

LABOREM CONTEMPLATIVUS: WORK AS CONTEMPLATION AMIDST ECONOMIC PROGRESSION¹

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In the field of economics, work is typically considered a form of barter for wages. This perspective reduces work to a mere activity serving profit, productivity, and, ultimately, the economy. Such a reduction also diminishes the person performing the work, treating them merely as a "cog in a machine." To fully appreciate its true meaning, work must be seen as labor serving temporal goods and as a pathway to contemplation. This paper argues that personalist economics is necessary to achieve contemplative labor, affirming the totality of the person—as composed of both body and soul—involved in work and economic activity. Consequently, both the person and their work are irreducible to mere profit, productivity, and economic activity. In this light, the paper seeks to answer the question: Is it possible to retrieve the meaning of the person in today's economy through labor?

Keywords: contemplation, economy, person, work

INTRODUCTION

The economist Ludwig von Mises (1963, 878) notes that “economics must not be relegated to classrooms and statistical offices and must not be left to the esoteric circles. It is the philosophy of human life and action and concerns everybody and everything. It is the pith of civilization and of man’s human existence.” The economy in every society is efficiently conditioned by the works of human hands. It is, therefore, my task to discuss two crucial elements in the economy: dignity on the one hand and *labor* on the other hand.

One of the many underlying conditions in the economy today is *marketability*. This marketability is the core principle that drives the market towards profitability. At the very bottom of this principle lies what remains superficial: *measurability*. This is the root cause of exploitation, which happens when the economy loses sight of the dignity of the person. Jeremy Muller, in his book *Tyranny of Metrics* (2018, 4), has expressed this through what he calls *metric fixation*, which is “the seemingly irresistible pressure to measure performance, to publicize it, and to reward it, often in the face of evidence that this just doesn’t work very well.” Just look around us and see

the reason why we celebrate in almost all of the universities in the Philippines: *statistics*. For instance, many universities brag on social media that they have landed on a specific *university ranking*. University stakeholders will tell everyone how many of their *alumni* successfully passed the licensure examinations. But how many universities really identify *good students* based on their character and not on their *performance* on the basis of their grades? I am not saying that grades are not important, but instead, they are *not* the only thing that is important. Muller (2018, 4) emphasizes that “the problem is not measurement, but excessive measurement and inappropriate measurement—not metrics, but metric fixation.” In schools themselves, we are already giving so much importance to what is merely measurable, as if it is at par with what is truly good. Then, we are still surprised that there are *topnotchers* in the licensure examinations who became politicians only to *plunder* the masses. This affects the economy because if universities keep on producing intelligent students who are not formed with proper conscience, those students will have an influence on society and economic activity, which ultimately leads to exploitation in every corner of society, particularly in workplaces, through unjust wages and inhumane corporatization.

Should we just then leave these concerns to the economist? Ludwig von Mises (1963, 878-879) reminds us that “reasonable men are called upon to familiarize themselves with the teachings of economics. Whether we like it or not, it is a fact that economics cannot remain an esoteric branch of knowledge accessible only to small groups of scholars and specialists. Economics deals with society’s fundamental problems; it concerns everyone and belongs to all.” In other words, economics is fundamentally *personal*, where each person is involved, whether actively or passively. This leads me to answer the question: Is it possible to retrieve the meaning of the person in today’s economy through a personalist interpretation of labor? While this is the main problem of this work, additionally, I try to answer the three questions that complete the picture of achieving a *personalist economics*: What is the importance of mass movements and participation in the process of resolving economic conflicts? What is the role of media in economic development in third-world countries? How can we use personalism to improve the economy?

GOING BACK TO THE GREEKS

One of the ways to retrieve the meaning of the person in *economics* is to go back to the *Greeks*. The world, according to the Greeks, is a *kosmos*. It is a “jewel” which is the culmination of divine goodness and creation. Therefore, everything that is in there is *good* since they are divinely created. Economics is part of *society*, which arises due to human activity, but this does not mean that economics is *evil* since it is caused by persons. Rather, economics has something to do with a *just society* that should lead to the realization of *divine goodness*. For Plato, *money* is one of the many ways to engage in the economy that will put a person in a paradoxical situation to the point that the person will necessarily embrace contemplation. This is because Plato views money not as *wealth* but as an *appearance* of wealth. It is a *means*, an *instrument*, but not the *end* in itself. Hence, money is a *means to being wealthy*, which is limited by *actuality*. (See Schindler 2009, 402) In short, money is subordinate to *reality* and to the entire *material*

order. This leads to the realization that *money* is not the source and end of higher things that are not “*purchasable*.” This is the same reason why, for Socrates, to be a *sophist* is to live a futile life that is meaningless since being a *sophist* means being well-educated but money-motivated. In other words, the *sophists* are *exceedingly* wealthy because they work excessively for money, which is limited to what is merely measurable.

In the *Timaeus* (87c6-d1.), Plato justifies this point by saying that “of proportions, the less important ones we perceive and calculate, but the most authoritative and important escape our reckoning.” It is easier to pursue things that are *less beautiful*, such as making your life governed by money alone. As Socrates contends in *Republic* (435c-d): “Beautiful things are difficult.”

WORK AS *QUARERE DEUM* IN MEDIEVAL CONTEXT

In Medieval times, *work* or *labor* was taken as a form of *taking care* of God’s creation. When a person works, he or she *works* in view of obedience to the Creator, who commands the human person to be the steward of His creation. Schindler (2017, 6) correctly observes that

When God created Adam, he placed him specifically *in the garden* in order to tend it and to keep it. Like all created living things, man receives the commandment, which at the same time a blessing or conferral of creative power, to ‘be fruitful and multiply,’ a commandment he lives out in the one-flesh union of man and woman. But beyond this general prescription, man is given another injunction to fruitfulness, which is specific to him, namely, the command to have dominion over the things of the earth.

However, this dominion is not equivalent to domination or exploitation, rather, it is a form of reception to what was divinely commanded and entrusted. As John Paul II (1981, n.4) notes in *Laborem Exercens*: “As man, through his work, becomes more and more the master of the earth, and as he confirms his dominion over the visible world, again through his work, he nevertheless remains in every case and at every phase of this process within the Creator’s original ordering.”

This is where the Benedictines took the inspiration of seeing work as a search for God—*Quarere Deum*. The motivation to work is not because of *money*—since it is only the *secondary effect* and artificial goodness—but because of Glorifying God by means of obeying his entrustment of the world to the human person, the one who possesses his *image and likeness*. Does it mean gaining money is *evil*? Again, it is not, as long as it was gained in accordance with what is *truly good* and *just*. In other words, if one gains it in an honest way, without taking advantage of others.

Not all medieval thinkers agree that this should be taken this way, whether willingly or unwillingly; William of Ockham goes a different way and negates this specific point through his *Lex Prasimoniae*: “Entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity” (*Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitate*), which have led to the denial of God’s involvement in the work of human hands. Labor and its effects became

self-serving rather than self-giving, and it became the source and inspiration of many modern thinkers.

SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY AND MODERN UTILITARIANISM

In the modern period, Machiavelli's (2008, 285) *The Prince* became famous for its strong advice of domination over the human person, particularly with Machiavelli's claim that "*When there is no court to appeal to, people judge all men's actions, and particularly those of a prince, by the final outcome.*" This statement is better known as "the end justifies the means." This destroys all moral foundations, including the ethics of work and just principles of economy. *The Prince* became the moral standard of both politics and economics. Hence, during Machiavelli's time, forced labor and slave trading were justifiable as long as they were pleasing to one's activity.

This has been succeeded by *utilitarianism*, particularly the kind of utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill, which, in principle, is equally motivated by the same Machiavellian principle, hence stating that the only reasonable option is no other than which has chosen the *greatest number for greatest maximization of happiness*. John Stuart Mill (2015, 121) is very specific on this: "The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure." This is a modern hedonism that invites one to *maximize happiness* and *minimize pain*, regardless of its effects. This is the underlying principle—whether knowingly or unknowingly—that greedy capitalists are guilty of.

Added to this is the domination over nature heralded by the scientific revolution, where Francis Bacon (2012, 11), in his work *Sacred Meditations*, asserted that "*...knowledge is itself power.*" Hence, economic knowledge means economic power. This power is a means of *domination* over the self, people, and nature. What was previously held as *eternal* and *unchanging* can finally bend into one's own will. This mode of thinking would pave the way for the Industrial Revolution, which exploited human work into profit-making domination. It became a source of industrial competition where the rich were competing for the monopoly of business power and control over the economy. This led Marx to revolt against *Capitalism*.

MARXISM AND ITS SELF-DEFEATING MATERIALISM

Marx saw that there is great division in the society. On one end, he branded the bourgeoisie as capitalists and elitists who owned industrial power and machinery. Workers were seen as a means to an end instead of being treated as an end in themselves by virtue of their dignity as human persons. On the other end, Marx called the other class the proletariat, the working class struggling in the factories as they work tirelessly without proper and just compensation, leading to alienation. As a resolution, Marx fought for the abolition of private property and a desire for a classless society where everyone is equal, including property and ownership. Since Marxist economics

tends towards a *materialist solution*, Karl Marx wanted to obliterate any form or traces of *spirituality*. Hence, he indoctrinated a Marxist eschatology to replace the heavenly promise of the crucified Christ. Marx (1970, 131) conceded that “The wretchedness of religion is at once an expression of and a protest against real wretchedness. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is a demand for their true happiness.”

Marx made a valid point when he fought for the rights of the workers. However, his anthropological resolution has led to more horrors than solutions because man has been reduced to material desires alone, and he has become unsatisfied and greedy. For no material thing can ever satisfy a being who is at once material and spiritual. John Paul II (1981, n.11) comments on this, remarking that “the Marxist programme, based on the philosophy of Marx and Engels, sees in the class struggle the only way to eliminate class injustices in society and to eliminate the classes themselves. Putting this programme into practice presupposes the collectivization of the means of production so that, through the transfer of these means from private hands to the collectivity, human labour will be preserved from exploitation.”

What comes after Marx is Friedrich Nietzsche, the architect of *God's death* and ultimate domination against the weak. In his book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche (2006, 5) narrated that “*God is dead!*” Nietzsche wanted to replace God by himself. This is the reason for his claims when he continues that, “*If there were gods, how could I stand not to be a god! Therefore, there are no gods*” (2006, 65). But what does this have to do with economics?

If God is dead and can be replaced, then the capitalists can become gods of their own who can control the economy without any care for the weak and the poor in society. Nietzsche's God is *Dionysus*, whom William Barret illustrated in his book *Irrational Man* in the following way:

Dionysus was the god of the vine, the god of drunken ecstasy and frenzy, who . . . united miraculously in himself the height of culture with the depth of instinct, bringing together the warring opposites that divided Nietzsche himself. . . Dionysus reborn, Nietzsche thought, might become a savior-god for the whole race, which seemed everywhere to show symptoms of fatigue and decline . . . But Dionysus is a dangerous as well as an ambiguous god. Those in antiquity who meddled with him ended up being torn to pieces . . . So Dionysus himself, according to the myth, had been torn to pieces by the Titans, those formless powers of the subterranean world who were always at war with the enlightened gods of Olympus. The fate of his god overtook Nietzsche: he, too, was torn apart by the dark forces of the underworld, succumbing, at the age of 45, to psychosis. It may be a metaphor, but it is certainly not an exaggeration, to say that he perished as a ritual victim slaughtered for the sake of his god . . . Nevertheless, the victim did not perish in vain; his sacrifice can be an immense lesson to the rest of the tribe if it is willing to learn from him (Barret 1962,178-179).

In other words, Nietzsche has created the most individualist and hedonist persons. In an economy that is filled with individualism, nothing will be left but *corruption, domination, and injustice*. Although Nietzsche's narrative of Dionysus leans on aesthetics rather than economics, it proves that his notion affected moral stance, which, by extension, also influenced economic policies and theories. Particularly when one becomes individualistic with his reasons for *economic activities* (see de Lubac 1995, 17-95).

For the same reason, it is not surprising when Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* advanced his theory about the *invisible hand* in the economy found in his book *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Smith, in this book, defends the rich and the capitalists against the poor and the weak. Without hesitation, he claims that,

The rich only select from the heap what is most precious and agreeable. They consume little more than the poor, and in spite of their natural selfishness and rapacity, though they mean only their own conveniency, though the sole end which they propose from the labours of all the thousands whom they employ, be the gratification of their own vain and insatiable desires, they divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements. They are led by an *invisible hand* to make nearly the same distribution of the necessaries of life, which would have been made had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants, and thus, without intending it, without knowing it, advance the interest of the society, and afford means to the multiplication of the species (Smith 2004, 215-216).

The one who profits invisibly has no accountability as long as he or she pays the taxes, which is the reason for a market-driven economy. He or she is fully absolved of whatever responsibility from his or her actions as long as they are under the mantle of *business-as-usual* excuses.

Much more individualist is Thomas Malthus, whose economic theory insinuates and promotes birth control and depopulation. For him, all the resources in the world are limited. Therefore, people should be lessened. He says, "...while every man felt secure that all his children would be well provided for by general benevolence, the powers of the earth would be absolutely inadequate to produce food for the population..." (Malthus 1983, 161-162).

Thus, the introduction of the sexual revolution in the form of *promiscuity without responsibility*. Birth control in forms of abortion and contraception is being glorified as a right by pro-choice movements, even if it means taking away the right to live of a potential human person. Finally, *economics* became more important than the human person. Is it the end of it all? This is best captured by Gabriel Marcel's (1998, 31-160) *Le Monde Cassé* (The Broken World), where superficiality supersedes supernatural, leading to the brokenness and confusion of the value of the person and existence. For this, Marcel points out that there is a justifiable reason and emergence for personalism in order to repair this *le monde cassé*. Marcel (1962, 170) says, "People

would not bother to appeal to the idea of ‘the person’ so constantly if human personality were not on the way towards its disappearance.”

JOHN PAUL II’S *LABOREM EXERCENS* AND THE DIGNITY OF THE PERSON

In order to retrieve the person, it is necessary to return to the meaning of his or her dignity and worth in relation to the real sense of *labor*. As a matter of fact, “man’s dominion over the earth is achieved in and by means of work” (John Paul II 1981, n.5). This dominion over the earth is not the same as *exploiting* the goods of the earth. In fact, to dominate the earth means to responsibly govern it.

The human person, traditionally speaking, is composed of both body and soul. Therefore, satisfaction should not be centered only on what is merely material but must always consider what is spiritual. This spiritual reality of the human person is where one can find the irreducible dignity of the person. In fact, Wojtyła (2013, 4) defends the person, saying, “The word ‘person’ has been coined in order to stress that man cannot be reduced wholly to what is contained in the concept of a ‘specimen of the species,’ but has in himself something more, some particular fullness and perfection of being. To emphasize this fullness and perfection, the word ‘person’ must necessarily be used.” For this, Wojtyła distinguished the *cosmological*² *understanding* and the *personalist understanding* of the person. In the former, the person is seen from an *objective* point of view. The same as how Aristotle categorizes the person as a *rational animal*. This implies that the person is observed externally, excluding the interior reality. Wojtyła explains,

Traditional Aristotelian anthropology was based on the definition ἄνθρωπος ζῷον νοητικόν, *homo est animal rationale*. This definition does not only correspond to the Aristotelian demands of denoting the species (man) through the most proximate genus (a living being) and the factor differentiating the given species in this genus (endowed with reason). This definition is also built in a way that excludes—at least when we take it directly and immediately—the possibility of manifesting what is ‘*l’irréductible dans l’homme*.’ It contains—at least in the foreground—a conviction of the reducibility of man to the world (Wojtyła 2021, 537-538).

This is not a negative concept since it allows us to understand the person. Aguas (2014, 37) points out, “there is indeed a necessity to break from the process of reduction” for the reason that “the experience of man cannot be exhausted by cosmological reduction.” The latter, therefore, completes this because it is concerned about the interiority of the person which is not immediately visible to the senses. For instance, the irreducible reality that the person is unique and unrepeatable. As Wojtyła (2021, 542) remarks, “We must consider *l’irréductible*, what in every man is unique and unrepeatable, through which he is not only ‘in particular’ this man—an individual of a species—but through which he is a person: a subject.”

Given these reasons, it is important that the person is treated as an *end* and never should be treated as a *means to an end*. To see the person as an “end” in himself is the personalist response to the *utilitarian* treatment of the person, which is present in both capitalism and communism insofar as these two are purely materialistic responses.

Wojtyła distinguished the two meanings of the verb “to use” to clarify his position regarding this moral danger. The *first meaning* of the verb “to use” is when the person uses a *thing* for the sake of an end. This *means* it is necessarily subordinate to the achievement of that *end*. At the same time, this is not morally wrong insofar as, naturally, the person can responsibly use the *things* around him for the sake of flourishing. Wojtyła (2013, 8) explains this by saying that,

Man, in his diverse activity, makes use of the whole created world. He takes advantage of its resources for these ends, which he posits himself, because he alone understands them. This attitude of man toward inanimate nature (*przyroda*), whose riches mean so much to economic life, or toward animate nature (*przyroda*), whose energy and values man assimilates, in principle, does not raise doubts. The only thing that is demanded from the rational human being is that he does not destroy and squander these natural resources, and that he uses them with the moderation that will not impede the personal development of man himself and will guarantee for human societies a just and harmonious coexistence.

This form of *using* an object—of *something*—must never be applied to *someone* or *somebody* who is a *person*. The *second meaning* of the verb “to use” has something to do with the tension between *pleasure* and *pain* wherein the person is being reduced to a source of one's *pleasure*. This is equally dangerous, according to Wojtyła (2013, 15-17).

Thus, *labor and economy* should have the *person* as its center, not profit. This is not to say that profit should be removed from the equation because it satisfies the real material needs of the body. However, it must not be the sole reason for labor. A personalist economics—as opposed to impersonal economics³—is one that should always put the person's dignity over profit and the economy itself. This is simply because the economy is created for human flourishing, not for human slavery, because in the first place, “work is ‘for man’ and not man ‘for work’” (John Paul II 1981, n.5).

This is the reason why work should always be *personal work*, because the self-giving of the person in the work is seen as a form of flourishing, and this also means that the person is irreducible to work alone, even in the midst of technologization of work. The person stays as the proper subject of work. Who must never be treated as a cog in a machine, given that as a person, “he works, he performs various actions belonging to the work process; independently of their objective content, these actions must all serve to realize his humanity, to fulfill the calling to be a person that is his by reason of his very humanity” (John Paul II 1981, n.6).

A machine, in the form of technology, is only a material instrument, but it can, and should never replace a person. As John Paul II warns, “In some instances, technology can cease to be man's ally and become almost his enemy, as when the mechanization of work ‘supplants’ him, taking away all personal satisfaction and the

incentive to creativity and responsibility, when it deprives many workers of their previous employment, or when, through exalting the machine, it reduces man to the status of its slave” (John Paul II 1981, n.5).

The unique capacity for transcendence that enables the person to realize that “The one who acts is a person; he verifies himself as ‘somebody,’ while all the more precisely and more thoroughly, he manifests in action, in act, why he is entitled to be called ‘somebody,’” (Wojtyla 2021, 283) and experience conscience sets human persons apart from the rest of all beings in the material world. Actions of the person, which are intertwined with *labor*, have the potential to impact society and others. Therefore, it is imperative to carefully and freely select a work that aligns with one’s conscience, ensuring that our actions do not bring harm. As Wojtyla (2021, 258) puts it, “Freedom contains dependence on truth, and this is manifested with full vividness in conscience. For the function of conscience consists in designating the true good in the act.” Through this, the person has the capacity to choose *dignified labor* which distinguishes individuals from machines, which operate solely based on their established design.

TOWARDS A PERSONALIST ECONOMICS

In a contemporary society where secularization and materialism are the leading ideologies, it is important to return to the ancient and medieval meaning of work as a form of contemplation. This is true both for the workers and the owners of business industries, given that they drive the economy. Modernity, for its part, positively contributed to the importance of liberty. However, there are still two extremes that it has fathered. First is individualism, which glorifies the individual over other people as it “advances the good of the individual as the principal and fundamental good to which every community and society must be subordinated.” (Wojtyla 2021, 390)

The most important thing for an individualist is his or her success and fulfillment. In this context, his or her economic situation is more valuable than others. Individualism comes in the forms of *liberalism*, *utilitarianism*, and *capitalism*. Liberalism teaches apathy because what one cares about in liberalism is his or her own freedom. As long as his or her actions do not affect others, be it positive or negative, he or she does not care. In utilitarianism, the person is seen as readily disposable and reducible. In the context of economics, the person is *useful* only insofar as he or she can be profitable. If that person is not profitable and unproductive, then that person is *useless*. Then capitalism gives profit importance over the dignity and worth of the human person. Finally, collectivism “fully subordinates the individual and his good to the community and society. As is evident, each of these systems sees the principal good and the basis for norming in something different.” (Wojtyla 2021, 390) In short, it gives emphasis on group over individual good and threatens the freedom of the person since it teaches that the individual must submit to what everyone wants

In collectivist economics, such as Marxism, Communism, and Totalitarian forms of government, there is no real achievement for justice because individual effort and individual rights are meaningless. Even worse is that in collectivism, individual dignity is nonsensical at all. So, to conclude, I now answer the question: is it possible

to retrieve the meaning of the person in today's economy through a personalist interpretation of labor?

It is possible if we take into consideration the spiritual reality of the human person. Only through this can the person not be subverted by economics and its extremes, such as *economic materialism*. Through this, human labor is seen as a form of creative expression and *personal* activity instead of forced labor to rise against economic poverty and oppression. In any case, this does not mean that the person at work should not receive a proper wage. Since it is against his dignity as a worker. On the basis of the principle of justice, it is also important to keep in mind that “the person who works desires not only due remuneration for his work; he also wishes that, within the production process, provision be made for him to be able to know that in his work, even on something that is owned in common, he is working ‘for himself’” (John Paul II 1981, n.15). One does not work for money alone, but for flourishing through contemplation—*Labori est contemplativo*: “a good thing for man—a good thing for his humanity—because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfillment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes ‘more a human being’” (John Paul II 1981, n.9). By being a “*more human being*,” one allows the *imago Dei* to crystallize even in workplaces. ~~Unless one forgets~~ Such a personalist economics is governed by love in order for it to be free from being tainted with any utilitarian principle. For if love is present in the economy, *labor* will be seen as a form of giving oneself for the *true good*. If *using* is excluded from the equation of profit, one will always be ready to embrace the personalist economics that challenges forms of economic principles that are enticed with cosmological objectives alone: the person must increase, even if the profit decreases. This is the greatest expression of *disinterested love* in economics. As Wojtyła (2013, 18) reminds us,

A conviction that man is a person leads to accepting the postulate that using should be subordinated to loving. ‘To use,’ not only in the first meaning, the broader and objective one, but also in the second meaning, the rather narrower and subjective one—for by its nature, the experience (*przeżywanie*) of pleasure is something subjective— may be interiorly ordered and elevated to the level of the persons only by love.

CONCLUSION

To answer the sub-questions posed earlier, I assert the following: *Mass movements are important* in improving the economy because, following the principle of personalism, it can easily be pointed out that one of the ways to resolve economic conflicts is through solidarity, which includes dialogue characterized by constructive criticisms and disagreements. Wojtyła (2021, 402) highlights the importance of this: “People who oppose do not want to withdraw from the community. Quite the contrary: they seek their own place in this community—thus, they seek participation and an understanding of the common good by which they can better, more fully, and more effectively participate in the community.” This is why *opposition* does not negate solidarity as long as it intends to achieve participation. Following this, *mass*

movements are meaningful on the condition that they do not intend to promote violence because a violent protest will also be self-contradicting since the victim of violence is another human person. In the end, all of us are participants in the economy whether we like it or not. Hence, our involvement in any resolution of any conflict is always important.

Furthermore, in the economic development of developing countries, media has an indispensable role because of the expectation of their service to truth. If a corporation is taking advantage of the people, the media tries to expose it. If a corporation is abusing its laborers, the media could serve as a source of information on the right course of action against the injustices being suffered by the laborers. The media must always be reminded that “man’s duty is to work, not only to produce and possess but also to achieve fulfillment. The human person must be the ultimate aim of any entrepreneurial activity” (Macaranas 2020, 492).

On a more positive note, media can serve economic growth by promoting local products that are being made and produced in that developing country. This could help them receive grants, assistance, and aid from foreign investors willing to give their money to lift up products with great potential. This is also tied to the use of technology as a form of *labor*. Benedict XVI (2009, n.69) reminds us of the importance of technology in work. It is not something that is entirely negative but it must be used responsibly. He says,

Technology enables us to exercise dominion over matter, to reduce risks, to save labour, to improve our conditions of life. It touches the heart of the vocation of human labour: in technology, seen as the product of his genius, man recognizes himself and forges his own humanity. Technology is the objective side of human action whose origin and *raison d’être* is found in the subjective element: the worker himself. For this reason, technology is never merely technology. It reveals man and his aspirations towards development, it expresses the inner tension that impels him gradually to overcome material limitations. *Technology, in this sense, is a response to God’s command to till and to keep the land* (cf. Gen 2:15) that he has entrusted to humanity, and it must serve to reinforce the covenant between human beings and the environment, a covenant that should mirror God’s creative love.

Moreover, *media*—insofar as they use technology as part of their *labor*—should open itself to personalist principles, particularly *transcendence*. There is a danger in using media through technological means for self-serving reasons or unwillingly presenting pieces of information in a shallow way in favor of one self-defeating narrative; instead of being in service of truth that is always objective, though expressed in different ways and forms by virtue of subjectivity. It is treacherous because it creates the illusion that breaks reality and betrays the unfolding of grace through time.

The elimination of transcendence leads to the re-conception of time in the image of space. But technology conquers space—think of modern transportation, the cell phone, the internet—and so eliminates the time

and our capacity to indwell it. The irony, then, is that the elimination of the transcendent results in an immediate presentism, with little retention of the past, attention to the present, or intention for the future, in which it is scarcely possible to pray, or to think, or to love (Hanby 2016, 363).

Certainly, *media* can serve as a mediating point between technology and the economy as long as it is in service of truth that can never be dissociated with *transcendence*, whose ultimate reason is the flourishing of the human person and the protection of his worth and dignity.

Finally, *personalism can improve the economy* by seeing it not as entirely dependent on a philosophical principle but rather on a principle of economy that is solidly grounded on a philosophy of persons. Besides, persons are the reasons for and the subject of *economic activity*. Personalism argues and defends the dignity and worth of the human person above anything else. An economic principle grounded on the dignity and worth of the person treats the economy as a means for the sake of human flourishing and not the other way around. Moreover, personalism is against *individualism* because it is the root of *capitalism* that subordinates the dignity and worth of the person to profit. This consumerist stance "...focused so much on the quantitative development of man's condition but paid little attention to the human person himself" (Aguas 2009, 47).

Furthermore, personalism is also against *collectivism* because it treats the person only as *part of the collective* at the cost of the person's freedom and individuality. These two extremes are also the problem of the economy: capitalism as caused by liberalism and Marxism as created by *collectivism*. These two disrupt the economy because their priorities are both *material* and, therefore, temporal resolutions. Whereas a personalist economy stands in the middle insofar as the person is seen not as someone who is in need only of material gratification but, above all, spiritual satisfaction, which is only achieved through seeing work not merely as an economic activity but also as a *contemplative* personal activity.

NOTES

1. This paper is the full version of my short lecture at the event: "*GAHOM: Ekonomiya Para sa Masa, Masa Para sa Ekonomiya*" organized by *Humanities and Social Sciences Strand* of the University of Santo Tomas Senior High School, held last April 11, 2024.

2. In this sense, *cosmological* is translated as "world" from the Greek *Kosmos*.

3. I take *impersonal economics* to mean the same as "economic materialism" which places the person as a *means* to an *industrial end*. John Paul II defines this as "directly or indirectly includes a conviction of the primacy and superiority of the material, and directly or indirectly places the spiritual and the personal (man's activity, moral values, and such matters) in a position of subordination to material reality. This is still not theoretical materialism in the full sense of the term, but it is certainly practical materialism, a materialism judged capable of satisfying man's needs, not so much on the grounds of premises derived from materialist theory, as on the grounds of

a particular way of evaluating things, and so on the grounds of a certain hierarchy of goods based on the greater immediate attractiveness of what is material” (John Paul II 1981, n.13).

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