see also 292–302. For another Weberian interpretation of Jōdo Shinshū, see, e.g., Ōtani Teruhiro, “Bukkyō to keizai rinri: Jōdo Shinshū to Ōmi shōnin wo megutte,” *Ryūkyō Daigaku Daigakuin Kenkyū Kiyō*, Jinbun Kagaku 8 (March 22, 1987): 47–49.

⁵⁶ Kawamura Nozomu, “Ōmi shōnin to Jōdo Shinshū,” 1, citing Naitō Kanji, “Shūkyō to keizai rinri: Jōdo Shinshū to Ōmi shōnin,” *Shakaigaku*, no. 8 (1941). Bellah follows Naitō explicitly on 117–118, and implicitly from 117 to 126. On the Naitō-Bellah thesis generally, see Uematsu Tadahiro, *Shinkō to bijinesu*, 35–37.

ni mieru) concept of *hōon* (repayment of blessings)—which Bellah, following Naitō, emphasizes—as applicable broadly to Japanese society or even to Ōmi discipline more narrowly.⁵⁷ *Hōon* is a Buddhist precept, but in fact the idea is found throughout Japan, and is probably not so much explicitly Buddhist as deeply cultural. (Confer, for example, the Japanese saying “*ongaeshi*,” or the repayment of munificence in kind.) Kawamura also takes exception to Naitō’s deployment of the Mahayana/Hinayana distinction in his analysis of the Ōmi spiritual roots.⁵⁸ And Bellah, Kawamura avers, also focuses too much on Weber’s arguments, and on trying to shoehorn Japan into those arguments, following Naitō too closely as well.⁵⁹ Naitō, says Kawamura, goes too far down the Weber path, too, in trying to link the afterlife of the True Pure Land paradise with the this-worldly concerns of business.⁶⁰ (Bellah, of course, followed Naitō very far down that same path.) And in a larger sense we must also bear in mind that, just because the name “True Pure Land” remains the same now as in the past, it does not mean that the faith and teachings have remained unchanged across the centuries. In fact, they have not.⁶¹ Taken all together, there is little to support the theory of Buddhist underpinnings of the Ōmi ethos, despite this theory being very attractive at first pass.

The underlying Ōmi ethos, rather, is traceable in my view to the Shintō-rooted understanding of the human person as transcendent and always an end in him- or herself.⁶² Seen from this angle, the Shintō roots of economic order in Japan would seem to complicate, if not at-

⁵⁷ Kawamura Nozomu, “Ōmi shōnin to Jōdo Shinshū,” 4.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4–5, citing Naitō Kanji, “Shūkyō to keizai rinri,” 285.

⁵⁹ Kawamura Nozomu, “Ōmi shōnin to Jōdo Shinshū,” 10–11, 14.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶¹ Itō Shinshō, “Kinsei Jōdoshū jūin ni okeru honmatsu-jidan kankei to jūshoku no idō: Ōmi Konan chiiki wo sozai ni shite,” *Bukkyō Bunka Kenkyū* 55 (2011): 105.

⁶² Katō Genchi, *Ajiagaku sōsho* 14, 334–356.

tenuate, the effect of Pure Land Buddhism which many who study Ōmi merchant culture say was a vital component of the merchants’ marketplace morality.

Take another example, one much closer to our own time. Students of the military history of the twentieth century sometimes point to the *arahitogami*, or “living god,” interpretation of the Japanese Emperor.⁶³ This notion of *arahitogami* was put to political use in modernity during the run-up to the Second World War, but it is much, much older than that. It is among the most ancient of Shintō beliefs. The “Deus-Homo” understanding of the Japanese Emperor is, for most of us today, the most visible instantiation of “anthropolatry,” but the notion did not originate with emperor worship, but rather appears to have culminated in it.⁶⁴ And it was in the past not even just emperors who were divinized. In Shintō, the door to kamihood is open to all. Non-imperial rulers such as Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616) have flirted with living godhood, and Ieyasu certainly encouraged belief in his own postmortem apotheosis.⁶⁵ Famed cultural figure Sugawara no Michizane (845-903) is just one of many Japanese historical personages to have been deified.⁶⁶ In casual speech and in advertisements, Japanese people often speak of someone’s being the “kami” of a certain skill or sport. I have even heard the word “kami” used to describe the taste of alcoholic drinks or the preparation of dumplings. “Kami” means “above” on another reading,

⁶³ Okuyama Michiaki, “‘State Shinto’ in Recent Japanese Scholarship,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 66, no. 1 (2011): 123–145, and Christopher Ives, “Review of Walter Skya, *Japan’s Holy War: The Ideology of Radical Shintō* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009),” *Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 3 (August 2010): 918–920.

⁶⁴ Katō Genchi, *Ajiagaku sōsho* 14, 107–121.

⁶⁵ See, e.g., Matsuzaki Kenzō, *Hitogami shinkō no rekishiminzokugakuteki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwata Shoin, 2014), 75–99, and Mark Ravina, “State-Building and Political Economy in Early-Modern Japan,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 54, no. 4 (November 1995): 1003.

⁶⁶ Kawasaki Tsuyoshi, “The Invention and Reception of the *Mino’odera engi*,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 42, no. 1 (2015): 140.

and its dual use to mean both “above” and “divine” suggests how the gods are understood. It is common parlance in Japan to speak of the *kami*, the gods, as being just a little ways above the usual world, or just a step outside of the human world—perhaps even in groves of trees or in special rocks. People can become *kami* fairly easily. It is not that the bar is low, but that the door to divinity is wide open.

So immanentist is the Japanese religious landscape, in fact, that even the Buddhist Pure Land paradise was, in some cases, pulled down to earth, made chthonic, while the Buddhist saints were equated to local Shintō *kami* according to the practice known as *honji suijaku* (or, more appropriately, *han-* (anti-)*honji suijaku*).⁶⁷ Meri Arichi, for example, writes that:

[T]he term *jōdo* [or “Pure Land”] encompassed larger spatial and transhistorical dimensions [than the traditional Buddhist conception of the Western Paradise lying beyond the human, earthly realm]. The rationale behind the identification of certain geographical area[s] of Japan with Buddhist paradises was intimately connected to the *honji suijaku* theory. As Allan Grapard explains, “if a shrine and the area in which it was located were conceived of as the residence of the *kami*, and if those *kami* were thought to be hypostases of buddhas and bodhisattvas enshrined in the adjacent temples, then those areas came to be seen as the abodes of those buddhas and bodhisattvas, as Pure Land in this World (*gen-se jōdo*).⁶⁸

Going even farther, famed religious history scholar Kuroda Toshio (1926-1993) argued, as Arichi reminds us, that the medieval Japanese royalist Kitabatake Chikafusa’s (1293-1354) declaration that “Great Japan is *shinkoku*,” or “the land of the *kami*,” meant not “land” in a political sense, as in a kingdom or an imperial holding, but land as in the

⁶⁷ Katō Genchi, *Ajiagaku sōsho* 14, 310.

⁶⁸ Meri Arichi, “*Sannō Miya Mandara*: The Iconography of Pure Land on this Earth,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 33, no. 2 (2006): 324, citing Allan G. Grapard, *The Protocol of Gods* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992), 209.

place where people (and gods) dwell. The gods do not control “Japan,” they *live* in Japan, the place where Japanese humans also happen to live. Even Buddhists in Japan began to refer to the archipelago as *shin-koku*, a reference, Arichi suggests, to Japan’s being a place infused with immanent deities.⁶⁹ So identified was Japan with the gods that mountains have often been referred to as *shintaisan*, “the mountain as the kami’s body” (with other natural features receiving similar designations).⁷⁰

Ishida Baigan, Shingaku, and the Economics of Brotherly Love

The Ōmi merchants were not the only business ethicists of the Tokugawa period. Nor were the Ōmi merchants the only subject of Bellah’s book on Tokugawa religion. In Chapter Six of Bellah’s famous book, the author focuses on Ishida Baigan and his body of teachings known as Shingaku.⁷¹ Ishida Baigan was a singular figure of great moral seriousness and intense practice. After studying under a teacher in Kyoto learned in “Sung nature philosophy, . . . Buddhist and Taoist teachings as well,” Baigan had a profound spiritual experience and

⁶⁹ Meri Arichi, “*Sannō Miya Mandara*,” 326, citing Kuroda Toshio, “Shinkoku shisō to senju nenbutsu,” in *Kuroda Toshio chosakushū*, vol. 4 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1995), 44, and Kuroda Toshio, *Mōkō shūrai, Nihon no rekishi*, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1965), 123. Kuroda advanced a theory of Japanese religious and institutional history, *kenmon taisei* (“gates of power”), which privileges older religious orders over newly arrived ones like Pure Land Buddhism. This reinforces my argument for the endurance of old Shintō sensibilities over time. See Tomoko Yoshida, “Kuroda Toshio (1926-1993) on Jōdo Shinshū,” 381.

⁷⁰ Meri Arichi, “*Sannō Miya Mandara*,” 333, 340. See also Borovoy, “Robert Bellah’s Search for Community and Ethical Modernity in Japan Studies,” 478, for a deeper political consideration of *kami*.

⁷¹ The term “Shingaku” was not used by Baigan himself, but was applied by later followers due to Ishida’s teachings’ searching for the “heart” (*shin, kokoro*) of men and matters in the world. Shibata Minoru, “Ishida Baigan to Shintō,” *Shintōgaku*, no. 14 (August 1957): 14.

awakened to the identity “between his self and his nature.”⁷² Baigan, like his teacher, was influenced by Chinese philosophy (e.g., “Sung nature philosophy”), and placed particular emphasis on *jin* (Ch.: *ren*, benevolence, idealized humanity), a key element of classical Confucianism.⁷³ Ishida’s thought was thus syncretic, but he went beyond his teacher’s scope to make the teachings practical, as well. Shingaku, as Baigan’s thought was later called, taught that human commerce must be selfless.⁷⁴ No matter one’s station in life, Baigan held the ideal to be that, “Each exhausts himself for the sake of all.”⁷⁵ Merchants, typically despised under the Confucian order then prevailing among samurai-ruled Japan, were lauded by Baigan as essential to the flow of goods and services around the realm.⁷⁶

But while Baigan’s Shingaku was certainly syncretic, and while Ishida himself was certainly conversant with a variety of teachings from abroad (such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism), there is much about Shingaku which is closer to the general culture of Japan than derivative of a particular foreign idea.⁷⁷ Take, for example, honesty (*shōjiki*), which Baigan placed at the center of his merchant ethics.⁷⁸ As scholar of Japanese law and legal history J. Mark Ramseyer notes, “The self-confidence of the merchant code writers suggests that Baigan may have found an audience predisposed to accept such ideas [e.g., that “the virtues of diligence and frugality lead to wealth” and that “the Tokugawa economic system is a just system and that they them-

⁷² Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*, 136.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 140–141, see also 143.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁷⁷ On Ishida’s syncretism, see, e.g., Asayama Masashi, “Ishida Baigan no Shintō shisō no keisei: yōin to shite no Masaho Nokoguchi,” *Shintō Koten Kenkyūjo Kiyō* 9 (March 2003): 24–25.

⁷⁸ Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*, 161–164.

selves [*i.e.*, the merchants], the beneficiaries of it, are necessarily righteous men”]. That audience may even have already heard much of Baigan’s message from other sources,” Ramseyer continues, such as “the Shimai code,” which was “written over a century before Baigan’s principal book appeared.”⁷⁹ Later in life, Ishida directed his focus to the Japanese household (*ie*), and deepened his Japan-centered philosophy which many authors have remarked was inseparable from daily life in Japan.⁸⁰ Given all this, it is much more reasonable to argue that Baigan appropriated and expanded *shōjiki* than to argue that he invented or introduced it. People work with what they have, and Baigan, for all his influence, did not transform the fundamentals of Japanese life, such as business ethics or the household. Nor did he want to.

Not only this, but Baigan himself privileged a Shintō approach to the supernatural above all other modes of thought.⁸¹ Consider, for instance, this passage from Baigan, quoted also in Bellah:

The gods of our land have received it [*i.e.*, the nature of Japanese society] from Izanagi no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto [the god and goddess, respectively, who created the Japanese archipelago]. From the sun, moon, and stars to the ten thousand things, they rule over all. Since nothing is omitted, it is a unity and we call it the land of the gods. Here is a matter which should be meditated on. In China it is indeed different.⁸²

For Baigan, then, China was not only different, but the nature of Japanese society was a gift from the creator god and goddess of the Japanese islands. Baigan’s teachings later came to be known as Shingaku,

⁷⁹ Ramseyer, “Thrift and Diligence,” 219. Ramseyer notes that “diligence and frugality are also, in the codes, considered religious virtues.” *Ibid.*, 218.

⁸⁰ Tada Akira, “Ishida Baigan no kyōgaku to Shintō,” *Shintōgaku* 96 (February 1978): 14–15.

⁸¹ Shibata Minoru, “Ishida Baigan to Shintō,” 20–21.

⁸² Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*, 155, citing Ishida Baigan, *Shingaku sōsho*, vol. 3, 121–122.

but one could be forgiven for thinking that “Shintōgaku” was closer to the heart of the Heart Learning.

Beyond even this chthonic view of the Japanese gods as being in intimate union with the land and people of Japan, Baigan gave primacy to Shintō in his syncretism. For example, Baigan thought that the self-heart (*gashin*, *wagakokoro*) of the three teachings of Shintō, Buddhism, and Confucianism was to be found by the latter two receiving the assistance of the *shinkoku*, land of the gods (*i.e.*, Japan—recall here Kitabatake Chikafusa) and giving birth to *kami* in their own inner beings. The gods are therefore superior to Confucianism and Buddhism, revealing the Shintōist underpinnings of Ishida’s syncretic ethics.⁸³ Not everyone was convinced, and not everyone was impressed. Postwar scholar and liberal apologist Maruyama Masao (1914–1996), for example, wrote dismissively of Shingaku, averring of it that:

A mere broadmindedness without any consistency of principle does not deserve the name of scholarly tolerance. Shingaku may have prided itself on its broad dissemination as a popular moral philosophy, but in theoretical value it did not even rise to the level of the Eclectic school [a loose grouping of anti-orthodoxy scholars active mainly in the eighteenth century in Japan].⁸⁴

But in this very refusal to isolate and elevate one teaching above the rest—in the very “mere broadmindedness without any consistency of principle” that Maruyama disdained—we can see a very Shintōist regard for all human life.⁸⁵

⁸³ Asayama Masashi, “Ishida Baigan no Shintō shisō no keisei,” 24, 25–27.

⁸⁴ Masao Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, trans. Mikiso Hane (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1974), 142.

⁸⁵ On the primacy of Ishida’s Japaneseness, see, *e.g.*, “(2) Nihonjin toshite no ‘katachi,’” in Huang Haiwang, “Ishida Baigan no Shin Ju Butsu shūgō shisō ni kansuru ichi kōsatsu,” *Bukkyō Daigaku Daigakuin Kiyō*, no. 39 (March 2011): 25–26. See also *ibid.*, 27–28. On the deep Shintō roots of Ishida’s thought, especially on Ishida’s understanding of the gods being unified beneath the diversity of the Shintō pantheon, see Asayama Masashi, “Ishida Baigan no kami kansen no tokushoku,” *Shintō Shūkyō*, no. 178 (April 2000): 72–74, and Asayama Masashi, “3: tashin soku isshin ron: shinmeiron,” in “Ishi-

Shibusawa Eiichi’s Confucian Model of Business Ethics

The March 20, 2021, issue of the *Economist* magazine announced that “Shibusawa Eiichi is having a moment.” Thanks to a new television series in Japan dramatizing his life, the *Economist* notes, and the Bank of Japan’s plan to put Shibusawa’s portrait on the 10,000 yen bill, “Shibusawa’s business philosophy, ‘the *Analects* and the abacus’, is in vogue.”⁸⁶ But while the *Economist* correctly gives credit to the Confucian classic the *Analects* as a source of Shibusawa’s business ethics, the magazine makes the important qualifier that “Shibusawa fused Confucianism’s collectivist morality with market logic” in a way that “echo[es] the 17th-century Edo-era precept of *sanpo-yoshi*, or ‘three-way good’—namely for buyers, sellers and society.”⁸⁷

Shibusawa is indeed known in Japan for having espoused a “philosophy of the unity of morality and the economy” (*dōtoku keizai gō-ichi setsu*).⁸⁸ This philosophy, according to Shibusawa, was drawn from his studies of Confucius, in particular the *Analects*.⁸⁹ For example, in June of 1923 one of Shibusawa’s speeches was published in the *Meishi*

da Baigan no kami kannen ni tsuite,” *Shintō Shūkyō*, no. 177 (January 2000): 111–113. Tetsuo Najita, who was an expert on the *kō* or mutual aid societies in Tokugawa Japan, writes of Ishida’s ideals: “All individuals regardless of status are endowed with a universal essence that is sagely and . . . goodness is to be acted out in the everyday world of work.” Tetsuo Najita, *Visions of Virtue in Tokugawa Japan: The Kaitokudō Merchant Academy of Osaka* (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 96.

⁸⁶ “Japanese Business: *Analects* and Abacus,” *The Economist* 373, no. 8406 (December 18, 2004): 51. See also Kuroda Haruhiko, “Hopes for the Japanese and U.S. Business Communities: Economic Recovery from the COVID-19 Crisis and Efforts to Address Climate Change,” Speech at the 58th Japan-U.S. Business Conference (October 6, 2021). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

⁸⁷ “Japanese Business: *Analects* and Abacus,” *The Economist*, 51.

⁸⁸ See, e.g., Ōno Masahide, “Shibusawa Eiichi to Hiroike Chikurō no ‘dōtoku keizai shisō’ no hikaku kenkyū,” *Moraroji Kenkyū Happyōkai Yōshishū* (2016): 69.

⁸⁹ Tsuchiya Takao, “Dōkei ittai shisō no shiteki kōsatsu,” *Dai Ni Kai Moraroji Kenkyū Happyōkai ni Okeru Kōza Yōshi* (March 17, 1973): 2.

Record. In this speech, Shibusawa introduces the notion that a firm sense of “right reason” (*dōri*) must be the basis for business activities, and that the standard for right reason is to be found in the *Analects* of Confucius. If Confucian right reason, or morality, prevails in business, Shibusawa argues, then the business will benefit the entire country.⁹⁰ This sounds about as Confucian as one can get. Confucius himself could hardly have argued with Shibusawa’s wise words.

However, while it is certainly true that Shibusawa was a devotee of the *Analects*, he probably turned down the explicitly philosophical path of equating business with morality much later in life than is commonly believed. Many today associate Shibusawa with Confucian business ethics, and for good reason, but several scholars in Japan, such as Mizuno Hirota and Miyamoto Matao, argue that Shibusawa was responding to rising nationalism, a lingering disdain for merchants, and other social pressures in formulating a logical link among good business practices and the economic and overall health of the country as a whole.⁹¹ What appears to us as Confucian, and what Shibusawa insisted was *Analects* chapter and verse, may have been more impromptu rationalizing than wisdom learned at the feet of Master Kung.⁹² Further, Mizuno argues that, prior to his formulating an ethical approach to busi-

⁹⁰ Mizuno Hirota, “Shibusawa Eiichi ni okeru ‘dōtoku keizai gōichi setsu’ no keisei katei: sōnenki no ‘gakumon’ no kankei ni taisuru kōsatsu wo chūshin ni,” *Shisōshi Kenkyū* 20 (October 2014): 41. Shibusawa called this idea *gapponshugi*. John H. Sagers, *Confucian Capitalism: Shibusawa Eiichi, Business Ethics, and Economic Development in Meiji Japan* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 196–197.

⁹¹ Mizuno Hirota, “Shibusawa Eiichi ni okeru ‘dōtoku keizai gōichi setsu’ no keisei katei,” 51, citing Miyamoto Matao, *Nihon no kindai 11: kigyōka tachi no chosen* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron, 1999), 293. See also Jason Morgan, *Equity under Empire: Suehiro Izutarō and the Law-and-Society Movement in Japan* (Amherst, N.Y.: Cambria, 2020), 126–127.

⁹² On reinterpretations of Confucianism in light of spiritual realities, see Jason Morgan, “Greatness of Character as the Great Idea of Religion and Freedom in Classical Confucianism,” in *Great Ideas of Religion and Freedom*, ed. Peter Redpath, Imelda Chłodna-Błach, and Artur Mamcarz-Plisiecki (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2021), 210–236.

ness in Confucianist terms, Shibusawa’s business ethics were much more of a continuation of Edo Period market morality. This morality could be found, for example, in Ishida Baigan’s Sekimon Shingaku and in the foundational Japanese socio-economic unit of the *ie*, or household, which encouraged diachronic, honest dealing and corporatist responsibility, something obviously resonant with Anesaki’s description of the village Shintō shrine and accompanying social and moral practices.⁹³ In his earlier pronouncements on the virtues of learning, too, Shibusawa echoed traditional Japanese “sanpō yoshi” ideas when he exhorts students to study hard because doing so will redound to the benefit of their school and of Japan, as well as to the students themselves.⁹⁴ Confucian-sounding, to be sure. But scratch the paint a little bit and the Shintō chassis shines through.

Shibusawa’s *ad hoc* Confucian turn suggests that the much more substantial Shibusawan business ethic was not derived from the Chinese classics, but from the deeper cultural tissue of Shibusawa’s home country of Japan.⁹⁵ The *Economist* article cited above quotes Waseda University Faculty of Commerce professor Miyajima Hideaki as arguing that “Japan has long been evolving a ‘hybrid form of governance’ that seeks to balance shareholders’ focus on performance and management’s concern for stakeholders,” for instance.⁹⁶ Now we are hewing much closer to Japanese-style than Chinese-style philosophy. The cor-

⁹³ Mizuno Hirota, “Shibusawa Eiichi ni okeru ‘dōtoku keizai gōichi setsu’ no keisei katei,” 44, citing Watanabe Hiroshi, *Nihon seiji shisōshi: jūnana kara jūkyū seiki* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2010), 85–86.

⁹⁴ Mizuno Hirota, “Shibusawa Eiichi ni okeru ‘dōtoku keizai gōichi setsu’ no keisei katei,” 46, citing *Shibusawa Eiichi denki shiryō*, vol. 26, ed. Shibusawa Seien Ki’nen Zaidan Ryūmonsha (today: Kōeki Zaidan Hōjin Shibusawa Eiichi Ki’nen Zaidan) (Tokyo: Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō Kankōkai, 1959), 579. See also Mizuno Hirota, “Shibusawa Eiichi ni okeru ‘dōtoku keizai gōichi setsu’ no keisei katei,” 48.

⁹⁵ But for a dissenting view, see Miura Noriko, “Higashi Ajia ni okeru borantarizumu no seiki to tenkai,” *Yamaguchi Chūki Shakai Kenkyū* 10 (2012): 3–4.

⁹⁶ “Japanese Business: Analects and Abacus,” *The Economist*, 52.

poratist model of “Japan, Inc.,” often derided by Western management scholars, businessmen, and politicians in the postwar, was not just good for Japan, it was often argued, but also prioritized economic stability and long-term financial and employment predictability for individual workers.⁹⁷ Shibusawa would surely have recognized it—and might have been hard-put to explain how it was Confucian and not just “Japanese.” Today, when Kyocera founder and later Japan Airlines (JAL) CEO Inamori Kazuo asserts that Kyocera must do what is good for society as a whole, he is drinking from the same river that flows from deep in the Japanese past, the harmonious merging of the individual and the community which Masaharu Anesaki noted was a defining feature of Shintō village life in prehistoric Japan.⁹⁸

Dōkei Ittai: A Secular Reprisal of an Ancient Anthropology

The above-mentioned argument over whether moral philosopher Hiroike Chikurō’s articulation of “sanpō yoshi” predated that of a member of an Ōmi merchant household is not just a semantic detail, but reflective of a much broader pattern in Japanese culture of calculating far-reaching economic effects across the social spectrum and over a long period of time, much broader and longer than a single economic transaction. What the Ōmi merchants and the moral philosopher Hiroike, and many others who have worked in or thought about the Japanese moral universe, seem to be participating in or referring to in their eco-

⁹⁷ But on the origins of the “lifetime employment” trope, see J. Mark Ramseyer, *et al.*, *An American Perspective on Japanese Law: Amerika kara mita Nihon hō* (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 2019), 256, fn. 22 (on page 257), and “Case 21: Yoshikawa v. Shuhoku Bus, K.K.: 22 Saihan Minshu 3459 (Sup. Ct. Dec. 25, 1968),” 262–274.

⁹⁸ “A Zen Monk on the Board,” *Newsweek International Edition* (March 1, 1999): 50, Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi, “Strategy as a Way of Life,” *MIT Sloan Management Review* (Fall 2021): 56–63, and George Taninecz, “Kazuo Inamori: ‘Respect the Divine and Love People,’” *Industry Week* (June 5, 1995): 47–51.

conomic actions and teachings is what Hiroike came to refer to as “dōkei ittai,” or the unity (or identity) (*ittai*) of morality (*dō*) and economics (*kei*). This is not an abstract concept, but an array of concrete behaviors and approaches to shared life which coincides, in many ways, with the deep-seated Shintōist view of the human person in Japan.

Among the key elements of this approach to shared life, life seen as embedded in a moral and even spiritual context, are things which are so common in Japan as to be almost afterthoughts to daily life. For example, we find on the *dōkei ittai* moral menu: sincerity (*magokoro*, lit. “true-hearted”),⁹⁹ trust (*shin’yō*),¹⁰⁰ a heart of compassion and deference to life (*inochi wo itsukushimu kokoro*),¹⁰¹ obeying the dictates of Heaven and of nature (*tenchi no hōsoku ni shitagatte*),¹⁰² seeking the long term (*sue hirogari wo mezashite*),¹⁰³ building up the human person (*hitozukuri*),¹⁰⁴ and acting with utmost responsibility in mind, behavior, word, and intention (*shinkui icchi*).¹⁰⁵ These in turn are reflected in such things as “placing a premium on quality and relegating quantity to the second rank” (*shitsu wo tōtobi ryō wo tsugi to su*).¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ *Moraru Biz Premia*, no. 43 (October 2021), 11, *Moraru Biz Premia*, no. 39 (June 2021), 10.

¹⁰⁰ *Moraru Biz Premia*, no. 42 (September 2021), 11.

¹⁰¹ *Moraru Biz Premia*, no. 41 (August 2021), 10. This is of course also a Buddhist precept. Cf., e.g., Barbara R. Ambros, “Tracing the Influence of Ming-Qing Buddhism in Early Modern Japan: Yunqi Zhuhong’s *Tract on Refraining from Killing and on Releasing Life* and Ritual Animal Releases,” *Religions* 12 (2021): 1–31.

¹⁰² *Moraru Biz Premia*, no. 41 (August 2021), 11. Cf. also Keiei to Dōtoku Editors, “‘Dōkei ittai shisō’ kiso kōza 2: dōtoku keizai ittai no jissen,” *Keiei to Dōtoku*, no. 167 (June 1998): 7.

¹⁰³ *Moraru Biz Premia*, no. 40 (July 2021), 10. Cf. also “devote your whole life [to whatever you do],” *Moraru Biz Premia*, no. 44 (November 2021): 10–11.

¹⁰⁴ *Moraru Biz Premia*, no. 36 (March 2021), 12–13, and *Moraru Biz Premia*, no. 37 (April 2021), 10.

¹⁰⁵ *Moraru Biz Premia*, no. 38 (May 2021), 11.

¹⁰⁶ *Moraru Biz Premia*, no. 42 (September 2021), 10.

The Ōmi merchants also took the long view of business and life, reflecting the long-term view espoused by Hiroike.¹⁰⁷ The Ōmi merchants also valued trust and sincerity, and also sought quality first and quantity second. The Ōmi merchants also strove to obey Heaven and nature and not to cheat the moral fabric by cheating their fellow human beings. There is not a competition between the Ōmi legacy and the moral philosopher Hiroike Chikurō—the resonance of the two strands of Japanese economics and morality suggests a much deeper harmony, rooted in history. As former student of Hiroike and founder of a machine oil and automotive parts firm Kagawa Keizaburō (1884-1974) wrote, “Think in human terms in everything you do, and make it your heart’s purpose to conduct your business affairs for the salvation of the human soul.”¹⁰⁸ This is not Buddhist or Confucian. This is just how things are supposed to be done in Japan.

Immanent spirituality, the Shintō hallmark, is stamped all over the *dōkei ittai* philosophy. For example, one of the keys to *dōkei ittai* is Hiroike’s definition of capital as not just physical goods such as money or plant, but also spiritual or mental goods such as “labor capacity, know-how, ability, and, in particular, the fruits which accrue when morality is put into action.”¹⁰⁹ This kind of moral or spiritual capital is to other, physical capital, according to some moral philosophers associated with the Moralogy research center specializing in Hiroike’s ideals, as “life-force [*seimei*] is to the flesh.”¹¹⁰ *Dōkei ittai* practitioners see the physical world as the property of the gods (*kami no shoyūbutsu*), which is only held for a time by human beings (*kami kara no azukari mo-*

¹⁰⁷ See Yamamoto Masahito, *Ōmi shōnin no tetsugaku*, 158–160.

¹⁰⁸ *Dōkei ittai e no michishirube*, ed. Moralogy Kenkyujo Shuppanbu (Kashiwa, Japan: Moralogy Kenkyujo Shuppanbu, 2013), 20.

¹⁰⁹ Tajima Masayoshi, *Dōkei ittai to sanpō yoshi no keiei: jissen Morarōjī keiei Q&A* (Kashiwa, Japan: Hiroike Gakuen Shuppanbu, 1989), 35.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

no).¹¹¹ Labor is to be performed in a spirit of sacrifice (*giseiteki seishin*) and for the advancement of Heaven’s good purposes (*tenkō wo tasukeru*).¹¹² *Dōkei ittai* philosophers, and especially Hiroike, stress *hōon*, as did the True Pure Land Buddhists said to have exerted a formative influence on the Ōmi merchants and their ethos of diligence and honesty. But for *dōkei ittai* philosophers and practitioners, the repayment of blessings (*hōon*) is carried out toward tradition, and not to a particular Buddha or saint or transcendent deity.¹¹³ While Hiroike’s moral philosophy has no overt religious dimension, and is catholic and pluralistic in its acceptance of religious and moral teachings from around the world (Jesus of Nazareth, Socrates, Shakyamuni, and others are honored as great “sages”), the association of repaying blessings with tradition arises, I think, from the basic Shintō moral paradigm of Japan. The watermark is Shintō, not Buddhism or Christianity or anything else.

If Ōno Masahide is correct that *sanpō yoshi* is a term coined by Hiroike Chikurō, then the identification of *sanpō yoshi* as the “highest morality” by Hiroike’s followers in moral philosophy lends additional support to the argument that *sanpō yoshi* grows out of the Shintōist soil of traditional Japan.¹¹⁴ Under *sanpō yoshi* thinking, for example, businessmen are exhorted to think not just of their own benefit, or even of their and their business counterpart’s benefit, when conducting a trans-

¹¹¹ The word “*azukari*” means that someone is holding something for someone else. The sense is much closer to “keeping something (for someone)” than to “owning” something. The distinction here is very important.

¹¹² Tajima Masayoshi, *Dōkei ittai to sanpō yoshi no keiei*, 37. See also Uematsu Tadahiro, *Shinkō to bijinesu*, 230–232.

¹¹³ Tajima Masayoshi, *Dōkei ittai to sanpō yoshi no keiei*, 39–44. See also *Genten basui shiryōshū dōkei ittairon*, vol. 2, ed. Morarōjī Kenkyūjo (Kashiwa, Japan: The Institute of Moralogy, 1978), 320–321, and “Tradition and Some Other Forms of Order,” in *H.B. Acton: The Morals of Markets and Related Essays*, ed. David Gordon and Jeremy Shearmur (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, 1993), 157–189.

¹¹⁴ See in general Keiei to Dōtoku Editors, “‘Dōkei ittai shisō’ kiso kōza 3: ‘sanpō yoshi’ no keiei,” *Keiei to Dōtoku*, no. 168 (August 1998): 4–7.

action. Instead, businessmen must think of society as a whole—and not just society, but the happiness of society—and then act in such a way as to bring about a better world through even the smallest aspect of one’s business dealings.¹¹⁵ All of the “stakeholders” to a deal—including of course the parties to the deal, but extending all the way out to society, the nation, the market as a whole, and even the international community—are to be brought into consideration (within a net of gratitude¹¹⁶), and in this way a firm is to be thought of as an “open system” benefiting, ideally, everyone in the world.¹¹⁷

Under this broadly cast perspective, *sanpō yoshi* thought has quite naturally expanded, for example to become, in one work by Hiroike Chikurō, a six-way beneficial arrangement: for “self, user, supplier, client, general society, and nation.”¹¹⁸ This virtually unlimited regard for the social fabric within which a product or service is produced and consumed leads, in turn, to a high emphasis on character, which is even elevated in Hiroikean thought to the level of *hinsei shihon* (“moral character capital”).¹¹⁹ Character and society are the systolic and diastolic of the human person-centric economy in Japan. Body and mind are taken to be in a mutually-reinforcing relationship,¹²⁰ and the spiritual is privileged on the premise that attention to the moral good will bring naturally the physical order needed to sustain human life and human society.¹²¹ The “ultimate” (*kyūkyoku*) in *dōkei ittai* thinking is the formation of the human person (*hitozukuri*), a process which Hiroike defines as

¹¹⁵ Tajima Masayoshi, *Dōkei ittai to sanpō yoshi no keiei*, 62–64, 69–71.

¹¹⁶ *Dōkei ittai keiei genron: Hiroike Chikurō no keieiron to sono gendaiteki tenkai*, ed. Morarōji Kenkyūjo (Kashiwa, Japan: The Institute of Moralogy, 2019), 155–159.

¹¹⁷ *Sanpō yoshi no keiei*, ed. Morarōji Kenkyūjo (Kashiwa, Japan: The Institute of Moralogy, 2001), 35.

¹¹⁸ *Dōkei ittai keiei genron*, 173.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 92–95.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 100–105.

much bigger than merely training a worker.¹²² Rather, *hitozukuri* is the cultivation of the moral character, the elevation of the human person to a greater regard for his situation and his obligation to serve others.¹²³ To become truly compassionate, Hiroike writes, is to obtain to the heart of God (*kami no kokorotaru jihishin*), which in turn brings the human person into possession of his faculties, into true humanity as a member of society.¹²⁴ At the same time, the individual human person is to recognize his limits, and is not to overexert himself beyond his natural capacity.¹²⁵ The human person under Hiroikean moral philosophy retains, then, almost perfectly the ancient Shintōist balance between the divinity of man, and his individual nature within a much larger array of other men and of forces beyond his ken and control, the gods with which he completes a dynamic whole.

Religious Human Personalism in Japan Today

The practices outlined above are diverse. While many of them are informed by a religion or spiritual practice (Buddhism, Shintō) or a philosophy (Confucianism) which is often understood to possess the possibility for spiritual coloring (neo-Confucianism), the last practice detailed, *dōkei ittai*, has no particular religious dimension. *Dōkei ittai* is simply a secular best-practice for carrying out business transactions in an ethical, socially responsible manner. And yet, even this secular approach would be much less likely in a milieu in which the human person was not valued beyond material gain. It is the *yaoyorozu no kami*,

¹²² Keiei to Dōtoku Editors, “‘Dōkei ittai shisō’ kiso kōza: hitozukuri no keiei 5,” *Keiei to Dōtoku*, no. 170 (December 1998): 4–7.

¹²³ *Dōkei ittai keiei genron*, 148–150. See also Tahara Michio, “Hitozukuri,” *Dōkeijuku*, no. 107 (March 2017): 50–52.

¹²⁴ *Genten bassui shiryōshū dōkei ittairon*, vol. 3, ed. Morarōjī Kenkyūjo (Kashiwa, Japan: The Institute of Moralogy, 1978), 65–68.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 69–70.

pantheist, human person-centered religious foundation of Japan which “animates” and engenders the religious and ethical practices described in this article.¹²⁶ The word for “economy” in Japanese, *keizai*, confesses this truth: *keizai* is a contraction of *keisei saimin*, which means “governing for the salvation of the people.”¹²⁷ By viewing the human person as an end and never as a means—an anthropology which is ultimately Shintōist, although broadly compatible with other beliefs—the standard economic actor in Japan works for the betterment of his counterpart and of society as a whole. This human person-centered approach can and should be replicated in other countries around the world.

This human person-centered approach, which also sees the human person as nested in a cosmos alive with divinity, need hardly be limited to Japan. The examples given here are from the Japanese archipelago, but the cosmic is, of course, universal. As Mircea Eliade writes:

What we find as soon as we place ourselves in the perspective of religious man of the archaic societies is that *the world exists because it was created by the gods*, and that the existence of the world itself ‘means’ something, ‘wants to say’ something, that the world is neither mute nor opaque, that it is not an inert thing without purpose or significance. For religious man, the cosmos ‘lives’ and ‘speaks’. The mere life of the cosmos is proof of its sanctity, since the cosmos was created by the gods and the gods show themselves to men through cosmic life. This is why, beginning at a certain stage of culture, man conceives of himself as a microcosm. He forms part of the gods’ creation; in other words, he finds in himself the same sanctity that he recognizes in the cosmos. It follows that his life is homologized to cosmic life; as a

¹²⁶ On the persistence of the deep past in the present in Japan, see, *e.g.*, Kurita Isamu, *Kami yadoru Yamato* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1986), 264.

¹²⁷ Taniguchi Noriko, “Nihon ni okeru shihonshugi seishin no keisei ni kansuru jose-tsuteki kōsatsu,” 24.

divine work, the cosmos becomes the paradigmatic image of human existence.¹²⁸

It is often remarked that Japan did not experience the “twilight of the gods” or the desacralization (“disenchantment”) of the world that many thinkers in Western Europe and North America have stressed.¹²⁹ I do not mean to imply, though, by quoting Eliade and by arguing against the high-modernist Wagnerian mode, that Japan is a primitive country. Quite the opposite, in fact. What I mean is that Japan never lost the primordial sense of man as a religious being, as embedded (to go far beyond what Karl Polanyi meant by the term) in a cosmic panoply in which honesty and good business practice, sincerity and thrift, are the dues owed to the creators, progenitors, and divine co-inhabitants of human life.¹³⁰

Perhaps this is why the spirit of the Ōmi merchants, and of Ishida Baigan, and of Shibusawa Eiichi and Hiroike Chikurō, remains strong in Japan:¹³¹ not just because these are examples of Japanese religiously-grounded business ethics, but examples of how the religiously considered human person should be treated in any society.¹³² In March of

¹²⁸ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1957), 165 (emphasis in original).

¹²⁹ A discussion germane to the theme of this chapter can be found at Alexandra Walsham, “The Reformation and ‘The Disenchantment of the World’ Reassessed,” *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 2 (June 2008): 497–528.

¹³⁰ See Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York, N.Y.: Farrar and Rhinehart, 1944), and Daniel Immerwahr, “Polanyi in the United States: Peter Drucker, Karl Polanyi, and the Midcentury Critique of Economic Society,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70, no. 3 (July 2009): 445–466.

¹³¹ See Nagayasu Yukimasa, “Dōtoku keizai ittai no genre no teishō: Hiroike Chikurō no seiji keizai shisō,” *Keiei to Dōtoku* 20, no. 5 (110) (December 1988): 13–14.

¹³² For a comparative East Asian approach, see Rebecca Chunghee Kim, “Can Creating Shared Value (CSV) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) Collaborate for a Better World? Insights from East Asia,” *Sustainability* 10, no. 4128 (November 9, 2018): 13, 15, 21. See also Mikita Hisami, “‘Sanpō yoshi’ no ruike-

2021, for example, the popular glossy magazine *Nikkei Business* ran a special feature (*tokushū*) on “‘*sanpō yoshi*’ management (*keiei*),” arguing that it was time for a return to “Ōmi wisdom (*chie*)” and a turning aside from the “English and American way (*Ei Bei ryū*)” of doing business.¹³³ The CEO of ITOCHU, which traces its roots to the Ōmi merchants, advocates using *sanpō yoshi* management to increase productivity (*seisansei*) and raise stock prices (*kabuka wa shinchō*).¹³⁴ In the same issue of *Nikkei Business*, management philosopher Ikujiro Nonaka explains his “human-centric management philosophy” (*ningen chūshin keiei riron*), trying to put the human person at the heart of the economy and of management strategy.¹³⁵ These things hang together naturally in Japan, and just as naturally flow from the tongues and pens of Japanese people who think about business ethics and the ways in which commerce can benefit the social good.

The same spirit can be found even when there is no explicit reference to Ōmi or *sanpō yoshi*.¹³⁶ For instance, there is the September 18, 2020, issue of another glossy business magazine, *President*. Inamori Kauzo is featured on the cover and his business philosophy is introduced throughout. The proper approach to business, Inamori teaches, is to remember that the person you are today is the same person who was

ika: Shimbun kiji de-ta wo kinishita naiyō bunseki,” *Shōhisha Seisaku Kenkyū*, vol. 1 (August 2019).

¹³³ “Tokushū: ima koso ‘sanpō yoshi’ keiei: Ei Bei ryū yori Ōmi no chie,” *Nikkei Business*, no. 2084 (March 29, 2021): 30–47.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹³⁵ “Bei Chū ni makenai ‘shin kokufuron’: ‘chitoku kokka’ Nippon no jifu wo,” *Nikkei Business*, no. 2084 (March 29, 2021): 138–139. See also https://www.ics.hub.hit-u.ac.jp/faculty/profile/nonaka_ikujiro.html, last accessed November 27, 2021.

¹³⁶ One example is “Mujin kaisha,” in Tetsuo Najita, *Sōgo fujo no keizai: mujin kō, hōtoku no minshū shisōshi*, trans. Igarashi Akio and Fukui Shōko (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 2015), 243–289. See also Chapter Six, “Establishing a Firm Foundation for Economic Development,” in John H. Sagers, *Origins of Japanese Wealth and Power: Reconciling Confucianism and Capitalism, 1830-1885* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 115–134.

helped along the way by others, to decide to work with all your might for those who have supported and continue to support you, and to “honor heaven and love other people” (*kyō ten ai jin*).¹³⁷ The Inamori-funded Inamori Foundation’s Kyoto Prize is also featured in this issue of *President*. The prize is awarded based on the ideal that “being of service to others and to the whole world is the highest action of a human being,” and the article introducing the 2020 prizewinners is titled, “‘A Heart Devoted to Benefiting the Other’ Will Save the Human Race.”¹³⁸ By the same token, in a 2017 book economic thinker Uzawa Hirofumi (1928-2014) and medical researcher Watanabe Itaru (1916-2007) challenge the idea of *homo economicus*, arguing instead for a human-centered, whole-person approach to economics.¹³⁹ Hakuhodo, the second-largest advertising firm in Japan, “has [since 1980] been one step ahead in defining the public not as mere consumers but ‘Sei-Katsu-Sha (living person),’ a more holistic definition of individuals with lifestyle, aspirations, and dreams.”¹⁴⁰ This now commonized [sic] term takes consumption not as an economical but a cultural act and interpret [sic] consumers in such context.”¹⁴¹

The above examples could be easily multiplied. While very few modern entrepreneurs or organizational or management philosophers reference a particular religious teaching or philosophy in their human-centric management and CSR ideals, there is a deep harmony among the various strands of social-conscious and human-person-over-profit mentality in Japan. This is not Buddhist or Confucian, or the trace of

¹³⁷ Murata Hirofumi, “Jiri rita,” *President* 58, no. 18 (September 18, 2020): 28.

¹³⁸ “‘Rita no kokoro’ wa jinrui wo sukuu,” *President*, 52–55.

¹³⁹ Uzawa Hirofumi and Watanabe Itaru, *Seimei, ningen, keizaigaku: kagakusha no gimon* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shimbun Shuppansha, 2017).

¹⁴⁰ See <https://www.hakuhodo-global.com/about/history/index.html>, last accessed November 27, 2021.

¹⁴¹ Yasuhiko Kobayashi, “The Concept of Engagement: State of the Art and Developments in Japan,” *Communicative Business*, no. 1 (2008): 117.

any other non-Japanese teaching or creed. It is Shintō, in its most pervasive cultural iteration of honesty, respect, and diligence, rooted in a divine understanding of man and his cosmos.

Conclusion

I have argued above for an immanentist interpretation of Japanese business ethics and economic paradigms. My argument is in the spirit of Robert N. Bellah's book on Tokugawa religion, but it goes deeper, getting to the living quick of economic morality in Japan: Shintō. Not the Shintō of myths or of more recent political theology, but the Shintō which inculcates virtue by teaching that everyone is a living part of a much larger and sacred interplay of forces both human and divine. As such, the human person is to be valued and never used as a means to an end. When this is achieved, economic practice is harmonized with social life, and the human person, seen as a recipient of and participant in the life of the gods, is carried forward in the moral calculus as the one element which trumps all else in commerce.



The “Unity of Economic and Moral Practice”: Japanese Religious Sensibility and the Person-Centered Economic Tradition of Japan

SUMMARY

In Japan, the ideal of economic practice has long been rooted in a native Shintō-inspired religious sensibility according to which the world is populated by a myriad of deities (*yaoyorozu no kami*; lit., “the eight million gods”). This engenders an understanding of the other in an economic transaction as having a transcendent nature, and of the household and wider society as a fortiori transcending (both spiritually and diachronically) the individual economic actor. In turn, the transcendent view of the human person has nurtured a person-centered approach to economic activity in Japan.

The author examines three iterations of Japanese spiritually-influenced economic activity—the Ōmi merchants, the Shingaku teachings of Ishida Baigan, and the “unity of economic and moral practice” views of Shibusawa Eiichi and later business ethics thinkers—to show that, regardless of specific creed, Japanese economic thinking tends to reproduce the understanding of economic activity as ideally beneficial for human persons. By viewing the human person as an end and never as a means—an anthropology which is ultimately Shintōist, although broadly compatible with other beliefs—the standard economic actor in Japan works for the betterment of his counterpart and of society as a whole. This human-centered approach should and can be replicated in other countries around the world.

KEYWORDS

Ōmi merchants, Ishida Baigan, Shibusawa Eiichi, Pure Land Buddhism, Shintō, Hiroike Chikurō, Moralogy, *sanpō yoshi*, *dōkei ittai*.

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J. Daniel Hammond

God and Man at the University of Chicago: Religious Commitments of Three Economists

My concern in this book is not with the Will but with the Intellect, not with sanctity but with sanity. The difference is too often overlooked in the practice of religion. The soul has two faculties and they should be clearly distinguished. There is the will: its work is to love—and so to choose, to decide, to act. There is the intellect: its work is to know, to understand, to see: to see what? To see what’s there.

F. J. Sheed, *Theology and Sanity*, 1946

Milton and Rose Friedman report in *Two Lucky People*¹ that when making their wedding plans in 1938 she overcame his resistance to a religious ceremony. Neither Rose nor Milton adhered to their parents’ Orthodox Jewish beliefs, but Rose convinced Milton that considering her parents’ and his mother’s feelings was more important than his fear of hypocrisy in participating in a ritual based on beliefs they did not hold. They were married by a rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York on June 25, 1938, satisfied that this was a matter of “pure form, not substance.” As a child, Rose attended Hebrew school for a year, and “Sunday school” until she was thirteen. She remarks in *Two Lucky People*, with apparent regret, that her family did not leave religious “superstitions” in the Old World when they emigrated from

J. Daniel Hammond — Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C., USA
e-mail: hammond@wfu.edu • ORCID: no data

¹ Milton Friedman and Rose D. Friedman, *Two Lucky People: Memoirs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

Eastern Europe, mentioning in particular the practice of burning candles from sundown to sundown on Yom Kippur, with the fear that a family member would die during the year if any of the candles went out. As a child Rose dreaded the fasting and prayers for forgiveness of the Day of Atonement holiday. Her father was “more fanatic” about religion than her mother, who over time became “emancipated” from some kosher rules of their Orthodox Judaism.

Milton attended Hebrew school until the age of thirteen, and he was Bar-Mitzvahed. By his own account, he was fanatically religious as a child. But as he neared the age of religious responsibility he came to believe that his Jewish faith was unreasonable. The Friedmans’ memoir gives no account of how and why Milton lost his faith, but when he did so he made a 180-degree turn, becoming completely agnostic, or by Rose’s description “fanatically antireligious.” Why would these two Jewish youths, she being an immigrant and he the son of immigrants, whose parents appear to have lived up to their responsibilities to raise their children in the faith and practice of Judaism, have felt confident in leaving the religion? To answer this question in detail we would need to know more than can be known from historical records of the Friedmans’ personal lives. It would appear, however, that they made their exit from the religious faith and understanding of their childhoods, carrying neither religious practice nor religious inquiry into their adult lives. Their experience was not unusual for budding intellectuals from both Jewish and Christian families. Milton and Rose came of age when intellectual and academic life in the United States was becoming increasingly separated from religion.²

² See, for instance, George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), and James Tunstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges From Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998).

The first commandment Moses received from God on Mount Sinai was, “I am HaShem thy G-d, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”³ The Israelites’ history was to stray from God and be called back by God and His prophets, time and again. When they strayed, they did not simply leave God, they left Him for other gods. Thus the commandment’s two parts, that the Lord is God, and that His people shall not have any other gods. Since Jesus’ life on earth, the commandment has held equally for Jews and for Christians. But over the past three centuries there has been a steady abandonment of God by Jewish and Christian intellectuals. Many have viewed their apostasy as Rose Friedman viewed her mother’s break with kosher rules, as emancipation, for themselves as individuals and ultimately for society. If, as came to be conventional wisdom among the highly educated in the early twentieth century, God is a human creation rather than vice versa, prayer, worship and other religious practices are nothing but superstition, *i.e.*, belief and practices resulting from ignorance, trust in magic and chance, and false conceptions of reality. Human progress requires that reason and knowledge replace ignorance and superstition. Therefore human progress requires pushing religion out of the public square. In a democratic society, where good government depends on an educated citizenry, this requires removing religion from the private sphere as well. Citizenship requires rational contact with reality, not adherence to false and superstitious world views.

Yet a clearheaded look at human history suggests that men and women have a stubbornly persistent religious impulse. They do not and cannot live their lives solely on the basis of confirmed, evidentially-based knowledge. There is not enough of it. We are faced with chronic excess demand for knowledge on which to base decisions. So we make

³ *Exodus* 20:2–3, Jewish Publication Society edition.

commitments to “facts” about which there can be no crucial experiments, no confirmation or disconfirmation, and to values for which, as the positivist philosophers reminded us, in principle there can be no experiments. Even the hardest-headed rationalists make intellectual commitments that cannot be justified on positivist scientific grounds. These commitments frequently have a personal dimension that approaches the level of discipleship—Marxians, Randians, Keynesians, Misesians, Kantians, Freudians, Smithians, Friedmanites. For intellectuals of the most independent cast, who stand outside these various tribes, there remains the commitment from which economists have made much hay ever since Adam Smith, commitment to one’s self. It seems that even in this post-Judaism, post-Christian, post-modern, end-of-the-Enlightenment age, God and Moses were onto something in human nature. Humans always have a god.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how three very different Chicago economists, Milton Friedman, Frank H. Knight, and John U. Nef, Jr., handled the question of God and religion.⁴ This is of interest for understanding the “Chicago School” that developed after World War II, for all three were present at its inception. It is useful as a step toward understanding the ideology of the Chicago School, to use that term very broadly to mean beliefs, values, and presumptions that give

⁴ Notable work on religion and the history of economics includes papers in the supplementary issue of *History of Political Economy*, volume 40, “Keeping Faith, Losing Faith.” The editors’ introduction is: Bradley W. Bateman and H. Spencer Banzhaf, “Keeping Faith, Losing Faith: An Introduction,” *History of Political Economy* 40 (December 2008): 1–20. Also, see A. M. C. Waterman, *Revolution, Economics, and Religion: Christian Political Economy, 1798-1833* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); *Economics and Religion*, ed. H. G. Brennan and A. M. C. Waterman (Kluwer Academic Press, 1994); *Economics and Religion*, ed. Paul Oslington (Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elgar, 2003); Thomas C. Leonard, “Religion and Evolution in Progressive Era Political Economy: Adversaries or Allies?” *History of Political Economy* 43, no. 3 (2011): 429–469; and Bradley W. Bateman, “‘In a Space of Questions’: A Reflection on Religion and Economics at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century,” *History of Political Economy* 43 (Summer 2011): 389–411.

particular shape to one's conception of what economics is, the breadth of its domain, and the uses to which it can be put. We will see that for each of these three figures, their stance on religion set limits on the effectiveness of their intellectual efforts in the public sphere of their university, the larger academic community, and American society.

The view that the God of Jews and Christians is a fantasy was presented by Sir Julian Huxley to assembled administration, faculty, and students of the University of Chicago in Rockefeller Chapel on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1959:

Religions are organs of psychosocial man concerned with human destiny and with experiences of sacredness and transcendence. In their evolution, some (but by no means all) have given birth to the concept of gods as supernatural beings endowed with mental and spiritual properties and capable of intervening in the affairs of nature, including man. Such supernaturally centered religions are early organizations of human thought in its interaction with the puzzling, complex world with which it has to contend—the outer world of nature and the inner world of man's own nature. In this, they resemble other early organizations of human thought confronted with nature, like the doctrine of the Four Elements, Earth, Air, Fire, and Water, or the Eastern concept of rebirth and reincarnation. Like these, they are destined to disappear in competition with other, truer, and more embracing thought organizations which are handling the same range of raw or processed experience—in this case, with the new religions which are surely destined to emerge on this world's scene.

Evolutionary man can no longer take refuge from his loneliness in the arms of a divinized father-figure whom he has himself created, nor escape from the responsibility of making decisions by sheltering under the umbrella of Divine Authority, nor absolve himself from the hard task of meeting his present problems and planning for his future by relying on the will of an omniscient, but unfortunately inscrutable, Providence.⁵

⁵ Sir Julian Huxley, "The Evolutionary Vision," in *Evolution After Darwin: The University of Chicago Centennial*, vol. III, *Issues in Evolution*, ed. Sol Tax (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 253.

Friedman (1912-2006) was a student of the two older economists, Knight (1885-1972) and Nef (1899-1988). He took Knight's *History of Economic Thought* (302) in the winter quarter 1933, during his first year as a Chicago graduate student. After a year away from Chicago at Columbia he returned, expecting to complete his Ph.D. at Chicago. Toward this end he took Nef's *Economic History of European Civilization I* (221) in the fall quarter 1934 and sat in on the second course of Nef's sequence in the spring quarter 1935.

In comparison with these two of his teachers, Friedman represents the mainstream of positivist economic science. Positivism, loosely defined as the modern idea of science, restricted economics to questions on which empirical fact could be brought to bear. Both Knight and Nef rebelled against the wave of positivism that swept over the social sciences during their lives, a wave not unconnected with the loss of intellectuals' religious faith. Knight's and Nef's visions of economics, and more generally of intellectual life, were broader than Friedman's specialized positivist bent allowed. Friedman saw himself as an economic scientist. Knight saw himself as a scientist, but not as a positivist scientist.⁶ Although his appointment was in the Department of Economics, Nef identified himself as a historian, and not as an economic historian but a historian of civilization. Both Knight and Nef sought to preserve room in social science for matters that cannot be captured in empirical evidence. This led them to direct confrontation with religious questions that appear not to have troubled Friedman.

On the surface Knight and Nef are alike in their differences with the new Chicago economics that developed under Friedman's leadership. Yet, on the matter of religion they began life in vastly different places, and took different routes through their lives. Knight began life

⁶ See J. Daniel Hammond, "Frank Knight's Antipositivism," *History of Political Economy* 23 (Fall 1991): 359-382.

in Midwestern “Protestant” Christianity and struggled throughout his life for emancipation from it. Nef began life in the ambit of what Rosalind Murray called “the Good Pagan,”⁷ and at first intellectually, later spiritually, came to the religion that Knight most despised, Roman Catholicism. The following two sections provide brief religious biographies for Knight and Nef, completing that which we began for Friedman in the introduction. Then in the final part of the paper we will offer some conjectures on how their stances on matters of religion relate to their economics and what this may mean for economists today.

Knight: Relatively-Orthodox, Orthodox-Protestant Agnostic⁸

James Buchanan identifies Knight’s stance regarding institutional religion:

To Frank Knight nothing was sacrosanct, not the dogmas of religion, not the laws and institutions of social order, not the prevailing moral norms, not the accepted interpretations of sacred or profane texts. Anything and everything was a potential subject for critical scrutiny, with an evaluative judgment to be informed by, but ultimately made independently of, external influence. The Knightian stance before gods, men, and history embodied a courage and self-confidence that upsets the self-satisfied propounders of all the little orthodoxies, then and now.⁹

Buchanan attributes Knight’s rebelliously critical stance before gods, men, and history to his upbringing in the rural, evangelical Christian environment of McLean County, Illinois. Knight’s family were Disci-

⁷ Murray’s book by this title (*The Good Pagan’s Failure* [New York: Longmans, Green, 1948]) is an autobiographically based Christian apologetic. Her father was classical scholar Gilbert Murray, the eponymous good pagan.

⁸ One of Knight’s favorite terms was “relatively absolute absolute.”

⁹ James M. Buchanan, “Frank H. Knight: 1885-1972,” in *Remembering the University of Chicago: Teachers, Scientists, and Scholars*, ed. Edward Shils (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 244.

ples of Christ and he attended two Disciples colleges in Tennessee, American College and Milligan College. Knight maintained a long-term friendship with Disciples theologian Frederick D. Kershner (1875-1953), from whom he took courses at both American and Milligan.¹⁰ But Knight either abandoned the faith early in life or never formed belief in the historical and metaphysical claims of Christianity. However, unlike Milton Friedman, he was never able to get religion off his mind.

Ross Emmett records Knight's "religious life" in the Unitarian church while he was on the faculty of the University of Iowa.¹¹ Emmett uses the term "religious life" loosely, for Knight's association with the Iowa City Unitarians was as much or more social and intellectual as religious, by any conventional definition of that term, including Knight's own. Emmett reports Knight's statement to Kershner that "in addition to complete skepticism of religion historically and metaphysically (which I have always felt), I no longer believe in it as a social institution."¹² He later explained to Kershner why he chose to attend the Unitarian church in Iowa City rather than, presumably, the local Disciples church or no church. "I want some sort of religious connection, and while these people are really about as dogmatic and opinionated as any of the rest of them, at least they stand theoretically for a truth-seeking attitude."¹³ Here we see Knight's stance to which Buchanan's sketch draws our attention: truth-seeking is paramount, but truth is never found. Frank Knight could not be a follower of Jesus of Nazareth who

¹⁰ Kershner was later President of Texas Christian University and Dean of the Butler University School of Religion.

¹¹ Ross B. Emmett, "The Religion of a Skeptic: Frank H. Knight on Ethics, Spirituality and Religion During His Iowa Years," *History of Political Economy* 40 (December 2008): 315-337.

¹² Knight to Kershner, September 19, 1916, in *Frederick D. Kershner Papers* (Library, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Ind.), Box 12, Folder 9, 320.

¹³ Knight to Kershner, November 15, 1922, in *Frederick D. Kershner Papers*, Box 15, Folder 27, 322.

told the apostle Thomas, "I am the way and the truth."¹⁴ Presumably when Thomas heard Jesus he stopped seeking; he had found the truth. Not so for Frank Knight.

Knight did not believe in God. He told assembled Unitarians from Iowa and Nebraska, "We must if we are to be honest go farther and admit once for all that science has made it impossible to be religious in any theistic sense, orthodox or liberal."¹⁵ This, it seems to me, is the starting point for understanding Knight's commitments. He was committed to the absence of a theistic God. He believed that such a God did not exist, and the man Jesus was therefore not one of three divine persons with the Father and Holy Spirit. Others' belief in Jesus's divinity was part of historical and contemporary reality, as was the theological, ethical, and institutional structure of Christianity. When Knight evaluated Christianity he did so as a nonbeliever. He evaluated Christianity as one might evaluate John Locke's social contract political philosophy. It was a real system with many adherents that was based on a fiction.

Knight's agnosticism was, to an approximation, orthodox Protestant agnosticism rather than liberal Protestant, or Catholic agnosticism. This can be seen in his and Thornton W. Merriam's introduction to *The Economic Order and Religion*, where writing jointly about themselves, the self-professed agnostic Knight and self-professed Christian Merriam say:

In connection with the question of the objective justification of any person or group to call himself or itself "Christian," Knight is more inclined to insist on the scriptural character of Christianity, throughout its history, and to hold that a religious or ethical

¹⁴ John 14:6, *New American Bible*.

¹⁵ Frank H. Knight, "The 'Concept' of Spirituality," Closing Address, Iowa and Nebraska Association of Unitarians, Iowa City, 17 October 1923, in *Frank H. Knight Papers* (Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, 1923), Box 4, Folder 23 (and Box 55, Folder 21).

position which is not reasonably derived from, or at least harmonized with, the content of the New Testament in some defensible interpretation should not be called Christian. Merriam, on the other hand, is more inclined to view Christianity as a movement, in the literal sense of something which moves, grows and changes. He would not deny the legitimacy of the use of the designation "Christian" by people who consider their position as belonging to the movement, even if they explicitly say that a substantial part of the beliefs actually taught in the New Testament must now be rejected outright, in the light of the growth of knowledge and changes in the accepted ultimate premises of theology, religious philosophy and ethics. Knight thinks that if this view is accepted in an extreme form, it becomes impossible to assert any conflict or opposition between Christianity and any other religious, philosophical or ethical position, if the continuity is actually affirmed by any considerable number of people whose judgment is entitled to respect.¹⁶

Knight's frame of reference in *The Economic Order and Religion* is "liberal Christianity," meaning "those who wish to order their beliefs on the basis of facts and reasoning, not to those for whom all questions in this field have been answered, long before their birth, by deference to some individual or organization, or doctrine or tradition, which claims supernatural authority."¹⁷ Nonetheless, he requires a firmer basis in the New Testament than Merriam for beliefs or persons claimed to be Christian.

Mr. Merriam gives much less explicit discussion even than I have done to the meaning of Christianity, not to mention religion in general; and what he does give is more of the nature of a statement of his own ethical position than of argument for the view that his position is to be identified with that of Christianity, or of religion. . . . Merriam's treatment would hardly differentiate Christianity from Judaism, as to present-day ethical content, and the

¹⁶ Frank H. Knight and Thornton W. Merriam, *The Economic Order and Religion* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

two practically cover the meaning of religion in our culture situation.¹⁸

Knight and Merriam are of like mind in regard to Christianity's evolution as inevitable and welcomed. Where they differ is on the question of whether contemporary beliefs, having evolved over nineteen centuries, were in any meaningful sense Christian.

With reference to the genius of Christianity, it is an error to define its content in terms of the world view of a previous age, for Jesus commanded his followers to expect new disclosures of truth, from the Spirit of Truth. Such a definition is said to be the basis of attack on Christianity by external enemies, while its internal enemies attack it by seeking a haven of refuge from the realities of the life about them. Although this discussion runs in terms asserted to be Christian, I suggest that it is better taken in a general idealistic sense, apart from any religion. And the contention that the churches should be the leading agents in promoting such ideals and reforms rather raises without answering the question whether such churches should be called Christian, or even churches.¹⁹

Emmett notes that commentators have attributed Knight's rejection of Christianity to the conservative, "hell-fire and brimstone" faith in which he was reared.²⁰ We see in his exchange with Merriam that the Christianity of his youth retained its hold on Knight. As liberal Christianity became less orthodox and harder to distinguish from secular humanism, Knight thought it ceased to be Christianity, even to be religion. His agnosticism was not a denial of liberal "humanistic Christianity," but of relatively orthodox Christianity.

There was something of Christianity that Knight found attractive. Reviewing William J. Ashley's *The Christian Outlook*, a collection of sermons, Knight wrote admiringly, "There is no quietism in his mes-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 231–232.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 232–233.

²⁰ Ross B. Emmett, "Frank Knight: Economics vs. Religion," in *Economics and Religion*, ed. Brennan and Waterman, 103–120.

sage, as there is no gloom; it is 'Christian' in the highest and best sense (whatever one may think of the historically 'true' interpretation), as against paganism, asceticism or Puritanism."²¹ Humanistic tendencies in Protestant Christianity met with his approval. But he expressed only wrath for the type of Christianity that was the most orthodox, Roman Catholicism.

It is not surprising that the worst of Christianity, in Knight's view, was Roman Catholicism. There was anti-Catholicism in the Disciples of Christ environment of his youth. But more important, I think, the authoritarianism of Catholicism clashed with Knight's individualistic liberalism. Thus philosopher Jacques Maritain's defense of human rights within a Catholic intellectual framework²² struck Knight as fitting a square peg in a round hole. Notwithstanding the Catholic Modernist movement, which was condemned by Pope Pius X in the encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*,²³ Catholicism stood in stark contrast with what Knight found most appealing about liberal Protestantism such as Ashley's or Merriam's.

This is a point that is easily overlooked in light of the magisterial teaching authority of the Church and its library full of canon law, council documents, encyclicals, and apostolic letters, which have little or no counterpart in Protestant denominations. One might think that the new teachings from the magisterium contain new doctrine. But this is not the case. The Church's charge and authority is to preserve the deposit of faith as handed down from the apostles. The Church interprets and teaches but does not add to the deposit of faith.²⁴ The Catholic Christian

²¹ Frank H. Knight, "Review of *The Christian Outlook: Being the Sermons of an Economist*, by William J. Ashley," *Political Science Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (Dec. 1925): 625.

²² Jacques Maritain, *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, trans. Doris C. Anson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943).

²³ Pope Pius X in the encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (1907).

²⁴ "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office

faith, as professed in the Nicene Creed, does not evolve with science, law, and the humanities. From the Catholic perspective, Protestant reformers such as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and their followers became heretical once they went beyond proposals to re-collect Christianity, and re-formed it.

Knight either did not understand this, or understood it but thought the Church's image of itself was untrue, for he responded to Maritain's Catholicism:

Medieval Christian thought vacillated on the question as to how far natural law could be discerned by the reason, or conscience, of "fallen" man, how far he is dependent upon revelation, meaning the Bible. But, in sharp contrast with Judaism, the revealed word had to be "interpreted" by the divinely inspired church and was subject to amendment by law and fiat of the latter as God's spokesman on earth. In any case the law of nature became the law of God, meaning in practice the law, or will, of the church, and this is still the Catholic position (since there is no real limit to matters of "faith and morals"). For the church, the end—beginning, of course, with maintenance of its own authority and prestige—has always justified any means; it was not bound by any law, and resistance or disagreement was blasphemy or heresy and called for suppression by torture or execution. Human reason was out of it, except possibly in some sense for the supreme authorities in the church and as prescribing agreement by others.²⁵

Knight believed that the contemporary Catholic Church was no less intolerant than it had been in the Middle Ages. And that, he thought, was not mild intolerance. He claimed that by comparison with Communism and National Socialism, Catholicism was the worst "ism."

of the Church alone. . . . Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith." *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 85–86.

²⁵ Frank H. Knight, "The Rights of Man and Natural Law," *Ethics* 44 (1944), reprinted in *Freedom and Reform: Essays in Economics and Social Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1982), 322–323.

The similarity between the platforms of Roman Catholicism and communism has often been pointed out. But an ecclesiastical authoritarianism is hardly to be preferred to other species of the genus; rather, its very claims to superhuman wisdom and virtue are likely to make it more arbitrary and ruthless than other forms, and this inference could be abundantly documented from the history of western Europe.²⁶

Nef: Searching for God

John U. Nef, Jr. was the son of the founder of the University of Chicago Chemistry Department. Both of Nef's parents died during his youth and he became the ward of his father's faculty colleague, George H. Mead. Mead, a philosopher, was one of the leaders of the Chicago pragmatists. Before his father died Nef made regular trips to the Meads' apartment to deliver butter. On one such visit he met Mead's niece, Elinor Castle, who had come to Chicago from the East for a visit and stayed to attend the University. Nef was smitten at first sight of Elinor, who was five years his senior. After his father died in 1915 and Nef became the Meads' ward, he and Elinor both lived at the Meads'. They were married in 1921 and, with wealth from both their families, spent the next five years in Europe, where they delved into European culture and Nef researched and wrote *The Rise of the British Coal Industry*.²⁷ He took his Ph.D. from the Brookings Graduate School on the basis of that study. After a teaching stint at Swarthmore, he joined the Economics Department of the University of Chicago. The year Nef joined the Chicago faculty was 1928, the same year that Frank Knight came to Chicago from the University of Iowa.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 331–332. Knight continued his critique of Maritain in “Natural Law: Last Refuge of the Bigot,” *Ethics* 59 (January 1949): 127–135, a reply to comments by F. S. Yeager's “A Note on Knight's Criticism of Maritain,” *Ethics* 58 (July 1948): 297–299.

²⁷ 2 vols. (London: Routledge & Sons, 1932).

Elinor Castle and John Nef were both brought up as atheists by their parents and by his guardians, the Meads. The five years that he and Elinor spent in Europe were, aside from his work on the history of British coal, devoted to art and culture. His academic training was in economics but he had a passion for beauty. Beauty was the keystone of Nef's humanism, and he found beauty in man and man's creations. One of two epigraphs at the beginning of his autobiography, *Search for Meaning*,²⁸ is from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: "O, wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is!"²⁹

John Nef was as much drawn to Jacques Maritain as Frank Knight was repulsed. One reason was their common interest in art. Nef first learned of Maritain through an essay by T. S. Eliot in the *Criterion* in which Eliot praised Maritain "as one of the meaningful contemporary French thinkers."³⁰ This led Nef to Maritain's *Art et Scolastique*, which Nef began using in his courses. In the view of both Nef and Maritain the artist transcended the human domain to reach the divine, the source of artistic insight.

Like Stravinsky, I was struck by Maritain's emphasis on the distinction between the servile arts, where results depend on changes in matter, and the liberal arts, which are mainly constructions of the mind. This distinction revealed contrasts between reality as it appeared to medieval and to modern people. Generally speaking moderns find it more difficult than their medieval predecessors to envisage what their senses cannot detect—what cannot be touched, seen or heard.³¹

The other attraction to Maritain was just that which Knight considered retrograde, Maritain's political philosophy. The context for Nef's

²⁸ John U. Nef, *Search for Meaning: The Autobiography of a Nonconformist* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1973).

²⁹ Act 5, Scene 1.

³⁰ Nef, *Search for Meaning*, 212.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 212–213.

encounter with Maritain's philosophy was the pragmatism of his guardian George Mead and Mead's colleagues in the University of Chicago Philosophy Department. Growing up in the shadow of the pragmatists, Nef found their philosophy "an alien creed."

On many occasions while we lived in Washington and Swarthmore [*i.e.*, 1926 to 1928] I took issue in amiably conducted controversy with elders in philosophy whom I had known since childhood. They usually held that the trends in American living and thought, if left to themselves, would inevitably lead to "the best of all possible worlds." But it became my conviction that unless American thought arrived freely at firm goals, other than quantity production, we would, at least, lose sight of the ideals of the Founding Fathers and, at worst, approach the mechanized nightmare towards which the trends seemed to be leading.³²

In 1933, when Maritain lectured at the University of Chicago, the Nefs were away. But Nef read the lecture, which was published as *Some Reflections on Culture and Liberty*,³³ and was thereby introduced to Maritain's political philosophy. Maritain argued for a theocentric or Christian humanism as opposed to anthropocentric humanism. The Christian humanism he proposed was not modern (post-sixteenth century) Christian humanism ("of which we have experienced to the point of nausea; for is it not the world of this humanism that is now being vomited up?"³⁴), but the humanism taught by St. Thomas Aquinas (~1225-1274) and St. John of the Cross (1542-1591). This was a humanism "that does not suffer any diminution of divine truths."³⁵

Nef became involved in Robert M. Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler's Great Books program in 1940 and soon thereafter suggested to Hutchins that they bring this initiative to the graduate school. The out-

³² *Ibid.*, 213–214.

³³ Jacques Maritain, *Some Reflections on Culture and Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

come of their conversation was the Committee on Social Thought. In 1942 the Committee was founded and granted authority to recommend students for graduate degrees, and in 1946 authority to recommend faculty appointments. All of this happened in the face of faculty opposition due to Hutchins' involvement.³⁶ The Committee's faculty were drawn initially from the humanities and social sciences, with visitors from the arts and natural sciences. Nef's vision for the Committee was intellectually unified inquiry and education.³⁷

One product of Nef's widening interests beyond strictly economic history is *The United States and Civilization*,³⁸ based on his 1941 Walgreen Foundation lectures. Nef portrays the book as the epilogue of an unfinished study of industrial history relative to the history of civilization since the Renaissance. He traces the ideas in the book to his junior and senior years at Harvard, immediately after the World War I armistice. Prominent among writers whose influence is found in the book are two Christian humanists, Maritain and R. H. Tawney.³⁹ From the other side of the intellectual divide, in the preface Nef thanks Frank

³⁶ Hutchins had opponents, including Frank Knight, because of his academic management style, and also because of his views on philosophy and education, which were much like Nef's. For example, Hutchins wrote: "Pragmatism, the philosophy of Dewey and his followers, like positivism, the philosophy of Reichenbach and Carnap, is not a philosophy at all, because it supplies no intelligible standard of good or bad. Pragmatism and positivism hold that the only knowledge is scientific knowledge. As the Mad Hatter and the March Hare in *Alice in Wonderland* celebrated unbirthdays, so pragmatism and positivism are unphilosophies" (*The Conflict in Education in a Democratic Society* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953], 53).

³⁷ See Ross B. Emmett, "Frank H. Knight and the Committee on Social Thought: Contrasting Visions of Interdisciplinarity in the 1950s" (June 7, 2013). DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.2307185.

³⁸ John U. Nef, *The United States and Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942).

³⁹ Maritain and Tawney both spent terms in Chicago as visitors to the Committee on Social Thought.

Knight for reading the entire manuscript “with a care for my interests that I would describe as Christian were I not afraid of offending him.”⁴⁰

A separate but related difference between Nef and Knight was their conceptions of the meaning of freedom. Nef acquired his understanding of freedom from Aristotle initially and later from Maritain. In this view freedom can never be absolute. Rather it is the freedom to choose the right slavery for oneself. Slavery of any kind was anathema to Knight. He agreed that freedom can never be absolute, but his vision of the ideal free society was nonetheless antinomian, with a maximum of free rational discussion.

Although Nef was not baptized until after Elinor’s death, by the time of his Walgreen Lectures in 1941 he was a fellow traveler with Christianity.⁴¹ He tells a story in his memoirs that shortly after the founding of UNESCO in 1945 his name was mentioned in discussion of possible UNESCO participants, which prompted an American scholar, who had not met Nef, to remark, “I hate John Nef.” When asked why, the man explained, “Because he is a Roman Catholic.” Apparently, Nef’s reputation had been tainted by his association with Maritain.

The contrast between Nef’s and Knight’s views of Christianity’s role in the history of European civilization is striking. Where Knight thought Christianity was incompatible with material and ethical progress,⁴² Nef wrote that:

Christianity is, therefore, the ally of the good life. It teaches men and women that honesty and charity are right whether they lead to worldly recognition or not. . . . Nothing can sustain us so much as the belief that we are striving to act here on earth according to the light He has provided for us, and not out of any desire to ad-

⁴⁰ Nef, *The United States and Civilization*, xv.

⁴¹ Elinor Nef died in 1953.

⁴² See, for instance, Frank H. Knight, “Foreword,” in Renzo Bianchi, *Liberalism and Its Critics: with Special Attention to the Economic Doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church* (Northfield, Minn.: Carlton Economics Club, Carlton College, 1958).

vance ourselves according to the transient and fragile fashions of the world. . . .

At a time when the people of the Western countries, and most of all of the United States, are suffering from an unwillingness to assume responsibilities, when most people in their public and private relations think mainly in terms of what they can get in a worldly way and very little in terms of what they can give in effort and honesty and sweetness, there is a tremendous need for a renewal of the sense of obligation. Nothing helps men so much to assume obligations, to take a course that is difficult and unpopular, as the belief that an all-wise Being is looking on with approval when they turn away from the course that is easy or popular or likely to save their skins, but that is unjust or unwise or cowardly, if not actually wicked.

The Christian faith is the ally of reason as well as virtue. . . .

Thus the Christian faith provides reason with a shield. As the Christian faith has been weakened, as the churches have made compromises to meet material standards, this shield has grown rusty. The modern world has denied the existence of wisdom because it has seen in the work of the wisest men of the past flaws which they would be the first to recognize. No truly wise man, like Thomas Aquinas, ever claimed that he had found wisdom. Christianity offers an explanation for the flaws.⁴³

As much as Nef admired Christianity, especially Roman Catholicism, for its contributions to civilization indicated in the passage above, he remained for a long time an outside admirer. After Elinor died in 1953 Nef went into a despair from which he found solace in spiritual direction from a French priest, Fr. A. M. Carré, O.P. They were introduced by Nef's friend, French composer Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979). Fr. Carré baptized Nef and provided religious counsel for ten years.

This would seem to have completed the spiritual journey for John Nef, with his conversion following a long-standing intellectual attraction and the loss of his wife. But at a dinner party in New York in January 1964 Nef met Evelyn Stefansson née Schwartz, widow of arctic ex-

⁴³ Nef, *The United States and Civilization*, 168–169.

plorer Viljalmur Stefansson. Evelyn Schwartz was born to Hungarian Jewish parents in Brooklyn, New York City in 1913. Her mother's family were not observant. Her father's were Orthodox, and she spent her childhood in a kosher household. After her parents died Schwartz joined a group of Greenwich Village bohemians and became for a time mistress of Buckminster Fuller. She joined the troupe of puppeteer Bil Baird, and in 1932 they were married. They planned to have the ceremony in New York's City Hall "because he was Episcopalian and I was a lapsed agnostic Jew,"⁴⁴ but a friend persuaded them the City Hall setting was too grim, so they were married at St. John's Church (Episcopal) in Greenwich Village. In preparation for a trip to Iowa to meet Baird's mother, he warned Evelyn that his mother was "a religious Episcopalian" and she was worried that her new daughter-in-law was not baptized.

Since I was an agnostic and it didn't make any difference to me what faith I was against, I told him that if it would make his mother happy I would gladly be baptized. So I studied some words, met with a charming minister, became an Episcopalian, and made Bil's mother rest easy.⁴⁵

Evelyn left Baird in 1936 and in April 1941 married Viljalmur Stefansson, who was part of their Greenwich Village circle of friends. She and Stefansson remained married until he died in 1962.

When Evelyn and John Nef were married in April 1964 he had been a widower for eleven years, and a Catholic for almost as long. The matter of religion came up as they made wedding plans.

When John and I first talked about a marriage ceremony, I declared that a Roman Catholic ceremony was impossible for me. My agnostic feelings were too strong. My belief that man had invented the religions he needed to fulfill his fantasies and calm his

⁴⁴ Evelyn Stefansson Nef, *Finding My Way: The Autobiography of an Optimist* (Washington, D.C.: The Francis Press, 2002), 63.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

fears had been confirmed and strengthened during my time with Steff[ansson], who had studied comparative religions at Harvard and had come to the same conclusion. I love the music associated with all religions and can be moved to tears by the sound of a cantor's voice singing an excerpt from the Orthodox Jewish service or an aria from Bach's St. John's Passion, but I could never believe in the divinity of Christ, the Immaculate Conception, or the various miracles depicted in the Bible.⁴⁶

For a time after their marriage Nef attended Mass at Epiphany Catholic Church, near their home in Georgetown (Washington, D.C.). Evelyn often attended the French language Mass with him. At first, she was unable to follow the liturgy, but after studying French in a Berlitz course she came to understand what was being said in the Mass.

When I could understand what was being spoken and sung, I was horrified by the amount of *sin* and *guilt* and negative ideas the service contained. I told John I preferred to spend my Sunday mornings in ways that were more profitable to me but urged him to continue going on his own. He began to skip Mass, at first occasionally and then often. When I asked him about it he said, "Since I have you, I don't need to go to Mass. It only makes me sad now." I had a twinge of guilt, but he seemed so happy it didn't last very long.⁴⁷

Reflecting on his conversion as he wrote his memoirs in the early 1970s, Nef thought he had not understood the faith commitment required in becoming Roman Catholic. He wrote that he had thought of Christianity as a set of virtues taught by Christ and exemplified by Christ's suffering in the place of others.

I did not realize the extent to which the act of joining was prompted by the desire to save oneself and how little connection that act had with the service of humankind which commands my allegiance. Nor had I realized the prominent place given to the dogma (shared by some other churches) according to which God, the source of forgiveness of sins, is made the cause for the crea-

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 272–273.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

tion of the species which has been for thousands of years a principal source of the very evils He abhors. The Devil had no reality and it had been impossible for me to locate that Garden of Eden from which the first woman excluded her descendents by picking forbidden fruit. Elinor's unions with me did not fit the story.⁴⁸

When John Nef died on Christmas Day 1988 Evelyn buried his ashes at the base of a Marc Chagall mosaic in their garden, without a funeral.

Three Economists' Commitments

Milton Friedman's twin commitments were to empirical social science and to personal liberty for all. He was not philosophically inclined except with regard to scientific methodology.⁴⁹ That may be a part of the reason that after losing his religious faith, religion ceased to be a weighty issue for him. For an intellectual, interests in religion and in philosophy are complementary. The plane on which Friedman worked did not take him into the realm of fundamental questions of meaning and truth. However, though Friedman may not have believed in God, he believed in man.⁵⁰ He had deep confidence in the essential goodness of man and in the potential for human flourishing, provided we get the institutions right, *i.e.*, give full range to individual decision making and responsibility within a framework of mostly laissez-faire markets. He was committed to pursuit of knowledge through economic analysis, and conveying this knowledge to his fellow man. It was Mil-

⁴⁸ Nef, *Search for Meaning*, 223.

⁴⁹ See J. Daniel Hammond, "An Interview with Milton Friedman on Methodology," *Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology* 10 (1992): 91–118.

⁵⁰ It is interesting that Milton Friedman and Evelyn Nef were born within a year of each other into Orthodox Jewish immigrant families in Brooklyn. Both rejected their families' religion and became, in Maritain's term, anthropocentric humanists.

ton Friedman's humility, as much as his brilliance, that made him a master teacher.⁵¹

Knight and Nef to a greater extent than Friedman were philosophically inclined. Both men had spiritual and intellectual yearning for meaning that Friedman did not outwardly display. Nef titled his memoir *Search for Meaning*. He and Knight incorporated their searches for meaning into their scholarship in a way that Friedman felt no need for. By outward appearances, and most likely in reality, Nef's search for meaning was more successful than Knight's. He found meaning in and through beauty, despite his Godless upbringing. Beauty in the arts provided the foundation for Nef's pursuit of truth and goodness.

Knight sought meaning in the unrelenting pursuit of truth, but this was truth that by his own account would never be found. Knight held a democratic consensus theory of truth. Truth is found only in unanimous agreement among freely consenting persons.⁵² Thus truth is possible only, if at all, in a liberal democratic order. There is no point in searching for truth in history prior to the emergence of liberal democracy, for there cannot be truth apart from liberal democracy. There is no objective truth, and no objective meaning and value. These are not discovered; they are created. In Knight's view economic values are created in markets and other values are created in conversation. So Knight was a precursor of postmodernism. Yet tragically, despite his firm belief that free discussion was the sole route to truth, Frank Knight was a person with whom it was exceedingly difficult to have a conversation. His interlocutors were at risk of being labeled fools and knaves, even if

⁵¹ On the latter see introduction and part I of *The Legacy of Milton Friedman as Teacher*, ed. J. Daniel Hammond (Aldershot, UK, and Brookfield, US: Edward Elgar, 1999).

⁵² Knight's student James M. Buchanan made unanimous free assent the foundational principle of his theory of government. See Marianne Johnson, "Public Goods, Market Failure, and Voluntary Exchange," *History of Political Economy* 47, suppl. 1 (2015): 174–198.

their opinions were those Knight himself had held in the past but no longer held.

The difference between Knight and Nef may have been more in their personalities than their intellects. We glimpse this in Nef's epigraph from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, alongside poetry from James Thomson that Knight used in his 1923 speech to the Unitarians when he claimed that science had made it impossible to be religious in any theist sense.

O, wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is!⁵³

Who is most wretched in the dolorous place?
I think myself; yet I would rather be
My miserable self than He, than He
Who formed such creatures to his own disgrace.⁵⁴

Religion and Economics

What have religious biographies of John U. Nef, Frank H. Knight, and Milton Friedman to do with their economics? We will begin with the more obvious case and proceed to the less obvious cases. That is, we will begin with Nef, then consider Knight, and then Friedman, for whom at first glance there would seem to be little connection.

We have seen that Nef's intellectual life was from the beginning of his career much wider than economics. Although his Ph.D. dissertation was industrial history, a study of the rise of the British coal industry, Nef taught and wrote economic history as a historian rather than as an economist. He proposed a broad and lofty vision of economic history to members of the Economics History Association in 1944, when

⁵³ Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Scene 5, Act 1.

⁵⁴ James Thomson, *The City of Dreadful Night*.

economics and economic history done by economists were becoming increasingly and narrowly specialized:

The essence of history does not consist in the separate treatment of a number of topics in the historical development of an epoch, such as its wars, its great political leaders, its constitutional changes, its industrial changes, its philosophical thought, its economic thought, and so forth, no matter how fully and correctly each of these topics is treated. Nor does the essence of history consist in analyses of cause-and-effect relationships between various aspects of the historical development of an epoch, no matter how close to truth such analyses may be. Both accurate knowledge and a genius for understanding causal relationships are necessary for writing of the kind Voltaire envisioned. But the essence of history consists in the characteristics of an epoch which are at once common to and most important for all sides of its history. It is fundamental to select from events, institutions, conditions, and thought only what is likely to have enduring meaning. It is still more fundamental, and very much more difficult to relate all that is meaningful in so meaningful a way that the result will always have a compelling claim upon the human mind and spirit at its best. A perfect portrait of these interrelationships alone could give the essence of the history, through a unified period of time, of the people or peoples who form a civilization.⁵⁵

Nef's intellectual life was, as he suggested in the title of his memoir, a search for meaning in the details of human life across historical epochs. His search for meaning presupposed that there is meaning in economic relations, and other parts of life and history. In a genuinely open search for meaning the searcher is led, as was John Nef, toward God.

Like Nef, Frank Knight stood outside the mainstream of economics through much of his career. Soon after completion of his Cornell Ph.D. dissertation, *Risk, Uncertainty, and Profit*,⁵⁶ Knight's inter-

⁵⁵ John U. Nef, "What is Economic History?" *The Journal of Economic History* 4 (December 1944): 2-3.

⁵⁶ Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921.

ests veered away from the practice of economics to philosophical and methodological questions about economics and other social sciences. He insisted that there is a science of economics, but his vision of a theoretical science was incompatible with the conventional positivist conception of economic science.

Of Knight's prodigious writings few were on, or rather in, economics proper. In his introduction to the two-volume *Selected Essays by Frank H. Knight*⁵⁷ Ross Emmett identified Knight's primary contribution to economics per se as the meticulous parsing of the implications of the assumptions of economic theory.⁵⁸ *Risk, Uncertainty, and Profit* developed the distinction between risk and uncertainty in the context of moving from perfect competition with perfect knowledge and no profit or loss, to imperfect competition with profit and loss. Emmett credits this work as the base for subsequent theoretical developments by others, including decision theory, theory of the business enterprise, and the theory of imperfect competition. Knight's direct contributions to economic theory included contributions in Marshallian cost theory, critique of Austrian capital theory, and a critique of Slutsky-Hicks demand theory. In most of what Knight wrote, he ventured outside economics proper to the other social sciences, to history, and philosophy, taking the stance of critic, as he did in his economics proper. Knight was a skeptical critic of what others had built, be that in economics or in religion. But he was not a builder himself. For every brick that he might remove from a structure, every arch that might be taken apart, he could

⁵⁷ Ross B. Emmett, "Introduction," in *Selected Essays by Frank H. Knight*, ed. Ross B. Emmett (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), vii–xxiv.

⁵⁸ See also Ross B. Emmett, "Frank H. Knight," in *The Elgar Companion to the Chicago School of Economics*, ed. Ross Emmett (Cheltenham, UK, and Northampton, Mass., USA: Edward Elgar, 2010), 280–286.

think of three reasons against any replacement that he or others might propose.⁵⁹

So, his skeptical critical stance shaped and constrained both Knight's spiritual life and his intellectual life. Where John Nef sought truth in mundane and heavenly matters, and enjoyed the contentment of having found bits of truth, Knight devoted his life to a quest for truth in mundane and heavenly matters that was by his own standard a futile quest. For Knight, there was little to be gained from history prior to the modern era, either of knowledge or wisdom. He perceived no lighthouse in the search for comfort and security, not in the record of history, nor in the present, nor in the future. Mankind's only hope was in a recent and highly tenuous intellectual and political development: liberalism.⁶⁰ Knight understood that, at its core, liberalism is grounded in a commitment that nothing will be fixed or taken for granted.

To say the belief is free is to say that truth is inherently "dynamic," subject to change and actually growing and changing. The liberal interest in truth is one of curiosity and quest, not of mystical contemplation or adoration. Truth is the right—or the best—answer to some intelligent question, and when a question is definitely answered it is no longer a question. Hence, any truth that is really "established" is no longer interesting, but a commonplace, even a bore. Truth is the supreme example of the principle that liberal idealism looks at the values of life in terms of pursuit as well as possession; they belong to the activity as much as to the result, to means as well as to ends. Truth is an end when it is unknown or uncertain, and especially if controversial; hence the truth interest is finally a romantic one.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Knight's persistent criticism is reflected in the subtitles Emmett chose for the two volumes of *Selected Essays of Frank Knight*: "What is Truth in Economics" and "Laissez-Faire: Pro and Con."

⁶⁰ The work of his former graduate student James M. Buchanan in search of a contractual basis for government, and in recognition that the social scientist is a part of the system he analyzes, may be Knight's most enduring intellectual legacy.

⁶¹ Frank H. Knight, "The Sickness of Liberal Society" (1947), in *Selected Essays by Frank H. Knight*, vol. 2, 305.

But liberalism was neither solipsistic nor individually autonomous. “The second feature of the liberal conception of truth is that it is a social category; its only test is unanimous acceptance in some community of discussion. Further, truth as social is ultimately democratic.”⁶²

In April 1947 Knight and Friedman accompanied Aaron Director and George Stigler to Switzerland for the first meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society. The European and American liberals who gathered at F. A. Hayek’s bidding were beleaguered by the appeal of totalitarian Communism for intellectuals on the heels of the bloody struggle against totalitarian National Socialism. A united front by the small band was needed to reinvigorate liberalism. But instead, a fissure developed in the Mont Pelerin Society from the start. On one side were Europeans such as Wilhelm Röpke, Walter Eucken, and Hayek, who viewed liberalism as the fruit of the historic European culture based on Christianity and the best of Greek and Roman philosophy. John Nef was not at Mont Pelerin, but we can surmise that he would have been allied with these Europeans. On the other side were Americans such as Friedman, Aaron Director, and George Stigler, who located the roots of liberalism in the economics of Adam Smith and his successors. And there was Frank Knight, who did not fit in either camp. Knight thought the roots of liberalism were in the modern democratic movement in politics and religion. The society that was formed at Mont Pelerin bore the name of the location of the first meeting because the name favored by Hayek, the Acton-Tocqueville Society, might have been taken to suggest compatibility between historic Christianity and liberalism.

Among the Mont Pelerin liberals, economics was less divisive than religion and philosophy, so beginning with the first meeting the

⁶² *Ibid.*, 306.

Mont Pelerin Society was dominated by economics and economists.⁶³ There were a few sessions at Mont Pelerin Society meetings in the 1940s and 1950s on topics such as “the proletarianized society” (1949), “cultural and ideological aspects of capitalism and socialism” (1950), “the moral basis of academic freedom” (1950), “social presuppositions of the market economy” (1953), “the meaning of liberty and the philosophical basis of liberalism” (1957), and “human rights and human duties” (1960). These sessions tended to be chaired and populated by a small group of men such as Wilhelm Röpke, H. D. Gideonse, and Alexander Rüstow. More numerous were sessions on economic topics such as “monetary and fiscal policy,” “progressive taxation,” “the nature and function of profits,” “trade union legislation,” and “inflation.”

At the 1961 meeting, Röpke, as Society President, delivered the opening remarks. This meeting was less than a month after the Soviets and German Democratic Republic sealed off East Berlin from the West. Röpke referred to the possibility that communists might come into power in Western Europe through democratic election as satanic. He asked, somewhat rhetorically, how Europe had come to this point:

It may dawn upon all of us now that we may live to see once more confirmed a great truth of human history, namely that suicide, not murder is the normal form of death of a cultural system. It is not the strength of the barbarians but the weakness, moral and intellectual, of the civilized which is usually their undoing.⁶⁴

By this point in the Mont Pelerin Society’s history, consideration of barbarian, civilized, moral, and cultural matters had given way to narrowly economic issues. Mont Pelerin programs looked much like post-war Chicago School economics.

⁶³ See J. Daniel Hammond and Claire H. Hammond, “Religion and the Foundation of Liberalism: The Case of the Mont Pelerin Society,” *Modern Age* 55 (Winter/Spring 2013): 35–51.

⁶⁴ Wilhelm Röpke, “Opening Speech at the Turin Meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society,” *Mont Pelerin Quarterly* 3 (1962): 8–9.

Milton Friedman's relative indifference to metaphysical matters is reflective of the times and the American context in which he was educated and began his career. There was confidence that science was the key, perhaps the only key, to unlock human potential. The University of Chicago was founded in 1891 during the Progressive era, which saw the apex of this faith. As skeptics, at Chicago Nef and Knight were outliers. Friedman was a believer in science as the key to resolving social issues. He wrote in "The Methodology of Positive Economics":

I venture the judgment, however, that currently in the Western world, and especially in the United States, differences about economic policy among disinterested citizens derive predominantly from different predictions about the economic consequences of taking action—differences that in principle can be eliminated by the progress of positive economics—rather than from fundamental difference in basic values . . .⁶⁵

Time and experience proved Friedman to be overly optimistic about the potential for using scientific economics as he understood it for the betterment of mankind. On technical matters of economics, he and Anna J. Schwartz spent over three decades studying the role of money in business cycles, particularly in severe recessions and inflations. They were largely unsuccessful until the stagflation of the 1970s produced converts. The reason is that their debate with Keynesians over the role of money was not fundamentally a disagreement over contingent facts, but disagreement over scientific methodology, and as such a difference that was rooted in philosophy.⁶⁶ Historical evidence and statistical analysis counted for little to their Keynesian critics without what the critics considered the right sort of theoretical model.

⁶⁵ Milton Friedman, "The Methodology of Positive Economics," in *Essays in Positive Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 5.

⁶⁶ See J. Daniel Hammond, *Theory and Measurement: Causality Issues in Milton Friedman's Monetary Economics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Friedman's way of doing economics stood in between atheoretical empiricism and theorizing apart from evidence. His Keynesian critics, while Keynesian in the sense of according money a passive role in recessions and inflations, were more fundamentally Walrasian, or Cartesian. They assigned cause and effect roles in theory, with little if any reliance on empirical evidence to support their assignments. Friedman learned from experience to expect the retort, "correlation does not prove causation," and he consciously avoided overtly causal language in writing about matters that were undoubtedly questions of cause and effect.⁶⁷ While economic methodology may seem far removed from matters of religion, it is not. Throughout the modern era, as Westerners shed their belief in truths of religion, they likewise lost their confidence in causality. David Hume referred to causality as "the cement of the universe." Yet he concluded in his discourse on causality that:

All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another; but we never can observe any tie between them. They seem conjoined but never connected. And as we can have no idea of anything, which never appears to our outward sense or inward sentiment, the necessary conclusion seems to be, that we have no idea of connexion or power at all, and that these words are absolutely without any meaning, when employed either in philosophical reasoning, or in private life.⁶⁸

Friedman's critics placed their scientific bets on certain kinds of theory, and thereby imposed causality on their models by their own lights. Friedman set out to discover causes and effects empirically, but was stymied by modern skepticism. Skepticism about the supernatural led ultimately to skepticism about the cement of science.

Friedman's confidence in the capacity of economic scientists to resolve disputes was tempered in a second way over the course of his

⁶⁷ See Hammond, "An Interview with Milton Friedman on Methodology."

⁶⁸ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Eric Steinberg (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993), 49.

life as a public intellectual. He experienced the power of vested interests in public policy and in the minds of individuals, what he and Rose Friedman called “Tyranny of the Status Quo.” *Capitalism and Freedom*⁶⁹ displays Friedman’s confidence that counterproductive policies can be reformed once the public are persuaded with sound reasoning and evidence. But a decade later, that confidence was diminished. In *Free to Choose* he and Rose Friedman wrote:

[T]his book is influenced by a fresh approach to political science that has come mainly from economists—Anthony Downs, James M. Buchanan, Gordon Tullock, George J. Stigler, and Gary S. Becker, who, along with many others, have been doing exciting work in the economic analysis of politics. *Free to Choose* treats the political system symmetrically with the economic system. Both are regarded as markets in which the outcome is determined by the interaction among persons pursuing their own self-interests (broadly interpreted) rather than by the social goals the participants find it advantageous to enunciate.⁷⁰

The title of the third of the Friedman’s mass market books on public policy testifies to his loss of the Progressive faith in science. The Friedmans titled this book, *Tyranny of the Status Quo*.⁷¹



⁶⁹ Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

⁷⁰ Milton Friedman and Rose D. Friedman, *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), ix–x.

⁷¹ Milton Friedman and Rose D. Friedman, *Tyranny of the Status Quo* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984).

**God and Man at the University of Chicago:
Religious Commitments of Three Economists**

SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to examine how three very different Chicago economists, Milton Friedman, Frank H. Knight, and John U. Nef, Jr., handled the question of God and religion. The author shows that for each of these three figures, their stance on religion set limits on the effectiveness of their intellectual efforts in the public sphere of their university, the larger academic community, and American society.

KEYWORDS

Milton Friedman, Frank H. Knight, John U. Nef, God, religion, Chicago School, University of Chicago, economics, university, academic community, American society.

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