

## **Economic Ideology: A Virtue-less Recovery**

### **Seeking An Antidotal Paradigm In Liturgical Anthropology**

Economics involves persons and relationships. The economy reflects Man's understanding of himself and it expresses his virtue writ-large. During economic low points, general opinion looks for remedy in systems and structures; fix the dam and it will hold water. But a lack of money is not the culprit in recessions, just as low water levels do not fracture dams. It would appear fatuous to suggest virtue as the prescribed treatment. How could the remedy be Man himself, being virtuous? Should everyone just be 'economically-nice' to each other? The utopian sneers and cynicism would amass, failing to recognize "economic relationships do not operate on value-neutral laws, but are carriers of specific convictions about the nature of the human person-origins and destiny."<sup>1</sup> It will not merely be about Man creating economic transformation, but created Man being transformed.

What embodies this self-understanding and relationality needed to regulate economics? "Catholic social thought, especially since the Second Vatican Council has in fact adopted the anthropological perspective as the defining ethical perspective."<sup>2</sup> And when is Man at his ontological apex? It is Man at liturgy. This *liturgical anthropology* alone is adequate to serve as model and summit of Man's self-understanding and solidarity with other persons. But this liturgical anthropology must be exportable. It is barely detectable among many in Christendom, and absolutely foreign to those outside. However, who Man is *in familia* is universally understood and can be 'packaged for

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<sup>1</sup> Cavanaugh, William T., *Being Consumed*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008, pp. 59-60.

<sup>2</sup> Bayer, Richard C., *Capitalism and Christianity*, Georgetown University Press, 1999, p. 103.

consumption’. Within this framework, a familial paradigm can emerge where cooperation is apparently superior to competition, solidarity to individualism, sufficiency to exuberance and the connection between love and truth posited as axiomatic to a recovery of virtue and the economy which rightly ordered, serves Man.

Man’s vision of himself has been thwarted; often by his own hand, sometimes by the structures of evil<sup>3</sup> in which he has been placed. And ‘when this order of values is jumbled and bad is mixed with the good, individuals and groups pay heed solely to their own interests.’<sup>4</sup> Societies ills are not caused by the “monopolistic control of a privileged few; it is rather the weakening of brotherly ties between individuals.”<sup>5</sup> Self-interest, self-control and self-destiny become the aim of Carnal Man; the antithesis of solidarity. This Man, not the sole possession of the modern age, seeks comfort and protection in that which is foreign to his good. “In languishing for security, [he] enters into patterns of ultimate competition and accumulation, the pathological inversion of our affective potential.”<sup>6</sup> Within this anti-model, the other cannot be looked upon in love; Man cannot become ‘gift’.

The virtue of selflessness is overtaken by selfishness. Self-love becomes love of things for the self and when “uncontrolled, [emerges] narrow and confined in its views, and admits of no sharers and competitors;”<sup>7</sup> it breeds discord. Solidarity is not quantifiable, so it is not sought or pursued. “In a technocratic and scientific culture,

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<sup>3</sup> Those hard to conquer social institutions, deeply rooted in society, contrary to divine goodness. cf CCC §1869.

<sup>4</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, § 37.

<sup>5</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 1967, §66.

<sup>6</sup> Kavanaugh, John F., *Following Christ in a Consumer Society—Still*, Orbis Books, 2003, p.68.

<sup>7</sup> Myers, Milton L., *The Soul of Modern Economic Man*, The University of Chicago Press, 1983, p.18.

people will often abandon self-giving love in favor of measurable values.”<sup>8</sup> Consequently, “each one wishes to assert himself independently of the other and in fact intends to make his own interests prevail.”<sup>9</sup> This age has yielded to the Hobbian innate drive to satisfy needs and pursue self-interests. The gift of self has been subjugated by the reward of consumption. And this consumption is marketed as the modern economic fix; spend money and the economic waters will rise again. “Scarcity miraculously turns into abundance by consumption itself, a contemporary loaves-and-fishes saga.”<sup>10</sup>

If this cannot be accomplished by the individuals collectively, then let the State prime the pump. This is the “Keynesian perspective on economics, but it does not show significant understanding of the human person.”<sup>11</sup> It lacks any moral responsibility and misunderstands the dilemma. Carnal Man markets a remedy, and profit becomes the primary indicator; fill the dam with water. “Leviathan thrives on the illusion of its own inevitable triumph.”<sup>12</sup> This craftiness in marketing is even presented as secular virtue; recall Scripture, “For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.”<sup>13</sup> Here then is Man in the celebrated present age—love of self and consumption with out culpability. “This [is the] festival of self-affirmation, closed in on itself: eating, drinking and making merry. [This] dance around the golden calf is an image of self-seeking worship.”<sup>14</sup> It remains worship, though inverted and

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<sup>8</sup> Jeffreys, Derek S., *Defending Human Dignity*, Brazos Press, 2004, p.111.

<sup>9</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 1995, §20.

<sup>10</sup> Cavanaugh, p.93.

<sup>11</sup> Bayer, p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> Lanz, Tobias J., “Economics Begins at Home”, *Beyond Capitalism and Socialism*, HIS Press, 2008, p. 158.

<sup>13</sup> Sacred Scripture, RSV-CE, Ignatius Press, 1994, (Luke xvi.8).

<sup>14</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Ignatius Press, 2000, p.23.

perverted. It has become Man, closed in and disoriented, worshiping Man. This antithetical anthropology and synthetic worship points towards Man.

“The human person is the best point of departure for elaborating a response to the specific moral challenges of [this] consumer culture.”<sup>15</sup> One must look to Man, however Man cannot fix Man. The antidote comes from outside of Man; it is in liturgy or more precisely, Man in liturgy. One must not so much discover, but realize *Liturgical Man*. Man’s nature is actual, even if not evident to the culture. So too this liturgical Man must evidently become natural to the world. Rather than pointing towards Man, liturgy does point beyond Man and draw Man in. Because “liturgy can only attract people when it looks, not at itself, but at God.”<sup>16</sup> It reorients the wayward and exposes Man’s transcendence. But first and foremost, this Man in liturgy must be founded in the “grace poured forth upon [him, where] all other activities of the Church (*cum omni militia*) are directed toward their end.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, Man is truly graced. That which he truly is, comes not from himself (it is supernatural), but yet is essential to him<sup>18</sup>. Grace sustains Man, even if unbeknownst. Being filled with grace, Man is also transcendent; he is destined for something greater than this temporal age. This destination is theosis, the salvation of God, “which is liberation from everything that oppresses Man, but which is above all *liberation from sin*.”<sup>19</sup> Man’s contact with God in liturgy then brings freedom. This is freedom towards truth, not autonomy (the modern concept of freedom). That ‘seeming liberation [only] subjects him to the dictatorship of the ruling majority, to shifting human

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<sup>15</sup> Tracy, Rev. Joseph A., “The Challenge to Catholic Morality From a Postmodern Culture of Consumption”, (S.T.D. diss.), Academia Alphonsiana, 2000, p.158.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>17</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Sacrocanctum Concilium*, 1963, §10.2.

<sup>18</sup> “Grace perfects nature”, cf ST., Ia, q62, a5..

<sup>19</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Evangelium Nuntiandi*, 1975, §7, [emphasis mine].

standards, which inevitable end up doing him violence.”<sup>20</sup> They otherwise direct Man, away from his otherworldly fulfillment. This materializes with the so-called free market of Friedman, one of voluntary exchange—is there freedom without knowledge? But true freedom in love, since love does not impose but only proposes, must rather be “a knowing and free choice that is personally motivated and prompted from within, not under blind impulse nor by mere external pressure.”<sup>21</sup>

Having been “called out of bondage and idolatry, the people of God are at the same time and by that very reason called into a new life of relatedness—not only with God, but with their fellow human beings.”<sup>22</sup> So ‘Liturgical Man’ is also communitarian and relational. This is where the solidarity can be demonstrated and contrasted. This is natural to Man. Any adequate anthropology of Man “presupposes a metaphysical interpretation of the ‘*humanum*’ in which this relationality is an essential element.”<sup>23</sup> He is never alone at Liturgy (the entire assembly is present)<sup>24</sup>, and communion is consummate solidarity. A communion which does not obliterate his uniqueness. Liturgical Man loves the other, in knowledge. “The unrepeatable human qualities of knowing and loving, inevitably disappear in a universe whose ultimates are productivity and marketing,”<sup>25</sup> but present in Liturgy, they must be presented to the culture.

The Eucharist is the symbol of this; Christ thus consumed, divided up but whole, unites all in consummation. But unlike Carnal Man who is disconnected from that which he acquires, “the consumer of the Body and Blood of Christ does not remain detached

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<sup>20</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, p.23.

<sup>21</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, § 17.

<sup>22</sup> Kavanaugh, p. 80.

<sup>23</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 2005, §55.

<sup>24</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Sacrocanctum Concilium*, cf. §33.2.

<sup>25</sup> Kavanaugh, p.33.

from what he or she consumes, but becomes part of the body.”<sup>26</sup> How this frustrates the conception of “overproduction [being] the necessity of the market theory of the cheapest price.”<sup>27</sup> The Body of Christ remains abundant, not produced but gifted. For “truth, and the love which it reveals, cannot be produced; they can only be received as a gift.”<sup>28</sup> It submits to no economic structure, yet becomes the paradigm to structure Man economically. And this “gift by its nature goes beyond merit; its rule is that of superabundance.”<sup>29</sup> Liturgy can actuate individuals towards an agape-oriented economism; Thomas’ *caritas facere*.<sup>30</sup> Love being made [from God], consumed and shared. Here God is present to Man. “If we love one another, God abides in us.”<sup>31</sup> In love, Liturgical Man proceeds out as gift. The *ite missa est* (being sent), “helps us to grasp the relationship between the Mass and the mission of Christians in the world;”<sup>32</sup> i.e., sent to be made gift for others.

*In nuce*, Liturgical Man is grace-filled and grace-dependent. He is transcendent, oriented beyond a temporal existence. This Man is also relational and communitarian, called as gift to consume and be consumed by others, without ever sacrificing his uniqueness. The love given him satisfies, and he in turn is to satisfy others. Liturgical Man is not extant in the contemporary economic world. In fact, he is despised. “A culture that is sustained by and sustains the *Commodity Form*<sup>33</sup> of consciousness will

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<sup>26</sup> Cavanaugh, p.95.

<sup>27</sup> Cooney, Anthony, “I Fear No Peevish Master,” *Beyond Capitalism and Socialism*, HIS Press, 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 2005, §52.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, §34.

<sup>30</sup> “Love being made”. ST, IIaIIae, q134, a2-”Strictly, *facere* means to work something in an external manner.”

<sup>31</sup> I John iv.12.

<sup>32</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 2007, §51.

<sup>33</sup> Marketability of the person v. intrinsic worth, consumption v. self-gift, demand v. invitation, competition v. sharing, having v. being & accumulation v. detachment. cf. Kavanaugh pp. 110-111.

relate to [this] personal reality as a hostile, deviant, or heretical force.”<sup>34</sup> When Carnal Man does not work against it directly, he will summarily jeer at this life, seeing no connection to the pragmatic. To “those who live in the desacralized world under the shadow of the Enlightenment, this power of grace and ritual will be [and is] dismissed as mere magic.”<sup>3536</sup>

Now, this liturgy is natural for Man, but it is not universally perceived. Even among the faithful “there is evidence that many find difficulty in reconciling their love for life with worship of the Lord of life.”<sup>37</sup> The bridge between liturgy and life is often foreign. Crossing this chasm is the *familia ecclesia*. Family--man, woman and child, are accepted as natural institution (Liturgical Man’s secular iceberg?) and thereby by extension of the liturgy, can be exported as the paradigm. In the family, expressions of competition and an absence of solidarity are recognized as dysfunctions. To have one member consume at the expense of another would be repugnant. It is true that “individuals may choose to live isolated lives, expressing hostility or indifferent to others, but they will not be fulfilling their nature of completing their beginning by so doing.”<sup>38</sup> Economics must follow the genuine familial—*caritas* economics. Carnal Man this is a struggle, for he is “terrified of obsolescence, perceives life as conflict; as competition with other person-things. [In the end,] people are produced, marketed and consumed.”<sup>39</sup> By contrast, the family is the authentic paraliturgical community and truth in love its

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<sup>34</sup> Kavanaugh, p.74.

<sup>35</sup> Engelhardt, JR., H. Tristram, “Sin and Bioethics: Why a Liturgical Anthropology is Foundational”, *Christian Bioethics*, 11:2, pp. 221-239, 2005, p232.

<sup>36</sup> Jean Corbon speaks of difficulty reconciling earth/heaven, liturgy/life and ritual/code, p159.

<sup>37</sup> USCCB, “Human Life in Our Day”, November 15, 1968, §5.

<sup>38</sup> Simpson, Peter Phillips, *Vices, Virtues, and Consequences*, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy, Vol. 35, The Catholic University of America Press, 2001, p.191.

<sup>39</sup> Kavanaugh, p. 55.

action. This Trinitarian expression of the nuptial mystery (man, woman and the child-gift) is the colloquial expression of the Eucharist *agape* meal. Although the trajectory of John Paul II's *Wednesday Catechesis* (asymmetrical symmetry) must lead ultimately to or ultimately begin with the liturgy, its debut has been within human sexuality. Why? It was the native sequence of God's love-illustration.

The market must center on Man. The pursuit of virtue for Man is mandatory. "The Congregationalist minister, Dr. Edmund Opitz puts it this way: 'the market will exhibit every shortcoming men exhibit in their thinking, [for] it is nothing else but that.'"<sup>40</sup> We must understand the family in light of nuptiality, comprehend its expression of the liturgy and apply it to the market. It cannot terminate with family. "If we remain satisfied with the unity of our own community (family), we have not fully grasped the nature of the Eucharist--becoming food for others."<sup>41</sup> 'Gift' is not merely acquiring wealth and distributing to those less fortunate. Like the *dicaonia* of Acts vi:1-6, we "are not to carry out a purely mechanical work of distribution. But a ministry of charity exercised in a communitarian way."<sup>42</sup>

Man is not capital, but the end of economics. "Everything contained in the concept of capital is only a collection of things. Man alone is a person. This truth has important and decisive consequences."<sup>43</sup> *Caritas* unites Man and in turn this "charity unites Man's mind to God."<sup>44</sup> This is liturgy expressed, God coming down to Man. This

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<sup>40</sup> Sirico, Robert A., "The Culture of Virtue, The Culture of the Market", Capitalism, Morality and Markets, The Institute of Economic Affairs, 2001, pp. 50-51.

<sup>41</sup> Cavanaugh, p.55.

<sup>42</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, §51.

<sup>43</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 1981, §12.

<sup>44</sup> Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, IIaIIae, q24, a4.

“epiclesis of divine charity always takes place in kenosis;”<sup>45</sup> a divine love emptied out and returned to God. Adversely, Carnal Man sees this “love as dependence and it is rejected [No to the *reditus*]. In its place come autonomy and autarchy.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, the virtues necessary to overcome fear and bring peace, “love, compassion and hope are called into question because they cannot be verified by the methods of instrumental commodity-knowledge,”<sup>47</sup> which is the modern criterion. More is better, this commodity-knowledge acquires excessively; taken to mean “things consumed out of conformity; greed; status concerns; one-upmanship or preoccupation with material things.”<sup>48</sup> These are not familial virtues, but consumer virtues hoped to propel the economy.

“It is therefore necessary to create life-styles in which the quest for truth, beauty and goodness and communion with others are the factors which determine consumer choices.”<sup>49</sup> They cannot be quantified, nor are they effortless. “Patience, kindness, honesty, justice, diligence, self-control, respect for others and the like, on which public and private happiness so much depends, requires long and hard training.”<sup>50</sup> More than altering the system is necessary, but it still should be agape-oriented. “Just laws and forms of redistribution governed by politics...need works redolent of the spirit of gift.”<sup>51</sup> This “reality of human solidarity bring us not only benefits, but obligations”<sup>52</sup> to overcome inequities. The “vast differences in the wages and salaries [of those ranging

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<sup>45</sup> Carbon, p.170.

<sup>46</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, p.33.

<sup>47</sup> Kavanaugh, p.41.

<sup>48</sup> Tracy, p.95.

<sup>49</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 1991, §36.4.

<sup>50</sup> Simpson, p.193.

<sup>51</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, §37.

<sup>52</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, §17.2.

from maids to lawyers] bear the brunt of responsibility for distributive injustice and from this a lack of solidarity.”<sup>53</sup> Man senses being used as a means. But the liturgical/familial model thwarts that perception. “It is in the human family that the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us in all the dimension of human life.”<sup>54</sup> This familial paradigm can demonstrate how cooperation is apparently superior to competition, solidarity to individualism, sufficiency to exuberance and the connection between love and truth posited as axiomatic to a recovery of virtue and the economy which rightly ordered, serves Man. “It is only when the household again becomes a viable actor in social and economic life that a Catholic cultural renewal will even become possible--it is where economics begins.”<sup>55</sup> Recovery cannot be virtueless and a liturgical anthropology is the only adequate account to transfigure the economy.

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<sup>53</sup> Bayer, p.25.

<sup>54</sup> Corbon, cf. p.165.

<sup>55</sup> Lanz, p.155.