Research Project Description

The principle question of the research:

Can we find a theological approach to describe a free market in democratic society following similar principles and using a methodological approach of John Paul’s “theology of the body.”?

The general description of a research on the “theology of the markets”:

There can be a new exploration of the idea of a free economy from the perspective of theological anthropology considering the nature of the “theology” of the free market economy. The general audiences by John Paul II held during the first four years of his pontificate on the nature of human sexuality perhaps sounded to some listeners like “bold” proclamations on the “subtleties” of sexual activity, which were usually discussed and analyzed only in the “secular” context. To some people this undertaking by John Paul II sounded like a provocative “project” challenging people to think, for instance, about the sexual intercourse of husband and wife as an “act of worship.” John Paul II does not hesitate to look into the nature of the Blessed Trinity, the perfect self-giving and perfect receptivity of the Persons of the Trinity, and to recognize the traces of God’s interrelationship in the bond of the family. In the “theology of the body,” John Paul II demonstrates that theological concepts are able to enrich the human understanding about our earthly reality and human relationships, thus showing their divine nature and purpose. If we assume that our reality reflects the nature and glory of God, we need not hesitate to see free market exchanges as something which potentially reflects in some way the nature of loving God. Of course, we are speaking here about a resemblance of the nature of God with that of human reality only in a metaphorical and figurative sense. Despite that, we are able to deepen the meaning of our human-social reality by concepts describing God’s nature and His action in the world. Therefore, we can speak about the possibility of enriching the economy with theological insights. It is the task of theology to describe human reality from the perspective of God and His Revelation. A “theology of the markets” still waits a similar kind of systematic study from the perspective of theological anthropology, similar to that of the “theology of the body.” The deepening of the meaning of the free economy from the perspective of theological anthropology is necessary, since it is a human and social reality which must reflect God’s intended plan for humanity.

There were some opinions raised during the Second Vatican Council that the Church need not deal with the themes of economy or political theories, as they are the subjects of the “secular” order. However, the Church’s decision at Second Vatican Council to engage in a dialogue with the world about its problems in the political, economic, and social realms should encourage theologians to look for new areas for the “incarnation” of the Gospel message. There are the common words that the economic and theological vocabularies use such as creativity, exchange, price, competition, and profit. Is it possible that the meaning of these concepts could be deepened through a “mutual exchange” of their economic, anthropological and theological meanings?
This theology could, for example, talk about the *creativity* of God the Creator who made Heaven and the Earth; the "holy exchange" between God and humanity through the mysteries of the Incarnation and Eucharist; the *price* of our salvation through the Paschal mystery of Christ; the *competition* regarding perfection, which the Apostle Paul uses in the metaphor of the race among sportsmen (1 Cor. 9:24-27); or the *profit* by the good servants described in the Parable of the Talents in the Gospel (Mt 25:14-30). These concepts used in theological discourse must find a way to enrich the meaning of the same terms used in the science of economy. Today there is a challenge to look not only for similar terms that theology and economy use, but also to find the traces of the affinity of their meaning. If a way could be found to develop the meaning of the economic terms via theological reflection, it could help to the "evangelization of the economy."

One example of common language in theology and the economy is the area of creativity. God is the Creator who calls a human person to be His cooperator. However there are differences between the nature of God’s creation and human creative activity. We can talk about a common feature between God and man – the spirit of creativity. The ability of people to create new products, to obtain new services, to find new ways of efficiency is in some sense "the new reality of existence" and reflects God’s creation *ex nihilo*. Although human creativity, in the strict sense, is never the *creatio ex nihilo*, as the book of Ecclesiastes reminds us by saying that "nothing is new under the sun" (Ecc 1:9), it has an allegorical similarity to God’s creative act. This concept is important not only for the sake of explaining the nature of human creativity and the purpose of entrepreneurship, but it is even more significant in terms of explaining the nature of the person, the market, and finally, the nature of God. The free market provides "the land" in the words of Genesis to exercise the call to "subdue the earth."

Theology talks about the Blessed Trinity as the perfect unity of the three Divine Persons with the term "subjectivity" is used to describe the inner-personal relationship of the Holy Trinity. The term "subjectivity," which John Paul II uses to describe the nature of the person and society, tends to reveal the urge in human society for finding more advanced ways to realize the "personhood" of man and the inner interdependence among people. For John Paul II, it also becomes a way also to talk about the "subjectivity" of human society. This "subjectivity" is enabled in society if there are the right social conditions and the willingness of man for various forms of self donation. The perfect "free gift of self" exists among the Persons of the Holy Trinity, which for John Paul becomes the concept of "self-giving" in considering the purpose of the free economy.

The loving exchange of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit can also contribute to the insights about the free market exchange. The exchange between two parties, in the deepest sense, is the exchange of subjectivity of personhood seen in human work, work with others, creativity, and entrepreneurship, which in turn raises the reality of "communal subjectivity," the reality of "communal creativity," or the "society of free work of enterprise and of participation." The free market exchange is
one way by which the reality of personal and communal "subjectivity" can be enhanced. Indeed, this is
not a "side effect" of the free economy. This is one of its purposes.

The theological meaning of "exchange" can be described using the concept of Eucharist. This
"holy exchange" between God and His people when they offer the bread, "which earth has given and
human hands have made," asking God that it become "the bread of life,"\(^1\) brings into human existence a
new reality -- the special and actual presence of God for the strengthening and transformation of the
human person. This transformation of the person impacts the transition of the world for becoming a more
"friendly" place for the human striving toward perfection. God accepts this "fruit of the earth and the
work of human hands" and makes it His own Real Presence in order that the human person receiving Him
enters into a very personal communion with God. Even if we cannot compare the meaning of the
exchange in the mystery of the Eucharist and that which exists in market operations, the theology of the
Holy Trinity and Eucharist can help us to understand how the exchange among the two parties enable this
new reality. This holy exchange in the Eucharist, which is the cause of the new reality can be
metaphorically equated to the exchange in the market, which means that there is not only the exchange
between the parties, but also the coming into existence of a reality in society which we call "communal
subjectivity."

The Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ begins the definitive divinization process of the world, which moves
toward its final consummation in God. Therefore, there are no purely "secular" subjects in this world.
The free economy belongs to this process also. A. M. C. Waterman express this reality by saying that
"the efficacy of the market in organizing human action for wealth creation is evidence of divine wisdom
and mercy in turning human frailty to socially beneficent ends."\(^2\) Attempts to consider the free market
from the perspective of theological anthropology suggest a great area for exploration in Catholic Social
Teaching in order to find new benefits from this collaboration between the sciences of theology and
economy. The broader considerations on the nature and purpose of the free economy from the
perspectives suggested by John Paul II are still in process. The separation of the markets and morality
causes negative effects for both: markets without morality lead to various forms of totalitarianism, and
morality which ignores the logic of markets devalues itself by narrowing its understanding of the concept
by being "private" morality. The contribution of John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus* is the investigation of
the benefits of Christian conception of human liberty in relation to the concept of the free market
economy. Interpreting its origins and purpose is a new chapter in the midst of CST. The "incarnation" of
the Christian message about the nature of God and that of the human person into a proper understanding
of the market economy is the task to which John Paul II invites us in *Centesimus Annus*. The most
important condition for advancing this project on the meaning of the free economy is the proper

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\(^1\) The "Offertory" prayer in the Roman Liturgy of the Eucharist.

\(^2\) Waterman A. M. C. Market Social Order and Christian Organicism in Centesimus Annus // Journal of "Markets and
understanding of the person and the formation of a healthy culture whereby a person can advance his personhood.

**The project's objectives:**

- To develop the meaning of a free market in democratic society, its moral-cultural prerequisites as well as the challenges following the recent developments in Catholic social teaching
- To present a few theological interpretations on the meaning of a free market.

**Research methodology:** An analyses and synthesis of a resent academic research in the area of the meaning of the authentic economic liberty and democracy.

**Anticipated results:** A few new concepts presenting a Christian vision of democratic society and its culture.