

**PERSONALIST ECONOMICS IS HUMAN ECONOMICS
BECAUSE IT PUTS THE HUMAN PERSON AT THE
CENTER OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

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In the field of scientific research, a positivistic mentality took hold which not only abandoned the Christian vision of the world, but more especially rejected every appeal to a metaphysical or moral vision. It follows that certain scientists, lacking any ethical point of reference, are in danger of putting at the centre of their concerns something other than the human person and the entirety of the person's life. Further still, some of these, sensing the opportunities of technological progress, seem to succumb not only to a market-based logic, but also to the temptation of a quasi-divine power over nature and even over the human being [John Paul II 1998, § 46].

In his presidential address to the Association for Social Economics, William Waters identified three major domains of economics: philosophical base or what he called the "hard core" of economics, description of the significant characteristics of the economy, and policy formulation. The third part, he said, is determined by the first two.

The hard core of conventional economics consists of a set of four main premises regarding the economy. Simply put, they are *the law of nature*, *the individual*, *certainty*, and *contracts*.

By *the law of nature* he meant that the economy is self-regulating. Any intervention on the part of the government is regarded as an imperfect state of affairs.

In conventional economics, *the individual* is the basic unit of the economy, governed by the laws of nature, acting in a calculated, self-interested manner to maximize personal utility. The impersonal forces of the competitive market harmonize the self-interested behavior of all individuals so as to prevent chaos in economic affairs.

Certainty means that through the powers of human reason, economists are able to come to an understanding of the workings of the economic order and to develop determinate models which allow them to acclaim their work as authentic science.

Finally, Waters stated that *contracts* are a part of the hard core of conventional economics in the sense that economics assumes that human behavior most significantly is contractual in nature as with the wage contract between workers and employers [Waters, pp. 113-117].

Milton Friedman is most articulate in affirming these premises.

As it developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the intellectual movement that went under the name of liberalism emphasized freedom as the ultimate goal and the individual as the ultimate entity in the society. It supported laissez faire at home as a means of reducing the role of the state in economic affairs and thereby enlarging the role

of the individual; it supported free trade abroad as a means of linking the nations of the world together peacefully and democratically [Friedman, p. 5].

In summary, the organization of economic activity through voluntary exchange presumes we have provided, through government, for the maintenance of law and order to prevent coercion of one individual by another, the enforcement of contracts voluntarily entered into, the definition of the meaning of property rights, the interpretation and enforcement of such rights, and the provision of a monetary framework [Friedman, p. 27].¹

Friedrich Hayek, whom Friedman [p. 11] cites approvingly, defines the core of individualism in economic affairs.

It is this recognition of the individual as the ultimate judge of his ends, the belief that as far as possible his own views ought to govern his actions, that forms the essence of the individualist position [Hayek, p. 59].

Today, individualism is foundational to the way in which mainstream economists think about economic affairs in a market system.

Juxtapositioned to these four premises of conventional economics, Waters posited four from a radically different kind of economics known as “solidarism.” The four premises are *institutions*, *the person*, *uncertainty*, and *status*.

In solidarism, value-laden *institutions* and social groups replace *the law of nature* in societal decision-making. Government is seen in a much more positive light, but its role is limited by the principle of subsidiarity.

The person is the basic unit of the economic order who at times corresponds to the *homo economicus* of conventional economics and at other times behaves in ways that are not so self-interested and rational. The common good is not served by each individual pursuing his/her own self-interest in a strictly competitive manner. Rather, cooperation is necessary to assure that individuals do not trample on the common good in pursuing their own ends.

By *uncertainty* Waters means that solidarist economists do not accept the principle of certainty. They do not see economics as being determinate, as being scientific. Rather, because free

¹ See Friedman [pp. 7-21] on economic freedom, political freedom, and the connections between the two.

decision-making is not compatible with the rationalistic assumption of certainty, economics is a softer, moral discipline.

Finally, *status* means that every person is sacred and thereby has status in society assuring him/her of certain inalienable rights which are more fundamental than contracts. This view contrasts with the conventional view of behavior by contractual negotiations leading to Paretian optimality [Waters, pp. 117-120].

Solidarist economics draws its name from the social value of economic community which it rests upon and promotes. However, it is an outdated expression and we much prefer to call our efforts to extend and expand this way of thinking about economics affairs *personalist economics* which draws much inspiration from John Paul II's explication of personalism in various encyclicals and other publications for more than the past 20 years and the writings of Emmanuel Mounier.

In sharp contrast to the overwhelming majority of our contemporaries in economics whose views on economic affairs are grounded in individualism, we think about economic affairs in a market system in terms of personalism. In what follows, we elaborate on all four premises (more or less) from a personalist perspective, cutting across those premises rather than addressing them one by one. Section I by Danner is more nearly philosophical; Section II by O'Boyle is somewhat more pragmatic.

I. PHILOSOPHICAL CONCERNS

The Human Person as an Embodied Spirit.

A personalist view accepts economics as an empirical and mathematical science concerning activity which is expressed in quantity ratios -- so much gained for so much given -- which then can be generalized, correlated, trended, and the like and can be appraised on that basis. This corresponds to what Waters called the second domain of economics -- description of the significant characteristics of the economy. Additionally, personalism affirms that all such acts are placed by human persons and thus are moral acts. It follows that there is more to economics than just empiricism and mathematics. There is as well a crucial moral dimension to economic affairs which economics must take into account.

The importance of this insight is to ground one's economic thinking on the most empirical fact that *I am here and now* which to deny is to affirm. From this, persons can deduce that they are both self-aware and self-knowing as existing in time and space.

[To] exist subjectively [and to] exist bodily are one and the same experience. I cannot think without being and I cannot be without my body, which is my exposition to myself, to the world, to everyone else [Mounier, p. 11).

In short a person is an *embodied spirit*, a spirit which can act externally only through its body, not like a rider on a horse nor a ghost in a machine, but essentially and necessarily bonded to the body. The “I,” therefore, retains its identity even though the body renews itself many times in a lifetime. These facts yield two necessary conclusions.

First, a human person can come into being only through the act of conception, the fertilization of a female ovum by a male sperm. The embodied person thereby is both uniquely individual and related to every other human person, past, present, and to come. Second, the human person is totally dependent on material things for survival, needing nurture, safeguards, tools, vehicles, carriers, and communication. Since little in nature is usable as such, an economic problem arises for persons individually and collectively: natural things must be discovered, their qualities analyzed and then processed for human use.

But as spirit the human person transcends the material. As singularly coming into being, a person even as child is unique to his/her self and retains this specificity throughout life: grandfather is the same as when a purling infant. He is not and will never be a creature of parents, society, state, or church.

As spirit too each and every person is self-aware of his/her own actions, enjoying hindsight, sight, and foresight, and thus insight into what can and should be done. To that extent, therefore, persons are free to act and are, thereby, responsible for their actions. Further, as by nature ordained to what is true, good, and beautiful and as related to and also aware of other human beings as persons, everyone can see whatever values inhere in the nature, character, thoughts, desires, and deeds of others. Such value insights may be of loved ones, friends, enemies, or just chance acquaintances. *All together these material and spiritual elements -- self-knowing, matter dependent, morally responsible, value-seeking, and other-related -- combine to form the stuff of the human drama.*

The Personalist Drama.

Obviously, dependence on matter is both necessary for as well as an impediment to achieving full personhood. For persons can survive, grow, and develop as human beings, related to others or place external acts only in a material way. But even the most spiritual acts, however private or public they may be, must occur in time and space and usually require other material means. All in all, therefore, material wealth is an essential element in the human drama. But too much or too little, destitution or super-abundance, can corrode the work of the human spirit.

Even so, the great barrier to spiritual development and human perfection arises from within the person. The moral drama is always a conflict between the forces of good and the forces of evil. But the good is not always and simply internal to the person and the evil external. *The conflict is between forces and tendencies within the person.*

This inner struggle involves four cardinal virtues doing battle with seven cardinal sins. Prudence (right thinking), justice (granting others their due), temperance (controlling the body's passions), and fortitude (resolute endurance) are opposed to the spirit's inclinations to pride, anger, lust, envy, tendencies to inflate one's ego and to denigrate one's neighbor, and the body's unruly appetites for food, drink, and sex, for ease and for wealth. All seven combine in almost infinite variations, each of which, as with even tiny holes in a dike, can let in the flood of moral disaster.

Thus bodily needs for food, drink, medicine, dress, shelter, sex, and the rest can become desires and economic wants in and for themselves to the point of impairing the spirit's wellbeing and actions. "Consumerism," as it is called, always poses the danger of weighing down the person with material things such that not only are the spirit's natural yearnings to know, to love, and to seek beauty blunted but also one's common sense is so warped that the newest product always seems more beautiful, the latest gadget more efficient, and the most expensive fashion more satisfying. Worse, the unchecked drive for more can feed the spirit's worst tendencies to self-emulation by unrestrained seeking for fame, power, and wealth, and by denigrating through envy, anger, and hate anyone who might impede the attainment of those goals.

Clearly, the human drama is a complex phenomenon, involving the goals of both the spirit and the body. Further, as with Willie Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, human persons tread the narrow ledge between self-preservation and self-destruction, with their personal drama engaging all who have a part in their lives or are included in their calling and vocation. Again, Mounier:

The person only exists thus toward others, it only knows itself in knowing others, only finds itself in being known by them . . . One might almost say that I have no existence save in so far as I exist for others [Mounier, p. 20].

The Personalist Vocation.

In other words, every human person is *called* by others. A career, no matter how humble or exalted, is not so much a path which a person chooses as what he/she is called to do by circumstances and by others. This is the real meaning of vocation. Whether one is drawn to a mainly moral, artistic, intellectual, or utilitarian vocation, no matter how self-centered the choosing may be, ultimately and basically one's vocation involves others. Contemplatives pray for petitioners, intellectuals share ideas, merchants sell useful products, legislators frame just laws.

History is replete with tragedies of self-centered genius. Ludwig I of Bavaria went crazy and broke trying to build more elaborate palaces than Versailles. Rockefeller and Carnegie were able to rehabilitate their family names only by means of philanthropy. No person, however much a curmudgeon, lives and works in total isolation.

Even our everyday language paints this picture in inescapable sociality: parents, siblings, kinfolk, schoolmates, colleagues, neighbors, friends, spouse, and children. Beyond this world of familiars are the wider circles of economic activity, political alliances, and the comprehensive social common good all of which John Paul II calls “together with others” and contrasts with the denial of participation embedded in individualism.

Individualism limits participation, since it isolates the person from others by conceiving him solely as an individual who concentrates on himself and his own good; this latter is also regarded in isolation from the good of others and of the community. The good of the individual is then treated as if it were opposed or in contradiction to other individuals and their good; at best, this good, in essence, may be considered as involving self-preservation and self-defense. From the point of view of individualism, to act “together with others,” just as to exist “together with others,” is a necessity that the individual has to submit to, a necessity that corresponds to none of his very own features or positive properties; neither does the acting and existing together with others serve or develop any of the individual’s positive and essential constituents. For the individual the “others” are a source of limitation, they may even appear to represent the opposite pole in a variety of conflicting interests. If a community is formed, its purpose is to protect the good of the individual from the “others” [John Paul II 1979, pp. 273-274].

In an economic vocation which provides the goods and services persons need and want, just as in music, art, sculpture, architecture, philosophy, historiography, drama, poetry, and similar pursuits, personal expression originates in a basic urge to affirm one’s personhood by communicating it to others, whether the goods and services provided are utilitarian, ethereal, or esthetic. Economic vocations are as essential for embodied spirits as procreation, as necessary as law and order, and as communal as society itself. *The economy is nothing other than society manifested in people’s utilitarian relations.*

The Personalist Economy.

The economic order needs organization. Even the simplest production requires seeing possible utilitarian functions in natural objects or forces like stone or fire, and calls for careers and vocations to create businesses and markets. From the beginning and for the simplest artifacts, all the elements of the economy were required: innovation, investment, production, marketing! The economy is not a modern invention but goes back to the Neolithic.

Economic organization, of course, implies not only combining finances, equipment and material resources and human effort into a working system, but also an order of subordination: finances to plant and equipment, and the material to labor. That is the basic meaning of the principle of the priority of labor. *The human contribution to the economic process is more important than things.* This would be no less so for a tribal hunting than for shipbuilding. It also means that organization suggests subordination of some functions to others, of employment to employer, job to boss, production to selling, and implies the priority of personal responsibility over anonymous organizations.

Beyond that, personalism honors labor in the broadest sense as a desirable human activity, not as a form of slavery but as a fulfilling vocation, as doing tasks worth doing for oneself and for others. Moreover, economy implies doing work well, not only with efficiency but with industry, not wasting resources and effort but with a certain zest in applying one's skills and knowhow. Personalism sees all forms and kinds of economic efforts as producing in cooperation with others something socially desirable. It follows that the work involved in performing the numerous tasks required in the economic order makes those jobs qualify as authentic vocations.

In sum, personalist economics expresses all the features of a truly human economics. It acknowledges the spirit's dependence on the body and the body's needs and wants for products fashioned from a bountiful universe necessary for human survival and functioning. Further, it accepts gain as a valid economic motive for innovating, financing, producing, and marketing economic goods and services. It affirms as well the essential social nature of economic self-interest. Consequently, personalist economics very clearly asserts that wealth has an obvious social function, that consumption is not for its own sake, but for the spirit's self-expression and interaction with other persons.

From the personalist perspective, therefore, the economy is a very complex system of interweaving and changing flows of moneys, raw and processed materials, along with human labor, in knowhow, and wants. Given this complex dynamism, personalism accepts also the need for gain-seeking, hiring and firing, borrowing and lending, and especially for risk-taking. But at the same time it insists that every economic act is a personal expression of the spirit and as essentially social can benefit or harm others. Therefore, every economic act is subject to moral judgment, as being just, honest, charitable, moderate and so forth or as failing in those qualities. But howsoever important a personalist view of the economic side of life is, it is far more enlightening when directed to persons' daily living and their leisure activities and pursuits.

Personalist Leisure.

Leisure means much more than doing nothing. Leisure is doing what a person wants to do and need not do in order to survive. It may be play, doing something for the *fun* of it, like volleyball on the beach or a game of chess. It may be purposeful, doing something for the *good* of it, like reading a book, collecting arrowheads or helping a neighbor. Usually leisure has some economic aspects -- costs, time and expertise -- but these are incidental to the activity itself. Leisure varies widely from person to person and activity to activity and reveals as much, if not more, about a person than his/her economic functions. How a person freely chooses to engage free time and efforts says more about his/her character and aspirations than do one's economic needs and wants.

The leisure people have, therefore, ranges across a spectrum from that of the "idle rich" to the destitute, from the boredom of having everything one wants to the despair of having hardly enough to survive. For some persons, leisure means eating, drinking, gambling, sex and so on which may satiate but never satisfy. For others with an economic passion, income, savings, and investment are never enough. Their leisure activities are misdirected and frustrating because they are based on the proposition that their spiritual needs can be met with material things. By contrast, the omnivorous reader, the faithful singer, the devoted father, and charity volunteer, who direct their leisure activities toward the true, good and beautiful, never have enough time. *In this sense a person's use or abuse of leisure is a true index of character and the state of one's spirit.*

II. PRAGMATIC CONCERNS

Homo Socio-Economicus.

Homo socio-economicus is to personalist economics what *homo economicus* is to mainstream economics: a way of thinking about human beings in the conduct of their economic affairs or as Marshall put it "in the ordinary business of life" [Marshall, p. 1]. The following discussion centers on three principal economic activities -- consumption, work, and leisure -- which form the core of daily living. In this regard, we find it convenient to refer to Danner's "embodied spirit" as "materialized spirit."²

As the term itself suggests, *homo socio-economicus* is not a breed apart from *homo economicus*. Deriving as it does from the philosophical premise of mainstream economics as to the centrality of the individual to economic affairs, *homo economicus* most fundamentally represents a way of thinking about humans in their ordinary activities as economic agents which views them strictly as individual beings. *Homo socio-economicus* affirms the self-evident individuality of all human beings but adds a second dimension to human nature which derives from a personalist philosophy,

² Danner himself uses "materialized spirit" in an essay which is to be published shortly [see Danner forthcoming].

that is the equally self-evident sociality of all human beings which, as we stated previously, John Paul II calls “together with others.”

Personalist economics insists that utilizing both dimensions helps us understand better how the economy is organized and activated and why there are two domains to economic theory: microeconomics and macroeconomics. Simply put, microeconomics looks at economic affairs from the perspective of human individuality. Macroeconomics approaches the same economic affairs from the point of view of human sociality. Thus to argue as some do that all economics is microeconomics is to deny the sociality of all human beings.

Consumption.

Notwithstanding the preoccupation of mainstream economics with human wants to the virtual exclusion of needs, personalist economics defines consumption as the means by which human material needs are met and human physical wants are satisfied. Both needs and wants -- the former being the things required to sustain human life, the latter being the things which are humanly desired -- derive from human materiality. Put differently, if humans were pure spirits consumption would be unnecessary.

According to the conventional way of thinking about consumption, *homo economicus* is seen as unique, autonomous, self-centered, solitary, and self-made, whose behavior is commodity-acquiring, utility-maximizing, and privacy-protecting. According to those who embrace the philosophy of individualism, the consumer is free properly so to make his/her own decisions regarding consumption because no one is able to make those choices better than the individual. This freedom, in turn, is foundational to the concept that the consumer is sovereign in economic affairs.

Homo socio-economicus expands on *homo economicus* by calling attention to the sociality of the consumer. Thus, personalist economics sees the consumer as unique *and* alike, autonomous *and* dependent, self-centered *and* other-centered, solitary *and* communal, self-made *and* culture-bound whose behavior is commodity-acquiring *and* gift-giving, utility-maximizing *and* utility-satisficing, privacy-protecting *and* company-seeking. Consumers are at once free to choose according to their own desires *and* morally accountable to others. The behavior of consumers at times more nearly expresses their individuality, while at other times it evinces their sociality. Thus their behavior arises from different demands originating in their individuality and their sociality which at times are in conflict and which in turn can make for indecision and uncertainty.

Additionally, as emphasized by *homo economicus* and re-affirmed by *homo socio-economicus*, consumers make choices which are based on the use of reason to process information and they

ultimately select the products and services which according to their calculations best suit their purposes. *Homo socio-economicus* asserts that at times, however, consumer decision-making rests not so much on the dictates of reason but the emotions of the heart. Further, personalist economics states that there is no clear priority of the one over the other. Heart-felt is not always better than reasoned; reasoned is not in every instance superior to heart-felt. We separate the rational/emotional pair of consumer attributes from all the rest because individuality and sociality are not the basis of the difference, although we are inclined to think that in general reasoned is self-centered and heart-felt is other-centered.³

Work.

Homo economicus works in order to produce the goods and services which ultimately earn the income enabling him/her to purchase the goods and services to meet physical needs and satisfy wants. *Homo socio-economicus* affirms this behavior as manifestly so in a market system where what one is able to consume depends critically on the value of what one produces. Even so, personalist economics insists there is more to work than simply what is produced and how much is earned.

First, all human work depends on human materiality, that is all work even the most cerebral requires that the worker be embodied. Pure spirits are unable to dig ditches, wait on tables, install telecommunications equipment, write a play, mound clay into three-dimensional figures and the like.

Second, because humans are materialized spirits, human work has a purpose beyond serving the strictly material. Human beings work in order to meet the needs of the human spirit: the need to belong and the need for opportunities to utilize their creative talents. The need to belong is rooted in human sociality; the need for creative opportunities originates in human individuality. The experience of being an outsider on the job affirms the need to belong and the dead-end job attests to the need for creative opportunities in the workplace. Following John Paul II, personalist economics asserts that the more important aspect of work is the effect which it has on the one who works [see John Paul II 1981, §§ 22-27]. That is, humans work primarily to meet these two needs of the human spirit.

John Paul underscores the importance of work by linking it to the body, fulfillment, integration, and freedom.

³ For more on the duty of the firm in selling to the poor based on the concept of *homo socio-economicus*, see O'Boyle 1998.

For us action reveals the person, and we look at the person through his action . . . Action gives us the best insight into the inherent essence of the person and allows us to understand the person most fully . . . the body is the territory and in a way the means for the performance of action and consequently for the fulfillment of the person . . . The integration of the person in action, taking place in the body and expressed by it, reveals simultaneously the deepest sense of the integrity of man as a person . . . The ability to objectify the body and to employ it in acting is an important factor of the personal freedom of man [John Paul 1979, pp. 11, 205, 206].

Leisure.

Leisure too is grounded in the materialized spirit and reflects human individuality and human sociality. Clearly, leisure in the form of daily rest and sleep is necessary to reinvigorate the human body. The National Sleep Foundation's 1999 *Omnibus "Sleep in America Poll"* indicates that 73 percent of shift workers and 59 percent of regular day workers experienced a sleep problem a few nights a week or more in 1998 and that 40 percent of adults are so sleepy during the day that it interferes with their daily activities [*Omnibus*]. Leisure in the form of weekends away from the workplace and vacation leave is required for the same general reason: rest and sleep, even when they are sufficient on a daily basis, are not enough to fend off the fatigue and exhaustion that attend year-round, full-time work. Thus, sensibly, employers allow their workers breaks during the typical eight-hour day, vacation periods, and even in a few instances naps on the job [*Hoosiertimes*]. In this regard, we observe both dimensions of human nature: individuality in the form of sleep and sociality in the form of family vacations.

Leisure meets the needs of the human spirit as well. As Danner has noted elsewhere [Danner 1995, p. 29], those needs are to know, to love, and to feel and experience beauty which frequently require the use of some good or service for their fulfillment. To illustrate, *to know* frequently demands the use of a book, magazine, newspaper, or television. *To love* commonly requires meals shared with others who are dear to us. *To feel and experience beauty* may take the form of a visit to a museum or gallery or trip to a mountain hideaway.

Here, too, human individuality and human sociality come into play. Reading for the most part is a solitary activity although it often involves another as with a parent reading aloud to a pre-schooler. There is nothing unusual or untoward about walking the beach alone or isolating oneself in order to pray in silence. Even so, the beach is a place for being "together with others" as for instance playing volleyball and building a sand castle with a child. A church, synagogue, and mosque are places of communal worship.

The Role of Justice in Limiting Undesirable Behavior in Economic Affairs.

Human beings are impaired in the ordinary business of life when too little consumption, work, or leisure, or too much, preclude them from reaching their full potential as human persons.⁴ Often the impairment is serious, as with malnutrition, long-term unemployment, workaholic behavior, compulsive buying.⁵ Sometimes it becomes critical as in the case of starvation, homelessness, and drug addiction. It follows that notwithstanding mainstream economists' largely unchallenged premise of the unlimited wants of *homo economicus*, limits regarding consumption, work, and leisure are necessary. In what follows, we focus entirely on the limits which are imposed by justice, the good habit or virtue of rendering to others that which is owed.⁶ In personalist economics, *homo socio-economicus* is expected to know those limits and to respect them even at some personal peril.

There are three principles of economic justice which correspond to the three principal ways in which humans interact in economic affairs. The principle of equivalence governs the interaction between one individual and another as, for example, between buyer and seller, and employer and employee. The principle of distributive justice sets limits on the interaction between the superior -- defined as the one with the greater responsibilities -- and the subordinate. Finally, the interaction between a person and the group to which he/she belongs is constrained by the principle of contributive justice.

The principle of equivalence imposes two conditions on the individuals engaged in a routine marketplace or workplace transaction. They are to (1) exchange things of equal value and (2) impose equal burdens on the other. This principle limits, for instance, certain consumption-related activities which are harmful to personal development such as shoplifting and passing bad checks or counterfeit currency. The principle of equivalence also helps rein in work activities which also are harmful to the human person such as sweated labor and featherbedding.

By requiring the superior to distribute the benefits and burdens of the group among its members in some equal or proportional fashion, the principle of distributive justice also limits certain

⁴ See Schor for more on too much consumption and Jacobs and Gerson for more on too much work. Notice the international notoriety accorded Imelda Marcos even many years after it was discovered that she owned 3,000 pairs of shoes. And notice the popularity of the syndicated television program *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* which titillates its audience with the lavish consumption of the rich.

⁵ A new word for the compulsive shopper -- one who buys not so much to acquire something which is expected to satisfy a want or meet a need as to experience the pleasure which is associated with shopping *per se* -- is "shopaholic."

⁶ Other limits are imposed, for example, by religion, as with the Mormon prohibiting consumption of coffee and cigarettes, the Jewish banning of work on the Sabbath, and the Amish disallowing dances.

workplace and marketplace practices which impede personal development. To illustrate, the faithful practice of distributive justice helps bring to an end red-lining whereby some are denied the financing necessary to purchase their own home. It brings down the barriers which block the entry of some into certain trades and professions which otherwise would have denied them an opportunity to meet their own needs and satisfy their own wants through their own best efforts.

The principle of contributive justice requires the person who benefits from belonging to a group to help support and maintain that group. This principle helps deter such consumption-related abuses as insurance fraud which victimizes honest policyholders who are required to pay more for insurance and have less to spend on the other things they need or want. Adhering to this principle deters the “bad mouthing” which occurs in the workplace and which disrupts the performance of work and threatens the success of the company, its owners, and workers.

Because they are so crucial to establishing and maintaining the trust and confidence necessary for peace, order, and tranquility in economic affairs, these three principles and the limits they impose quite often are reinforced by specifying certain actions which violate those principles or exceed those limits as criminal in nature. The main difficulty for *homo socio-economicus* is not so much in knowing what the limits are but in the abiding by those limits especially when personal advantage lies elsewhere. Here justice requires fortitude to carry the day.

III. SUMMING UP

Stripped to its bare essentials, personalist economics is human economics because it puts the human person at the center of economic affairs. Here our presentation has been reduced by the editor’s limit on length and has focused on three central economic activities: consumption, work, and leisure. In addressing those activities, we have emphasized that (1) human persons are materialized spirits and (2) human nature is two dimensional -- individual and social. In our remarks we have relied heavily on Mounier and John Paul II.

Our nature as materialized spirits is at the very heart of consumption, work, and leisure. Without a human body, there would be no desire for consumption, no way to work, and no need for rest. Without a spirit, there would be no need to belong, to exercise our creative talents, or to know, love, feel and experience beauty.

Without individuality, we would all have exactly the same needs, wants, skills, and talents. Without sociality, cooperation in the workplace among persons with different skills and talents would be impossible.

Without limits on what and how much we consume, on how long and how hard we work, and how much we allow for or indulge in leisure, our development as human persons is arrested or misdirected. The three principles of justice provide useful and effective limits on consumption, work, and leisure, and their faithful practice contributes powerfully to the realization of the full potential of every human being.⁷ However, more than justice alone is necessary to bring order, efficiency, and tranquility to economic affairs. It is true, nonetheless, that justice is essential to those ends and to the personalist way of thinking about economic affairs.

⁷ See O'Boyle 1991 for more on the role of charity alongside justice in economic affairs.

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